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The Image: An Ontological *‘Dardichtung’*

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1. Introduction

In this research project, I am engaging with J. L. Nancy's book "The Ground of the Image", and his ontological understanding of the image in the context of the turn from the metaphysics of presence towards a presence as presentation in 'ex-cess'; that is: as 'ek-sistence'[1], 'ak-cedence', 'ek-stasis' and 'ek-phanes'[2]. Throughout the text, my main interest will be the notion of the image in relation to representation and arts, the faculty of imagination and the way in which Nancy establishes the claim that the image 'touches' in an immediate and direct way worldly existence and the sense of the world. In this respect, my thesis will take the form of a close reading of Nancy's book in and as a dialogue with other poststructuralist thoughts. Additionally, I will also refer to the chapter "On the schematism of pure concepts of the understanding" from Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"[3] and to Heidegger's take on Kant in his book, "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics"[4], especially chapter §20 "Image and Schema", to which Nancy himself refers directly in "The Ground of the Image". The reasons behind my interest in J-L. Nancy and in his understanding of the image come from the nature of my painting practice, from my passion for the material and the figure, and the ardent need 'to speak' and 'to write' – but how? – (from within) painting.

"The Ground of the Image" is a collection of nine essays written between 1999 and 2004. In all these essays, Nancy discusses the meaning or sense of the image and puts forward his belief that the image is the medium of presentation in which "alterity" (term established by Emmanuel Lévinas throughout his essays collected in "Alterity and Transcendence") can be embodied and in which the "there of the beyond" is presented. All essays were originally written for various other contexts and the first six essays were published for the first time in 2003 under the same

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[1] Martin Heidegger choose this spelling, 'ek-sistence', in order to distinguish human existences from the old meaning of 'existentia'.

[2] Dieter Mersch, Negative Präsenz, S. 99-117, in: Arno Böhler, Susanne Granzer (Hg), Ereignis Denken. TheatRealität, Performanz, Ereignis, Passage Verlag, 2009, p.111

[3] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing

[4] Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997, 2nd edition

title. These essays have been included previously also in exhibitions catalogues, academic journals, or in an anthology that explored the relation between art and the memory of concentration camps.

I believe that, what concerns Nancy in all of these nine essays, is one main thing that he tries to appropriate in different ways and in showing that it cannot be appropriated at all – the secret of schematism, this one thing that is the mystery of the pure image, the schema of all schemas, the schema of the 'I', the '*advent'* as the birth of all birth, which dwells in the ground of each image. This embodied mystery of schematism, "a hidden art in the depths of human soul"[5], is a secret that can be unveiled only by veiling it anew, since it is not enveloping any secret at all. It is a mystery that is illuminated from itself – "a blind spot that also forms, at every moment, and as every moment, the focal point where an image lights up"[6]. Pure imagination exists as the spacing of a "limit, an edge, contour, extremity, outline, local subject-color, which can be withdrawn, concentrated, and pulled into the nonextension of a point or self-center – blind spot; simultaneously distending or extending itself through passages and partitions."[7] Thus, pure imagination is not something that can be imagined as such, identified or appropriated; but it is some thing that remains unimaginable and unpresentable.

It is Nancy's claim, that this is, why Heidegger's example of the death mask is so exemplary in showing the operational mechanism of the Kantian schematism – the death mask masks the imagination itself, even if, in some ways, it does also uncover it as dead. Heidegger's example shows thus that the logic of '*aletheia*', as

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[5] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 273, B181: "This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with great difficulty. We can say only this much: the **image** is a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination, the **schema** of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product and as it were a monogram of pure *a priori* imagination, through which and in accordance with which the imagination first becomes possible, but which must be connected with the concept, to which they are in themselves never fully congruent, always only by means of the schema that they designate…"

[6] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 95

[7] Quotation slightly changed by me of: Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 23

the veiling unveiling, is what withdraws in the ground of every '*eidos*', of every Idea and that, reciprocally, every Idea hosts a place in '*aletheia*'.

While it is important that Nancy's aim is to untie the image from any logic of representation, what is even more important for any artistic image or for aesthetics in general, is the path he goes in following the demand (manifested in Heidegger's '*Kantbuch*') that there "must also be a self-showing of the unshowable, a tracing out of the effacement, a modelling of the absented gaze […] an *eidos* of *aletheia"*.[8] The unshowable, the effacement and the absence, they all refer to the real and to the sense of the world as 'the being-with' in the event of becoming. The image, as the 'being-there' and as "*proffering*" is the trace of the immemorial past, the infinite and dispersed sense of worldly existence[9]. Nancy's attempt thus is to show that the unimaginable imagining, what was thought also in the Romantic notion of the sublime or in the Kantian "*intuitus originarius*", doesn't imply "*a poetic making/ making poetic of the world*" (The italics are Nancy's)[10] nor an auto-intuitive self, but a being-with in the world as an alterity. The image and art in general has for Nancy an ontological status.

1.1. Gestalt Psychology

In his reading of Nancy's book, Ian James proposes two background ideas for "The Ground of the Image": the first one takes account of the Kantian schematism and of the pure power of imagination (including Heidegger's attempt 'to lay bare' the secret of schematism) and the second one, relates, in a less explicit but still important way, to the account of the image in the perception offered by Gestalt psychology. We shall look now, at the distinction made by Gestalt psychology between the figure and the ground, since the Kantian schema is one of the main points on which I will focus throughout this essay.

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[8] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 96

[9] Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, The being-with of the being-there, trans. Marie-Eve Morin, in: www.springerlink.com, published online 12 February 2008, 8.9.2009

[10] Jean-Luc Nancy, Multiple Arts. The Muses II, edit. Simon Sparks, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 71

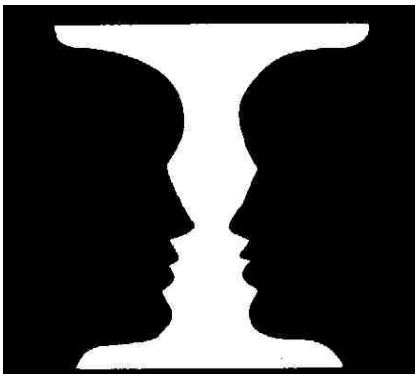
Gestalt psychology (known also as Gestaltism, or Gestalt of the Berlin School)[11] developed in Germany in the early twentieth century as a theory of the mind and brain. It has its roots in theories by J.W. Goethe, I. Kant and Ernst Mach. The operational principle of our brain functions in a holistic, parallel and analogue way, showing several self-organizing tendencies. This means that the whole is different from the sum of its parts. Our senses show a form-forming capability, especially with regard to the visual recognition of figures. This means, that we see not only simple lines and curves, but through this form-forming capability of our senses, we are able to and we have the tendency to recognize whole forms and figures. The existence of dynamic structures determines the appearance of the perceived forms and what we perceive within these forms, as fore- and background, part or whole. The ground of our mental life has to be seen as the experience of forms and not in atomistic terms, and it represents the experience, of those organic unities or wholes, which manifest themselves within the spatial and temporal field of perception or representation. When we perceive a figure as distinct from the ground, then this fact is a result of an internal quasi-instantaneous choice that nevertheless involves complex internal processes. For the Gestalt psychology, the relation between the figure and the ground given in the *instant* when the distinction is made, is what gives the figure its meaning. A classical example here would be the image showing either a vase or a face, whereby a moment of confusion occurs between the figure and the ground.

The instant in which the distinction is made - let us pause for a moment before I continue my thoughts on the figure-ground oscillation, on the *instant*. The painter, Hélène Cixous writes, "is a bird-catcher of instants"[12]. For Cixous, the moment of the instant is the possibility for absolute presence, what she calls, the third person in the present, that is the present itself. Painting opens and gives itself as the chance to take hold of the instant, the absolute presence, the fall into the instant's depth grasped in the surface and skin without depth. Painting is agony directed towards instants, errancy through or in those moments when distinction is made. In trying to keep up with the speed of time, painting is itself – at least it should be

[11] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_psychology

[12] Hélène Cixous, The Last Painting or the Portrait of God, p. 583-597, in: The Continental Aesthetics Reader, edit. Clive Cazeaux, London: Routledge, 2008, 4th edition

– mad speed. But mad speed is erratic in itself. Speed is spacing. The speed of the erratic displaced bodies touching each other. Everything that might hold the painter back needs to be broken off with – knowledge, thoughts, plans, calculations…even and especially the painter's ego. The mad speed of the instant is the power of the metamorphic flux of the figure, of the body, that the painter aims to take hold on in the image. Inexhaustible distinctions in whose depth the painter should fall and come few steps nearer - or further, repulsed by the impenetrable matter - uncountable instants to err around towards "a little sense in a pure state, infinitely opened and infinitely lost"[13]. The speed of accidental contours and foreign adumbrations of illusory apprehensions in the spacing of the nervous lace of endless modifications in obsessive successions – speed spacing the depressive decay of any form in the imminence of the sublime instant. Uncountable differentiations in the final discreteness of their spacing-speed.



The simple example of the face-vase image shows the oscillation that might take place between the two, between the figure and the ground. Each one of us might perceive either the vase or the face first. What each of us automatically perceives firstly, is related to what is called the ground of the viewer's experience. In Gestalt psychology this would be a rich mix of all the past experiences of the self, of the world, and their endless interactions. All this, together with feelings, beliefs, values and needs embedded in one's internal world. In this sense, we can say that the ground defines the figure and gives it its meaning. This ground is what allows the figure to emerge from and to distinguish itself from the

[13] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 13

background. It creates the meaningful unity of an image/figure from a diversity of sensible appearance.

It is in this context (while also following Heidegger's ideas on the ground and on truth), that for Nancy the world is the surface of surfaces on surfaces, faces on faces, an "infinite foliation of layers of the obvious"[14] and that the ground is not the support for the figure, but the very "coming about of forms", "the appearance of the world".[15] The ground and the figure are not opposing each other, but, on the contrary, they share the intimate relation of intertwining and interlacing. Both the figure and the ground tend to open towards the manifest and absolute presence, while also exercising a power for closure and withdrawal.

The ground declares itself as the ground only in its rising in the image. The ground becomes distinct in the image through its own repetition. It depends on the image to clarify itself as the ground in a movement of doubling itself, and the image protects itself against it and, simultaneously, opens itself to it. The image and meaning in general are both in the ambivalent position of being distinct from the network of significations while, at the same time, touching ceaselessly on the order of signification and representation.

It was Gestalt theory, the first theory of perception that confronted the "bucket theory of a passive registration of stimuli"[16] and that denied the concept of the "innocent eye"[17]. We cannot see things or forms as they are, because we inherit certain 'properties' that are not reflected directly by the received stimuli, but that con-figure them and draw them in pre-arranged slots. So for example, we tend to 'look for' or to 'seek' to see simple configurations, straight lines or circles rather then seeing random shapes. The nervous impulses reached by our visual cortex are 'subject to forces of attraction and repulsion'. It is our tendency, and inherited intentionality that makes us content to probe the real world and its representations

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[14] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 76

[15] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 76

[16] E. H. Gombrich, The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2nd edition, 2006, p. 4

[17] Term established by John Ruskin in "The Elements of Drawing" (1857)

against regularities that are not abandoned unless they are refuted. We reduce the realm of sensible forms to schematic renderings, or 'conceptual images', which are "minimum-representations" of the object they intend to conceptualize for the subject, but these 'minimal schemas' are first of all 'con-structed' and 'con-figured' and only afterwards proved against the real world, corrected and altered in such a way that the real world matches them.[18] An inherited 'sense of order' leads man in perceiving the world and man imaged and formed the world for himself as a rule, and thus any 'natural regularities' surprise the man, who thinks he is the one who orders and controls the world. But the distinct touches the indistinct and order touches dis-order – and Nancy knows that this happens only in the clarity of dawn, which is, in its evidence, itself labile and dispersed by touches, because: the "dawn is the drawing of a line, a presentation of place. Dawn is the sole medium for bodies, which subsist neither in fire nor in ice (solar thinking sacrifices bodies, lunar thinking phantasmagorizes them […])"[19]. In dawn, our faculty of imagination becomes tensed and ex-tensed and thus it in-tends to figure and expands to con-figure the 'trait' or edge of their touch, their coming towards each other and their trans- or sur-passing between each other without becoming interlinked. The faculty of imagination is itself a 'trait' that touches, a limit at the limit; it is what is between the faculty of understanding and perception, between the intelligible and the sensible. Imagination is the touch that creates continuity between the distinct – it contours, outlines or adumbrates, that is it 'it casts the shadow'. It is what traces continuity as a passage between the sensible outside and the intelligible inside (and between the intelligible outside and the sensible inside – in the context of materialistic existence), between the Idea and its sensible appearance; and also between actuality and possibility, between purpose and chance. Still, the faculty of imagination – and this will concern us more in detail later in this text – is not only the passive waiting for stimuli to be reproduced, but also the active look or aspect that traces, con-figures and des-figures its limits, its outline, its shadow. It is what causes both, rationality and creativity to take place, being that that orders and opens possibilities for

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[18] E. H. Gombrich, The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2nd edition, 2006, p. 5

[19] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 47

understanding to legislates towards a principle of unity. The imagination creates and performs the unity of fleeting instants, a 'principle of an elastic unity in diversity. It is what makes 'delight' possible, because 'delight' lies somewhere between 'boredom' and 'confusion'.

Delight – a word that echoes opulence and extravagance, bedazzlement and indulgence, playful irrationality and sensuality, revelation, and most of all seductive manifestations radiating in force the warmth and beauty of things in their multiple dissimilar but intertwining heterogeneity. Delight is the inability to decide and to renounce – undecidability, "the sameness of the same produced by the same as its alteration"[20]. Delight is not the absolute alterity that causes nausea, but the sameness in difference that enables the absolute experience of the "whole that only will be itself when each thing will already have reached its plenitude"[21]. And this delight as 'fascination' or 'seduction', we will see later, plays an important role in the image. Of this "making and matching" we are not aware in our everydayness, in the familiarity of a too long ago internalized routine that escapes as such our awareness. But should the making fail to match, our awareness would awaken and open for the touch of that that is every thing without restriction, not yet sketched, formed, traced, designed. It is in this moment that 'sense' touches without representation, directly and without mediation. The harmonic rhythm of "schema and modification" has to be brought out of balance, interrupted, ruptured and made porous in order to disturb the monotone awareness that comes with it and that stopped "seeing". A rhythmical discharge should balance the tension between being and nothingness, without taking anything away, without naming and visualising any thing from nothingness. Seduction, bedazzlement, deceit, fallacy, the shadow of light escape existence as 'existentia', reality and rationality, and open a chance for something else, some thing that is not-a-thing.

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[20] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, edit. by Werner Hamacher, trans. by Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 9

[21] Cf. Jean-Paul Sarte, Nausea, trans. Robert Baldick, London: Penguin Classics, 2000, and also: Cf. María Zambrano, Philosophy and Poetry, trans. D. Ohmans, 2008, in: http://www.webshells.com, September 2008

J. L. Nancy's philosophical writings form a heterogeneous oeuvre, a multiple and fragmented corpus that evolves itself from his thinking and exposure to fragmentation and multiplicity. Nevertheless, in his thinking, there are also notable continuities like, for example, his interest in art and literature, in aesthetics in general. Two of his most original thoughts on aesthetics are, on the one hand, the fact, that he consistently unties the existence of the artwork from any logic of representation and on the other hand, the fact, that through his turn towards an immediate materiality, he is emphasizing the issue of realism and the relation of works of art to the real of worldly existence and to the sense of the world.

The 'real' is for Nancy "pure and simple reality […] detached from any use, impracticable, untreatable, even untouchable, dense, and porous, opaque and diaphanous". A "faint reality of a 'ground' ", substance, matter or subject. The 'real' is what is drawn and separated from the ground (on the wall in Plato's cave) by the trait, the tracing line that divides and sets out the form. It is not presence, but trace, 'trait', vestige and monster, the displacement of presence, the reverse side of presence, manifestation and birth or "coming into the world of what has no place (because it is not presence) in the world".[22] The real, Nancy explains in "Corpus" is the whole *areal*. Areality is "the nature and the specificity of an *aire* ("area")[23] that suggests in a sense also some kind of lack of reality or a suspended, undecided reality. But only through this 'faint reality' the *areal* becomes real. The real is, for Nancy, where the architectonical orchestration of bodies in their structures of 'partes extra partes' allows them to articulate and to space themselves. The real as the whole *areal* " merely reunites the *infinity* of the maximal existence (quo magis cogitari non potest) with the *finite* absolute of an areal horizon". What 'unites the infinite and the finite is an unmediated tension or extension of a body and as the touch in the distance of a body.

In chapter "§ 43. Dasein, Weltlichkeit und Realität" from "Sein und Zeit", Heidegger speaks of the real and of the notion of reality. He applies the term

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[22] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 75-76

[23] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 43

'reality' to a mode of being of 'beings' or 'entities' ('innerweltliches Seiendes') that are either present-at-hand, available ('zuhanden') or objectively present in the world (vorhanden); we encounter entities in the world ('innerweltliches Seiendes') by way of reality in the two modes of being as "Vorhandenheit " or "Zuhandenheit"[24]. Entity ('Seiendes') here is *what is* in general, it does not say anything about or give any reference if it refers to an object that is a mental representation or to a 'thing', as that that gathers in itself, if it refers to a phenomenon in its different meanings of that, 'that shows itself' or to an 'appearance' that designates a relationship between entities. It is what is 'being-there' (but not in terms of Da-sein's being-there that is always a being elsewhere). Reality in itself does not adequately apply to either Being or to the world. Reality is only a mode of being for entities in the world among other modes and all of these modes of being are ontologically grounded in the way world 'worlds' and thus in the phenomenon of "being-in-the-world". Reality is ontologically grounded in Being[25]'s being as "being-in-the-world". But the way Being is, is as being-out-in-front-of-itself in-the-world and being-with upcoming beings. Heidegger calls this mode of being of Being 'care', or "Sorge"[26]. Therefore, reality is remitted on the phenomenon of 'care'. On the other hand, the real is the mode of being of Dasein in its completed ek-sistence. But Dasein, is always an ecstatic being there in being elsewhere with other beings, thus in order to access the real one has to engage with Dasein's being-in-the-world. Dasein is always incomplete, always lacking something and due to this, the real cannot be known in itself, but only through engaging with Being's unfolding in the world and in reality, we can try to access it. The real is for reality, what earth is for the world: the real is the earth that in its withdrawal from the world, shows and unveils in its

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[24] Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl.: "Realität ist als ontologischer Titel auf innerweltliches Seiendes bezogen. Dient er zur Bezeichnung dieser Seinsart überhaupt, dann fungieren Zuhandenheit und Vorhandenheit als Modi der Realität. Läßt man aber diesem Wort seine überlieferte Bedeutung, dann meint es das Sein im Sinne der puren Dingvorhandenheit. Aber nicht jede Vorhandenheit ist Dingvorhandenheit."

[25] I am using Being with capital 'B' as the English word for 'Dasein', but I will keep the original spelling in direct and indirect quotations.

[26] Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl.: "Das Sein des Daseins besagt: Sich-vorweg-schon-sein-in-(der-Welt-) als Sein-bei (innerweltlich begegnendem Seiendem). Dieses Sein erfüllt die Bedeutung des Titels *Sorge*, der rein ontologisch-existential gebraucht wird. Ausgeschlossen bleibt aus der Bedeutung jede ontisch gemeinte Seinstendenz wie Besorgnis, bzw. Sorglosigkeit." (Die Hervorhebung ist Heidegger's)

withdrawal the remainder, the sur-plus and ex-cess of this world. "Erde durchragt nur die Welt, Welt gründet sich nur auf die Erde, sofern Wahrheit als der Urstreit von Lichtung und Verbergung geschieht."[27]

The real is for Nancy groundless and bottomless "imminence infinitely suspended over itself".[28] It is "the presence that is par excellence not present: the one that is not there. The one whose being-there is a being [être] […] exposed to the elsewhere of this very place".[29] The real can be understood as what stretches in between (or beyond) and what expands in retreating itself in the ambivalence and the twofold possibility of the world: that of language's negativity, (the 'being there' and being named and split from the indistinct), and that of the absolute and eternal "Being beyond", the irreducible residue of Being. We can thus try to access the real, Nancy writes, as Heidegger did by engaging with 'Dasein', or by thinking the 'différance' with Derrida and Deleuze's 'becoming-imperceptible' or through engaging with the image the way Nancy understands it. And we shall keep in mind that both, 'Da-sein' and the image are ways of 'being-there' in being actually also elsewhere.

Nancy wrote important readings on Descartes, Kant or Hegel and engaged with the thinking of Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Bataille, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida. His philosophy persistently and insistently turns towards a thinking of being in which any possibility of unity and identity has withdrawn, a thinking in which the demand of the multiple and the fragmentary allows no reference to any overarching unity, totality or ground. His thought requires moving beyond figures of subjectivity and stable identity formations and unfolds as a ceaseless preoccupation with or reworking of the thinking of other philosophers. In his philosophical reflections, Nancy is actively engaging with his experience of physical and embodied existence and with an exposure of existence to an originary heterogeneity or "exteriority". A persistent thought in Nancy's work is

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[27] Martin Heidegger, Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes, S. 1-74, in: Holzwege, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 8te Aufl., 2003

[28] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 26

[29] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 123

that "the truth of the subject is its exteriority and its excessiveness: its infinite exposition"[30]. The exteriority of existence is the 'outside' or 'beyond' of presence, the infinite, obscure and dense presence that is not named and that is not distinct.

Nancy's writings follow closely the Heideggerian thinking of Being, which will be radically transformed and exceeded while reworking Heidegger's ideas, in relation to his own thoughts on multiplicity and fragmentation. Furthermore, Nancy refuses to shift towards a "poetic saying" and chooses to absorb himself in the philosophical discourse of the and in the 'syncope'[31]. His belief is that "there is no point in doing philosophy if it isn't to try to accompany this exhaustion of discourse to its limit"[32]. If with Nietzsche and Heidegger, philosophy started to question the sense of philosophy itself, then Nancy believes that the task of philosophy is to think the sense of its exhaustion and he emphasizes the necessity of taking the responsibility of thinking its limit as its limit. Following this path, Nancy comes to the conclusion that what we have to think differently is 'sense' itself.

Sense for Nancy does not belong to the symbolic order or to the relation of signifier to signified. Sense is an excess of signification that makes meaning and signification only now possible. I will refer to this more in detail in one of the next chapters. With this new understanding of sense, Nancy will rethink not only the 'community' and the political, but also art. He will turn towards a realism within art confronting with his thoughts those theories (e.g. R. Barthes) that acknowledged the impossibility of realism in literature, since they claimed that literary meaning was only received via a signification theory. What Nancy puts forward is that art has some kind of direct relation with worldly existence and with the 'real'. He always emphasizes the plurality and multiplicity of our shared worldly existence, and argues that the image, be it literary, artistic or musical, has the potential to open itself to the 'real', to that realm that is prior to the symbolic

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[30] Quotation after: Ian James, The Fragmentary Demand. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean Luc Nancy, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 5; J.-L. Nancy, L'Intrus, Paris: Galilée, 2000, p. 42

[31] Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, edit. Werner Hamacher, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008

[32] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, edit. Werner Hamacher, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 15

order, to language, and to the primacy of the subject. However, the question that arises, is to what extent, this prior stage to the symbolic order, can only be attained and accessed only as a sur-passing or a going beyond language, that is only through language at limit – limit that is necessary and that we also need to surpass at the same time.

Nancy's thinking of aesthetics is closely linked to the French literary theory of the 1960s and 1970s and poststructuralist critiques of representation. Nancy, like Barthes, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze and others, is very sceptical of forms of representation. He insists that the logic of representation is unable to capture and to deal with the diffuse multiplicity and complexity of shared worldly experience. The logic of representation can only reduce and codify in a violent way the shared worldly experience to restrictive frames of determinate meaning. At the same time, Nancy fully re-engages with and recovers the material, the embodied sensory dimension of our shared world of perception experience.

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In the course of my research for writing this text, I encountered the suggestion, that one could address this compilation of nine essays by arranging them in three groups. Four essays explore the structure of the image by distinguishing the image from other modes of communication. These essays would be: "The Image – the Distinct", "Image and Violence", "Forbidden Representation" and "Distinct Oscillation". Several other essays would engage in a direct way with painting choosing to discuss specific works of art like Pontormo's "Visitation", Pierro della Francesca's "Madonna del Parto" or Artemisia Gentileschi's "Cleopatra". This group of essays would include: "Uncanny Landscape", "Visitation: On Christian Painting", and "The Sovereign Woman in Painting". Last two essays, "Masked Imagination" and "Nous Autres" would form a separate group because they take explicitly account of the structure of the image as an ontological structure of 'being-with'.

However, I don't necessarily agree with this approach. Primarily, because it appears to me, that in all these essays Nancy's main concern remains the same: to think the image that unfolds the primal monstration of the pure image and the way

it touches the real of the world, claiming its ontological status, more precise its place in a 'body ontology'. Thus what Nancy attempts to think is an access to the inaccessible via and in the image, as an '(in)carnation of mystery'. The image for Nancy is not, primarily, a mode of communication –it is not of the order of representation. Image is for Nancy a body and painting is the 'art of bodies'[33], 'carnation' of bodies. What Nancy proposes is thus an ontological analysis of the image and not a characterisation of the image in relation to other modes and means of communication.

Since my first encounter with Nancy's texts on painting, I always felt that his writings are reverberations coming from a painter's painter, very different from other writings about painting. They happen amidst the event of painting, in the matter and body of painting, (in his own words:) "in the local color", in the "local existence" tracing an ontology of foreign and estranged bodies. In her reflection on painting, Cixous on her side, also figures the secret: "Thought is not the weighty thinker seated. It passes, inside, distracted, travelling, it is the foreigner, the stranger. He paints the stranger in me, in you. The times when […] we suddenly become the stranger, the foreigner in ourselves. We separate ourselves from ourselves. We lose ourselves. From sight also"[34] […] in the "carnation plain and simple, referring to the vibration, color, frequency, and nuance of a place, of an event of existence"[35].

I should find a way to talk or write in and with this kind of 'voice'. I should also look at Nancy's texts, the way I would approach the whiteness of a canvas – intuitively, without expectance and without plan, but full of energy, delighted, in force, violently, in full speed. With the gesture of the first single line that is for Nancy already a 'becoming', the opening for a passage, for an image. Hope in a moment, agony the next. The touch of my eyes, the scent of oil and turpentine, the stickiness of paint on my clothes is already this line even before it is imprinted on the blankness of the canvas. But once imprinted, marked – I am not alone in doing

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[33] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 15

[34] Hélène Cixous, Stigmata, London: Routledge Classics, 2005, p. 9

[35] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 17

anymore. A mark follows the other, a line will make space for the next one; a blotch of colour will clear its place, while the stain will retreat in the white light of the ground. It is not only me who is painting, but the paint itself paints the image and it paints me – my fingers, my clothes, sometimes even my face and my hair. It impregnates and presences its scent in my body. At any minute, I can destroy it – what it, the paint does - without return, but I am not allowed to fear this moment – 'the imminence of' is my only hope. I am moving forth and back, towards and away from the 'work', from this freeze-frame (Nancy) that cuts in the weave of sense the field of force in which the image threatens to either emerge or to abstain from it. Such is the way I should follow: making and matching[36], weaving and cutting, looking and writing, writing and reading, reading and following. I would jump from Nancy to Benjamin, to Blanchot to Bachelard to a movie, to James...to Kant or Heidegger, intertwining several debates, and hoping that their collision will 'open' them for each other, and for me. What brings all these debates in contact is the critique of the metaphysical presence and an understanding of the image as something that exceeds representation, or that open at least the possibility for this.

2. "Behind the Canvas: Philosophical Painters"[37]

"Behind the Canvas: Philosophical Painters" was the title of a seminar that gathered together three essays that argued: "Just as philosophy cannot ignore its literary dimensions, it also cannot ignore its visual and plastic dimension. Put differently, these papers argue that there are many painters who have considered themselves thinkers who communicate by means of paint, and who thus require philosophical exegesis and engagement".[38] One of the papers dealt with the

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[36] E. H. Gombrich, The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2nd edition, 2006, p. 4

[37] Lecture held during the IAPL (The International Association for Philosophy and Literature) 2009: "Double Edges. Rhetorics. Rhizomes. Regions", Brunel University West London, UK, 1-7 June 2009

[38] I believe that 'exegesis' here is used in the classical phenomenological meaning of revealing the meaning of something and not in the sense of taking account and becoming aware of the "ekphanes" of presence, of its event of 'becoming'. It is used with the meaning of an unveiling and disclosure of meaning and intention and not of the proffering of simply 'being there'. This would thus imply that the "philosophical exegesis and engagement" with painting would take the form of a series of tautological affirmations or descriptions.

connection between the American painter Philipp Guston and the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, the second presented Rene Magritte's paintings in relation to Michel Foucault's essay "Ceci n'est pas une pipe"[39] and the last essay, interpreted Fernando Botero's[40] series of Abu Ghraib paintings in embracing Michel Foucault's ideas.

My intention here is not to discuss the ideas presented during this seminar with which I can agree only partially. But, I do believe, that some of the thoughts regarding these issues, are a good way to set in motion my own reflections on the image. At the same time, this seminar deepened my reasons for acknowledging the importance of Nancy's thoughts. One is, as I have previously mentioned, Nancy's most original thought on 'arts' in his turn towards matter and materiality of being and of sense that allowed him to untie the image and 'arts' from the logic of representation and to utter the non-reflective demand towards images. His proposition is to stop trying "to seek to go behind a canvas" and to stop trying "to see behind the visible", as there is no 'behind' to be lighted. We should only accept the "brief immobilization of the oil", and the fact that "we have already entered". We are exposed to seeing and it is only 'seeing' that we are asked to do, that we are permitted and promised. 'The invisible' lies not behind, nor beyond, nor inside and nor outside the visible, which is the canvas' surface. It is rather what is right in front of us: its very oil, its weave, and its pigment. Here and now. So, what Nancy prompts us to do, is to leave off representation and interpretation: "one must remain right at the surface of the canvas, glued to it, on its threshold".[41] This is Nancy's main call with regard to the artistic image. The encounter with the image is not encounter with meaning and with presence of vision, but an encounter with something that dislocates time. Painting imposes its sovereignty in the moment when it unfolds itself in the excess of its own fragility, in the ground without depth, which is skin, the flesh and light and the gaze that is not directed

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[39] Michel Foucault, This is not a Pipe, trans. and edit. James Harkness, London: University of California Press, 2nd edition, 2008

[40] Fernando Botero is a contemporary Columbian painter and sculptor.

[41] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 59-62

and controlled by any ideality.[42] It is an encounter with the resolute disclosedness (the Heideggerian 'Entschlossenheit') of the swiftness of an instant, Dasein's transparent repetition of itself in the realm of genuine praxis.

In its factical existence as subjective lived body, the ego's main aim, its only aim, is to save us from appearances, to bring everything under a transparent and structured unity of an 'I'. The ego is slow and tied up directly in the net of unity. But painting's surface is shadowed and scattered between seductive appearances, between multiplicity and the heterogeneity of the things in the world; between the curves of its own heavily scented and painfully engraved skin, "variously folded, refolded, unfolded, multiplied, invaginated, exogastrulated, orificed, evasive, invaded, stretched, relaxed, excited, distressed, tied, untied".[43] Dispersed in mad speed between instants and "the imminence of". It is H. Cixous who wrote that the greatest lesson painting gives us, is "flinging oneself beyond the ego" and that:

> "At the moment, when the ego no longer weighs him down, the painter becomes permeable, becomes immense and virgin, becomes a woman. He lets light work in him. Submission to the process. He becomes tender, he becomes plant, he becomes earth, the sun impregnates him. *Tanta masidão*, such gentleness…" (The italics are Cixous'.)[44]

In such moments the passion for our own material existence becomes ontologically articulated opening beings not only for intersubjectivity, but also for interobjectivity. Not only a world is opened, but also an earth that shines in the dawn of this threshold.

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[42] Nancy cites also Hantaï's remarks: "What hides itself, shows itself – folded into a reserve….The canvas ceases to be a *projection screen*, becomes material, cutting through itself, etc. – the invaginated – the involuted – the flattened mountain – the painted and the hidden – folding and unfolding…void that separates and binds…there is nothing behind." (The Ground of the Image, p. 121). Some of his paintings are on show in the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

[43] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 15

[44] Hélène Cixous, The Last Painting or the Portrait of God, p. 583-597, in: The Continental Aesthetics Reader, edit. Clive Cazeaux, London: Routledge, 2008, 4th edition

Rene Magritte, the surrealist painter, claimed "the ascendency of poetry over painting"[45] and in disliking to be addressed as an artist, he preferred to be "considered a thinker who communicated by means of paint".[46] "A thinker who communicated by means of paint": this is, I will argue, someone who uses paint as a means of, as a tool to communicate, to express, to bring forward his thoughts or ideas already 'completed' and 'finalised' before the act of painting had not even started.

Painting cannot be understood as a later composition and 'translation' of pre-painting experiences and thoughts or ideas to which the painting would remain faithful and will give a visual appearance. For me painting is rather the experience itself. Before painting there is nothing. As the materials are assembled, com-posed, con-figured, trans-formed or de-formed the image is born – and the imager of the image as well. Both at the same time. The imager/artist images/paints the image and the image images the imager/artist. The artistic image in the instant of its becoming, is not an object of reflection and of knowledge. The painted image is the same that undecides itself. It is the simultaneous production and expanditure, the superimposition of the blind spot and the centre of vision. Syncope. You know nothing, you decide nothing, and yet every single act is a decision taken. Explained the artistic image is reduced to concepts, elucidated it is exalted in idolatry or in memorials. The artistic image as a present reality, as being or entity, on which thought and discourses can be plausibly constructed and established ("her-gestellt') is placed in the secure place of something that is known, comprehended, usable, available, secured and which presents no risks, which is not at risk. The image is not a matter of what existed 'before', but the power that makes it into what it is 'after' – an 'after' that is nevertheless always a 'becoming', always another one and always in movement.

In spite of this, there exists however an intense and obsessive desire to work with words in painting, with the painting of words and with writing as painting. Nancy mentions in relation to this Apollinaire's "Calligrammes", Burroughs's cut-ups

[45] Magritte's preference for poetry over painting hints already at the fact that he failed to see the painted image outside transcendental representation and independently from resemblance.

[46] James Harkness, in: Michel Foucault, This is not a pipe, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008, p. 2

and forms of "concrete poetry", Schwitters' or Hantaï's attempts, acknowledging, at the same time, that this desire and obsession to embed words within painting, and to bring out their form and materiality, happens at he expense of their incorporeal value.

In calling himself a "thinker…" I intend to believe, that Magritte refused right from the beginning to experience paint's materiality, which implies, in Blanchot's words, an experience as thinking that doesn't know anymore, but which remains nevertheless a form of thinking. This doesn't refer to a thinking experience, but to an experience that challenges both the limit of thinking and of experience. Experience is what cannot be thought, because what is thought is already and always ideality. His thoughts had been "thought" or formed previously to the act of painting, which means that paint is used, in this case, as a depiction mode. In his case painting, better the body of painting is the corpse of painting, the cadaver of a dead body without a body. But this was, what he tried to avoid in language. The idea (of the visual critique on language) precedes and governs his communication, which transports precisely this idea. Self-conscious about the philosophical ideas that interested him – Magritte read especially Hegel, Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault, he was aware of the discourse around a non-representative language and engaged himself in a visual critique of language that followed closely Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas regarding the arbitrariness of the sign and "the essentially circumstantial, conventional, historical nature of the bond between the signifier and the signified".[47] The strategy and programme employed in this respect, was to paint familiar, easy

[47] Michel Foucault, This is not a pipe, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008, p. 5. Already for Hegel language was 'naming' and conceptualizing, negativity that revealed Being to man only half tone. For Heidegger, poetry was the place in which language simultaneously revealed and withdrawn itself, a possible way to truth as 'aletheia'. Both these two views position language either on the side of Non-Being or on the side of Being. Kojeve's reading of Hegel and his ideas on language, as a recombination of linguistic elements and the absence of reference, influenced the context of the French philosophy from the 1960s onwards. Discourse and language became the main focus of the French thinkers like Foucault, Barthes and others. With Maurice Blanchot, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jaques Derrida, Georges Bataille and others, language will be thought on its own and not in relation to Being or Non-Being anymore. Language in this case will freed itself from the primacy of the subject and will become a 'neutral and anonymous exteriority' that neither negates nor creates Being.

recognisable, objects or scenes and to subvert them immediately, fact that made them appear either "impossible" or "irrational", strange and foreign.

What preoccupied Magritte was to banish resemblance and its implicit discourse from language, and, I argue, only secondarily or not at all, from the painted image. By concentrating himself on the relation between language and vision, between language that is representing, revealing, and thinking and language that accommodates invisibility, and non-knowledge, or even better a 'beyond-knowledge', Magritte obliterates his 'senses', from my point of view, and fails to sense directly the materiality of paint as it exists in front of him. He is not painting from within the painting experience, but he seems to use paint from an external position of the painting practice. He criticises how language is used, but employs paint in a similar manner. Considering this, he was not able to see that the visual field offers itself as a perfect example, because it stands for the domain of immobility as such, for immutability and impassability. However, the image also never stops "tightening and condensing" into itself. The image is "self-coincident" and "self-fitted" with itself, which is that it resembles itself and gathers itself together, being a totality that fits and coincides with itself. The image is sur-face, ex-position and ex-pression.

Magritte worked mainly with the literal meaning of words, as he wanted to reveal the representational anchor in resemblance. "What we see is never what we say", wrote Foucault in "Les mots and les chose", and this is what Magritte illustrated. "And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendour is not that deployed by our eyes but defined by the sequential elements of syntax."[48] But the 'sense' (in Nancy's terms now) on which his paintings are touching is not a 'becoming' of being and of the sensuous materiality of paint, not syntax of matter, of paint and colours, of marks and gestures, but a sense that comes from the realm of concepts. They are not sense, they make visible what linguistic meaning is not.

(Foucault differentiates between resemblance – that prescribes, classes (through imposing the priviledged status of the 'model' over the 'copy'), and copies (on the

[48] Michel Foucault, in: Les mots and les choses, cited after: James Harkness, in: Michel Foucault, This is not a pipe, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2nd edition 2008

basis of a mimetic relation that is dominated by representation) – and similitude, in which case, things are spaced in lateral and not hierarchical relations to each other. "Similitude circulates the simulacrum as the indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar."[49] In this case, for Foucault, painting would become "an endless series of repetitions, variations set free from a theme"[50].)

Magritte's paintings question and aim to disturb the 'normal' relationship between language and image, which was influenced traditionally by the metaphysics of presence and by the privilege given to vision, followed from the fact that 'seeing' meant 'presence'.[51] Heidegger writes: "Seeing, or having or keeping something in view, is indeed the predominant, most obvious, most direct and indeed most impressive and extensive way of having something present. On account of its exceptional way of making-present, sensible vision attains the role of the exemplary model for knowing, knowing taken as an apprehending of entities."[52] 'Erkennen'[53] understood as the cognitive relation between the subject that disposes over the ability to understand and to percept, to know and to 'see' that what faces it, the object, made of 'seeing' and presence a precondition of knowing. This in turn established the privilege of form over matter. For Heidegger, both these prejudices favoured the metaphysics of presence. In this context then, the sign was the representation of an idea, which in turn was a representation of the perceived object. Used as such, language allowed the

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[49] Michel Foucault, This is not a pipe, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2nd edition 2008 p. 10

[50]James Harkness, in Forward for: Michel Foucault, This is not a Pipe, London: University of California Press, 2nd edition 2008

[51] Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, Writing otherwise than Seeing. Writing and Exteriority in Maurice Blanchot, 2007, p.16 (PDF), http://ethesis.helsinki.fi., July 2009

[52] Quotation after: Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, Writing Otherwise than Seeing. Writing and Exteriority in Maurice Blanchot, 2007, p.16 (PDF) http://ethesis.helsinki.fi., July 2009; Cf. § 36 "Die Neugier", in: Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl, 170-173

[53] Heidegger suggested that the etymology of knowing has it roots in 'seeing'. "*Eidenai*" in its roots means 'to see' and Heidegger connects it to "*eidos*". In this, Heidegger believes, lies the central thought in the Western philosophy, that is: "Primordial and genuine truth lies in the pure beholding." (Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macqarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980 (1962), p. 215; Original text: "Sein ist, was im reinen anschauenden Vernehmen sich zeigt, und nur dieses Sehen entdeckt das Sein. Ursprüngliche und echte Wahrheit liegt in der reinen Anschauung." (Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl, p. 171)

objectification of the world and gave the subject the ability to control its objects with its gaze. Heidegger refers to this gaze as a mere looking-at, a fixed starring at something that is purely present-at-hand.[54] In the traditional context language is understood as representational, constative and affirmative. The guarantee for meaning is presence, the clear form in the light of the idea. Similarly, the image is also approached from a representational or mimetic point of view. The image represents or copies the perceived thing. Magritte's painting(s) confront us with "figures in the shape of words" and "extend the writing more than it illustrate it or it fill its void"(M. Foucault). According to Foucault, Magritte is denying 'naming' and revealing of meaning. Foucault writes, that Magritte's paintings question the intersection, within the same medium, of representation by resemblance (plastic representation) and representation by signs (linguistic reference that excludes resemblance). This allows him to exemplify "the penetration of discourse into the form of things" and to reveal "the discourse's ambiguous power to deny and to redouble".[55]

In "The Ground of the Image", J. L. Nancy himself refers to Magritte's painting "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" and explains that the painting seems to enunciate at first sight "a banal paradox of representation as imitation", but that the "truth" of the image is actually to be found in the inverse affirmation, which would be the image accompanied by "Ceci est une pipe", because, Nancy writes:

> "a thing presents itself only inasmuch as it resembles itself and says (mutely) of itself: I am this thing. The image is the non-linguistic saying or the showing of the thing in its sameness: but this sameness is not only not said, or 'said' otherwise, it is an *other sameness* than that of language and the concept, a sameness that does not belong to identification or signification (that of 'a pipe', for example), but that is supported only by itself in the image and as an image."[56]

What Nancy (and Foucault) is emphasizing here, is that the thing as an image is always different from the thing as "vorhanden", as being-there and also different

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[54] or: "[…] Naivität eines zufälligen, »unmittelbaren« und unbedachten »Schauens«." (Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl., p. 37)

[55] Michel Foucault, This is Not a Pipe, trans. James Harkness, London: University California Press, 208 (1982), p. 37

[56] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 9

from the thing as the word. "Being-image" is the being "not here, but over there, in the distance, in a distance". The image is an 'image of' by being a dissimilar resemblance. The resemblance of the image is a resemblance of force and passion: "Resemblance gathers together in force and gathers itself as force of the *same* – the same differing in itself from itself […]". Thus the image allows us to touch on the same and "on the power that affirms this: I am indeed what I am, and I am this well beyond or well on this side of what I am for you, for your aims and your manipulations."[57] The image is participation and dwelling, taking part in and being possessed by it. The image is *"mimesis"*, representation and resemblance, but only inasmuch as it also is "*methexis",* sharing and participation. The image gives itself to the view. It is existence as a form of presence - or rather absence made present - that is drawn out of absence and imagination is the force capable of doing this. Imagination is not only representation for the subject, but also manifestation and figuring of being as 'coming into presence', as 'becoming' and as the 'coming of a stranger' and "a birth into a world of what has no place in the world".[58]

3. "The Effect of Strangeness"

A painting is a call and is an invitation for admiration and not for adoration; it is a visitation that is according to its Latin etymology a "procedure for becoming aware of something, for examining and experiencing something". Our gaze follows its light and we desire its flesh and skin.[59] We desire its passage[60]. Access

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[57] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 9

[58] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 76

[59] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 136

[60] M. Merleau-Ponty writes in "The Visible and the Invisible": "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term "element", in the sense […] of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle (…) Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to *location* and to the *now*. Much more: inauguration of the *where* and the *when*, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity, what makes the fact to be a fact. And at the same time, what makes the facts have meaning, makes the fragmentary facts dispose themselves about "something"." (The italics are Merleau-Ponty's) (M. Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, Edit Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 139-140)

is given to us only to the fact that we do not accede. Light is not a phenomenon, but the limit-speed of a world, the expanse of a world. The image is the visitation of the "immense rising of depth into surface […] always-already-there, therefore always to come again like the return of a past more ancient than any past".[61] Dieter Mersch speaks about the 'out of self' ("Aus-sich") force that affirms its "ex-sisting-effectiveness" that cannot be neglected, but that is nothing more than this impossibility of undeniability.[62] It is the visitation of the groundless-ground that hollows-up and presses against its surface. The painted image, every image, gives itself to us, to our gaze and to our "*jouissance*" of meaning of the inexhaustible distinction and of entering a world and being there. In doing this, the image lies bare and images the mystery of being-a-world, and the mystery of power and passion coming together. "[…] In its withdrawal and from its withdrawal, it (the image) is an *attraction* and a *drawing* toward itself."[63] (The italics are Nancy's.) The image is not a thing facing the spectator and it is not an "idea": the image is not sensible and not intelligible form. It is more the experience of a force that forces form to touch itself. In this case, the image is participation and participation as 'entering', better as 'expanding' and not as 'facing', participation as penetration and being penetrated by the endless and continuous "metamorphic flux" of the image. It is touching with eyes, hands, belly, body, and reason. The painted image is flesh, "amorous flesh" in which case the penetration can only be reciprocal. It is fidelity, because it pays equal respect for the being and the non-being, for the beautiful and the ugly, for the light and the shadow. The image demands trust. Trusting the threshold. Trust to give. Trust to invest.

Painting made flesh, reversibility of *carnations* and *étoffes*[64], writes Nancy. According to Merleau-Ponty, 'flesh' is the common existential ground for both

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[61] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 118

[62] Dieter Mersch, Negative Präsenz, S. 99-117, in: Arno Böhler, Susanne Granzer (Hg), Ereignis Denken. TheatRealität, Performanz, Ereignis, Passage Verlag, 2009

[63] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 6

[64] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 64

the body and the world. Thus, in their material being the subjective lived body and the objective world do not stay in opposition to each other, they do not face each other, but as against this, they are intertwined with each other. Flesh is thus the structure of reversibility in which the subject and the object are not assigned fixed rigid position. The outside and the inside, the subject and the object, the outside of the inside and the inside of the outside are in a continuous interchangeability with each other. Body and the world share a common condition of embodied sense. If the subjective lived body is actively devoted to the enfolding of the world's and to it's own objectivity, then it, the subjective lived body experiences its sensual and sensible expansion, this means, that its awareness of what is to be a material body is enhanced. A primordial pre-reflective material sense-ability can be engaged through our passion for the world's enfolding and our own materiality. Image – which can be artistic, poetic, tactile, olfactory, musical, and so on - is the appearance and presentation of the stranger, the foreign body. Painting is a body. It is a mode of being other than objectified reality, because as "a prodigious force-sign of an improbable presence", "the image is outside the common sphere of presence".[65] Blind falling in love, passion for the 'out-of-place', for 'ek-stasis' and for our material being.

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What is characteristic for Bertolt Brecht's poetic images on stage is the sublime of their simplicity, and the fact that they continuously and directly remind us of and lay bare their 'normal' and usual artificiality, their fabrication. Displaying and presenting their fabrication, they bother our habit 'to see' things and the way they appear to us. We can no longer sympathetically and immediately merge our sensibilities with the actors who "incarnate our hopes and actualize our dreams in order to satisfy us passionately" (Blanchot), because we become aware of the event's theatricality.

A certain kind of strangeness Nancy insists, characterizes also man's humanity. Man's self-knowledge, the self-knowledge of the 'I' that is confronted, put face to face with his own self, his own 'I', is the knowledge of his presence as the

[65] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 22-23

presence of "the stranger, monstrously similar [semblable] […] The similar came before the self, and this is what it, the self, was."[66] The self outside self, the outside standing for self is the image, the schema of man's monstration, of his exhibiting and bringing to light. Imitation of this strangeness is man's own intimation.[67]

What Brecht's theatre (and we should understand theatre here as "embodied text, text in flesh and blood with breath and postures"[68]) aims to expose by employing the effect of strangeness is an identity that is not an identity, but "*alterity*" right from the beginning and up till the end. This is very similar to what happens in photography: the photography metamorphoses everything into "*alterity*" (referring to a constructed distinct identity), being all the more altered, as this 'everything' is close to us and it refers to our familiar immediacy.[69] The photograph appropriates "[…] a brief difference. An imperceptible alteration that thus becomes perceptible, present, indubitable".[70] And this is also something that Brecht intended to achieve in his audience – a distinct identity: not idolatry, but a "we" that becomes "nous autres", a "we" that constructs its "*alterity*" and that exposes "the totality of humans in the fragility of their finitude".[71]

His stage images confront us with the obviousness of the invisible, with an arisen anticipation. Being aware of what actually happens between the audience and the stage and its actors, aware of "this participation and sympathy, this almost revolting contact between emerged sensibilities, these immediate relations in

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[66] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 69

[67] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 6

[68] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 65

[69] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 106

[70] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 101

[71] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 104

which nothing is in relation, this manner of loving without love"[72], of this negative presence as something that is not, Brecht expected from his audience not to lose themselves in dreams and idolatry, but 'to look at' and to 'see' actively speech, to start and think about it through the participation in and the experience of 'making sense' and of 'being sense'. His, by now well-known "Verfremdungseffekt" is what allowed things to distance themselves and to appear strange, blurred and foreign, but which nevertheless demanded their existence and called for a 'fresh gaze', another gaze, that would shake, scatter certitudes, customs and frozen appearances. In this way, he allowed for the invisible to be present in the visible. The newly perceived image that produced this effect of strangeness not only represented things, but it also allowed things to present themselves from a dissimilar distance. It is not re-staging and description, but 'bringing-out'. Participation is not a form of idolatry, is not listening without hearing and not watching without seeing. Participation is actively imaging, it is 'relation' and 'rapport', a bouncing toward and leaping into it, but not an interlinking; participation is the attraction and the drawing towards the withdrawal and the distancing of the image. It is an investigation from the Latin '*vestigare*' and '*vestigium*', a following back of the traces; the footprints that threaten to disappear any minute. An investment at risk – the risk of the blind man gone mad.

As someone, who continuously devoted his thinking to the untying of the work of art from representation, claiming its ontological status and, at the same time, to the emphasis of the tied relationship between the issue of realism and the artwork, Nancy looks more in depth on the problematic that arose from the link between image, representation, copy, truth and presence. Alongside other poststructuralist thinkers, he engaged in the critique of vision, the questioning of the image as finitude, and the primacy of the subject and its omnipresent gaze. In following Heidegger's thoughts, he moves forward from the realm of imagination (Vorstellung) and representation, of making things "present to the material realm of imaging, figuring and expositing" (to Darstellung), the realm of "exhibition". From the availability of the things present-at-hand (das Zuhandene) set out ('stellen vor/ 'Entgegenstehendes') before the subject, that is the realm of the

[72] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. By Susan Hanson, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 (1993), p. 363

perceived objects by a controlling subject, to the realm of the image as subject that presents itself and is dissimilar. The meaning of the image is not that of mimetic representation anymore, but the image is now meaning. For Nancy the problem of "representation" has to be carefully analysed in its "alliance", which is constitutive for the Western history, between the image, the principle of monotheism and the Greek problematic of the copy, of the artifice and the simulacrum. In this alliance, Nancy discovers the reason for the 'mistrust' toward images.

In "Forbidden Representation", one of the essays from "The Ground of the Image", Nancy thinks the difference, between an 'image of', that is representation, and an 'idol'. Whereas the 'image of', which, in the traditional sense of representation, might be regarded as the copy or the imitation of an original (and to which Nancy will soon oppose his own understanding of it), the 'idol' is a fabricated God, "an image to be valued for itself and not for what it represents", an image that claims to be itself a divine presence and that asserts to be a pure and "heavy presence from which nothing departs or withdraws"; "the idol does not move, does not see, does not speak […] and the idolater, facing the idol, also does not see and does not understand."[73] Idols are the 'forbidden representations' and not images, Nancy asserts, precisely because they claim to be something that they cannot be, they claim to be God, the 'real God', when God is "only word (addressed to his people), vision (of the heart of man), and movement (in order to accompany his man)".[74] Nancy thinks concomitantly, on the one hand, of the problematic of the biblical prohibition and on the other hand, of the Greek problematic of the copy in relation to the absence of the original. He explains, that the biblical prohibition is the prohibition of the idol and not of the image as a representation of God, because God "gives his truth only through the retreat of his presence – a presence whose sense is an *absense* "[75] (the italics are Nancy's) and

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[73] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.30-31

[74] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.31

[75] In a footnote, Nancy explains that he borrowed this term from Blanchot, who charged it with its different resonance in his book "Awaiting, Oblivion". 'Absense' refers to a presence whose sense is in its absense; an image who gives its truth only through the retreat of its presence.

it therefore never challenges the image. The image attracts the gaze, it seduces and it demands to be admired, but not adored.

In "The Ground of the Image" Nancy does not refer directly and explicitly to the different types of images and how one has to discern them – however, in the first chapter, he distinguishes between images as the obviousness of the distinct, which are images of the invisible, and the others, where there is no such obviousness given, and which he calls: decoration, illustration, the support of signification, mere images. A thorough investigation in the different types of images needs still to be done. As we know, there is decoration and decoration – the mosaics and frescoes in the monasteries in Ravenna, for example, show the obviousness of the distinct, but were nevertheless intended as decoration. What is the relation between appearances in their traditional metaphysical meaning and décor-ation in its old meaning? What is the relation between 'being-image' and 'being-decoration' in an ontological context? Here I will only mention another way, to distinguish between artistic images among themselves, proposed by Hélène Cixous in a context in which she refers to works of art and to the fact that painting helped her to appropriate and to work "on ultimate phrases full of being". Cixous acknowledges that she might have arbitrarily distinguished between "works of art" and "works of being". Whereas "works of art" are for her works of seduction, magnificent works destined to make themselves seen (such as Leonardo da Vinci's paintings), "works of being" are precisely those paintings in no need to proclaim their glory or their magisterial origin (such as Rembrandt's paintings). Whereas "works of art" turn their gaze at us, catch hold on us and search us out with their sight, "works of being" turn their gaze to their inside towards the infinitum[76]. "Works of being" are death masks.

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It is not the literary dimension of philosophy, already a visual and a plastic dimension? And are not all painters – that is: all those who fully, intimately, continuously and passionately engage with painting at the limit, risking the limit,

[76] Hélène Cixous, The Last Painting or the Portrait of God, p. 583-597, in: The Continental Aesthetics Reader, edit. Clive Cazeaux, London: Routledge, 2008, 4th edition

in a practical, theoretical, ethical and moral way – thinkers? As I have already mentioned, thinking here should not be understood in opposition to experience, but as a type of experience that challenges the limit of thinking and of experience. Limit, which is also the limit of speech and of words that are always recessively licking in painting and in the limit of experience. Is it possible to be a painter without being a thinker? And is there not an alternative to thinking as knowledge and cognition? And is not this alternative, a thought as an actual "praxis of sense that renounces "theoria" as the imposition of an object" and that houses and dwells on the image as "the there of the beyond", "a thinking there, thinking as effectivity of a *place opening itself to presence*"; a beyond coming to open the there, giving it its being-there in this very opening.[77] (The italics are Nancy's.)

Is not painting for the painter a reiteration without repetition and, what Heidegger addresses in the following excerpt from his essay "Was heißt Denken"[78]:

> "Der Denker braucht nur einen einzigen Gedanken. Und die Schwierigkeit für den Denker ist, diesen einzigen, diesen einen Gedanken als das einzig für ihn zu-Denkende festzuhalten, dieses Eine als das Selbe zu denken und von diesem Selben in der gemäßen Weise zu sagen. Vom Selben sprechen wir jedoch nur dann in der ihm gemäßen Weise, wenn wir vom Selben immer das Selbe sagen und zwar so, daß wir dabei selbst vom Selben in den Anspruch genommen werden. Für das Denken ist daher das Grenzenlose des Selben die schärfste Grenze."

Is not this, what motivates Frenhofer's agonized search for the absolute meaning (in the masterpiece) that is adamant in not taking place, because it absconds itself from the "violent justice of the subject"?[79] How many painters have not agonized in the stray current of an endless number of series of the same paintings? Frenhofer is painting over and over and over the same canvas for ten years. But even if painted each time on a new canvas, each time with a fresh and new hope - as if one could direct one's hope to a new beginning in the same old body - one

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[77] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 125

[78] Martin Heidegger, Was heißt Denken?, Stuttgart: Reclam jun. Stuttgart, 4te Auflage, 1992, p. 31-32

[79] Frenhofer is the main character, an artist, from Honoré de Balzac's story "The Unknown Masterpiece" from 1832. In my text, I am writing from the point of view of the painter and of the image. Giorgio Agamben interprets the chiasm between the point of view of the artist and that of the spectator in: § 2 Frenhofer and His Double, p. 8-12, in: Giorgio Agamben, The Man Without Content, trans. Georgia Albert, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1999

still paints always the one same painting, the one that, one always knows, will never be accomplished, because this is what painting is. Frenhofer's paining –that he explains is not painting, but feeling, a passion – is the living reality of his thoughts and imagination exposed in their own excessive presence, their absence in presence. Painting exceeds itself, is never complete, never accomplished, but always an endless delight and bedazzlement of the surface without depth, always jouissance of endless marks and colors and lines, of matter and body, of body and the world. Is not this, what provokes the continuous dissatisfaction with my paintings, and what spaces the habit of my fingers, my arms and body, this trained and agitated, repetitive movement that keeps the tracks of my addiction to paint and to its transformative contingency that always eludes my consciousness? Is not this the promise for the exhaustion of the excess of a process that folds into and unfolds infinitely? Without this "roundabout route of destruction" (Emil Cioran[80]) would it be any painting at all, any arts? Does a painter really *know* to paint? Is she/he not always defeated by, always prepared to fight against itself, its own ego and against the (factical) world? The painter's only aim is to speed up, to accelerate to the limit-speed, to sur-plus expansion. And, what is important to address, for both the painter and the thinker, is the question of how to write or to paint, how to create without representing, commenting, without condemnation or interpretation. How can one pay equal respect to every thing, to the beings and to not-a-thing-ness? In "Pathmarks" ("Wegmarken") Heidegger asks: "Is objectifying thinking and speaking a particular kind of thinking, or does all thinking as thinking, all speaking as speaking, necessarily have to be objectifying?"[81] And we shall explore later in this text, to what extent the possibility of a thinking and a speaking and of the image that does not represent is given already in the Kantian schema-image and in an aesthetical encounter.

If the painting, as we said, refuses to obey to the primacy of the subject's consciousness, being more itself a presence as subject rather than an object, than we have to understand the painters' tireless and constant search for forms, not

[80] Emil Cioran (1911-1995), Romanian philosopher and essayist. After 1937, with the exception of one short visit in 1944 in Romania he lived in Paris until his death. He wrote mainly in French.

[81] Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 8th printing 2007, p.55

primarily as an attempt to paint forms, but rather as an attempt to trace or to figure "the force that takes hold on forms and carries them away in a pres-ence", the force that is "the unity woven from a sensory diversity"[82]. It is this force that allows forms to form, deform and to transform themselves. The image is always a constant flux of metamorphosis that comes from before and that goes beyond forms. Painting is this "metamorphic force". The painted image is more than aspect and representation and form; it exceeds them all. It is an excessive power that extracts presence out of absence, rather than representing absence. (Thus Poussin's indignation that Frenhofer cannot see, that there is *nothing* on his canvas comes from the point of view of the spectator, whereas Frenhofer's passion and feeling spaces an infinity of simultaneous instants, a presence out of *absense*.) It is the affirmative power that asserts that there is something that cannot be neglected, but that escapes and withdraws simultaneously from any naming or conceptualisation. Every painting is an attempt and a chance, a possibility for the one painting, the last painting that one never paints, a chance and an ability to be an image.

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Why should an image require a philosophical exegesis[83]? A philosophical engagement? Does philosophy provide the necessary tools for the exegesis of a painting? What does it mean here 'philosophical exegesis' and in what form should it take place? Is not the image already an exposition, an exegesis? What is the image/figure of philosophy? Shall we deal then with the transformation of an exegesis into another exegesis? Which painting requires a philosophical exegesis and which not and who is to decide to which of the two categories a painting belongs to? What do we expect to gain and what shall we hope not to lose?

I already fear, that once again, even in the good will, to give some painters (to those painters who are 'philosophical painters') and painting the weight of a philosophical ground or origin (as if painting is not enough in and for itself) – fact

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[82] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. by Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.22

[83] New Latin, from Greek 'exēgēsis', from 'exēgeisthai', meaning to explain, to interpret, from ex- + 'hēgeisthai', to lead, in: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/, September 2009

which would affirm already the illustrative and representational character of painting - or maybe even in the good will, of pointing out the aesthetic and aisthetic possibilities opened in the space of painting, this path lead instead only to the re-enforcement of a specific view on the painting practice as illustrative to concepts, as something that takes place in the field of and that works with concepts. This might be the case, no doubt, but it is a very limiting and closed view on the painting practice and its sense.

The etymology of 'paint' leads us back in the 13th century in the Middle English form of 'paint' coming from the Anglo-French '*peint*', the past participle of '*peindre*'. The word comes from the Latin 'pingere' meaning to tattoo, to embroider. In Greek '*poikilos*' meant variegated, and '*pikros*' sharp, bitter.[84] There is not the place here to elaborate on the interconnection between painting and decoration/ décor/ adornments/ pattern/ motive/ symbol/ stigma/ the Apollonian or the Dionysian, but I mentioned the etymology of the verb 'to paint', as I wanted to point out, the sharpness and painfulness of this matter that cuts trough and marks, stains, impregnates and manifests itself on the thin surface of a skin, at the limit of the sense of the world and of a world of bodies.

Let's not forget, what is the painted images demand, because what they demand is everything – labour, pain, passion, looking are not enough. These are requirements for decoration and craft and are as such not allowed to be sensed, to be part of the image – labour diminishes an artwork to craftwork, at the utmost an exquisite and virtuous decoration. Understandable. With patience, practice and endurance a student can exhale its master. But the pure image cannot be learnt, it cannot be taught. The fear of reaching joy, the fear of allowing oneself to be carried away by exaltation, to be seduced by it, by paint and gild, by the material and its flesh, the fear of trusting flesh is every painter's torment. It is the torment of the painter's ego. But this is what we have to do, to face the fear of enjoyment and bedazzlement, to indulge in the material, to consume it towards the ego's painful blindness that forces it to look.

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[84] www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paint. Nancy writes: "pingo means above all "to embroider with threads of color", or else "to tattoo", this mixes weaving, incision, and delineation with tinting and coloration. The woven thread and the puddle, or the line and the covered surface." (The Ground of the Image, p. 74)

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What is the space behind the canvas? In the context of the seminar mentioned before, the space "behind the canvas' seems to rightly imply, that the space taking over by a painting is much vaster than the space stretched out in between the four stretchers bars. However, at the same time, I also sense, that "behind the canvas" wrongly implies that there, 'behind the canvas', there lie hidden all those philosophical thoughts that, if I would be to know them, would give me the key to the 'truth' of the painting, and that will decipher a hidden meaning of the image and what it *actually* represents. There is space, behind, but also in front of, above and at the bottom of a painting. Nevertheless, it is within this loophole frame where the field of force is condensed and tensed and there should, however, be no 'behind the canvas'-space as a causal philosophical ground or essence for the image. In order for the painted image to suddenly irrupt from the bottom, to be presence rather than representation, in order for the image to aim to touch the sense of the world, there cannot exist any direct causal relationship to any philosophical concept. The painting is the Idea before it became idealized. Painting is the threshold of existence and there is no passage between the outside and the inside.

The space inhabited and 'ex-panded' by a painting was always vaster than the painting's actual surface and, in the art historical context, there were various physical and theoretical attempts to cross over, to open up the frame of the painting, to occupy a three dimensional space, to literally inhabit a painting, to expand it and to fast forwarded it even in time or dissected it in several frames. All these attempts, besides other things, they show that the frame is not the frame that the painting is the flat skin of the canvas; it is that and more then that, it is its exposed abyss. Even, the exposed abyss of Being.

What we need to think of, is the painter as someone who practically and theoretically investigates and invests in images that happen in the act of making, in the here and now, in the event of painting and not images that visually enunciate a 'before' or something that took place previously. We also need to analyse and appropriate the different types of images that emerge in the various contexts of art, of philosophical discourses, in the poetic reverie (G. Bachelard), in everyday life or elsewhere, even if our main concern will remain the pure

image, the image of all images. We need to think of the open, transgressive and dissimilar relation between all these images, between the productive and reproductive power imagination and yet again, the relation between the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding. Only in following this path, I do believe, that the rare 'companionship' between painting, and actually art in general, and philosophy can delicately irrupt on the surface.

4. Marks, Signs and Violence. Benjamin and Nancy

In the context of the tension between language and vision, the relation between the two is very complex and it is closely linked to the dialogue between the 'graphic line' and marks on the one hand, and between thinking ('naming') and imagination on the other. Judith Butler's essay from "The Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics" takes on Walter Benjamin's ideas on marks and signs, which helps us to appropriate the event of painting. In his late twenties, Benjamin wrote few fragments reflecting on painting, especially on Kandinsky's[85] works. In relation to Kandinsky's pictures he wrote: "the simultaneous occurrence of conjuring and manifesting".[86] And Butler explains, that what is "conjured" is what would be brought forward and invoked subjectively and what is "manifested" is what would emerge from the object itself. That is from matter or from the free materials of nature that overwhelm the understanding and give him food for thought. In other words, and in relation to Kant, we could also say, that what conjures is the schematism, the imagination under the constraint of the understanding, whereas what manifests itself is either the free (and beautiful) materials of nature or the imagination that freed itself being now able to reflect form freely. "Conjuring" comes from the intentionality and consciousness of a

[85] Michel Foucault in: "This is not a Pipe" ascribes to Kandinsky's paintings the rupture and dissociation of resemblance from affirmation. For Foucault, what happens in Kandinsky's paintings is a "double effacement simultaneously of resemblance and of the representative bond, by the increasingly insistent affirmation of the lines, the colors that Kandinsky called "things", neither more or less objects than the church, the bridge, or the knight with his bow. Kandinsky's works are a naked affirmation clutching at no resemblance. When asked what they were, he could only reply by referring himself to the gesture that formed them: an "improvisation", a "composition"; or to what it is found there: "a red shape", "triangle", "purple orange"; or to tensions or internal relations: "a determinant pink", "upwards", "a yellow milieu", "a rosy balance". (M. Foucault, "This is not a Pipe", p. 34)

[86] After Judith Butler in: the Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, p. 64-81, from Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Vol. I, 1913-26, Harvard 1996

subjectivity engaging with perception and intuition, and "manifesting" comes from the neutral, anonymous exteriority of the matter that exists in itself and for itself and not as a "present-at-hand" and available thing for a controlling subjectivity; from the material that acts on its own when imagination is free and reason withdrawn, when the subjectly lived body opens for the objectly lived body and vice versa. The subject is the one that has the ability to foresee and to "in-image" (Nancy), who is inspired and who claims to have access to the divine insight. What manifests itself is what is and what shows itself as what it is in also showing what it is not. In "Painting, or Signs and Marks", Benjamin defines a painting as "a set of marks", writing that, what distinguishes a painting as a painting is precisely this con-figuration or "set of marks". He also emphasizes that marks are different from signs and they are not to be confused with each other. Benjamin states that a painting "is a medium, a mark, since it has neither background or graphic line"[87]. This painting is what is before or beyond naming, it is the areal ground itself. The mark sets the distinct apart and in Benjamin's terms, this led to the mark's performativity in establishing the guilty subject. A mark is a branding mark, a "stigma", a tattoo or an incision, a "trait". The mark is the "trait" that draws the withdrawal, the "retrait" (Nancy) of the distinct. Marks and signs house among themselves "the absolute mark" and "the absolute sign". These absolutes are not found separated from, but are buried in the various signs and marks. Butler explains, that each mark and each sign contain in themselves the "absolute mark" or the "absolute sign". A mark is its own manifestation and it does not represent or resemble anything else. The mark emerges usually on a living body – as blush or stigmata - and is always therefore the absolute mark. On the other hand, the sign appears predominantly on the inanimate. For him a mark is a dunning sign of guilt, and we will see how this will come to be defining for a picture. The absolute mark is mythical, as it indicates an archaic mythical meaning of guilt and atonement. The (absolute) sign is magical, because it is a means of and it sustains representation and semblance. A mark transports no semblance and is individuating the living being who bears it.

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[87] After Judith Butler in: the Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, p. 64-81, from Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Vol. I, 1913-26, Harvard 1996

A painting demands to be looked at and, to see and understand a painting is to deal with seduction, beauty, life and guilt. To get 'to see' a painting and not only to gaze at it intentionally, one needs to accept seduction and to get involved, to participate and to enter in the lifeless (which refers to those aspects that are not named and are thus not beings yet) aspects of what appears. It involves revenge and retribution "in the name of a utopian possibility" and "the critical destruction of the work of art".[88]

In putting the mark forward, as the constitutive element of a painting, the picture is related thus for Benjamin to either guilt or innocence. In the theological past and in its tradition, the mark is stained on a living being because of a guilt, error or deed, and it is a sign of sin or punishment, a confession. Through the act of atonement, one might initially think that one can be relieved of guilt, but Benjamin explains that this cannot be the case, because this would be an outcome that would imply a causal relation, relation, which would therefore be magical. And, as we have seen above, the magical is the realm of signs and not of marks. Benjamin writes: "Since the link between guilt and atonement is a temporal and magical one, this temporal magic appears in the mark in the sense that the resistance of the present between past and the future is eliminated, and these, magically fused, descend together on the head of the sinner."[89]

The mark marks a living being as distinct, as bearer of the stigma, as the guilty one, whereas a sign distinguishes its bearer in a more positive way. The archaic and mythical meaning of a mark can be understood, Benjamin tells us, only through painting. Painting is the medium of the mark in general and therefore,

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[88] After Judith Butler in: the Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, p. 64-81, from Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Vol. I, 1913-26, Harvard 1996

[89] After Judith Butler in: the Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, pag. 64-81, from Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Vol. I, 1913-26, Harvard 1996. The original quotation is: "Insofern der Zusammenhang von Schuld und Sühnde ein zeitlich magischer ist, erscheint vorzüglich diese zeitliche Magie im Mal in dem Sinne, dass der Widerstand der Gegenwart zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft ausgeschaltet wird und diese auf magische Weise vereint über den Sünder hereinbrechen. Doch hat das Medium des Mals nicht allein diese zeitliche Bedeutung, sondern zugleich auch, wie es besonders im Erröten ganz erschütternd hervortritt, eine die Persöhnlichkeit in gewissem Urelemente auflösende." (Walter Benjamin, Medienaesthetische Schriften, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002, S 272)

everything we can find out about the mark, can be discovered only through the observations on painting.

" Painting is a medium, a mark, since it has neither background nor graphic line". If a painting is only mark, then how is it possible to be named? If, as we said previously, the painting is defined by marks and there are only marks that make a picture is true, then we are moving in a logical circularity. Benjamin's move to solve this problem is by claiming that there is a "name" that gives these marks a unifying composition and that the painting is thus also connected to something that it is not as such.

A medium that has neither background nor graphic line, is a medium that transmits nothing, no essence and no substance, the only thing transmitted is the emptiness of an 'opening', 'a becoming of' in an irremediable scattering in its inexhaustible advent, "a transgression and a being carried away beyond signs".[90] Painting is not form and not sign; "a groundless unity", the force that gathers itself in itself and presents and 'forces' itself before one's eyes. Painting is not a question of a controlling and oriented gaze that freezes its objects, but rather a spreading out and flattening of vision (Nancy), not a matter of signs or of representation. Painting is force and passion and it is not a form and it is not formal. It is a manifestation of no use and of non-availability. A painting is a set of marks, and the existence of marks is its transcendental condition, its "material fact"[91]. This infinite finite materiality of the painting invokes the existence of several senses and not of one common sense. Painting as medium or mark doesn't transmit anything; it doesn't communicate anything, besides plurality and dissimilarity. "Painting is a modelling which does not rest on a model".[92]

The graphic line is the line of the absolute sign and has to be understood in opposition to the surface. The graphic line describes, it characterizes and affirms

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[90] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. by Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 26

[91] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Birth To Presence, edit. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, Stanford: Stanford California Press, 1st edition, 2007, p.389

[92] Martta Heikkilä, Community, the Political, and the Indecidable: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Shared Origin of Art, p. 15, in: International Yearbook of Aesthetics, Vol. 9, 2005, edit. Arto Haapala, Helsinki: University of Helsinki

the surface and signs or traces the surface by subordinating itself as its ground/underground/background. For Benjamin, the realm of the absolute sign is not a medium, but "eine uns höchstwahrscheinlich zur Zeit gänzlich unbekannte Ordnung" – an order and organization that is still highly unknown for us at the time being. The sign has more like a spatial relation and tie to the person, whereas the mark has a more temporal connection. The mark seems to even reject the personal.

It is this "absolute sign" and not any sign or word that conjures and gives a painting a unifying intention. This 'name' (sign) signifies something that transcends marks, as it cannot be marked and it appears that this is the creative principle itself. "The picture may be connected with something that is not – that is to say, something that is not a set of marks – and this happens by naming the picture."[93] A painting is an infinite finitude, it is not a closed set of marks, but it is openness to its exteriority, into which it leaks and passes all the time without becoming interlinked with it. "That is why at the heart of painting […] an indefinite exchange is played out between representation and non-representation, between visible and non-visible, between art and the refusal of art".[94]

Nancy writes, that in the case of the artistic image – as painting, video, installation, sculpture, performance, architecture, music or dance – text, language, words may or may not be displayed, but the text will always proceed from the image itself, because somewhere, there will be a sign that announces the "work", as what is simply and only the "work". And by "work" he means "a minimum of discourse"[95], a designation or deictic or function that says nothing more than "freeze frame". The "work" here is a "cut of the weave (of the material sense) in process, an immobilized needle, an eternalized movement", and it is not "work"

[93] After Judith Butler in: the Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, pag. 64-81

[94] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. By Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 124

[95] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 71

as the product of a "setting-into work" (Heidegger) and it is also not a particular work.[96] 'Work' simply announces a singular but infinite field of force.

The title as a sign is magical, conjuring, providing a unifying intention to a picture. That after which the image is named is, for Benjamin, the creating, organizing principle itself, which transcends marks and cannot be marked. What organizes these marks in a painting, organizes them through 'naming', through resemblance. It is resemblance as the force of the same that gathers itself as the same, which is also the same that differs in itself from itself – the distinction enforced by the dissimilarity that inhabits resemblance. It is not a conceptual naming, but the naming of the thing as "the being-image". The name or the sign organizes and gives a composition to, it opens a passage for a set of marks that are manifestations withdrawn from this world. Signs and marks are working together in a painting, being in tension with each other. Signs and resemblance touch on the force of the same, its withdrawal and excess, its concentration and pressure of the surface. To name is to ex-tract things from the independent dark existence and to bring them in the light of concepts. The 'nameless thing' is the 'lifeless thing'. Meaning embodied in an empirically existing form is a meaning that 'lives'. Signification is the movement of language and it is like the life that maintains and endures death.

Judith Butler explains Benjamin's words: "The sign conjures through the resemblance at work between the particular word and the absolute sign to which it is related; the mark manifests, and these manifestations appear to be of a magical temporality that pertains to a moral universe of guilt and atonement." [97] Benjamin's reflections announce that "the linguistic word" is at home, in an invisible way, in the medium of the language of painting, revealing itself in the composition. But what does Benjamin mean by "the linguistic word"? Butler explains that the 'linguistic word" is something that cannot be expressed or communicated in any language. Benjamin refers to it in relation to what he calls

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[96] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 71

[97] Butler, Judith, Beyond Seduction and Morality: Benjamin's early Aesthetics, in: The Life and Death of Images. Ethics and Aesthetics, edit. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, Tate Publishing, London, 2008, pag. 64-81

"a pure language", a language that no longer means anything, "the expressionless" and "the creative word". It is therefore, an organizational power that governs the tension between the sign and the mark; it is the compositional organization itself – the schema image itself.

The 'expressionless' is related to the 'otherness' of language, to its obscurity and exteriority that is due to the possibility of signs to become marks through their extraction from their initial context, but also due to the possibility of marks to be repeated and thus to become signs. It is the 'otherness' of language that is inclusive of its own materiality and repeatable marking potential. The 'expressionless' is the presence of the 'pure language' in itself regardless of any subjectivity or any intentionality of an individual consciousness. It is the obscure exteriority that cannot be internalized by a subject and it is thus the exterior remainder that reminds itself of its immemorial past.

In "Categories of Aesthetics", Benjamin refers again to signs and marks distinguishing semblance from manifestation. Semblance is for him part of the realm of signs as it takes place in myth and it is a mere appearance. Semblance seduces us: " The seductive nature of beauty is based on the shamelessness, the nakedness, of the semblance that arms it". Nancy, as well, refers to the power of seduction of semblance and he explains that: "the pleasure men take in mimesis is made up of the troubling feeling that comes over them in the face of recognizable strangeness, or in the excitement that comes from a recognition that one would have to say is estranged".[98] The seductive nature of beauty comes from the desire and pleasure of the sublime.

Benjamin comments in a footnote of his essay "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" on how one can define beauty[99]. For him one has to understand beauty in relation to the realms of nature and history. In both cases the appearance, the '*apporetic'* in beauty will play a role. In its historical being, beauty is the call to gather oneself together with those who admired and adored it

[98] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 69-70

[99] Cf. Elaine Scarry, On Beauty And Being Just, London: Duckworth & CO. Ltd., 2006 (2000)

in time, in the past. Beauty is for him similar to death[100], as we cannot encounter in the identical object the initial object of admiration that is missing and long already dead. He quotes here Goethe, who said that, everything that had already a great impact is outside our critical investigation. In relation to nature, beauty is defined as that which is identical with itself in disguise. As explanation, he cites Paul Valery, who wrote that the beauty's call is to imitate that what is indefinable in things. We have to bring forward the insufficient and unsatisfactory "here" in things (even if and precisely because we are completely 'satisfied'). Benjamin calls this "the expressionless"[101]. Thought that shows similarities with that of the inadequacy in the presentation of the sublime.

Heidegger understands the beautiful as that what in its self-showing brings forth the man's state of feeling, the hidden part of '*techné*' and the irreducible and deep truth of man's fate. For him the beautiful is the artwork and the artwork is a manifestation of man's state of wonder before its presence and opening up in the world. The beautiful is the "*ekphanestaton"*, that what shows itself properly and is most radiant. In the artwork is manifested, 'gelichtet', 'offenbart', Being in its entirety of the world and the earth – "Dergestalt ist das sich verbergende Sein gelichtet."[102]

We could even recall here the Hegelian Idea. The Hegelian Idea is different from the thing as the product of a notion, and from the projection or the ideal of a thing: a gathering in itself and for itself of being's determination. Nancy writes that we could even call it truth, sense, or being itself. The Hegelian Idea is "the thing itself as vision/ envisioned [*entant que vue*] (…)" It is the thing grasped in its form from within itself. And from here Nancy concludes, that art is precisely the "sensible visibility' of this intelligible, thus invisible visibility. The Idea is in this case the

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[100] The same death, which in relation to language and to the metaphysics of presence, would be the violence of conceptuality and light, as analyzed in Hegel's concept of language as 'naming' that kills, appropriates and annihilates – before giving a meaning, a word suppresses it first, it takes "the flesh-and-blood reality away and causes absence". (Blanchot cites Hegel in his book "The Work of Fire", trans. Charlotte Mandell, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995, 322-323)

[101] "The Intentionless" is how Adorno will call "the expressionless" in his interpretations of Benjamin's thoughts.

[102] Martin Heidegger, Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes, p.1-74, in: Martin Heidegger, Holzwege, Frankfurt am Main: Viitorio Klostermann, 2003, 8. Aufl., p.43

self-imitation of Being, "its transcendental miming". The thinking around the 'invisible form', which is also Plato's '*eidos*', is concomitantly, Nancy writes, a thinking of imitation or a thinking of the Image or a thinking of the Idea. Moreover, every thinking of the Idea is thus a thinking of the image or of imitation. Put together all these discourses formed around these issues are in effect a theological thinking reflecting on "the visible image of the invisible God". The visibility of the invisible, the ideality made present (even as paradoxical and absent presence) is what makes or leads to "the beautiful". Nancy writes that for Plotinus, the access to beauty "is a question of becoming oneself pure light and vision, in beauty's intimacy, and thus becoming "the only eye capable of seeing supreme beauty".[103] The relation of the image to the Idea, or the relation of the image to the unimaginable, determines the division between 'the beautiful' and 'the Sublime'.

Semblance is beautiful and is armed with beauty's armour and with life. Through semblance an artwork becomes alive, because semblance "communicates life". But as a living and thus as semblance, a work of art stops being a work of art. A work of art becomes an artwork and may reach one's completion only through passing and overcoming semblance and by life's withdrawal. By destroying life, a work of art comes into being and to understand its truth and organizing principle means to accept this violence against life. These were Benjamin thoughts.

In citing Thomas Aquinas, Nancy attempts to look at the difference between "the image" and "the vestige", and he writes: "the vestige is an effect that 'represents only the causality of the cause, but not its form'."[104] Aquinas also referred to the meaning of the word '*vestigium*': as the sole of a shoe or the sole of a foot, a trace or a footprint. The difference lies therefore in the fact that "a vestige shows that someone has passed by but not who it is"; "the vestige does not identify its cause or its model, unlike the way (…) a statue of Mercury represents Mercury, which is

[103] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 89-90

[104] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 95

an image."[105] What is important for Nancy in 'the vestige' is the 'ek-sistence' of the 'vestigial presence' as the remainder without inside, as exteriority, not as absence, but as a "path of presence", as in the meaning of the word '*vestigare*', "to follow on the traces". And this is what happens in sense and with sense as well – "do not let the sense get set down any more than the foot of a passerby".[106] Sense is the imprint of the other face, the sole of the subjective lived body in the anonym singularity of the 'any one matter'.

A painting is beautiful, seductive, believable and alive trough semblance. And it is precisely this beauty and life achieved through semblance that it must lose in order to become "utopian perception" and to stop being visual perception or to reach the "moral nature of creation". The work of art should stop being seductive and alive and it should become "expressionless" – the neutral, anonymous exteriority of the other that is independent from any controlling subjectivity.

Walter Benjamin understands "the expressionless" as the critical violence, the Critique that is unable to differentiate between semblance and the truth of the artwork and therefore stops them to interfere. It is the critical violence that separates the beauty of life (the objectified Being) from the beauty of the death (nothingness, matter, the absence of beings, "presentia in absentia"), beauty by semblance from truth. He describes this violence as a "moral dictum", a violence that holds truth separately from beauty. (Benjamin is here very close to the way Nancy interprets Kant's decision to choose a style without style as presentation for the legality of reason and the foundation of reason's autonomy. For Nancy (and Kant) the simple but elegant presentation is for pure reason its ethics, that is, the morality of its ethos.) The beautiful based on semblance is separated and made distinct from beautiful that is its own death and arrest, and that is the violence of "the expressionless" who performs this separation, this setting apart. The truth[107]

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[105] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 95

[106] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 95

[107] Truth of the work of art for Benjamin is very similar to Nancy's understanding of truth, which is a truth that takes place before (beyond, outside) signification, another kind of truth than 'truth' in its traditional meaning. The power of truth in the artwork, in Nancy's thinking, is its ability to present presentation in a sensuous form or figuration, and by doing this to "touch" on sense, more precise on the sense of a world. To be sense. Sense is truth.

of the artwork is for Benjamin on the side of violence and of the Sublime: the sublime violence of the true appears for Benjamin in "the expressionless". Without life and 'beauty's armour', the work of art is shattered in various fragments that disclose the in-tention, ex-tension and at-tention, behind their organisation and composition and causes the withdrawal of this tension, this force. The destruction achieved by a work of art becomes then the destruction of the traces of guilt through forgiveness and gives us, as a result, an alternative to the act of atonement. The work of art is completed by the destruction and self-effacement of its marks, that is: the painting completes itself by destroying itself in the sense that it falls apart, it shatters itself in several fragments. It makes its own disparity and dissimilarity visible. It stops claiming to be an identity and becomes the unity of the different – which, we will see later on, is the image of all images, the pure image, the schema. The work of art is the image that touches on the primal monstration of the pure image, the schema. The work of art is the vestigial presence of that immemorial past of Plato's cave, always 'already-there' cutting the wall and separating and touching the real.

Nancy writes that violence is always in excess of signs, because it wants to be its own sign, and it always makes an image of itself. It is the image that authorizes violence. An image in order to be an image, even a mimetic one, but not a reflection or a shadow, it has to be something more than only 'like'; it has to go outside of itself, to count for more than only an image. Violence is the manifestation, the imprint of a mark, the excess of force that imprints an image by force in its effect, and as its effect.[108] Violence is "monstrative", because it wants to show itself and its effect and violence goes hand in hand with truth: violence has its truth and truth has its violence and both are showing or demonstrating themselves, realizing themselves in an image that is, in being in an essentially way "monstrative".

What is monstrative about the image or in the image is the unity of the image, the force of the image to emerge from 'the groundless ground', to gather in itself and to present itself, the force that brings forms into 'pre-sence' and joints the parts of

[108] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 20

the figure, that forms and de-forms and exceeds in the end all form. Through this force, the image opens a beyond of the aspect, of the form and of the surface of representation. But in order to achieve this, the image must first be imaged. This is, the image must condense itself in its own unity, re-tract and con-tract itself in order to ex-tract the tension and power of the unity of a thing that is not initially present in the thing 'present-at-hand', in the thing in its availability. This excessive power of unity of the image is what draws "the form of presence out of absence", which is "the form of self-presenting". In the next chapters, we will show that this is actually the Kantian 'schema' that is the image of imagination and therefore 'the self-imagining' and 'self-representing'. The excessive power that forms the self-presenting is the power of the schema, of the pure image, that makes it possible to speak of a presence of the world and of a presence in the world. It is the power that images the subject and the object, and its own knowledge in and the knowledge of the world. The image is " the fore-sign of unity without which there would be neither thing, nor presence, nor subject".[109] The unity of the thing needs to irrupt, to tear it (the thing, the entity) from the manifold, to resist multiplicity, to press against the surface, to gather and grasp itself – all actions that imply a violent force that is contained in the thing's being. Unity is violent because it must relate itself to itself in itself and for itself, and to present itself, to bring itself forward to the exterior and to mark itself against and as distinct from the exterior. The dispersed exterior gathers its "partes extra partes" into a body as a unified[110] partes extra partes" that shows itself to the exterior. Philosophical unity is exclusive, selective and imperative. Poetic unity, on the other hand, embraces it all – "the a posteriori "whole" that only will be itself when each thing will already have reached its plenitude".[111]

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[109] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 23

[110] 'Unites' and 'unified' not in the sense of being 'one', but as at-tracted, tensed or pulled – the forms don't form one 'big form', but a con-formity. "A unity so elastic, so coherent that it can adhere to you, expand and almost disappear, it descends down to your flesh and blood, down to your dream." (María Zambrano, Philosophy and Poetry, trans. D. Ohmans, 2008, in: http://www.webshells.com, September 2008)

[111] María Zambrano, Philosophy and Poetry, trans. D. Ohmans, 2008, in: http://www.webshells.com, September 2008

In his "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant shows that 'time' is what synthesises the production of unity, because: "time is the very unity that anticipates itself and succeeds itself in projecting itself endlessly in advance to itself, grasping at each moment – in this ungraspable instant – the present in which the totality of space presents itself, in which its curving expanse is surveyed in a single view, from a perspective in which time is both the blind spot and the obscure vanishing point."[112] The pure image, is the unity that con-tracts and con-centrates the dissimilar exterior, but at the same time, this unity and its power is what dis-tracts and dis-rupts the continuity of extension and expansion of the "dismembered exterior". Therefore the schema is con-tracting and ex-tracting at the same time, it is unity and disunity. The image is what tears being away from being and it is marked and set apart by this tearing away. The image bears the mark of guilt, the stigma of being the one, who forces the 'slit' of being. The image bears in itself its ground "monstrously opened to its very bottom […] to the depthless underside of its presentation".[113] 'The death mask' – and I will engage with this example used by Heidegger to analyse the Kantian schema and to 'extract the secret of the schematism' in a separate chapter – shows death, that is its image, and it also shows its 'look', its 'Bild' and its 'Sicht'. The death mask shows how death appears and the aspect of death in general. Heidegger showed that each image, each 'Bild' or reproduction of an image, each 'Abbild' or 'Nachbild', they all contain and show the primary monstration of the pure image, of the schema – the '*look*' in which there can be seen the 'unlooking face' of someone who can no longer see. The schema is "the 'Gesicht' of the one without 'Sicht' (sight)".[114] The image in being 'monstrative', in being the monster that opens the possibility for the presentation of presence, can as well be the monster that prevents from any presence to presents itself. The monster that holds the look back, embedded in the

[112] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 20

[113] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 24

[114] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 24

dense unity of its ground, or the monster that projects presence ahead of itself, "a presence always too singular to be merely self-identical".[115]

5. G. Bachelard – The Poetic Image

Nancy affirms that the image is not only imitating a thing, in the sense that it reproduces the thing, or that it "*aemulates*" it, that is, it rivals the thing and competes against it for presence and disputes the presence of the thing. The image shows that the thing is and how it is. It takes the thing out of its simple presence-at-hand and brings it fore to "*praes-entia*", to "being-out-in-front-of-itself", it takes the thing from a general "Vorhandenheit" to "Gegenwärtigkeit" (Heidegger) and makes it "monstrative" by presenting it. Therefore, the only thing we have to do for grasping an image is to: "exhaust your looks until your eyes close, until your hands are raised over them, until your faces fall upon your knees and see the invincible right at it"![116] Before we grasp something our hands have to grab first. Against the same discourse that criticises vision and that positions the image at the intersection between the visible and the invisible, Nancy argues that the image is not objectified presence "for a subject" or normal representation in this sense, but the image (and only through the image the thing, as either a thing or a person), is posited as a subject that presents itself. The truth of the image in this sense cannot be the metaphysical truth of the knowable as visible and present. The truth (or the sense of the image in Nancy's concept of sense) of the image is display of presence not as appearance, but as an event of exhibiting, of an advent. The image challenges the visible in "implanting" (Nancy) itself with the mystery of 'real presence' as absence and withdrawal.

In the case of the artistic image, as in the case of the poetic image, we have to be "receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears: if there be a philosophy of poetry, it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image: to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the

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[115] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.25

[116] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 59

newness (it takes place in the moment you read it) of the image."[117] In his book, "The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places", Gaston Bachelard studies the direct ontology of the poetic image by employing Minkowki's phenomenological method.[118] For him, in order to 'hear' the poetic image in its whole resonance, one has to leave behind causality and a rigorous and rigid philosophical and scientific method and to allow the reverberation (Bachelard from Minkowski) to touch one's senses, to listen to the sound of being (Minkowski) in its reverberation. For Bachelard the phenomenology of imagination, which is "the study of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul, and being of man, apprehended in its actuality"[119], is the only way to expose the problem of the poetic image philosophically, and to fully engage in its immediate and short-lived dynamics presenting "the flare-up of being in imagination" (Bachelard). The consciousness in which the poetic image emerges is a consciousness that is only aware of its own withdrawal.

Bachelard writes, that whereas the concept is '*constitutive'*, the poetic image is '*variational'*. The poetic image is reacting, despite its sudden and short appearance, its unusual and conflicting form at times, in the heart and mind of other subjects, and sometimes it possesses us entirely; the poetic image is characterized by its transsubjectivity (and one should also add a transobjectivity) that cannot be fully determined. The phenomenology of the poetic imagination is the task to look at the specific and singular presence of a poetic image. Far from being an object, the poetic image "places us at the origin of the speaking being" and " through its exuberance, awakens new depths in us". The subject and the object are in the poetic image in a continuous tension with each other, allowing and producing endless inversions. In this case, one has to look at the "onset of the

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[117] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p. xv

[118] Bachelard refers here to Eugene Mikowski and to chapter IX from his book "Vers une Cosmologie". In the English version of Bachelard's book, the editor gives a detailed presentation on Minkowski's ideas and cites a long passage in full length for a better understanding of what Bachelard is referring to. (Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, Boston:Beacon Press, 1994, p. xvi-xvii)

[119] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, Boston:Beacon Press, 1994, p. xviii

image" in its singular, short and simple appearance that bears no consequences for the future and no weights of the past, that is regardless of all the school of thoughts and scholarship of the cultural past. The language of poetic images is so new, that it cannot be looked at, by employing correlations between the past and the present. We are always unprepared, both in the literary and in the psychological sense for the spontaneous, innovative and piercing force of the poetic image. It always takes us by surprise and stays with us afterwards, allowing us to feel that we possess it, even if, we know that it is not ours, allowing us the joy of taking part in the creative performance – "a *jouissance* of meaning": for a moment, we become poets. And Bachelard writes, "the poetic image is an emergence from language, it is always a little above the language of signification […] poetry puts language in a state of emergence, in which life becomes manifest trough its vivacity"[120] and he cites J. H. Van den Berg who wrote that: "poets and painters are born phenomenologists. […] We are continually living a solution of problems that reflection cannot hope to solve."[121]

However, Nancy would argue in relation to this, that phenomenology comes here with regard to the image, at its limit, because here it is a matter of 'the appearing of appearing', or of 'appearing as coming into presence', a 'coming *of* the world', rather than 'a coming *in* the world' and an appearing as a showing itself of entities. It is precisely this on which Nancy is focusing his attention: on the limit of thought and signification and on the limit of the phenomenological account of the disclosure of the world. What is at stake in the image is an opening, a passage, a touch on the sense of the world and for Nancy, sense is always offered at the limit of signification. The order of signification marks a rupturing of presence, because it divides and orders presence according to 'clear-cut forms' and concepts. What is thus problematic about the phenomenological method is that it maintains the primacy of the subject and of an origin. And Nancy concludes that it is not a matter of phenomenology, but of ontology. However, the phenomenology of the imagination is not to be understood as a 'light' that reveals and makes

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[120] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p. xxvii

[121] Quotation after: G. Bachelard in: Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Places, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p. xxviii

things visible, evident and lucid. It is more acceptance and experience of a force that 'opens up' subjects for Bachelard and bodies for Nancy and makes them intertwine. It is a light that is too white, that is penetrative and violent – it cuts the contour. It is not demarcation and separation, but limit that touches. Non-knowledge, or better a beyond-knowledge, as we will see later with Blanchot, is the primal condition for the positive receptivity, better participation, for poetic imagination. The naïvité of wonderment. Wonder opens our senses for poetic images.

For Blanchot it is "fascination" what challenges seeing as intentionality and making present. It is "fascination" or "wonderment" that challenge also the classical phenomenological understanding of the image as seeing and thinking. It is not the case anymore of the consciousness of a subject, but a consciousness that becomes affection and the case of a perception that becomes "fascination' or "wonderment". It is not either 'seeing' or 'not-seeing', but it is a seeing of what is neither 'seeing' or 'not-seeing', but the 'in-between' of the radical punctuality of the now – the surprise of the new that forces the intentional ideality of the artist.

The image exercises its force so that being is caught up in the fascination of the image – being is caught up in "there-is" and estranged from every "I can". The experience of the "there-is", of "es gibt" is the experience of an offering that simply offers itself, a simply "is" or "gibt" without the taking part of any subject that offers nor any object that is being offered. Ian James quotes Nancy:

> " The singular transmission of art, neither lost nor saved, would be the offering [offrande] of an offering, and perhaps the offering of offering itself, absolutely. Or indeed, the presentation of presentation itself. Art is presented, by itself in sum for itself, or for the presentation that it forms."[122]

The sensible and sensuous form of art is a proffering, a gift, "Gabe" or "Gegebenheit". Dieter Mersch explains (in following Jean Luc Marion's thoughts) that what offers itself, "the proffering", is what gives up itself in

[122] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 213

presence and gives up thinking. The proffering is the duality that stretches between a "giving up for something" and a "giving in something".[123]

This idea of the artwork as a proffering is close to Heidegger's concern with a "thinking *in* something", a thinking as happening and affection. The image exerts a fascination that deprives doing from its power and opens a presence that is never tangible, but always and nevertheless present.[124] Blanchot makes here an important call that pushes Heidegger's thought further. We will see in one of the next chapters how Heidegger analysed the creative imagination as the possibility to "think" against the world's becoming a mere image and to free thinking from the metaphysics of presence. Similar to this, Blanchot demands an even more radical and resolute resistance against the "mere image" in the space of literature – in art, I would say. Whereas Heidegger claims that art is the "setting-to-work" of truth, Blanchot claims that the truth in art is the experience of errancy, of wandering and being lost in exteriority. Poetry, literature and arts in general do not contain any image (representation); rather the world becomes an image in art. Blanchot thus distinguishes between "an image of language (and not a pictorial language)" and "an imaged language […] that no one speaks". It is the second, the "imaged language", in which the 'otherness' of language speaks, the language of shadows, of vestiges (Nancy), of the 'aura' (Benjamin) or of 'éléments' (Lévinas[125]). The image is never 'resonance', which is the echo of the known, but a 'resounding', a stepping outside of itself.

Possessed by the poetic image, the poet's consciousness expands and relaxes and promises to be written. The other is allowed to take part in this *poetic intentionality* (Bachelard). "It is through the intentionality of poetic imagination that the poet's soul discovers the opening of consciousness common to all true

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[123] Dieter Mersch, Negative Präsenz, S. 99-117, in: Arno Böhler, Susanne Granzer (Hg), Ereignis Denken. TheatRealität, Performanz, Ereignis, Passage Verlag, 2009

[124] Cf. Emanuel Alloa, Bare Exteriority: Philosophy of the Image and the Image of Philosophy in Martin Heidegger and Maurice Blanchot, trans. Millay Hyatt, http://colloquy.monash.edu.au/issue010/index.htm, July 2009

[125] E. Lévinas refers to the "élément" as: what it does not give itself as an object of vision, it is more like an environment for the experience that no longer represents.

poetry."[126] The intentionality of poetic imagination comes from or is the intentional, creative, indecidable synthesis of the faculty of imagination freed from the faculty of understanding and the faculty of reason, as its tension and (violent) power to trace the 'figure', to 'con-figure'. Reverie, poetic reverie, is for Bachelard, "lived in a relaxed time which has no linking force […], it is a flight out of the real that does not always find a consistent unreal world […]", a "constantly downhill path" in which "the consciousness relaxes and wanders and consequently *becomes clouded*" (the italics are Bachelard's).

> "This reverie is written, or, at least, promises to be written. It is already facing the great universe of the blank page. Then images begin to compose and fall into place. The dreamer is already hearing the sounds of written words. […] all the senses awaken and fall into harmony in poetic reverie. Poetic reverie listens to this polyphony of senses, and the poetic consciousness must record it."[127]

Reverie, even if it has its roots in the soul of a dreamer, it is more than an oneiric phenomenon. Reverie is more than passive dreaming, because of the possible intervention of consciousness in the tranquillity and the peace of repose of reverie. But also because it implies an act of creation and innovation, activity rather than receptivity. However this intervention allows no more than to make sure that one is conscious of the reverie and that one does obey to the oblivion of thinking. It is a solitary act, "the very force (puissance) of the being at rest", a state of the mind (soul), an opening into the world of words, free from any logical structuring and any systematic development of thoughts. "How can one dream while writing? It is the pen which dreams. The blank page gives the right to dream. If only one could write for himself alone."[128]

Antonin Artaud[129], in speaking about theatre, left us a treatise on poetics exploring things that are true for every creative act. He refused to recognize the limitations of a genre and searched for the language of an immemorial past.

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[126] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie. Childhood, Language and the Cosmos", Boston: Becon Press, 2004, p.5

[127] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie. Childhood, Language and the Cosmos", Boston: Becon Press, 2004, p.6

[128] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie. Childhood, Language and the Cosmos", Boston: Becon Press, 2004, p.17

[129] Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a French poet, actor and essayist

Artaud writes that poetry is becoming and it is "a poetry in space", because language "aims at encompassing and using expanse, that is, space, and by using it, making it speak." The stage, poetry, or art present us not the real space but the "space that is other", which is a more expressive, more abstract, more concrete, "the very space prior to all languages". Poetry is understood as space, not as the space of words, but as the space of the relations between words, the space of "their moving suspension, the appearance of their disappearance; […] space as pure becoming; the idea of image and shadow, of the double and of an absence '*more real than prese*nce'; that is, the experience of being that is image before it is object, and the experience of an art that is gripped by the violent difference that is prior to all representation and all knowledge […]"[130] Artaud writes:

> "The intellectual space, the play of the physical and the silence, molded by thoughts, which exists between the members of a written sentence are traced [in the theatre] in the scenic air between the members, the air, and the perspectives of a certain number of cries, colours, and movements."[131]

For Artaud, poetry emerges from "the need for speech" and not from "speech already formed" and he emphasizes that the theatre, poetry and art, they are all moving in the philosophical realm of a becoming. The theatre, poetry or art in general, they do not speak about reality, but about its shadow (aura or vestige), the darkening and deepening shadow through which something announces itself without revealing itself, the mystery in things. The experience of the poetic thought is a lack and an excessive, overwhelming suffering for Artaud.

The experience of 'exteriority' challenges one's capacity to perceive, one's intentional consciousness to see and to know. The ability to see and to objectify with the intentional gaze of the subject is the subject's condition to secure its own identity. The encounter with the 'outside', the 'exterior' of the horizon opened by the "eyes of the mind" is an impossible encounter with the "nothingness", with Being as such, with the "noth-a-thing" (Heidegger). And it is also a facing of the subject's own embeddedness in the intentionality of consciousness. To stop

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[130] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 295

[131] Cited after: Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 295; cf. Antonin Artaud, Collected Works Volume One, London: John Calder Ltd., 2007

'seeing' is a terrifying experience, the experience of a lost sight that cannot gaze into nothingness either – one cannot look, but one cannot stop looking either.[132] To deal with this encounter is to admit the fact, that what would enable to see, would also prevent from seeing.

"I have come to the conclusion that it is *impossible to write*" (the italic's are Flaubert's) wrote Gustave Flaubert years before Artaud. Impossible to write, how shall we understand this? Flaubert fought a similar battle to Artaud's. He wanted to give a new meaning to the word 'writing', he wanted to make books as a sole matter of writing sentences and to explore the intransitive work that is at work in the word writing. "One writes sentences so that the sentence's visibility will cover up and preserve the privilege of invisibility and the power to disclaim and efface that do not allow, "writing" to be anything but neutral word." [133] Nancy explains in "Multiple Arts. Muses II", that what Flaubert dreamed of was to write in a profane form a Holy Script measuring himself at the same time against the fact that literature excludes always the Holy Script. Literature does not reveal any transcendent world.[134]

Both text and image are present and manifest, and in the metaphysics of presence they would also claim to reveal something transcendental. A text usually confronts us with significations and the image with forms. For Nancy, the image and the text are like body and soul,

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[132] Cf. Maurice Blanchot, Madness of the Day, trans. Lydia Davis, Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1981, p. 11: "I nearly lost my sight, because someone crushed glass in my eyes. That blow unnerved me, I must admit. I had the feeling I was going back into the wall, or straying into a thicket of flint. The worst thing was sudden, shocking cruelty of the day; I could not look, but I could not help looking. To see was terrifying, and to stop seeing tore me apart from my forehead to my throat. […] "You were a asleep," the doctor told me later. I was asleep! I had to hold my own against the light of seven days – a fine conflagration! Yes, seven days at once, the seven deadly lights, become the spark of a single moment, were calling me to account. Who would have imagined that? At times I said to myself, "This is death. In spite of everything, it's really worth it, it's impressive." But often I lay dying without saying anything. In the end, I grew convinced that I was face to face with the madness of the day. That was the truth: the light was going mad, the brightness had lost all reason; it assailed me irrationally, without control, without purpose. That discovery bit straight through my life."

[133] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p.336

[134] Cf. § 8 On Writing: Which Reveals Nothing, in: Jean-Luc Nancy, Multiple Arts. Muses II, edit. Simon Sparks, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 70-77

> "each is the limit of the other, its horizon of interpretation. The horizon of the image is the text, with which it opens an indefinite power to imagine, before which the image is only a closure, a closed contour. But the horizon of the text is the image, with which it opens an indefinite power to imagine, before which the text is only an impotency, a permanent postponement of images."[135]

Every image and every text can be each other's image and text, but also image and text in itself. "Text is textile; it is the material of sense."[136] Text is interlinking and meshing and weaving together without material, without fibers and without consistency the infinite space of sense. Text in this case is liberated from "the primacy of speech over writing, of thought over language" and of the promise of direct and transparent communication; and becomes a text without identity that traces lapses and circles, turns and detours, "a roundabout route of destruction", a text devoted to itself, a text that refuses to develop, that sinks in the

> "movement of attraction and withdrawal, of affirmation and recession, of folding back in and exhibition through which something (but what?) timidly advances and immediately withdraws, appears and disappears, then again disappearing when it reappears and nonetheless maintaining itself in its disappearance"[137].

In this sense, 'the image gives presence to the text', the image is the image of the text, the meta-phor, the trans-port and movement of the text, its displacement, the image images the presence of the text, which lies in its absence of matter, in its immateriality; the image exposes, 'places into view', 'makes distinct' and 'monstrative' the absence, the lack of the text and of the written word, "the image is the web of a threadless weave."[138] It is the image that allows sense to emerge, to gather together and to press up against, to irrupt and transpire from out of the immateriality, invisibility and inaudibility of words and "to show us a fleeting circumstance that had escaped our attention", because sound, line and figure, the words' poetic reverberations are what grasp and touch on "the abstract and

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[135] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 69-70

[136] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 66

[137] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 69-70

[138] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 67

fugitive movement of a needle through the stitches of a piece of lace" and interrupt and distract "the lace of sense that fails at every moment to abolish itself in the doubt of its embroidery"[139]. The image "draws sense out of absence, by making *absense a presense*" (The italics are Nancy's). The image presents and imprints something that is absent, allowing in this way for the absent to be presence. "The empty place of the absent as a place that is not empty: that is the image."[140] The image is the place of displacement, of the meta-phor. "The image calls out: Make way! [Place!] Make way for displacement, make way for transport."[141] But let's not be mistaken, the kind of image we spoke about above, is not a simple metaphor! It is not an image that we see, or reproduce or retain in our memory; it is the product of a creative and free faculty of imagination. It is not only displacement, it is rather the emergence and touch of an intensity and an intentionality, it is withdrawal and passage, "shock, confrontation, tête-a-tête, […] less a transport than a *rapport* (the italics are Nancy's), or relation", it is an intimate ex-traction, a schema. This image is the forceful, intentional and tensed product of an active and productive imagination. It is not of the order and unity of signification, but of poetry, it is receptive for becoming, for the becoming of expression for the coming of a figure and a becoming of our being. It is the figural[142] expression that figures being, which is what opens the inter-subjectivity and inter-objectivity of being and of sense. And it is the same in all its forms, poetic, musical, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, kinaesthetic and so on.

If absence is what characterizes sense, Nancy writes, then sense "does not have any single mode of existing", because only complete presence by being identical with itself has a single form of existing. Therefore, "sense exists, or rather it is the movement and flight of existing: of ex-ire, of going outside oneself, exceeding,

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[139] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 67

[140] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 68

[141] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 68

[142] On the distinction between 'figural' and 'figurative': cf. "The Image as Rend and the Death of God Incarnate", p. 139-227, in: Georges Didi-Huberman, Confronting Images. Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art, trans. John Goodman, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005

exiling. Sense essentially disidentifies."[143] Sense ex-cribes. "The relation of the image to sense is the eternal return of the same. The same sense always imaged[144] otherwise."[145] And Heidegger's words resound in my ear: "dieses Eine als das Selbe zu denken und von diesem Selben in der gemässen Weise zu sagen." and Gertrude Stein's verse echoes from beneath: "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"… and Magritte's painting of the pipe with the text that Nancy intentionally read as "This is a pipe" strolls in my head… There is no image without text – even if we are not confronted immediately with a sonorous voice announcing its speech, this voice will soon and shortly, as if it didn't take place, come out of the image and return to it. Each artistic and poetic image 'murmurs' "no text[pas de texte]" and you hear "the text step by step [pas a pas le texte]."[146]

> "Text calls Image: perhaps it says nothing other than this call. Image illustrates Text: it dazzles it and us with it, and perhaps does nothing else." […] What Image shows, Text de-monstrates. It withdraws it in justifying it. What Text exposes, Image posits and deposits. What Image configures, Text disfigures. What the latter envisages, the former faces down [*dévisage*]. What one paints, the other depicts. But precisely that, their common cause and their common thing [*chose*], oscillates distinctly between the two in a paper-thin space: recto the text, verso the image, or vice (image) – versa (text)."[147]

In the paper-thin space of the 'kant' of the Critique. We will come back to this.

6. Sense, Body, Subject, Space, Art

In engaging with Jean-Luc Nancy's book "The Ground of the Image", I believe, that it is also necessary to mention, if not to analyse properly, those 'figures' that Nancy had developed in his very diverse body of essays and that he is often using and working with in "The Ground of the Image". "Sense", "Body", "Subject",

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[143] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 68

[144] Nancy prefers to use the verb to image, rather then to imagine: "allow me to use this verb in a sense that is neither 'to illustrate" nor "to imagine". "To image" must be heard as a transitive verb whose action, however, cannot act as an object." (The Ground of the Image, p.67)

[145] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 71

[146] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 71

[147] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 78

"Space" and "Art" have to be looked at, in so far as the purpose of this project allows us, in such a way that we can understand, how they operate in Nancy's thinking in general, because in most cases, Nancy's understanding and the way he employs them differs completely from their traditional meaning. This will also allow us to follow much easier Nancy's frequent shift between the order of imagining and imagination. It is also important to think these notions, with Nancy, as figures – a thought that operates in figures and not in concepts, because there is no fixed presence or identity left for the concept to comprehend or to re-present. These notions are not fixed and rigid symbolic structures, they are rather belonging to the multiple and fragmented horizon of sense, a shared worldly existence.

In "The Muses", Nancy reflects on the 'figure' and he writes: "A figure that does not represent, that does not identify, that is not exemplary, that is only what it *is*: the infinitely singular manner in which a traced line configures by virtue of no other essence than the inimitable existence of its singularity. An existence immediately lost, a model abandoned, a mold overturned".[148] The 'figure' is not for the attention or the intention of the subject and is therefore not representation. The 'figure' is "syncopation, trajectory and interruption, gait and gap, phrase and spasm".[149] The 'figure' is not image, if we are to understand the image metaphysically in relation to presence and if the image "remains caught in the ontotheological schema of the image of the invisible".[150] The 'figure' is not image understood as ideality. The step of the figure is its tracing and its spacing, the touch right at the ground, its vestige. 'Figure' is "the going-on-of-coming-to-presence"[151]. It is the 'trait' of the strangeness that characterizes man's humanity and that shows itself as an 'open intimacy'. The traced line is what 'con-figures' by virtue of no other essence than the inimitable existence of its singularity.

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[148] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 64

[149] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p.85

[150] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 93

[151] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 64

Nancy also explains how the relation of the Idea to the form (the figure) is to be understood. The Idea is the form of forms because the Idea is what forms all forms, what spaces forms and what causes their free 'con-figuration', which is a 'con-figuration' achieved by ordering out of surprise and not an operational ordering – a 'con-figuration' that is making before matching.[152] And Nancy argues, that if this is accepted, then the Idea is the gesture of painting; it is the first painting. This implies then that the painting in no way, can it be the copy of the Idea. For Nancy, the Idea is the gesture, the 'monster' that is monstrative in giving or in being the sign that warns. In this case, the Idea is neither beautiful, nor ugly, nor true or false, because, the Idea becomes all this only after its idealization. At first, the Idea is only gesture, only that what "comes forward here"[153]. But this gesture is never the same and the line that it traces, the 'trait', is always different. They are always different, always singularly different, always unique and always the traits of a different 'monster'. In relation to each other, all these tracings of traces are the "*tekhné mimetike*" of the infinite finite gesture, the showing of its own manner, a con-figuration in the absence of any figure.[154]

Nancy's idea of the image as acceding to infinity and to exteriority challenges both Hegel's concept of 'naming' (in the sense of forming) as conceptualizing sensible forms into intelligible forms, and Heidegger's concept of the work of art and language as ways to truth, to '*aletheia*'. However, Nancy observes, that in 1929, when he wrote "Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics", Heidegger does not mention yet '*aletheia*'. He speaks however of the Idea that seems to sit in for '*aletheia*', the term that will be used later on. In this case, the Idea or '*eidos*' plays in first place the role of the veiling/unveiling, of the appearance of seeing/showing. In "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" (1931/32, 1940)[155], Heidegger explains that Greek meaning of 'eidos' or Idea was that of 'visible form', but not

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[152] E. H. Gombrich, The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2006, p. 5: "the minimal schema is first constructed before it is modified or corrected by matching it against reality"

[153] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 79

[154] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 79

[155] Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 155-182

with the meaning of a mere aspect. The Idea as a visible form had also something of a "stepping forth" whereby a thing presented itself. This visible form was the way being itself showed itself. In its original meaning, the Idea was the visible form of something that provided a look at what a being is in each case. In Greek thinking Ideas enabled things to appear in their whatness and to be present in their constancy. "The ideas are what is in everything that is. Therefore, what makes every idea be capable as an idea – in Plato's expression: the idea of all ideas – consists in making possible the appearing, in all its visibility, of everything present. The essence of every idea certainly consists in making possible and enabling the shining that allows a view of the visible form."[156] The thing as its own image remains thus veiled, but at the same time, in being its own image it also shows or unveils itself. This however implies the fact that at least in the beginning Heidegger went for the possibility of truth as Idea in the image, and changed it later to '*aletheia*', as the truth that forms its path across Lethe, the river of forgetting, that forces its way out of the dark in the light ('*phos*') of the revealed phenomenon ('*phainasthai*'). The Idea that, at least at the beginning, belongs to '*aletheia*' is the '*eidos*' as the 'showing-itself', "the carrying-itself-outwardly of every aspect" and this can implie and demand, that there must be an '*eidos*' of '*aletheia*', which is: there must be a self-showing of the unshowable.

> "However, *idea* is not subordinate to unhiddenness in the sense of serving what is unhidden by bringing it to appearance. Rather, the opposite is the case: it is the shining (the self-showing) that, within its essence and in a singular self-relatedness, may yet be called unhiddenness. The *idea* is not some foreground that *aletheia* puts out there to present things; rather, the *idea* is the ground that makes *aletheia* possible. But even as such the *idea* still lays claim to something of the original but unacknowledged essence of *aletheia*."[157]

Nancy mentions, that the Platonic idea is for Heidegger (as he refers to it in "Plato's Doctrine of Truth") a yoke imposed on aletheia, a ground of presence that

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[156] Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 155-182

[157] Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 155-182, in: Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 173

makes this movement of unveiling and withdrawal to shift into a veiling-unveiling of presence as "*Anwesen* and not *Vorhanden*".[158]

Heidegger writes there: "Unhiddenness" now means: the unhidden always as what is accessible thanks to the idea's ability to shine. But insofar as the access is necessarily carried out through "seeing", unhiddenness is yoked into a "relation" with seeing, it becomes "relative" to seeing. Thus toward the end of Book VI of the *Republic* Plato develops the question: What makes the thing seen and the act of seeing be what they are in their relation? What spans the space between them? What yoke […] holds the two together? The "allegory of the cave" was written in order to illustrate the answer, which is set forth in the image: the sun as source of light lends visibility to whatever is seen. […]"[159]

Nancy focuses his thinking on that which is the "remainder", exteriority, that which resists becoming visible and knowable – that remains always in a form of becoming and that resists 'naming', but which nevertheless is not anything that can be neglected and which we have to keep trying to attain. In this case, we speak of presence not as presence of something – "als-etwas" (Mersch) – but of a presence of withdrawal and absence, a delayed and deferred presence that exposes itself as such and as a becoming. Dieter Mersch (in following Heidegger) refers to this "remainder" or excess or surplus as the presence that comprises the four moments of: 'ek-sistence', 'ek-cedence', 'ek-stasis' and ek-phanes. It is in the prefix '*ek*-', where we encounter (in its withdrawal already) the indefiniteness and indetermination, indescribability and irreducibility of this excess and surplus of meaning in its movement of irruption and emergence.[160]

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[158] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 88

[159] Martin Heidegger, Plato's Doctrine of Truth, 155-182, in: Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 173

[160] Dieter Mersch, Negative Präsenz, S. 99-117, in: Arno Böhler, Susanne Granzer (Hg), Ereignis Denken. TheatRealität, Performanz, Ereignis, Passage Verlag, 2009: " […] die Exposition einer doppelten Erfahrung, *einmal* von Präsenz als einer nicht ausreichbaren, nicht negierbaren Erfahrung, *zum anderen* aber als eines *Überschlusses*, einer "Ex-zedenz", wie man sagen könnte, die nichts anderes beschreibt als Erfahrung jener bereits erwähnten *Existenz* – einer "*Ex-sistenz*" freilich, wie man präzisieren müsste, die den Wortsinn des "Ex-" herausstreicht und sowohl dessen Unbestimmbarkeit oder Undarstellbarkeit betont als auch seine reflexive Unverzichtbarkeit oder Notwendigkeit. Durch das "Ex-", die Exposition, vermag die Erfahrung der Existenz darin – und das bezeichnet die entscheidende "Wende" der Argumentation – ihrerseits in eine *ekstatische Positivität* umzuschlagen, wobei "Ex-sistenz", mit einem Bindestrich, sowie "Ek-stasis", ebenfalls

6.1. Subject

Nancy's early writings can and have to be seen in the context of the shared sense of the shift that started in the 20th century, in the Western philosophical tradition, from the tendency to anchor the philosophical thought in a fixed point of origin to "the loss of any founding or transcendental signifier which centers philosophical or epistemological systems on a point of origin or moment of presence"[161]. This is: the decentering of the concept of structure and the loss of any foundation or origin, the surpassing of metaphysics and the overturning of its foundations. Nancy reflects on and analyses this shift through the complex engagement with the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger and their specific attempts to overcome this tradition. For Nancy this means the fundamental reworking of the foundational concepts of philosophy itself, especially the concept of subjectivity and the relation between philosophy and literature, between philosophical thought and the language of fiction, including its aspects of style, form, exposition or presentation. For Nancy, the subject is not an autonomous self-grounding entity and he attempts to overturn this traditional understanding of the subject. He also aims to overthrow the ultimately subjective essence of perception. He questions the foundations and grounding of philosophy through engaging with the fact that philosophy and literature cannot allow a rigid separation between them. He believes that philosophical discourse is embedded in the contingencies of language and emphasizes that style, form or other literary devices are part of the thought itself. The philosophical language is itself fiction or fable and is thus bound inevitably to its own metaphors, figures, tropes and style. This displacement of the categories of literature and philosophy implies two things: the

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mit einem Bindestrich, das Gleiche meinen: das Moment des Heraustretens, das die Kraft besitzt, den Bezug zu "wenden" und den Blick zu fesseln und anzusprechen, das heißt überhaupt erst unsere Handlungen und Denkakte als Antworten hervorzubringen. In seinem Aufsatz *Was heißt Denken?* ist Martin Heidegger einer ähnlichen Überlegung nachgegangen, die die Inversion der Bedeutung des Denkens zu dem einschloss, was "ins" Denken "heißt" oder "ruft", mithin den Bezug erst stiftet. Mit dem dreifachen Präfix des "Ex-" oder "Ek-" von *Ex-sistenz*, *Ex-zedenz*, oder *Ek-stasis*, dem noch die *Ek-phanes* als viertes Moment hinzuzufügen sein wird, ist, so die These, jene Unverneinbarkeit oder Irreduzibilität angezeigt, die diese ursprüngliche Stiftung apostrophiert, welche den Kern eines nicht metaphysisch oder substantialistisch prätendierten Präsenzbegriffs im Sinne des ästhetischen beziehungsweise "aisthetischen" *Erscheinens* oder *Ereignens* ausmacht." (p.101)

[161] Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006

overcoming of metaphysics, as already mentioned, and the pushing of the boundary between the two to the limit, which implies again the rethinking of the limits imposed by metaphysics. For Nancy, philosophical thought is a process and a pathway and not the laying of foundations, as it was the case in the tradition of philosophical discourse from Plato to Kant. The way Nancy thinks the subject, allows the subject to persist only "in being-outside-of-itself", in its radical exteriority that is irreducible to any order of the symbolic or to any logic of a 'sub-iectum', of a ground. For him the philosophical subject persists, but only in an exposure to the absence and the withdrawal of any kind of ground. The subject is infinitely exposed to its own excess and exceeds any possibilities of description or theoretical thinking. The thought of the thinking subject is held 'syncopated' within the repetition of this paradoxical moment. This thought is also radically different from the traditional understanding of thought as the work of concepts, since there is no presence or identity, which the concept aims to comprehend and to re-present. This thought operates in figures, as figures do not coincide with and are not identical to what they speak about. The logic of the figure is of a nonidentity in which the difference to what is figured is part of the figure itself. "The figure figures the unfigurable".[162] Terms, like sense, community, corpus/body, being or art, used by Nancy in his writings never refer or signify an identity, they always "excribe" a certain excess of signification and existence and function in the paradoxical logic of a 'Dardichtung' of presentation and withdrawal.

6.2. Sense

Both, 'sense' and 'sens', the English and the French word are polysemantic concepts. Sense can refer to direction, intuition, reason, the five senses, or to meaning. Nancy is making use in his thinking of the whole semantic field of the word 'sense', fact that gives the word sometimes an ambiguous meaning. He also prefers to use 'sense' in order to make a difference from 'meaning' or 'signification', which would relate to a rather fixed and rigid structure. In Nancy's concept 'sense' is before and beyond signification, it takes place before the

[162] Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 63

separation between the sensible and the intelligible. 'Sense' for Nancy is also a mater of the five senses or 'singular senses'. 'Sense' in Nancy's thinking is the sense of being as being with. "We" are the sense, not in terms of signifying something or having a meaning, but as sense that takes place in our sharing of a simultaneous time-space.[163]

Nancy's account of 'sense' is that sense is the stuff of shared sensible/intelligible worldly existence and takes thus an ontological status. Sense is the sense of a worldly and material existence, which always already 'makes sense'. In the usual account of sense our human world has meaning or makes sense, but for Nancy, our human world only ever exists as sense. Sense is that which appears in the phenomenon and exceeds the phenomenon[164]. Sense is excess, surplus of the being in being itself. Sense is the 'real' of the world, the multiple, fragmented, and shared worldly existence. And, therefore, he believes that philosophy is exposed to an offering of sense at the limit of signification. Nancy writes: "the sense of existence, that is or that makes sense, the existence without which sense would not exist; equally, the sense that exists or produces existing, without which there would be no sense"[165]. This is, that sense is being and existence of the world. Sense is that, that can be touched, sensed. Nancy thinks sense as the immediate way of making sense and in relation to an embodied sensory materiality and not, as already said, in relation to the symbolic order. Sense is pre-linguistic; it is a sensible, intelligible, touchable immediacy. A body. This thinking of sense lead to a rethinking of the political, of the community as a being together of bodies that make sense of the world. For Nancy, sense exists, takes place only in/as and between singular bodies that come in contact with each other and are exposed to each other and to themselves. Sense is always singular and local and happens in a certain place and a certain time and he calls a singular and

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[163] Martta Heikkilä, Community, the Political, and the Indecidable: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Shared Origin of Art, p. 1- 18, in: International Yearbook of Aesthetics, Vol. 9, 2005, Ed. Arto Haapala, Helsinki: University of Helsinki

[164] Jean-Luc Nancy, A Finite Thinking, p. 3-30, in: A Finite Thinking, edit. Simon Sparks, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003

[165] Jean-Luc Nancy, A Finite Thinking, p. 3-30, in: A Finite Thinking, edit. Simon Sparks, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003

local taking place of sense "corpus".[166] In Nancy's concept, community is a "being-in-common" and "being-with". Being has not other sense than this sense that is being in community and sense that happens "between us". Nancy's "being-with" is a radicalization of Heidegger's "Mitsein", it is the absolute value of being, its "transcendental condition" that precedes any consciousness and intentionality and presence. The opening of sense takes place and is "between-us". We are sense and our existence presents itself as sense; we expose ourselves to ourselves. "We *co-appear*" (*comparaissons*), and this appearing (*partition*) is sense".[167]

6.3. Body

Traditionally, the body is understood as a signifying or symbolic entity and a way to express and articulate cultural identity and meaning, and not in terms of a material or corporeal being. In opposing this view, Nancy's thinking of the body turns towards its materiality, its matter in relation to a certain technicity or to a technical apparatus.

Nancy's figure of the 'body' is similar and related to Heidegger's 'Dasein'. In both cases, 'body' and 'Dasein' have no pre-existing signification, because they are always already in an excess of signification, and both are used for naming or referring also to 'sense' or 'being'. They 'make' sense and sense 'takes place' in both in a singular way. However, Nancy sees 'Dasein' as a corporeal materiality, so he uses 'body' with the aim to stress and to expose its bodily aspects, the embodied materiality of existence. In his reworking of the "body" concept, he refers to and reflects again on the limit of signification and sense. The way Nancy looks at the body is in a manner of engaging with its immediate materiality, in a manner of touching or contact at the limit, in which sense and signification and the material are thought together. There are two key ideas that characterizes his understanding of the body: on the one hand he aims to overturn the traditional thinking of the body that resulted from the Christian tradition and from the

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[166] Martta Keikkilä, Jean-Luc Nancy and the Intimate Distance of Art, in: www.corpus-aesthetics.net/, June 2009. Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, 2008

[167] Martta Heikkilä, Community, the Political, and the Indecidable: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Shared Origin of Art, p. 1- 18, in: International Yearbook of Aesthetics, Vol. 9, 2005, Ed. Arto Haapala, Helsinki: University of Helsinki

concepts of the mind/body relation, and, on the other hand, Nancy's close link to the phenomenological thought. In his attempt to think the body, Nancy makes use of the figure of "touch", which has been analysed by Derrida in his book "On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy" (2000) as a key player around which Nancy's thinking turns.

Body is for Nancy the place, which is "the taking place of sense" – in and as matter, in the middle of matter - and bodies are those who articulate at first hand place. The body is the limit, the touching point where sense and matter touch and come into contact. At this limit and touching point, occurs the opening of a world and of the event of being ('Ereignis'). The body discloses existence at the point of contact between discourse and matter, but Nancy insists, they "take place neither in discourse nor in matter".[168] Bodies take place at the limit, as the limit at the intersection of the unknown/unseen/untouchable to the continuity of sense within the continuity of matter. The body as the corporeal is thought as an event at the limit of sense and, at the same time, also as a rupture and discontinuity within the continuity of sense and within the continuity of matter. Body for Nancy is a finite corporeal existence that is and makes sense and discloses a world not through gathering of its own identity and self-identity, but through a movement of dispersal and dissemination, of passage.

Bodies touch each other and, at the same time, they touch the limit of signification and make sense in terms of and as a 'transgression': they cross each other while keeping the distinction and by not establishing continuity; they leap into each other without being interlinked. As Nancy writes in relation to the image, bodies' touch is a "shock", a "confrontation", a "tête-a-tête" and a "rapport". Bodies are distinct and heterogeneous, the "unbindable just at the distance of touch".[169] He writes: " The body is the extension of the soul to the extremities of the world and to the confines of the self, each intricated [*intriqué*] with the other and indistinctly

[168] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 17

[169] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 4

distinct, extended, stretched [*étendue tendue*] to the point of rupture."[170] Thus Ian James explains: "The spatial temporal event of being, as the extension or exposure of sense to impenetrable matter, (that is the body) does not permit the world to be seen in terms of substances, or of the presence and self-presence of things, rather it must always be seen in terms of this separation and distancing of sense, which is also an event of touch, spacing, sharing, position, and disposition."[171]

Bodies are "finite bodily sense" that 'make' sense. On the one hand, 'Being' is for Nancy in following Heidegger's thinking, not to be thought as a constant presence, but rather as "coming into presence" or "presentation". The "event of being" is always a "coming" and a "borne into presence". And, on the other hand, "Being" is for Nancy always a radicalisation of Heidegger's "Mitsein": it is always a "being-with", as the transcendental condition of "Being". Being is or makes sense only as "being-with", which is, that sense is or makes sense only as a "sharing of a simultaneous time-space".[172] Sense may take place only "in" and "between" us and it takes place in bodies only 'in' and 'between' a community of bodies that are exposed to themselves, sharing and making this sense.

6.3.1. Body as "*partes extra partes*" (parts outside parts)

As we have seen by now, what preoccupies Nancy is the event of appearance, when it forges ahead and discloses a world, a moment of creation without ground and without purpose. In this context, body or bodies and sense space themselves in a total exposure to each other, by remaining in contact with each other, while at the same time keeping a distance from each other. There is no overall structure to support them into subjects or other identities. The relation between these parts outside parts is thus a relation of exteriority and '*effraction*' – the elements of a material body exist always also outside of each other and are never in the same

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[170] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 138, from: Jean-Luc Nancy, Poesie 99, 2002, p. 83

[171] Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 138

[172] Martta Heikkilä, Community, the Political and the Indecidable: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Shared Origin of Art, p.1-18, in: International Yearbook of Aesthetics. Ontology, Art, and Experience: Perspectives from West and East, Vol. 9, 2005, edit. Arto Haapala, in: www2.eur.nl/fw/hyper/IAA/Yearbook/iaa9/Yearbook9.pdf, June 2009

place. Bodies are of impenetrable matter and they gain their meaning only from the outside – they are touched, seen, sensed from this exterioriority from which they are in touch and at the same time at distance.

Nancy borrows the notion of the "*partes extra partes*" from Merleau-Ponty, who invoked this phrase in his book: "Phenomenology of Perception". Merleau-Ponty explains the structure of the "*partes extra partes*" as an object that takes up only an exterior and mechanical relation between his parts and in connection to other objects. This relation can either be transmitted or received or it can be a variable relation or function. So, for Merleau-Ponty this relation is an exterior and mechanical one. However, Nancy will adopt the phrase, but at the same time he will develop it in relation to the Greek term "*tekhné*", which refers to a know how and practical labor, to craft. For Nancy, the 'original technicity' of our world is the sharing of embodied existence that opens thus a world. The '*partes extra partes*' is the technical-mechanical relation of sense between material bodies that exposes material bodies in their 'contact-separation' relation between matter and sense. Material bodies exist as '*techné*', as the interconnection and 'co-articulation' of a technical apparatus. The structure of "*partes extra partes*" is not anymore thought as a pre-theoretical or pre-scientific dimension of experience (as it was the case in other phenomenological attempts), and in relation to the opposition between an original disclosure of the world and the realm of the scientific and technical knowledge of the world. It is more an originary technicity that is an embodied '*effraction*' that takes place as a touch in the distance of sense and matter.

6.3.2. Touch

With Nancy we have to see 'touch' as the touch of sense in general and of all senses. Touch is "the proper moment of sensible exteriority, it presents it *as such and as sensible*". Touch makes one feel and sense what is to be sensed – "the proximity of the distant, the approximation of the intimate" (Nancy). Touch is "the general extension and particular extraposition of sensing [*sentir*]". It forms one body with sensing or it makes of sensing a body; it is the *corpus* of the senses.

Touch is what opens continuity in distinct places and contrasted values. It is what figures the figure that offers itself now to our gaze.[173]

Touch is the figure of that unique place or point of contact between the body in its materiality and the soul, mind or thought. And Derrida argues that Nancy employs the figure of touch in order to "resist, in the name of touch, all idealism and all subjectivism, whether it be transcendental or psychoanalytic"[174] and emphasizes Nancy's turn towards the real: " touch remains for Nancy the motif of a kind of absolute realism, irredentist and postdeconstructive […] An absolute realism, but irreducible to all traditional forms of realism".[175] Touch is a way for Nancy to engage with the experience of embodiment and material existence and to move beyond the inherited traditional concept of the body. In doing this, Nancy privileges presence, immediacy, the instant, the 'here-and-now', in the imminence-of, but he also understands touching in terms of punctuality, discontinuity, fragmentation, partition and sharing. Touching is a contact that nevertheless interrupts itself in the act of self-touching. Therefore, touch is also an affirmation of that which seeks to exceed. However, Derrida's critique here is that even if the touch invoked by Nancy might be discontinuous and fragmented interrupting itself as itself, it still remains in a certain way anchored in the horizon of an origin.

6.4. Space

In order to understand Nancy's notion of space and how it evolved from and exceeded the traditional concept, we would have to look back and follow the thinking of space in Aristotle, Descartes, Newton, Leibnitz or Kant to name only a few, after which we would have to go over to the phenomenological account of space in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. However this is not the place to engage with this kind of complex analysis (and this is the case for all other figures, for 'subjectivity', 'body', or 'art'), so I will allow myself to only mention

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[173]Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 79

[174] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 118

[175] Jaques Derrida, On Touching. Jean-Luc Nancy, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 118

those characteristics that are necessary and helpful for the reading of "The Ground of the Image".

Space is thought in relation to "embodiment" – we experience space in embodying it in a spatio-temporal occurrence. Thus space for Nancy is not a geometrical space; moreover, it is something that is prior to the traditional understanding of space. It is space as spacing and exteriority; it is expansion, display, deconvolution, unfolding. Surface: '*sur-face*', as an "outermost boundary of anything, outside part", where we trace back a 'face'[176] from the Latin meaning of "*facere*" and the prefix '*sur-*' to the Latin '*super*'. This would thus refer to a beyond or surplus of a 'making' and therefore of '*tekhne*'. 'Sur-''s meaning from above might also refer to Nancy's notion of a ground out of layers of layers on layers, but not only in terms of one 'above' the other or a accumulation of layers covering each other, but of an 'above all' as the one that retreats in a singular distinct occurrence. An 'above' that spaces itself in between like the Latin '*cumulus*' or the Greek '*kyein*', that swells and gathers – or provokes a gathering.

Our experience of space is closely linked to 'sense', since an intelligible world occurs only through a spatial-temporal disclosure for Nancy from which we then experience 'world-hood'. Existence is sense and sense happens in, between and as bodies and thus sense is thought from Nancy's point of view as, "a bodily ontology". Heidegger's notion of the event of appropriation, as "Ereignis" influenced Nancy's understanding of space – who thinks the world in terms of a common 'being-in-the-world' and as a sharing of sense. Thus space is for Nancy an opening or an event that opens time as space as such. Space becomes thus the spacing of space. It is more an ungraspable 'coming' that is 'infinitely presupposed'. Space occurs in Nancy's thinking as position, dis-position, spacing, touch, tact, or contact. Space is an 'unfolding', an expansion, a 'pace' in the course of which time and space are made distinct. It is the originary (and co-originary) 'spatializing-temporalizing' event of appropriation, similar to an "Ereignis" in Heideggerian terms. However, space in Nancy doesn't allow any possibility of 'sheltering'. It is radical opening and exteriority of existence that is

[176] In Muses, Nancy explains '*vestigium*', which is a trace or the sole of a foot as the most dissimulated 'face' (or *surface* of the body), word that comes "from a root that means "to pose, to set": to pose, present, expose without reference to anything. (The Muses, p. 97)

always already outside of itself and thus '*ek-sistence'*. It is the opening of something that cannot be appropriated. Always in movement – mobile, adaptable, versatile, migratory, voluble, rolled-out, wrapped, fluent, portable: sense-space rolls and wraps itself in the body and as the body; body carries space and sense with it and sense is carried, trans-ported in the body from body to body. "A mobile extension, spacings, geological and cosmological displacements, drifts, sutures and fractures in archi-continents of sense, in immemorial tectonic plates under our feet, under our history. *The body is the architectonics of sense*." (The italics are Nancy's.)[177]

The body is for Nancy the opening of space, of a shared space and of the space between the bodies and the body is what spaces and separates. In this sense, space is concrete, corporeal material, a "place of existence". The sense of spacing is what constitutes the world and its beings in their discreteness and distance from each other, which is also the "absolute difference of appearance".[178] Being is what comes as a surprise, as a birth to presence and as the spacing of its figure or form. This 'coming-into-presence' is the infinite arrival of being.

[177] Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 25

[178]Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 19

(Still images of “a copy of a copy of a copy …of the original version provided by the artists Marina Abramovic and Ulay of their performance “Expanding in space”, 32 minutes, Documenta 6, Kassel, 1977)

6.5. Art and the Artwork

In art and in the image, we have to distinguish – and this counts for every work – between the image and the 'vestige'. In each work there is something that operates in relation to and calls for the identification of the model or a cause, however there is also something that only proposes or exposes merely 'some thing'. What it exposes can be anything – 'merely a thing' – but the way it exposes it, is the very precise mode of the vestigial presence. This is to say, that every artwork is "a singular concept, lodged as a foreign body"[179], that oscillates between the absence of naming and its material presence and matter, between the Idea and the image. Between 'Dichtung'[180] and 'Darstellung.

The '*vestigium*' is the sensible itself in its being created, Nancy explains, and it is in the sensible or as the sensible the way in which the image effaces and withdraws. Here, in the '*vestigium'*, the Idea leaves only its trace, the mark of its disappearance. The Idea in the vestigial presence is neither imprint of its form nor self-imitation, but that which is or that remains when there was no self-imitation taken place. Nancy also claims that all theories around the issue of imitation are indeed theories of imitation, but also theories of the image and of the Idea, which is understood as the self-imitation of being. In reversing this thought, Nancy concludes that all thinking about the Idea is also thinking about the image. In this sense, what is at stake in all this debates, Nancy asserts, is that they are all to a certain extent theological, since they reflect on the visibility of the invisible as such, or on the "ideality made present".

For Plato, the work of art is beautiful in so far as it is "*ekphanestaton"*, that what is most shining. The shining is the shining of the "true face" of nature that is exhibited, presented in the work of art. The true face is the "*eidos"* and the most beautiful is truth itself. For Plato, beauty is the manifestation of truth. The "*eidos"* at its most visible presence is Idea, the concept of all concepts. Art can provide an

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[179] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996

[180] For an analysis of the word "Dichtung" and the problems of its translation cf. also: Jacques Derrida, Demeure. Fiction and Testimony, p. 15-103, in: Maurice Blanchot, The Instant of My Death, Jacques Derrida, Demeure. Fiction and Testimony, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2000

image of truth, but because truth appears here through something else, trough the image, the work of art remains always incomplete. The work of art is an incomplete presentation of truth, as the imitation of truth. The work of art is the sensuous presentation of truth. In the historical context of Western philosophy, this was the moment when the work of art was related to the concepts of truth and imitation. In his "Aesthetics", Hegel re-inscribed the Platonic conception of art as imitation of truth, voicing beauty as 'the sensuous shining of the Idea.

In all these cases, the beautiful is a metaphysical concept and it was Heidegger who tried to think of the work of art outside Metaphysics. Art remains the production of beautiful things, but he asks, what does the work of art reveal more that its own process of production? He questions, if that, what is revealed in the work, is not "*aletheuein*" – the truth in the Aristotelian sense of establishing oneself in the world, the sate of revealing the revealing[181]. The work of art is for Heidegger the truth at work, the occurrence of truth. But what kind of truth?

Heidegger speaks of the essence or Wesen of truth in several places in his writings and his understanding of it changed in relation to the way he shifted the meaning of 'essence' or Wesen from its traditional meaning of possibility, ground or existence to the meaning of 'to linger, to dwell in a place'. In the course of his lecture, "On the Essence of Truth", Heidegger developed his understanding of the essence of truth not from the Latin word, but from the German word 'wesan'. 'Wesen' or 'Wesenheit' refers in its old sense to something that is ongoing, unfolding, that is taken it's time, dwelling – similar to Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as 'being-**in**-the-world', an 'in' coming from the old Germanic world 'innan', to dwell. Thus the new way to understand it brings essence very close to 'ousia', the Greek world that refers to a dwelling place. Thus existence is the essence of truth insofar as it operates in terms of veiling and disclosure. In this sense, truth is 'aletheia', the veiling-unveiling. However, existence discloses the

[181] Heidegger writes: " Eine dieser Weisen, wie Wahrheit geschieht, ist das Werksein des Werkes. Aufstellen eine Welt und herstellend die Erde ist das Werk die Bestreitung jenes Steites, in dem die Unverborgenheit des Seiendem im Ganzen, die Wahrheit, erstritten wird. […] Im Offenbaren des Zeugseins des Schuhzeuges gelangt das Seiende im Ganzen, Welt und Erde in ihrem Widerspiel, in die Unverborgenheit. Im Werk ist die Wahrheit am Werk […] Das ins Werk gefügte Scheinen ist das Schöne. *Schönheit ist eine Weise, wie Wahrheit als Unverborgenheit west*." (The italic's are Heidegger's), Martin Heidegger, Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes, in: Holzwege, Frankfurt am Main: Viitorio Klostermann, 2003, 8. Aufl., p. 42-43

world as ‘ek-sistence’, ek-stasis and ek-phanes that is from a particular perspective and in a certain way. The very moment ek-sistence uncovers an aspect of the world, it also, at the same time hides and shelters, it veils another or an other aspect. Because of Being’s ecstatic essence, a being always conceals it’s own essence as an existent being that is. Being operates in a doubling way of veiling and unveiling, of truth and un-truth or non-truth. Truth is thus not transparent clarity. Truth and untruth are not in opposition to each other, on the contrary, truth an untruth are different ways of being for truth (‘Wesensarten der Wahrheit’). ‘Un-truth’ is for Heidegger the ‘Un-wesen’ of truth. ‘Un-‘ or ‘Non-’ is not a negation, but a primordial mode of being older than truth itself, an ‘Ab-grund’, an abyss, the withdrawal of any ground. Thus essence and non-essence belong equally to truth and are different modes of being for truth. Truth will never be full and complete presence. Truth is only possible, if it is, at the same time, also impossible. “The essence of truth”, Heidegger writes in “Wegmarken”[182], “is the truth of essence.” Truth is for Heidegger always the truth of Being and it has to be analyzed only in its relation to un-truth, because they are closely interlinked and intertwined with each other, in tension, balancing the present and presence in the world. What is manifested in the world, what manifests itself is only the visible side of the invisible side of the essence of truth. For the metaphysical gaze, the essence of truth sheltered in its concealment remains ‘out of sight’, outshined by that that shines amidst of visible truth.

As we know, with Nancy we can speak of a ‘truth’ only insofar this truth is the taking place of sense. Truth in Nancy is a truth of taking part in ‘sharing’ and in the spatial-temporal ‘partage’ of ‘sense’. Truth is thought as a ‘co-belonging’ and ‘co-distancing’, as ‘punctuality’ that is the existence as ‘punct’ or puncture. Nancy explains that whereas truth punctuates, sense enchains. Truth is determined and presented as a piercing in and of exteriority. Thus truth for Nancy is not only fixed by, but also opened for the enchainment of sense.

The work of art is captivation and rapture, withdrawal and self-seclusion of truth. It is the danger that exposes the saving power. The work of art is produced and as

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[182] Martin Heidegger, On the Essence of Truth, p.136-154, in : Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks, edit. William McNeill, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 8th printing, p. 153

such it marks the end of a process. However, Heidegger follows his thought, the work of art seems to be also the starting point for something new, the work's ability to disclose and to manifest. In this sense, the work of art becomes a Da-sein, a being there that is elsewhere. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" he writes: "The singular artwork is always also the production of an artist, yet this being-produced of the work does not constitute its work-character (Werksein)."[183] The cause for the origin of the artwork is not to be found in a context outside the work of art, but in the artwork itself and in the way it works, in the 'work-character of the work', "das Werksein des Werkes". The being of the artwork is its ability to put something into and to bring it in the work to work. The artwork is taking place of something and is thus not a thing, but an event. And Heidegger claims that the artwork is an event of truth, however it is a truth that is developed in the artwork for which the artwork opens its space. Thus truth is the play between the "Lichtung' and "Verbergung", between concealing and revealing. It is truth as "aletheia", as the veiling-unveiling, between manifestation and sheltering. For Heidegger, art is the mode in which truth happens, "truth's own setting in to work". The work of art presents something and opens something that it is not reducible to the materiality of the artwork. It presents a gathering of a world that is not otherwise given.[184]

Nancy rejects any definition of art as only imitation or mimesis and also any belief that art could be thought in the sense that it gives "an image of some determinate and determinable pre-existing reality". Art exists for Nancy in relation to the world, to the shared finite existence of the world and it opens up world-hood in its singular-plurality. Art is and exposes a finite, concrete worldly existence; it touches and exposes the passage of sense. The artwork is never posited as an object of any kind – it is an event that manifests itself. The work of art is 'needlework' of "inscribing and encrypting glances and gazes"[185], and not the representation of some thing that exists before or independent from the work

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[183] After: Miguel de Beistegui, The Saving Power of Art, p.125-154, in: Miguel de Beistegui, The New Heidegger, London: continuum, 2005

[184] Cf. Miguel de Beistegui, The Saving Power of Art, p.125-154 in: Miguel de Beistegui, The New Heidegger, London: continuum, 2005

[185] Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, Writing Otherwise Than Seeing. Writing and Exteriority in Maurice Blanchot, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2007, p. 57

of art. Any form of artwork, any painted image, presents to us a world, an experience that makes sense, but this sense cannot be reduced to any form of signification. Artworks affect us, they stimulate our senses, and they touch us in a specific way, in a way that cannot be achieved through the discourses of signification. Art not only touches existence and sense, but it makes sense. Sense is here a density, thickness or mass, a passage or site of material and bodily existence. The artwork exposes both in a sensible and in an intelligible way physicality and materiality as such.

Ian James argues[186], that Nancy gained his understanding of art also from his specific reading of Hegel's ideas about art. In the work of art the universal spirit is presented in "an individualized and sensuously particularized configuration". For Hegel, art is the unity between the ideal content and the material, the sensuous form. Art has a continuation in history and it traverses different periods, periods in which the spirit emerges in different configurations. For Hegel, art is closely linked to the realm of the five senses, with a privilege for the senses of sight and hearing. Hegel's philosophy embraces the dialectical method through which the human mind gains its freedom from its contingent material environment and becomes absolute knowledge or spirit. The human understanding is able to differentiate between different concepts and categories and to reflect on them. The result of this reflection is the discovery of the contradictions contained in them and the production of new and higher categories that absorb the previous ones and thus resolve their contradictions. In relation to this, art is for Hegel also this conciliation of opposites. These opposites are firstly, the ideal content, the Idea and secondly, the form in which the ideal content is presented or presents itself. The human mind progresses in its rational and practical activities and overreaches itself through the idealization of everything around the spirit. Hegel differentiates various stages in which the mind relates itself to the objective world and progresses towards becoming the pure spirit. The contradictions of each stage are overcome in the next stage. Art in his historical movement has three phases: the symbolic art, the classical art, and the romantic art. The stage of the symbolic art is for Hegel the art of the ancient Egypt and of the East. Architecture was the

[186] Cf. Chapter 5 "Art", p. 202-230, in: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006

main form of art of this period. In this stage the spirit is confused and undeveloped and has difficulties in finding the "right" sensuous form to present itself. In the classical period, which was the period of the Greek art with sculpture as is main form, the spirit manifests itself in the perfect form of the figure of the Greek Gods, as these figures were already the harmonic and perfect unity between an ideal content and form. The stage of the romantic art period begins with the incarnation of God in the figure of Christ; which is the beginning of the Christian era. In this stage, art knows already, so Hegel, a regress, as it loses the perfect, harmonic unity of ideal content and form. But, at the same time, it seeks to express a spirituality that is far more developed than the one expressed in the figures of the Greek Gods. The romantic art deals with a "free-concrete spirituality", as an excess of "a spirituality toward the spiritually inward". The most important art form is now poetry – "the universal art of the spirit which has become free in itself and which is not tied down for its realization to external sensuous material."[187] Poetry is now the universal art of the spirit and it symbolises the end of art as a key element in the development of the spirit. The inherent limitation of art is its form and this is the contradiction of art that can be solved, according to Hegel, only by a new and higher category – philosophy as speculative idealism and dialectical method.

In "Le Portrait de l'art en jeune femme" and in "The Muses" Nancy takes a closer look on Hegel's ideas about art, especially on the progression of art to philosophy and on the notion of art as the conciliation of opposites, stating that the dialectical movement in art poses more problems than Hegel will allow himself to think of. Hegel claims, as we have already seen, that the task of the artwork is to create the harmonic unity of the ideal content and the sensuous form, of the Idea and its manifestation. And Nancy, following Hegel's thought in every step, concludes that the artistic beauty is the concrete presentation of the absolute and thus the absolute is of the order of a 'concrete' concept and not an abstraction of a thought. From this, Nancy draws the conclusion that the artistic beauty is belonging to realm of speculative knowledge, which for Hegel would be the realm of absolute

[187] Quotation after Ian James in: Chapter 5 "Art", p. 202-230, in: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press 2006

knowledge, of philosophy. Here Nancy forces the Hegelian text and through an inversion he comes to the conclusion that, "speculative knowledge is, effectively and necessarily, of the same order of presentation as art".[188]

In his next step, Nancy states that the contradiction of art, which Hegel thought to be surpassed in poetry, has remained unresolved and it persists not only in poetry but also in philosophy. Nancy preoccupied himself with the question of presentation (Darstellung) in regard to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" and he looked very closely in his book "The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus" to the relation between "Darstellung" and "Dichtung" emphasizing their distinctive rapport characterized simultaneously by distance and by proximity.

> " We are thus brought back to the partition between the philosophical and the mathematical… in the guise of their surreptitious identification. The renunciation of elegance and the critical position it forces Kant to occupy – or the reverse: the critical position and the renunciation of elegance it demands – repeats itself with a desire for elegance. Elegance is the term substituted for the presentation of the mathematical opus, and the desire for it is the desire to write a book. "Literature" will be name of the object of desire of the lost opus. […] a philosopher wishes to be, *as a philosopher*, an author. Or philosophy obliges a philosopher to wish to be an author. […] Nothing allows one to distinguish literature, on the one hand, from philosophy, on the other." [189]

For Nancy philosophy and poetry/literature are both at distance and in the proximity of each other, because philosophy is unable to draw on its own terms a clear line between its language and the language of literature. Nancy agrees with Hegel on the inadequacy of presentation in the romantic stage of the art, but he doesn't agree with regard to the contradiction between ideal content and form, which for Hegel seemed to be resolved in speculative thinking. For Nancy, both art and philosophy are deficient forms for the content they aim to present, because this content exceeds any possibility of presentation.

> "Defending philosophical language consists in defending a *Dichtung* which, in itself, has nothing to do with poetry – but which derives from *Darstellung* itself. *Darstellung* demands a *Dichtung*, because as exposition, it has already been deprived of pure and direct *Darstellung*. It

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[188] Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 210

[189] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 44-45

> is therefore exposition that demands, for its *Darstellung* or by way of its *Darstellung*, a *Dichtung*. The latter must be the palliative, the cloak of a naked and mutilated presentation."[190]

Thus Nancy is asking:

> "In art an immemorial past does not cease to be born anew…This immemorial past, whose 'passage' repeats itself, could this be the repeated moment of a *coming to presence*? Of an *arrival that Hegel's knowledge cannot and does not want to know-and yet cannot avoid*?" [191] (The italics are Nancy's)

Nancy is interested in the ontological sense of Hegel's thinking and he believes that the dialectical unfolding of the spirit toward absolute knowledge is fundamentally linked to the objective world, to how human reality manifests itself. Truth in Hegelian sense has a meaning only in relation to its manifestation, presentation and appearance. Truth appears and presents itself always for someone, for itself and for the spirit in general. In the introduction to Aesthetics, Hegel writes: "Art liberates the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception of this bad, transitory world, and gives them a higher actuality, born of the spirit".[192] For Nancy, Hegel's concept of history, as the history of the unfolding of the spirit toward absolute knowledge, is also history understood as the history of the different possibilities of understanding the worldly reality and the various manifestations and appearances of the world. Art reveals in this history the truth of the world and its understanding. The dialectic is for Nancy revelation, it is the appearance of what it makes itself to appear and art is the suspension of the dialectical operation, as art is not itself revealing and is not revelation. Art is suspended "in-between" poetry and speculative thought; art is left "syncopated" (Nancy)[193] and as such, it cannot show the development in the revelation of truth or spirit. Art is the suspension of the dialectic. It is therefore

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[190] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 84

[191] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 211

[192] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 212, from: G. W. F. Hegel, Introduction to Aesthetics, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon, 1979, p. 9

[193] Nancy used and developed this term in his reading of Kant in "The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus": Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 1-16

only pure presentation of pure presentation, the presentation of that what exceeds presentation. The sensuous form of the artwork is for Nancy an "offering": " the singular transmission of art […] would be the offering [*offrande*] of an offering […]". The presentation in art is "neither an impresentable, nor a present, neither a transcendence, nor an immanence, but the arrival [*la venue*] or the happening [*l'advenue*] of presentation".[194]

Moreover, Nancy thinks the plural as the origin of art. Whereas Hegel explained the existence of different art forms in relation to our different senses, Nancy suggests that the plural origin of art is to be tracked backed to the plurality of sense. This plurality of sense is "a plurality of the singular instances of sense irreducible to any governing principle or unity".[195] Nancy writes: " The *singular-plural* is the law and the problem of 'art' as it is of 'sense', or of the sense of the senses, of the meaningful [*sensé*] sense of their sensible difference".[196] The plural origin of art is the irreducible singular plurality of the senses and not the five senses condensed in a higher unity of sense.

7. The Limit-Experience

Let us now move to M. Blanchot's reading of G. Bataille's "interior-experience" or "limit-experience". Blanchot's gives us another attempt to appropriate this 'ex-cess" and surplus of being and sense. Blanchot (with Bataille) embraces the question of the possibility of ek-sistence, of the ek-sistence that includes a 'beyond', the 'ek-', a 'going-outside' of being and knowledge, and questions its role for the universal man and his life.

'The limit-experience' occurs in man, in the moment when man puts himself radically in question. This means that he questions radically those things that he himself ordered: the primacy of the subject, its absolute knowledge and its beings. This is also the moment when man gives himself entirely to his passion and

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[194] Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p.213

[195] Quotation after: Ian James, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. The Fragmentary Demand, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006

[196] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 13-14

affirmation of the 'negative thought'. "Man is already everything", Blanchot writes, because he is "the master of all knowledge, he is capable of everything and has the answer for everything"[197]. The action for and of the future is this "negativity" through which man negates nature and negates itself. Blanchot writes, that even if man appears to be exhausting this negativity in his actions, he is not doing this. He doesn't engage with all the nothingness he is, he does not transform it all in power. Man's passion is a 'more' for the 'negative thought' and not (or a 'less') for the absolute he might reach in the case, he becomes conscious of this 'whole' and equals the whole himself. The 'negative thought' has the power to suspend man's knowledge and in thinking 'the infinite' to contest the 'whole'.

It was Hegel who first pointed out the ontological character of 'the negative thought' or of 'negativity'. The negative thought, Hegel claims, is an energy that disengages the meaning from Being by separating essence from existence. It is the energy of "the pure 'abstract-Ego' engendering 'thought', that is the understanding and its discourse".[198]

If man is the 'universal man', we have to accept the supposition, that this man is 'essentially satisfied' and that " as universal man he has nothing more to do […] he is without need".[199] Blanchot explains, that the 'limit-experience' is the experience of the 'universal man' who refuses to stop at the sufficiency he has attained: "the desire of he who is without desire, the dissatisfaction of he who is "wholly" satisfied, pure lack, where there is nonetheless accomplishment of being. It is the experience of what is outside the whole when the whole excludes every outside"[200]. The ' limit-experience' is the experience of the "unknown" and the "inaccessible", of that what is to be attained when everything has been attained already, and of that that is still to be known when everything is known

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[197] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 204

[198] Quotation after: Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, Writing Otherwise Than Seeing. Writing and Exteriority in Maurice Blanchot, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2007, p. 77

[199] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 205

[200] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 205

already. This impossible lack belongs essentially to man and it is what makes him unsatisfied, when he is fully satisfied, unknowledgeable when he mastered already everything with his knowledge. It is this 'essential lack' what makes man to always question himself. As man fails to exhaust his negativity, because he chooses to continue to put itself in question, he arrives or touches on a state that Bataille calls: "a state of negativity without employ". But this state of "negativity without employ" can be also seen as an affirmation of the negation that is "without employ", which is the negation that has nothing more to negate. In refusing the path of absolute knowledge, and in turning towards the 'unknown and inaccessible', man was lead by his desire to 'sense' this nothingness in surplus'. Through nature's denial (which is the denial that takes place in every form of ideality), Blanchot writes, man "has constructed the world, had put himself to work, he has become a producer, a self-producer". But all this is not enough for him, fully satisfied he is seeking for and seeing after the "impossible dissatisfaction". Blanchot writes:

> "But should he come to sense this surplus of nothingness, this unemployable vacancy, should he discover himself to be bound to the movement that causes him, each time a man dies, to die infinitely, should he allow himself to be seized by the infinity of the end, then he must respond to another exigency – no longer that of producing but of spending, no longer that of succeeding but of failing, no longer that of turning out works and speaking usefully but of speaking in vain and reducing himself to worklessness: an exigency whose limit is given in the "interior experience".[201]

The passion for the 'negative thought' does not stop at God, Blanchot and Bataille write, it does not stop either at God's absence, and it is not tempted by the principle of 'unity' – we can always represent things in another way "in the fire of Action and Discourse". By affirming everything in relation to his existence, by comprehending the 'whole of everything' in himself and for himself, man created the circle and also closed this circle of knowledge. The absolute primacy of the subject and of presence made the absolute – understood as a totality of forms – knowledgeable and allowed it to be controlled and ordered. Thus the 'universal man' arrived at the point when he accomplished himself, accomplishing and

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[201] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 206

repeating himself in 'Discourse'. But, 'the universal man' is drawn by the 'essential lack', which relates to him in its withdrawal and which draws the trace, 'trait' of the 'universal man', who is now confronted with its own strangeness, its own presence with no place in this world.

For Blanchot, this 'limit experience' does what it does in making man to question itself and it insists on its questioning and on the possibility of a 'beyond' (not in theological terms). 'The limit-experience affirms the 'beyond' of the absolute and self-sufficient state. It opens the place of and for a surplus, excess, an addition. Excess is therefore this possibility that still opens after all possibilities had been realized. Georges Bataille speaks here of "impossibility" and Blanchot explains this by pointing that "possibility is not the sole dimension of existence". There are two ways in which existence takes place – the first one, is the one in which we "comprehend, grasp, bear, master […]" and we do this in relation to the principle of unity, and the second one, is the one in which we fail to undergo existence, and existence escapes "all employ and all end". Existence is thus not 'available' and has no use in this second dimension.[202] For Blanchot, this 'essential lack', that belongs to man and makes him to question himself in the moment in which he had accomplished everything and when he thus doesn't lack anything, this "impossibility by which (he) is no longer able to be able, […] without ever falling short of what this surplus or addition, this surplus of emptiness, of "negativity", this "essential lack', is in us, "the infinite heart of the passion of thought".[203] Why should this lack belong essentially to man? With Nancy, I will argue that this comes from man's presence as strangeness: 'I' is the "being-one-in-the-other". It is the same that never returns to itself, the self outside of itself, that confronts itself with itself. The same identifies with itself by being outside of itself, "the same that is the same of an identity that alters itself from birth, thirsting after a self that has never been self […] who appropriates itself as this very alteration".[204] The 'essential lack' in man is the love for the self one has lost in order to conquer

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[202] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 207

[203] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 207

[204] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 70

the world and the self. The importance of the 'limit experience' lies for Blanchot in the "ecstatic 'loss' of knowledge", which is: "[…] the grasping seizure of contestation at the height of rupture and dispossession", and he explains that: "the experience is not an outcome. It does not satisfy, it is without value, without sufficiency, and only such that it frees all human possibilities from their meaning: every knowledge, every speech, every silence, every end, and even this capacity-for-dying from which we draw our last truths".[205] This excess of knowledge, of sense is not non-knowledge, it is not ecstasy understood as invalid knowledge, and it is not absurd knowledge. But, it is knowledge beyond an achieved knowledge, beyond any form of knowledge as a mode of understanding. It is knowledge as a mode of 'relating', where any relation is withdrawn and thus impossible.

This excess is the affirmation of the radical negation that has nothing to negate. It is affirmation as affirmation and not as product that gets caught up in the dialectics of reason. It is the 'affirmation of affirmation', a 'presence without anything being present'. It is affirmation without meaning that is without negation. This 'affirmation of affirmation' gives Being "the status of its new sovereignty: the sovereignty of Being without being in the becoming without end of a death impossible to die".[206] Being is not anymore pro-ject throwing itself ahead of itself towards a always postponed death, not "the discourse of being-*toward*-Death, but the writing of the horizontality of the dead and the birth of all our bodies' extension – of all our bodies being *more than* alive"; only existence as spaced bodies, the space of bodies that do not know the fantasy of abolished space, death, but space as existence that knows each "body as a dead one, as *this* dead one, sharing with us the extension of it *here lies*."[207] (The italics are Nancy's.)

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[205] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 207-208

[206] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 209

[207] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 55

Thus the 'limit experience' is the experience itself. Experience is that which cannot be thought, it is thought that "thinks more than it is able by an affirmation that affirms more than can be affirmed".[208] Experience is this 'more' – an experience that affirms only by affirming a surplus, affirming without anything being affirmed, affirming therefore nothing. In this affirmation, everything escapes and escapes unity and the affirmation itself escapes and escapes unity. It is affirmation without unity and unicity. With Nancy, I will argue that this affirmation that affirms a surplus, that affirms without affirming and that therefore affirms nothingness, is the kind of affirmation that is affirmed in the image, the way Nancy figures it out. This affirmation, which in Nancy's terms would be the 'sense' "that is the world right at or right next to itself, this immanent sense of being *there* and nothing else, comes to show its transcendence there, which is to have no sense, to neither engage nor permit its assumption into any kind of Idea or End, but to present itself always as its own estrangement."[209] (The italics are Nancy's.) Moreover, Nancy concludes, that if we regard a certain position in time and place for a subject as a condition for presence, than we can say that "world and man in the world" is "the presentation of a presence without presence, because the world itself has neither time, nor place, nor subject". The world is "pure and simple monstrous presentation"[210]. This affirmation then, affirms being without being or essence that founds it. Being that exists there in its sovereignty. This affirmation intertwines in Bataille's view with the 'multiple' and the 'chance' and it is an affirmation that cannot maintain itself as an 'experience of non-experience', This is due to the fact, that it is threatened to become misused and to turn into a force that wants itself to be the truth and thus to turn into the 'intractable' (Nancy) that affirms its domination. At the same time, it cannot be the sovereignty of the Hegelian Spirit that takes possession of the world in first place and grounds as such its domination. However, it is a sovereignty that has to be completely different from domination; it is sovereignty that is not exercised

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[208] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 209

[209] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 71

[210] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 71

over anything. It is sovereignty that remains unexercised because it is nothing else than absolute sovereignty that as an absolute exceeds itself. It is sovereignty absolutely detached from itself, without foundation and without presence; the sovereignty of distancing and detachment from its own 'lack', the presence that shows alienation sovereignly.[211] For Nancy, what sovereignly withdraws itself from domination, the sense that eludes its imposition is art itself, the kind of art that it presences itself in Artemisia Gentileschi' s painting of Cleopatra.

Blanchot also asks, why should man desire "a desire that is without hope and without knowledge, making him a being without horizon" and what would happen if thought manages to affirms itself in this 'beyond'? He answers this by pointing at Bataille's own texts and thoughts and to the "surprise of his language", to Bataille's "speech". (In 'Logodaedalus' Nancy cites himself a remark made by Bataille on 'speech': "Only language reveals, at the limit, the sovereign moment when it no longer has currency. But in the end the one who speaks owns up to his impotence."[212]) And Blanchot writes: "speech entertains what no existent being in the primacy of his own name can attain; what existence itself, with the seduction of its fortuitous particularity, with the play of its slipping universality, could never hold within itself"[213]. Nancy's answer to this would lie in Plato's cave, in the 'grotto' that "is the world, where the drawing causes the impossible outside of the world to loom up, and causes it to loom up in its very impossibility"[214]. It is speech as image before it becomes concept and the Idea as painting's and figure's first gesture. "Friendship", "friendship" for "the impossible that is man" and "friendship" as "the exigency that relates us infinitely and sovereignly to ourselves" – this is what Bataille called this experience of non-experience, the "interior experience". As ex-cess and surplus of the being in being itself, sense can be reached out and shared (only) via an embodied image. Images of art may

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[211] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 72

[212] Quotation after: Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 8 (from Georges Bataille, Erotisme, Paris: Seuil, 1957, p. 306)

[213] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. Susan Hanson, London: University of Minneapolis, 2008, p. 210

[214] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 77

engage with representation and the symbolic order, but, at the same time, every obvious image has also something that exceeds its symbolic meaning and signification, something that belongs or reaches at the diffuse order of sense. There is something in the material order of things that imposes itself on me, and with Nancy, this is belonging to the participatory sense of the world. Image is not always only mimesis, but '*mimesis'* and '*methexis'*. Images of art generate a lot of meaning, but not any meaning and this is what makes the diffuse horizon of sense, the excess of signifying sense and of symbolic order, the horizon of the real, of the whole areality of bodies. Works of art go beyond representation and the symbolic order and escape the ideological, rigid and abstract construction of the world as representation. The experience of artistic images works at the limit and the arts[215] respond to the exorbitant demand of sense.

8. "Image – The Distinct"

In this essay, which is the opening chapter in "The Ground of the Image", Nancy writes about the image in relation to the notion of the distinct and the figures of distancing, separation and setting apart.

"The distinct, according to its etymology, is what is separated by marks […]: what is withdrawn or set apart by a line or trait, by being marked also as withdrawn."[216] "Trait" stays here for a line, stroke, dash, trait, characteristics, or a feature. The "distinct" is the different, other, separated, independent; that which does not allow itself to be confused with something that is neighbouring or analogous. The distinction of the image is also detachment, and separation. In the image takes place a threefold distancing: from the ground, from the perceiver and from that which is figured or imaged. The image is never characterized in terms of presence or proximity.

Let's remember the example given in the Gestalt theory, the vase-face image: if the vase shows itself as distinct emerging from the withdrawal of the ground, the

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[215] Nancy speaks of *arts*, more precisely of multiple arts and not of "Art", as there doesn't exist and cannot exist a common origin of the arts for him.

[216] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 2

tracing of a line detaches the image from the ground and places it before my eyes, but at a distance. Nancy argues that the figuration or imaging (vs. imagining) of the vase is at a fundamental level not grounded in the identity or sameness with a concept, the signified or represented empirical vase. He emphasizes that the distancing, detachment and separation that is marked by the "distinctive trait" of the image/figure, is a fundamental order of dissimilarity and difference.

As we have already seen, the image is a thing that is not a thing, so what appears in this example is the vase, which is not a vase. The vase is given to us in a fundamental withdrawal and distancing from the worldly object and the way we might encounter it. The ground is described in Gestalt Psychology as a force which allows the figure to distinguish itself from the background, to create unity of an image from a diversity of sensible appearance. Nancy argues that what makes the image distinct, what distinguishes the image as image and what makes it also meaningful, is the imposition of a certain force.

"The image gives itself through a distinctive trait (every image declares itself or indicates itself as an "image" in some way). It is the imposition of a force, which gives form, which detaches, separates, distances in the tracing of the distinct line or trait of the image. The image is placed at distance in front of the seeing eye and it is also detached from the background.

The ground appears thus to be contradictory: on the one hand it is withdrawn, and on the other hand, the ground exerts a certain force that imposes itself. The ground becomes the ground only in doubling itself. The ground, "it is the force of the image, its sky and its shadow". This force exerts its pressure "in the ground" of the image, or, rather, it is the pressure that the ground exerts on the surface – that is, under this force, in this impalpable non-place that is not merely the 'support' but the *back* or the *underside* of the image. The latter is not an "other side of the coin" […] but the insensible (intelligible) sense that *is sensed as such*, self-same with the image.[217] We find here conjured Gestalt psychology's notion of the ground, the notion of force and Nancy's particular use and understanding of the term "sense".

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[217] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 8

For Nancy, the ground of the image exerts a force even in its withdrawal and it is "insensible (intelligible) sense as such sensed directly on the image". The force here, then, is the force of sense. That is, sense that forces the figure to detach itself from the ground and to emerge in or as a form and force that makes sense in its sensible appearance. But this 'sense' as the force of the image is not linguistic meaning, even if it ceaselessly touching on meaning. The ground is what is framed within the gaze, but outside of its attention. The objectifying gaze of the subject fixes the object in focus, whereas the gaze that 'senses' doesn't fix anything because it responds to a continuous spatio-temporal pulsation. It doesn't stay outside and controls the focus, but it 'enters' and is 'entered' and turns itself into movement. It is a gaze that withdraws "in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves".[218]

As already mentioned, the ideas presented in "The Ground of the Image" are related on the one side to the Kantian schematism and on the other to Gestalt psychology. Here, in relation to, but also differing from Kant's understanding of the image and his idea of the systematic unity of reason, Nancy's account of the image suggests, that the unity (the force of the being-one) of the image and its ability to assemble a meaningful figure from a potentially amorphous diversity or heterogeneity of sensory appearance comes from this exertion of force, the force of and as the ground itself. This ground is not in the consciousness of a subject, as the producer of the image, but it is in itself, in the event of coming of a figure, an image, the becoming and opening of a world – a force field. The ground withdraws in the throwing into relief of a figure and in the delineation or tracing of a separation of foreground from background. This force or ground is for Nancy an affective, pre-cognitive, pre-symbolic and pre-linguistic imposition of a diffuse horizon of sense itself. This marks then a return to Nancy's thinking of sense as the stuff of shared sensible/intelligible worldly existence. For Nancy, sense needs to be understood as that embodied horizon of material and real referential implications and inscriptions, which constitutes the sensible-intelligible nature of

[218] Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, Writing Otherwise Than Seeing. Writing and Exteriority in Maurice Blanchot, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2007, p. 23

worldly sense perception and which is prior to language or any other order of determinate symbolic meaning.

Nancy distances himself not only from the thought that the unity of the image grounds in the Kantian systematic unity of reason, or from the Gestalt Psychology's concept of the unity of forms. Actually, in Nancy's account, the Kantian systematic unity of reason, the system or the edifice to the extent that it constructs itself comprises in its own fundamental rules dis-unity, dis-placement and dis-junction. In his account, the Kantian unity places itself always in plurality and within this dissimilar unity, the 'discourse', on its side, forbids itself to appear and to manifest itself into a pure presence-to-self.[219] Nancy explains that the assumption of the unity of the system is based or constructed on a technique borrowed from the *idea*[220] of nature, which is the technique of judgement that operates "in the manner of art". The system of the Critique of pure reason gives the limits and legislates over the regions and the regimes where reason exercises itself, which means that the Critique delimits the end of reason. In delimiting the end of pure reason, Critique is also delimiting the purity of its own instance as Critique. Critique is what delimits the pure and productive relation of pure reason to itself. Nancy explains: "the moment in which philosophy conceives its immaculate conception is precisely the moment in which it tears itself apart, or remains transfixed, torn between an inconceivable virginity and the terrifying presentation of an intolerable face that castrates the philosopher or leaves him to die of laughter in front of the abyss of his own mutilation."[221] Nancy continues: "The schema of the system should present itself a priori. However, it is this "a priori" that transcendental delimitation forbids a priori, which is *the same* as saying that Kant renounced the talent of this presentation, the talent of poetry as pure manifestation."[222] The way Nancy figures out the Kantian unity is by

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[219] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 108

[220] I am using here Nancy's spelling and italics from Logodaedalus.

[221] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 119

[206] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 104

thinking the relation between 'Darstellung' and 'Dichtung', between philosophical presentation and poetic or aesthetic presentation: the struggle between two incongruent forms of presentation – the one by method, which is the logical mathematical method, and the other by manner, which is the aesthetical method of style and tone. Nancy discovers that the systematic unity of the Critique, that is the schematism itself, is actually the "poetic union of unlikes" –

> "The union of the category and of intuition, this "concealed art" of the Critique, the condition of possibility of Darstellung in experience, constitutes here the superior power of Dichtung. […] In Dichtung's capacity for sensibility, or *in the sensible figuration* of this power, that is, in the sensible figuration of the *power of sensible exposition*, is at work what makes the system possible in its functioning and in its very systematicity, since the Architectonic of the *Critique*, whether it be the "art of systems", needs precisely a *schema* in order to present the system, a schema of an "organism" that rests on the "affinity of its parts". And this schema of the system constitutes (or *must* constitute) the ultimate jurisdiction of reason to the extent that it has to expound the cause of its science."[223] (The italics are Nancy's)

In Nancy's account of the image the unity of the image is achieved violently in the imposition of a force. The world appears to us as meaningful in sense perception only on the basis of this fundamental possibility of image formation, and on the basis of the presentability of intelligible, sensible, and visible forms. A fundamental order of imaging and of the con-figuration and presentability of meaningful images allows us to perceive with our senses the world as meaningful. The way Nancy understands the ground of the image is closely and intimately linked to his account of sense and world-disclosure. Because of this intimate link between the image and the sense of the world, images of art cannot simply copy or cannot simply represent or signify worldly existence. They do not simply trace an already given set of meanings we might ascribe to the world.

On the contrary, artistic images participate in a more direct and fundamental way in the order of imaging (in the order of image-formation) by which the world of sense perception and meaning is constituted at a fundamental level. Artistic

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[223] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 97-98

images touch upon, expose, or present the sense of the world, that by, through and in which the world itself emerges into sensible-intelligible visibility.

The ground of the image is the diffuse horizon of sense, which is always withdrawn, absented or distanced from and within any visible meaningful form or worldly appearance. This allows Nancy to state, that if the ground is always withdrawn, then sense itself, the sense that existence is, is always an ungraspable excess over the image and an excess over the world of visible appearance. This means, it (the ground) never presents itself nor is it ever graspable in terms of concepts, signification or determinate meaning. Thus, what concerns Nancy is the means of how to accede to the excess and surplus of sense, to the excess of being in relation to being itself. For him, art and the image open us this means and, Nancy argues, that images of art do accede to the sense, truth, or real of the world itself in its very ungraspability or excess.

The image is the distinct variation of the totality of a distinct and dissimilar sense. The image is always distinct and set apart from things 'present-at-hand' and from any kind of relation of the signifier to the signified. Although artistic images might engage and they do engage with representation, discourse or other forms of signification, they are irreducible to these determinate relations. What sets them apart is the impact they have on us, the way they touch us in a direct and intense mode. Artistic images make sense in a diffuse manner, which is intimately linked to our shared experience of the world. In this way, artistic images respond to "the exigency of the access to sense— its exaction, its exorbitant demand".

(Because of this, for Nancy, artistic images give us access to the real. The real is what is prior to our symbolic knowledge, prior to language and is different from the Lacanian 'real'.

Whereas with the Lacanian real it is arguably to what extent it has sense or meaning or whether it has no meaning at all, appertaining more to the realm of bodily drives and to the form of material existence that resists the symbolic order, the real for Nancy makes sense, it has meaning. A meaning that is not symbolic, but which is nevertheless meaning. It is radical exteriority. The real is the sense of the world in its very excess, its withdrawal, and its ungraspability. The real is pure and simple reality, "detached from any use, impracticable, untreatable, even

untouchable, dense and porous, opaque and diaphanous (…), an impalpable and impassive film (…)".[224])

9. "Image and Violence"

Nancy questions also the relation between the image and violence, which, as we know, dwells in representation and naming. As we can see, truth brings each one of the two in the proximity of the other, keeping them, at the same time, separated and at distance. Nancy points at the similarities between the image and truth. Image is like truth – being actually a kind of truth in its own. 'Images of violence" and 'violent images' are both of them 'double dualities', as both of them, the image and violence, have to be looked at in relation to their double configurations, that of image as copy or truth and that of violence as violence or as truth.

Violence is for Nancy the application of a force that remains, what resists the most. What resists the logic of violence of reducing the other to the same. The remainder is for Nancy a 'vestige'. It remains as passed and as past. It is the sensible exterior that resists its transposition into the non-sensible, the exterior impossible to be internalized. It is not an invisible ideality that 'expects' visualisation. This withdrawal of sense, which is the remainder, is wholly tracing itself right at the visible and as the visible itself. It is what touches us there, right there in front of us. It is the withdrawal of sense that traces itself as the 'sensible' or in a sensible form in general – and this is why it is the realm of the 'arts'.[225]

This said, arts and works of art are inherently violent.

Within this perspective and in relation to truth, Nancy identifies then two types of violence, a positive and a negative one.

The negative type of violence is the violence that "is not quite intentional and exceeds any concern with results", that "denaturates, wrecks, and massacres that which it assaults". It is a violence that takes the meaning and the form away from what it assaults and turns it into nothing other than "the sign of its own rage, an assaulted or violated thing or being" and "is concerned only with its own shattering intrusion. "It is the calculated absence of thought willed by a rigid

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[224] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 76

[225] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 93

intelligence." This type of violence is only interested in placing itself instead and as truth through destroying the whole relation of forces and any conjunction of forces only and entirely for the sake of destroying it. This violence accounts for completeness and worldlessness and denies any dissimilarity referring to nothing other than its own brutal force. In this case violence is a monstration, an exposure of a figure without figure, of a body without body.

In the second case, that of positive violence, if we can speak about a positive violence, we are dealing with the violence of truth. Truth is always violent in its own way, because it irrupts only by questioning and tiring apart an already established order. This violence is not only destroying, but at the same time, it is also destroying itself, as it only irrupts in a withdrawal – that is, "opens and frees a space for the manifest presentation of the true".[226]

What characterizes both types of violence is their impossibility to negotiate, compose, order and share, as they always act as a force that tires a given order apart. Nancy calls this, the "intractable" and understands it as "the mark of truth's closing or truth's opening".[227] For Nancy, violence "is the ambivalent name of that which defines, in all its problematic character, the *habitus* if not the very *ethos* of our world: one that has no other world behind or above us." [228] Put in other words, we live in a world of and as a picture, in (re)presentation. It is the imaginative subject who creates the world and the picture of the world and everything that 'is' is according to this picture. The pure conception of this imaginative subject is schema, or in another word, violence.

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In 1938, Heidegger gave a lecture, "The Age of the World Picture", in which he asserts that Modernity is directly linked to representative thinking and to the conquest of the world as picture. Heidegger looks at representation in relation to the direct meaning of "vor-stellen", to represent, maintaining that it also means 'to set out', to place before oneself, at a neutral and controlled distance. In the age of

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[226] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.18

[227] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.18

[228] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.20

Modernity, the world has been explored and approached by a controlling subject that "frames" it like a window or a photograph, placing this picture within the horizon of a controlling gaze. The world is thus known by having a clear picture of it, and therefore everything that remains outside of this frame, of the horizon patronized by the controlling gaze "is not", it does not exist, because it is not graspable in a picture. Representation was facilitated by men's tendency to approach the world from an 'outside' position – either that of the subject, or that of God. I will come back to this, but at the moment let us return to the Nancy's image.

Representation is the violent ordering and categorizing of everything that is, all beings and entities and their totality as a world. Beyond this world there 'is' nothing. Nothing exists outside of the 'word-picture'. The violence of the habitus and the ethos of our world is the violence of reason, of splitting being from Being, off splitting the object from Being (or presencing). At the same time, 'naming', knowledge and representation are the primal act of the taking-possession of all nature as this world of entities. The violence of 'naming' leaves its marks in the concept ruptured from existence. It 'takes out' the 'here and now' and imposes a 'everywhere and nowhere, an always and never'.

There is an obvious link that violence maintains with the image: violence makes always an image of itself and it is this image what authorizes violence and activates it. Violence consists in imprinting a mark, the sign of violence manifested on the assaulted being or thing. The force of violence consists in imprinting by force the image, the body of this force in and as an embodiment and spacing of this violent act. Violence wants to be demonstrative and monstrative, it wants to show, to expose its effect in an absolute way. Art is for Nancy "violence without violence" as it always presents an opening into a shared worldly existence by its own withdrawal. This is always a here and now, a singular occurrence that transforms itself continuously. Art as truth says something about the world without "being accountable to the world". Nevertheless, there is an undeniable complicity between violence and speech, violence and image, violence and line and violence and marks.

10. "Masked Imagination"

Nancy focuses in this chapter on Heidegger's choice of the death mask as an example for the paradigmatic, exemplary image. Nancy validates Heidegger's choice to reflect on the death mask[229], but at the same time he also points out the implications of Heidegger's step back and sudden withdrawal to fully engage with the complex implications of his own example. However Nancy follows Heidegger in his reading of Kant and engages with the schema-image both as negativity and as creativity.

Heidegger's move to engage with the image in its meaning that comes from the Latin "imago" – the representation of the dead, and to use the example of the death mask, was probably motivated by the release of several books of photographs of the death masks of famous personalities.[230] In 1925 (when these books started to be published), Heidegger gave a series of lectures on Kant's thinking that would result in his book "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics", published for the first time in 1929. Since we can assume that Heidegger did encountered the phenomenon of the death mask for the first time in Benkard's book "Undying Faces" while he was giving these lectures in Marburg, where the book has been published, we can find in this empirical context, a possible reason for Heidegger's peculiar choice of the death mask, as an example to serve him in his analysis of the Kantian schema image.

What Heidegger sets out to do in his reading of Kant, was to highlight a different Kant from underneath the epistemological context that was forced upon his thinking. Resulting from this, Heidegger would also be able to lift the epistemological character of philosophy out of its foundations. In "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics", Heidegger analyses three main thoughts: he shows, first of all, how the problem of Metaphysics is to be posed in Kant, secondly, he identifies wherein the problem lies and thirdly, he uncovers in which way the

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[229] Cf. § 20 Image and Schema, in: Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008, 5th edition; § 20 "Bild und Schema" in: Martin Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Frankfurt am Main: Viitorio Klostermann, 6. Auflage, 1998

[230] Such as: 1925, "Undying Faces" published by Ernst Benkard and showing the death masks of well known people from Renaissance to the First World War including those of Schiller, Wagner, Nietzsche, Brunelleschi and others. In 1926, "Totenmasken" published by Richard Langer and in 1929,"Das letzte Gesicht" (The Last Face) by Egon Friedell.

Kantian thought is already an anticipation of the decline of the metaphysical thinking. In doing this, he concentrates himself on the chapter of Schematism taking a position against the Neo-Kantianism's belief that regarded this chapter as an "insignificant addendum". As opposed to this view, Heidegger claims that the Schematism chapter is what holds together the entire structure of "The Critique of Pure Reason" and not only this, it is also the connective hinge for the three critiques overall. He also argues that the faculty of imagination is what anchored and led to the metaphysics of presence and representation, but at the same time, he claims, imagination is also the vanishing point where temporality postpones constantly the 'present-at-hand' and allows 'Dasein' to go beyond itself due to the temporal structure of the 'synthesis'. Imagination is the activity of the 'synthesis' of the manifold of perception with the concept of understanding. The Kantian imagination initiates a thinking embedded in the history of Western metaphysics of presence that is produced by a subjectivity for itself. However it also yields to a thinking of a "presentation" as "Darstellung" and a "free giving" as "Sichgeben".[231]

Heidegger's analysis of the schema image aims to elucidate the metaphysical conception of truth on the 'adequatio model' as the essence of presence, and secondly, he aims to extract from underneath this, another and different conception of truth as "exhibitio originario" in its literal meaning of an "original self-offering". In arguing that these two notions of truth are intertwined with each other in the Kantian text, he sets out "to lay them patent" or "to lay them bare", which is to outlay them hermeneutically ("hermeneutisch auslegen"). In the course of and as a result of his laying-patent ("freilegen"), Heidegger discovers a new kind of image other than the image as force to represent. The decisive move for his interpretation was Heidegger's decision to take on the problem of 'presentation' ("Darstellung"), rather then focusing on the problem of 'representation' ("Vorstellung"). In these new terms, the schema image becomes a mode of depiction, rather then representation (as 'bringing to mind'). One of the examples chosen by Heidegger to predicate his notion of the schema image was the example of the death mask. The death mask is taken on as a peculiar mode of

[231] This radical reading of Kant led to what is known as the "Davos dispute" between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer in 1929.

depiction – Nancy will speak of the "exemplary example". But before we look at this in detail, let us look first at Kant and his notion of the schema.

10.1. The Kantian Schema

In "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant tried to ground and to justify the mechanisms of the established forms of cognition in the form and nature of self-consciousness. The philosophical task of his system was to find a method to describe the nature of self-consciousness.

In his Critique Kant aims to lay a ground or foundation for the knowledge of all objects of experience in explaining the conditions of possibility of cognition and perception. In doing this, he aims to present, in first place, the possibility of the synthesis of sensible intuition with intelligible forms, meaning concepts, categories, or logical functions. Synthesis is a determination of a certain space and time by which the sensible manifold is related to an object in general according to the categories. Because of its activity, synthesis refers back to imagination, as it relates diversity to an object in general, and because of its unity it also refers back to the understanding and in its totality to reason. Imagination, understanding and reason are the three active faculties that participate in synthesis. For Kant, pure knowledge is grounded and originates in the 'a priori' structures of the faculty of understanding and it is this pure knowledge that makes the experience of the sensible world possible. What we encounter in our experience are not things in themselves, but things, as they appear to us, phenomena – more precisely, a sensible empirical diversity. This sensible manifold appears in space and time. Space and time are the pure forms of intuition; they present the sensible manifold (in time and space), but also their own pure a priori diversity of space and time in themselves. A priori structures are universal and necessary conditions for the possibility of our experience that are not derived from the empirical experience of the world, but are given to us prior to our experience. Kant lays the ground of any experience at all in the a priori structures of our mind. He also aims to show, how both the subject and the objects of our experience are not the result of our experience, but rather the products of a complex set of structures of concepts and categories of our mind, which open the possibility for the existence in the first place.

As already mentioned, Nancy is looking in detail at Kant's Critique in his book, "The discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus", focusing especially on the "architectonical" overall structure of the "edifice" and reflecting on the question of philosophical presentation, of 'Darstellung' as the syncope of 'Dichtung' and on the importance of the schematism theory[232]. In following Heidegger's interpretation of the Critique, Nancy states that reason affirms itself in the Critique and that by or in the gesture of the Critique we are actually confronted with the very gesture of ontology as the self-founded reason itself. What interests Nancy in Logodaedalus is to what content this self-legislation of reason requires an exposition of a pure style, the absence of a seductive voice and tone, and at the same time, the aesthetic form of a 'making-fit of', the creation and invention of a 'toned' Critique able to be the foundation of reason.

Howard Caygill noted that the reception of the Critique was marked by the tension between foundation and limitation[233], as it lays the foundation and, at the same time, it traces also the limits of our experience marking what is beyond the possibility of human knowledge. Following this, the interpretations of the Critique are divided between those who follow the idea of the grounding of the possibility of knowledge and those who are questioning the possibility of foundation itself. We have to place Nancy, along with Heidegger in this second category, where the status of the Critique as discursive "edifice" is analyzed in depth, especially the relation between the "Transcendental Aesthetic" and the "Transcendental Logic".

"The Transcendental Aesthetic" presents time and space as the two forms of a priori intuition that make the experience of sensible objects possible. Kant refers here to space, as the necessary a priori condition for external intuitions in its transcendental ideality and not in its empirical reality, which he affirms nevertheless. The fact that we are able to represent time a priori in our consciousness allows us to perceive objects as related to each other and spatially extended. Time is an a priori form of invitation as a necessary condition, but also a form of sensible intuition. Time is the form of the internal sensible intuition that

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[232] Logodaedalus was initially only the first part of a project that would contain also a second book "Kosmotheoros". However this second book remained unpublished.

[233] Ian James, The Fragmentary Demand. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean Luc Nancy, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 29

allows us to intuit our own selves and to perceive the temporal aspect of our 'inner state'. As an a priori structure of the mind, time makes the experience of external phenomena possible, because these can only be experienced in the form of a temporal succession, but as the immediate condition of our inner experience it is also the inner condition of our feelings and thoughts. Whereas. "The Transcendental Aesthetic" provides the rules for the sensible intuition, "The Transcendental Logic" shows that knowledge is only possible as the unity of intuition. Therefore, "the pure general logic" identifies pure principles that form the canon, the set of rules that are necessary conditions for the unity of the understanding and of reason. The pure general logic cannot be derived from the content of experience. These principles refer to "a form of thinking in general" and have no empirical content; they describe more how different ways of knowing relate to and interact with each other. "The Transcendental Logic" gives the rules for conceptual understanding and rational inference.

The only way to experience and to comprehend any things in their actuality is through an objective reality and through the use of concepts. Kant defines this mediated way of knowing via concepts a judgement. In this sense, concepts are predicates of possible judgements. He refers to these pure non-empirical concepts of understanding in the "Transcendental Analytic", where he also analyses the categories - quantity, quality, relation and modality, the pure concepts of understanding, and other logical functions of understanding, which are again, in accordance with the categories: quantity, quality, relation and modality. What is for Kant at stake here, is that these logical structures open the possibility for content, fact that allows them to actually be a priori conditions for the possibility of knowledge. These logical structures can be synthesized with a sensible content. Kant writes that the necessity of transcendental philosophy is to "offer a general but sufficient characterization of the condition under which objects in harmony with those concepts can be given, for otherwise they would be without all content, and thus will be mere logical forms and not pure concepts of the understanding".[234]

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[234] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 270, A 135 Original text: Imannuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Bd. 1, Hg. W. Weischedel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 14. Aufl, 2000: "[…] daß sie von Begriffen handelt, die sich auf ihre Gegenstände a priori beziehen sollen; mithin kann ihre objective Gültigkeit nicht a poste|riori dargetan werden, denn das würde jene Dignität derselben

What opens the possibility for this unity between the sensible and the intelligible is what Kant calls the "schema" of the concept. The method by which schemas are applied on sensible intuitions is called "schematism". A schema is similar to the synthesis also a spatio-temporal determination, but one that in itself corresponds to a category at any time and everywhere. It is a time-space relation that embodies actual conceptual relations. The faculty of imagination schematises only under the legislative power of understanding and only for speculative interest.

The schema has therefore the same ambivalent function as the Critique itself – on the one hand, it makes knowledge possible, and on the other hand, it is limiting the usage of concepts. The schema dictates how concepts and intuitions have to be united. Kant calls the schema the "representation of a general procedure of the imagination " that provides the concept with a sensible image.[235]

> "[…] the schematism of the understanding through the transcendental synthesis of imagination comes down to nothing other than the unity of the manifold of intuition in inner sense, and thus directly to the unity of apperception, as the function that corresponds to inner sense (to a receptivity). Thus the schemata of the concepts of pure understanding are the true and sole conditions for providing them with a relation to objects, thus with **signification**. […]"[236]

A representation or re-presentation refers to the synthesis, to an active grabbing of that that is presented: it implies both activity and unity. Thus representations are very different from the sensible material they represent which is passive and diverse. In a representation with the help of synthesis, we first apprehend – that is we depict the manifold in a certain time and in a certain space and we figure various parts in time and space that we then reproduce and con-figure. In this sense we can say that representation is the synthesis of that which is presented and thus knowledge. There are different sources for representations (intuition, concept, Idea…) and specific source of representation is for Kant a faculty.

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ganz unberührt lassen, sondern sie muss zugleich Bedingungen, unter welchen Gegenstände in Übereinstimmung mit jenen Begriffen gegeben werden können, in allgemeinen aber hinreichenden Kennzeichen darlegen, widrigenfalls sie ohne Inhalt, mithin bloße logische Formen und nicht reine Verstandesbegriffe sein würden."

[235] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 273, A 140-B180

[236] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 876, A 140-B 145. Original text: Imannuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Bd. 1, Hg. W. Weischedel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 14. Aufl., 2000, A, 145-146, B. 185, S. 192-193

However a faculty can also refer to the different relationships of a representation in general.
The schematism is the process of the imagination in which sensible intuitions and concepts plus categorical principles are synthesised making possible the experience and knowledge of the objects in the world in a unity. This unity is the unity of the apperception, the "I think" of the consciousness.

In his "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant tried to gain the certainty about the world from self-consciousness without using the theological argument. According to the traditional concept of truth, truth is "veritas est adaequatio rei at intellectus", that is: truth is the correspondence of matter to knowledge. This refers back and draws, in the midst of its various interpretations, on the Christian word view according to which God created all things in the world after his idea that was formulated in the divine intellect. Things are true insofar they correspond to the divine idea, but, as human beings were created in the God's image, they can for themselves and in themselves reproduce or produce ideas of things that correspond to ideas created in the divine intellect. The Christian concept of truth indicates, that the truth is the adequation of the divine idea to the things created by God guarantees the truth as the adequation of the human intellect to the created things.

Let us remember the "Cartesian Cogito". Descartes also aimed to find a set of principles through which one could decide, what can be known as true without any doubt. Descartes fought the radical scepticism resulted from the unreliability of empirical perception with the belief, that even if I doubt everything I know about the world, I can still rely on the minimal certainty of the fact, that I am existing as a thinking being. I exist through my doubting of the knowledge I have about the world. For Descartes, the only indubitable knowledge is that as a doubter, as a thinking thing. In order to establish a link to the world outside self-consciousness that can be perceived in a reliable way, Descartes will have to accept God as the bridge between his self-consciousness and the outside empirical world. Kant asks himself, how can subjectivity produce an objective true knowledge of the world without accepting the hypothesis of a pre-existing objectivity of the world. Kant's purpose, as mentioned already, is to establish

subjectivity and cognition as their own foundation. He argues that the multiplicity of perceptions of the world is given to us via "intuition" and that we need a "synthesis" to gain identity from the inherent difference. Repeatable knowledge is the result of the identity provided by the continuity of our self-consciousness. At two different moments of our life we cannot receive two identical perceptions, but we can still, nevertheless establish general laws of nature. This means, that our knowledge of the world via synthesis cannot be only the product of our sensuous experience of nature. There has to be something else in the synthesizing subject, there has to be a link between the thinker and his thoughts. Kant wants to prove that the relationship of the thinker to every thought he might have is the identity of the synthesizing subject. If this is accepted, then Kant can also prove, that the cohesion of philosophical thinking is not coming from an external source. One needs to reflect on, how a subject can move from one case of "I think" to the other and to reflect on the nature of a pure apperception, that is the "thoroughgoing identity of oneself in all possible representation"[237].

We can know the world only through appearance. The world appears to us via the constitutive a priori "categories" of subjectivity. These a priori categories synthesise our intuitions of the world into cognisable forms. Kant claims that we cannot know the world how it is in itself. Our knowledge doesn't follow the objects; they rather depend on how the subject constitutes them as an object "by giving them a repeatable identity in a predicative judgement".[238] Kant is insisting in the distinction between appearances of things and things in themselves and he wants to describe how truthful a priori knowledge is possible through looking at the applications of pure concepts to intuitions. As an example for truthful a priori knowledge whose truth cannot be proved empirically, he names different undoubtedly true propositions of Mathematics. Kant's conclusion is thus, that there has to be something in us that makes a priori knowledge possible. Kant wants to give a systematic exposition and explanation of how cognition and morality are possible and aims to establish what is the general case. He is

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[237] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 227, A 116

[238] Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, p. 17

concerned with the general principles and rules for the possibility of cognition and perception and not with singular and individual occurrences.

Kant defines “intuition” (Anschauung) as the immediate relation between the subject’s perception and a given object. The object has to be given to us, so that perception precedes the concept. Kant writes that the perception that gives the material for the concept is the only character of objective reality. Appearances are therefore objects as given to us, in their actuality. The things in themselves are not given to us.

There are “empirical intuitions” and “pure intuitions”. An empirical intuition is the sensation of the hardness of a piece of rock. The pure intuition is the framework within which we can apprehend things - time and space. We only perceive things given to our senses in a spatial and temporal form. Time and space are the a priori forms of pure intuition. Understanding distributes intuitions to higher, general categories or concepts. Categories are a priori forms of judgement and synthesis that are applicable to everything that is an object. The a priori given categories in the faculty of understanding synthesise intuitions into concepts. This is only possible, with the help of a mediator, because pure forms of understanding cannot be applied on something that is given empirically. Via the schema, our understanding creates empirical equivalents for the a priori categories. Cognition is possible because of, on the one hand, the “receptive sensuousness” that gives us the intuitions and, on the other, the “spontaneous understanding” that thinks of objects as perceivable objects and applies on them categories and concepts (it synthesises and schematises).

The faculty of imagination in the first A version of the “Critique of Pure Reason”, is both what reproduces intuitions without the object of intuition being present and what organizes (or synthesises) the multiplicity of sensuous intuitions into a coherent content by producing associations. Here imagination is productive and receptive. However productivity is supposed to be the function of understanding that is necessary for the synthesis of intuitions, whereas receptivity is the function of the sensible and sensuous. This would thus suggest an ambiguity between the functions of intuitions and concepts. Consequently, in the second version B of the Critique from 1878, Kant changes the role of the faculty of imagination. The productive imagination is now subordinated to the categories of understanding,

because Kant wanted to subsume all synthesis under the faculty of understanding. The problem encountered here by Kant is that of marking the limit between spontaneity and receptivity. Imagination organizes the images given in intuition into "schemata". The schemata are subsumed and synthesised under the categories and the concepts. Imagination is limited by the "compulsion of understanding" and schemata are "nothing but determinations of time a priori according to rules"[239].

Kant explains that categories and concepts are distinct from sensuous intuition. The subsumtion of a perceivable object under a concept of understanding implies that the image, the representation, of the object must be identical, "homogeneous", with the content of the concept or it must at least belong to the content of the concept so that we can speak of the subsumtion of an object under its concept. Thus pure concepts of the understanding have to be in accordance to this, but they are in no way similar to sensuous intuitions. Pure concepts are entirely "inhomogeneous" and never encountered in any intuition. A priori categories and concepts get an empirical content only via the schemata. We apprehend the inherently particular sensuous manifold as coherent entities of same kind via concepts made sensuous by the schemata. The "transcendental" schema is the linking bridge, the mediator, the mediating representation between sensibility and understanding that facilitates the subsumtion of an intuitively apprehended object under a concept. And the "Schematismus" is the procedure that provides the concept with its corresponding image.

"The synthetic unity of self-consciousness" is the fact that "I think" that needs to shadow all my representations. I can become aware of my own self-consciousness in time and be aware of the unifying principle for my representations only through the synthesis of different moments of consciousness. This synthesis is bound to an act of "spontaneity" and is "self-caused". This spontaneity cannot be part of the sensuousness, as, in such a case, we would both have to and want to find the "first cause" or we would have to ground a cause in another cause ad infinitum. The causally determined world makes available for us the realm of the sensuous via

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[239] Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, p. 28

intuitions. These intuitions are synthesised by our apprehension according to categories and the principles of judgement. Kant also claims, that my inner experience, what he calls 'the inner sense', is only possible in relation to a presupposed external experience. The fact that I can grasp the manifold of sensible appearances and representations in one consciousness is the condition for naming them my representations. The mind possesses only a representation of the identity of a function through which it combines the manifold intuition into an object and this object is the representation of "I think". If this wouldn't be possible, then my self would be the divided sum of as many and as different ideas of which I am conscious.[240]

Kant is confronted here with a twofold difficulty. On the one hand, the assertion that the "I" is self-caused is itself problematic. The 'I' cannot be available as an intuition, since the 'I think', which is the "synthetic unity of self-consciousness that allows me to be aware of my identity at any moment across time, must be able to accompany all my representations. On the other hand, the synthesis of the 'I' needs to be self-caused, because it cannot be grounded in or caused by something else, as this would imply the search for this first cause or ground. The 'I' needs to be an act of the spontaneity of understanding and not of the sensuous that is causally determined. The 'I' is the synthesizing process that allows the subject to identify itself, and the identity of the self is and must be independent from the given sensuous manifold. For Kant, the 'I' is what has a synthetic unity and what makes a set of cognitive rules that process intuitions into the unity of experience. The problem of the synthetic unity of the 'I' lies in the fact that, on the one hand, Kant demonstrates that it cannot depend on empirical perception and is thus self-caused, but on the other hand, he claims that empirical perception is a necessary condition for it. "The pure synthesis of understanding is the a priori foundation of the empirical synthesis"[241], which is the 'I' that accompanies all my experiences. The 'I' thus is more than the appearance of an "inner sense", since it seems that it needs to have an ontological status. This 'pure spontaneity' must be

[240] Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, p. 21

[241] Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, p. 140

given, so that the simple being of self-consciousness can be presupposed. Self-consciousness is not cognition of oneself, because cognition is only possible for what is given as appearance. The nature of self-consciousness cannot be completely understood by splitting the "I" into subject and object, since full cognition would be the intuition of something intelligible. This would be the self-caused intuition of a self-caused synthesis of intuitions, which would require something like an 'intellectual intuition'. However, an 'intellectual intuition' would contradict Kant's idea that intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without intuitions are empty, and therefore he denies the existence of any thing like this. In relation to this problem that has been acknowledged by Kant himself, he writes in "Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics", that the "representation of apperception, the 'I' is in fact nothing more than the feeling of an existence without the least concept and only a representation of that which all thinking relates".[242] Thus, we could assume, that 'feeling' might also refer to the thought of a relation between the object and the subject's pleasure or displeasure, a thought that will allow Kant to reflect on and to acknowledge the significance of aesthetical experience.

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I want to return now to Nancy's text from "The Ground of the Image" and more precisely to a passage from the second chapter, "Image and Violence". Nancy writes here: " The image not only exceeds the form, the aspect, the calm surface of representation, but in order to do so, it must draw upon a ground – or groundlessness – of excessive power, the ground of Being. The image must be imagined: that is to say, it must extract from its absence the unity of force that the thing merely at hand does not present. Imagination is not the faculty of representing something in absence; it is the force that draws the form of presence out of absence: that is the force of "self-presenting". The resource necessary for this must be in itself excessive."[243]

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[242] Quotation after: Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, p. 23

[243] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 22

Kant writes: "This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty"[244], and Nancy claims that Kant knew exactly that the force of imagination, or its secret lies in the power of the schema to imagine itself and to imagine imagination; the secret of "absolute withdrawal of power into the ground of power itself by which it is forced to invent itself at every moment" and the mystery of what doesn't envelop a secret, but which is illuminated from itself.[245] And, he also argues, that it is precisely this mystery with which painting "implants" itself without trying to either resolve it nor to make it an object of belief. The secret of schematism is nothing that can be revealed or unveiled, since every unveiling would be at the same time a new veiling. This is what is also at stake in painting – the "mystery of birth itself, of being in the world and being-a-world", the "mystery of incarnation".

"The art concealed in the depths of the soul" is the force and power of the 'pure image' itself, whose intimacy cannot be violated. It is the power of the pure image that makes experience possible, "whichever one" form and unity of a composite possible and the presence of and to a world possible. The transcendental schematism is the force of the object and of a world of objects. This pure image is a formidable "force-sign" through, which a presence distinguishes itself from a ground of restlessness and discomposure "on which nothing can be built".

It is the "force-sign" articulated in the unity that opens the possibility for the object and for the subject, for presence in general. The pure image or schema is per se violent.

> "It must irrupt, tear itself from the dispersed multiplicity, resisting and reducing that multiplicity; it must grasp itself, as if with claws or pincers,

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[244] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 14th printing, p. 273, B 181. Original text: "Dieser Schematismus unseres Verstandes, in Ansehnung der Erscheinungen und ihrer blossen Form, ist eine verborgene Kunst in den Tiefen der menschlichen Seele, deren wahre Handgriffe wir der Natur schwerlich jemals abraten, und sie unverdeckt vor Augen legen werden." (I. Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 14. Aufl, 2000, B 181, 182; A 142)

[245] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 136

> out of nothing, out of the absolute non-unity that first is given of partes extra partes of a dispersed exteriority; unity must thus relate itself to itself in itself in order to present itself and thus externalize itself, while also excluding from itself that which is not and ought not to be, that of which it is the refusal and the violent reduction." [246]

Kant explains that the method or rule of com-posing or synthesising is the form of activity that underlines the creation of this image and it is characterized as a form of movement. To illustrate this he gives the example of the image of five points. When one grasps this image, one grasps the schema *of* number as such or the number as schema. The schema of the concept is the representation of a *general* method by means of which the imagination creates an image for the concept. Categories, as 'a priori' forms of reason, have each one of them their own transcendental schema. Kant writes that this "pure image […] of all objects of the senses in general is time" and Nancy explains that this is so because the very moment of synthesis, which is the production of unity, is time. "Time is the very unity that anticipates itself and succeeds itself in projecting itself endlessly in advance of itself, grasping at each moment – in this ungraspable instant – the present in which the totality of space presence itself, in which its curving expanse is surveyed in a single view, from a perspective in which time is both the blind stop and the obscure vanishing point."[247] Time is the 'a priori' form of the 'inner sense' and as the faculty of imagination determines the 'inner sense', it also determines time. As a result, schemata are 'a priori' determinations of time according to specific rules. Schema is the product of the faculty of imagination, which is the ability to represent an object in intuition, even if the object is not present; imagination provides reason with "intuitive matter" on which 'the inner sense' can leave its trace, that is to determine. The image, the schema records the activity of the understanding and it also reflects "the kinetic form of a concept" The pure concept, Kant defines it as the "*forma formans*", must be recognized in what it is formed, in "*forma formata*". Consequently, the concept has to be imagined, which is embodied in an image, and it has to form (trans-form) the matter of intuition into an image by imagining the image-object.

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[246] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 23

[247] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 23

The schema of quantity is the schema of a pure concept of understanding, and it is the 'number-as-schema', the rule of com-position, the rule of "making-into-the-one", the "putting-into-picture", the "making-image" (Nancy). Number is the unity of 'synthesis' of the manifold given. In apprehending this unity of the 'number-as-schema', the 'I' produces time itself.

The schema, the pure image or time is the image of all images; it is what anticipates itself and what produces unity as such. It is a force that violently retracts the dispersed and disseminated exteriority while, at the very point of the consolidated folding, it also inserts a joint, a chasm, a disrupture or a fissure in the continuity of ex-tension. For Nancy, the schema is the "earthquake" in 'the there-is in general' that opens the chasm of presence. The schema draws form as presence out of the absence of noth-a-thing, of anything, of the vanishing point of things; therefore presence is also there where there is absence and this means that presence returns to itself only where there was no being in itself. With Heidegger Nancy writes: "Where being was in itself, presence will no longer return to itself: it is thus that being is, or will be, for itself."[248] Not the being as object ruptured from its own indistinct context, but 'Being as noth-a-thing' (Heidegger). The image, understood ontologically and as an existential, is the only way in which beings and 'not-things' can present itself to us. And, unity forms an image – "bildet ein Bild" – of something that not only has or is without image, but without identity, without unity. Through the image some thing presents itself by resembling itself and in the end by being itself. The image is existence as being open and as coming. Before resemblance there is gathering and bringing itself together, the image assembles itself in order to resemble itself. In doing this, form must make itself distinct from the ground, from the dispersed multiplicity without unity; it must withdraw itself from this exterior. That is: "being is torn away from being" and "it is the image that tears itself away".[249] In the image that makes every image possible, the schema, gestates always and right from the beginning. This force is the schema that will "torn being away from being" and that will open

[248] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 23

[249] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 23

the ground of the image to its very bottom, "to the depthless underside of its presentation"[250], displaying and manifesting the prodigious sigh that warns and brings to light, that exhibits presence. "*Aletheuin*" is what the image is, its ability and power for 'truthing' - speaking, discovering, uncovering, telling, touching, opening, the imminence of truth.[251]

Time and space as 'a priori' forms have to anticipate themselves; they have already taken place in order to take place. Time and space opened the opening itself in order to open the possibility of a world. They have already imagined the imagination itself in order to imagine representation. As we have seen already, experience is first of all image, which is the possibility of presentation, the display of presence and the bringing to show. Presence means being present, but also the presentation of being. Everything that is, presents itself in the form of an image that I provide for myself or that gives itself to me. Any imagining subjectivity is also the objectivity of the image. And, Nancy writes, the condition of the "subject of representation" can only be something that is not yet either subject or object.

Representation comes from the Latin "*representatio*", which is an accentuated form of presentation that is destined for a specific gaze. Representation makes something observable and exposes it with insistence. In Greek, representation is "*hypotyposis*", which refers to the presentation of the lines of a figure. The subject of representation is what is not yet either subject or object; it is figure, form, certain unity; it is the making of an image, the putting into image, the gathering and assembling into an image; it is "Ein-bildung" – the formation of the one, the force of the one. The possibility and potential for the "Einbildung" is what makes the subject a subject and the object an object. Thus, it is "Einbildung" itself that marks and proclaims the "infinite antecedence" of the subject "to every possible object".[252]

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[250] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 24

[251] Cf. Book IV of Aristotle's "Nichomachean Ethics", 1139b15-18

[252] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 83

The schema is what gives itself before all else; it is what makes every image possible, the "fore-seeing of the image, the opening to a view in general". The schema fore-sees, it "opens the vision of the unity of the concept and sensible material". The schema is not given to us by our empirical experience of the world; it is a pure non-sensible image that bears already in itself the unity of the manifold without containing it, as no manifold has been given to it yet. The foreseeing of the schema is an image of an image, the gathering together, a pure image of the presentation of the manifold as unity in general. "The schema foresees and in sum pre-(s)-ents self-presenting", "es vor-bildet, es bildet vor das Bild".[253] The schema imagines or images the imagination itself. It presents the ground from which it emerges. Therefore, as Heidegger showed in his interpretation of the schema, the image cannot be and never is only representation meaning only figuration and fiction. The schema is representation, but more than this it is presentation, "Darstellung".

It is in the following passage, that Nancy announces once again his understanding of the image and of the "*kant-ian"* unity:

> "an image is (the fact) that and the way in which something forms itself in and as one. An image is the making-one, the making-itself-one of something. This "one" is not unity as opposed to multiplicity: it is the possibility that anything at all, including something multiple or fluid, may come to presence; which is to say that, as some thing or event, it may bring itself out of the confused and incessantly dissolved dispersion of sensible givens in order to give itself to be seen. In order to make something to be seen. To give itself – to be given – to be seen coming out of the non-visible and the non-seeing: for we understand that in the imagination thus envisaged, the object and the subject are given together and give themselves to one another, or even in one another, ein ins andere hinein sich bildend. "[254]

In his "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant places the schema, the imageless image, in a moment that happens previously to the first encounter with the materiality of the manifold. In this, "the priority of the look over the look", Heidegger discovers and

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[253] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 83

[254] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 84

unveils the impossibility of the self-originating look. For Heidegger the look can never coincide with itself, which means that it cannot complete itself.

The most primordial level for Dasein to envisage the world is on a pre-theoretical and pre-reflexive level, in an openness-towards-something, towards the world. But Dasein is or it ex-sists as and in the mode of potentiality, possibility and power (in terms of an ability to become). The being of Dasein is possibility and not primarily actuality and thus, Heidegger claims in "Being and Time" that Dasein is essentially incomplete, open. Dasein is essentially and irreducibly in excess of itself, a 'not yet', and excess of actuality, a projection in and of the future, never to be realized or touched upon. Dasein has and is the look and therefore, the look cannot be complete either. To imagine itself as the one, the one and anyone requires the absence of the one, which means that it requires its own absence. Dasein as we have seen previously, ex-sists, projects itself, throws itself ahead of itself. For Heidegger, the possibility, of the being of Dasein that is irreducibly possible is death itself. Dasein ex-sits towards its death – a death that remains always in the future, something to come. The gaze of a dead man symbolizes and is the image that "looks without seeing and sees without looking".

Nancy is interested in the fact that Heidegger is glossing over the concealing role of the mask, engaging with the mask only as a means of "self-showing". The reason for Heidegger's abrupt abandonment of his example before discussing all the meanings of the death mask, lies for Nancy, in his not-being-able to see the look of the death mask also as "the death of the look", the death of Dasein ('s possibilities towards death). That is not a look that shows the look, but the look as a mask, which is a look that withdraws and conceals the look and that refuses to look.

Nancy writes: "in the ground of the image there is the imagination, and in the ground of the imagination there is the other, the look of the other, that is, the look onto the other and the other as look – which also opens, consequently, as another of the look, a fore-seeing non-look."[255]

In "The Muses" Nancy puts this in other words:

> "The gesture of the first imager, man puts himself outside its self, even before being a self. Man figured himself as the similar that came before

[255] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.97

> the self, the look of the self as the other, that figured it, what the self was – the self as the stranger, the look of the other. The 'I' is then the "the-being-one-in-the-other". "The same is the same without ever returning to itself, and this is how it identifies with itself. The same is the same of an identity that alters itself from birth, thirsting after a self that has never yet been self, and whose birth is already alteration, and who appropriates itself as this very alteration."[256]

What is at stake here is that the one of the image – which is the unity of the image – comes not from an auto-intuited self, but from the other and from the self as other. The self that knows itself by being the other for the self, and the self that is always the other. Perceptional forms come to us only via disunity, distance and withdrawal, and this is the only way man can imagine and foresee.

The image re-presents a thing only inasmuch as it says of the thing that it is and how it is. This is also how the image affirms its being that thing. Therefore, the image is the sameness of that thing, but it is a distinct sameness. The thing-as-image is different from the thing as being there, available, (a general "vorhanden" in Heideggerian sense) as given in sensible form for the subject's intuition. The image is more then the representation of the thing, as it presents not only the way the thing is, but also the ways beyond its way of being, the noth-a-thing. In Kant's case, the schema is what stands and makes the connection between reason and intuition, between the intelligible and the sensible. The schema represents the thing as an image and the image of this thing is at the same time a 'copy', the reproduction of the schema of the concept.

For Nancy, Kant's thinking was, in the history of modern age, the first moment, when the image was set outside the order of representation. The image and the faculty of imagination was from then on "presentative, appresentative, or apperceptive"[257]. Man was from then on the controlling agent that images and places 'in-front-of-itself ("vor-stellen") all present and existent entities, as opposed and in relation to itself. Being, as the totality of all entities, is "objected" and represented for and in front of man. Being exists and is an entity (Seiendes) only as and in so far as it is 'placed' ("gestellt") in front of the image-synthesis of man ("vortellend-herstellenden Menschen). Being-image is being in

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[256] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 70

[257] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 81

representation, a 'being in the know' or being in something, being prepared and disposed, equipped and assembled ("das Bescheid-wissen, das Gerüstetsein und sich darauf Einrichten"). In man's faculty of imagination and in its 'en-forcement' by the subject, being turned into its object. Entities are always to face the subject and truth became the certainty of the subject's imagination. Being became the concreteness of imagination and the subject 'the off shore ground' on which everything is layered.[258] Imagination is sensing and perceiving for itself, 'ad subiectum' – that is, perceiving on, to, by the ground, perceiving next to and towards the ground.

The imaginative subject sets everything in the world in front of itself, across of itself and produces as such its objects. Everything, including the subject itself, becomes thus object for knowledge, knowledge whose 'truth' lies, as mentioned, in the certainty of the subject's imagination and its existence as presence. The modern man in becoming the imaginative subject becomes also the source and representative of the knowledge of the world, understood as the totality of Being. Being, in the totality of its entities is now only inasmuch as the subject foresees it, only inasmuch as it con-fronts the imaginative and productive subject. Everything is only if it is according to and in front and towards the imaginative subject. What is important for Nancy is the fact that Kant's presentation of the faculty of imagination produces as such a knowledge that comes from the image, from the image as subject and from the image as object – the image is what produces both, the subject and the object. Things are only known in so far as they are presented in and as an image. What is objectively present is (re)presented in and as some image. The Kantian subject acts and functions like a God that imagines, "he imagines the moral world and he imagines himself as the light of this world" and "is nothing other than the imagination that creates the world".[259]

Nancy shows here that Kant rather than questioning, he only reinterpreted the '*adequatio*' theory of truth, as truth (or light) is what is at stake here. The Christian world-view implies the Christian belief that all things in the world were created by God after an Idea that originates and is founded in the divine intellect.

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[258] Cf. Martin Heidegger, Die Zeit des Weltbildes, in: Holzwege, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 7. Auflage, 1994, p. 69-113

[259] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 83

Thus created things were true – according to this view – in so far as they corresponded with the divine Idea. God created human beings in his image, and therefore they can produce and reproduce the ideas of the things that were created in accordance with the divine Idea. "Veritas est adaequatio rei ad intellectum" is the way truth is understood according to the Christian World-view. In Kant, something is true when it is in accordance to the rational concept of its essence. Thus the divine order has been only replaced by the rational order and the foundation and the ground of truth is now rationality and cognition.

Man imaged thus world and the world became an image, "Weltbild".[260] The subject imagined the unimaginable, he imagined himself and he imagined the world. His first knowledge was the knowledge of his own self that is outside of the self – the finite self that puts itself in front of itself and images thus itself without limit. The schema for man is, for Nancy, "self outside self", the outside standing for self.[261] The subject imagined the world and the unimaginable, knowledge and non-knowledge. In between these two extremities (in between 'thingness and 'nothingness'), Nancy explains, lies "technics" or "art" (*tekhné* or *ars*), the knowledge and know-how of man's own strangeness, its self that is not a self, its alterity present from birth, the original 'monster' and its endless 'monstration'. The image, as the 'monster' of presence, who exhibits the non-essence, the abyss of presence, exited presence as "bottomless appearance – aperity, resemblance without original", that is as the origin itself of the presence that presences itself in coming forward, in and as becoming.

In "The Muses", Nancy refers to the technicity of art as the production of revelation, thought as a materiality and immediacy unveiled in its truth. The role of the technics, of the know-how, is to 'to put the work out of work', to bring the work outside of itself in the locus where it can touch the infinite. For Nancy, art is always coming to an end, which is, the beginning of plurality. Technics here corresponds to Heidegger's '*tekhné*', to preoccupation, manipulation and production. It is the technics of existence, its knowledge and know-how, which is the relation to the endless ends, to the singular plurality. This thought is also the

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[260] Cf. Martin Heidegger, Die Zeit des Weltbildes, in: Martin Heidegger, Holzwege, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 7. Auflage, 1994, p. 69-113

[261] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 69

origin of Nancy's belief in the endlessly multiplying origin of art – in contradiction to Heidegger's understanding of the artwork as the place where truth is being put to work, as a gathering and sameness that leads him to think the common origin of arts. Art and the artwork led the artist, Nancy asserts, always to an end that is always a coming, passage, vestige, a postponement right from the beginning. Technics, Nancy writes, is "the pure production of form", but not of any form, but of form as "beauty", as form that is absolutely valid in itself and for itself. And, in following Kant, he explains that this kind of form is the form that exceeds all forms, an excess of form; that is the Kantian "Sublime" in which the subject, the imagination imagines itself as unimaginable or unimagining, and thus again, as productive of itself even unto its failure, productive of its limit and of the surpassing of its limit.[262] In the pure production of the sublime, the excess of all form, "imagination imagines itself as unimaginable or unimagining".[263]

The Kantian subject ex-pands and ex-tends Being between the two extremes: its transcendental temporality and its unconditioned freedom. Time is what makes the synthesis of the 'I' and the synthesis of the given manifold in the schema of its singular appearance possible and also what enables its presentation in the unity of a com-position and con-figuration of the image. We should probably remember here Blanchot's reading of Bataille's 'limit experience', the result of man's "essential lack" that allows him to 'affirm' and to appropriate a 'beyond-of-knowledge' and Being's new status: "the sovereignty of Being without being in the becoming without end of a death impossible to die".[264] (Death is with Heidegger an excess of Dasein's possibility, an ability that is irreducible possible and whose reality is felt in every instant. A virtual possibility embodied in the touch on the world and on Dasein who senses its contractive limit. Death is always something irreducibly to come, always in the future, always postponed. Death is the end towards which existence ek-sists, at once the very closure of

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[262] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.81

[263] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.81

[264] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, trans. By Susan Hanson, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 (1993), p. 209

existence and its beginning. It is the ownmost possibility of a human being, the possibility in which the authentic 'ownness' can be appropriated and realized.

" Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition [in general, a unity] due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition."[265] The schema, the pure, non-sensible image of quantity is 'one' as "the schema of the one as successive to itself".[266] This is what makes in first place the image and representation and its unity and unicity possible.

So between the imaginable and the unimaginable there is possibility and potentiality, the opening, the passage and coming to the infinite, to the singular plurality, to the endless diffuse dissimilation and multiplicity of sense. And what is able to connect to this diffuse multiple sense is art as the '*tekhne*' that puts the work of art in proximity to infinity, touching the limit and being at limit with the untouchable. Art is the pure production of "beauty", signifying nothing else than itself.[267]

For Kant, it is the faculty of understanding of the subject that produces this unity, which means that the subject imagines the unity of the successive presentation of the subject as subject-of-a-representation. This is, after Kant, the primary condition for the schematism of representation in general. This is the potency that opens at first hand the possibility and every possibility for being a thing and for the image – being as it is, is only presented in and as an image.

The subject must thus produce its own unity each successive time when it is facing its own self as a subject of representation, each time the self is confronted with its self outside itself. This is the condition for any image and therefore for every object and for every representation, for any being as image. The image is the singular and finite appearance of an infinite and indistinct chaotic flux. It is the finite time-space occurrence of the dissimilar 'nothingness', the unknown and the untouchable. The image is the distinct of the indistinct. Man's schema, the

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[265] After: Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.81; I. Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 14. Aufl., 2000, B 183; A 143, p. 191

[266] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p.81

[267] Ian James, The Fragmentary Demand. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean Luc Nancy, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 220-221

unity of the self outside self, man's own strangeness, its being-its-own-foreigner, is what makes the unity and unicity of the image and of representation possible. The image opens the vision of an object for the subject, it creates and shows the 'look' ("Aussicht") of the object and directs the gaze, it spaces the visible and the invisible. 'Vision' is the apparition, that is the presence of the thing for the subject and the 'sight' is the saying and the performative enunciation of a 'vision'. The image makes it possible to visibly accede to the invisible. It 'places' into presence and makes possible the taking place of sense. The schema is the formation; the sudden con-figuration that separates the distinct and finite form from the indistinct infinite and that forms form and, at the same time, unifies forms according to their sameness. The schema is tension and torsion that gathers in itself in a completion without end, a "finite finishing" that is an "infinite finishing".[268] The schema is a traced line that "con-figures by virtue of no other essence than the inimitable existence of its singularity. An existence immediately lost, a model abandoned, a mold overturned";[269] "a sort of ad hoc formation of the image always renewed, but never completed in the unique form of the real".[270]

The other extremity of the subject's imagination is freedom. For Bataille this is realized in "the essential lack", that is man's negation of it's own negation, the affirmation of the one negation that has nothing left to negate; the affirmation that makes the impossible possible, that imagines the unimaginable, that experiences the unknown when everything is known. This, the non-representation of the world in "an image of the world as a rational or reasonable whole endowed with ends", this is man's possibility for freedom. The Kantian subject is the imagination that imagines the world, "the *intuitus originarius*", Kant's God, who "imagines the moral world and he imagines himself as the light of this world".[271] It is the "*intuitus originarius*" that controls the thought of the "*intuitus derivatus*", which is the imagination that produces representations. Time and freedom, the two limits

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[268] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 87

[269] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 64

[270] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 82

[271] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 83

of imagination, they make the moral world and the imagining subject possible, and have to come therefore from before the subject and "from before themselves: in order to take place they have already taken place. In order to open the possibility of a world and of experience, they have already opened this opening itself".[272]

Imagination, "Ein-bildung" (putting-into-image) is the 'making-image', the subjectivisation of the subject and the objectivisation of the object. "Ein-bildung", Nancy explains, is the "Einung of Bild", its "Einigung", "the uni-fication in Bild or in image", "the making-one", or "the bringing-into-the-one-of-the-Bild". This is, Nancy argues, the "for-seeing of the image" prior to any image, "the opening of a view in general", the Kantian schema, which for-sees the unification of the concept […] and the sensible material […]". The schema is the pure non-sensible image, because it is the unity of the manifold before any manifold is given to it. The schema is more or less than the pure unity of the "One" that is only the "One". The schema is an image of the image of the "One", it for-sees the image before it gathers the image in itself, and it shows the way something presents itself in general and only as such. In this sense the schema presents the presentation of the image, it "presents self-presenting". What is thus presented in the schema is self-imagination itself: "es bildet, es vor-bildet, it performs or models the Bild". The schema exposes the ground from which it emerges. What interests Nancy in the Kantian schema is the fact that here, in the schema, lies a possibility for the image that is more than ordinary representation or fiction. And from this thought, Nancy can develop his thinking in untying the artistic image from the order of signification and representation and to develop his own art-ontology. The image, in his understanding, presents that something is and how it is in the "One" of the image, in which case the schema of the "One" is the only possibility for anything to come to presence the only possibility for the distinct to emerge from the indistinct.

10.1.1. Excursus: The Sublime

One experiences the sublime, or better the feeling of the sublime when faced with a formless or de-formed immensity and power. The feeling of the sublime is

[272] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 83

entirely subjective and in it, imagination faces its own limit – this is to say, that imagination knows its limit in a simultaneous comprehension of the experienced inadequacy of a maximum and the blowback or the repulsion caused by its inability to extend its limits. This immensity that causes imagination to stare at its own impotency to (re)present, to bring-into-image, might initially be assumed to be encountered in relation to the sensible Nature. However, this shows itself to be the case only as a projection. Kant claims that it is reason itself that causes and forces imagination to unite the immensity of the sensible manifold into a whole. Reason forces imagination to sense the limit of its power and to subsume itself to the power of reason. The whole into which reason forces imagination to unite the limitless sensible manifold given in the world is the Idea of the sensible grounded in a suprasensible, or in the intelligible. The sublime refers to an unlimited and formless that allows us to feel a purposiveness that is independent from nature. The sublime opens the possibility for a purposiveness that results from our capacity to transcend nature by reason. It doesn't depend on empirical scale, because it depends on the Idea.

"The Sublime corresponds in its effect to "a pretension" of "our reason [which] demands absolute totality as a real idea […]"[273]. It is this Idea that allows us to think of a beyond or a more of that that can be realised empirically. Thus, the sublime cannot be measured by our senses and it cannot obey to any rules given by our understanding (as it cannot be given in our intuition and therefore we cannot conceptualise it). "This pain stems from the constitutive failure of the sublime presentation: the sublime articulates itself, on and in an ability, a radical insufficiency of the mind to present (to itself) its end."[274] The sublime is what points at the subject's limits with respect to its sensuous relation to nature – and to the pain and alienation caused by this failure: it "concerns only those ideas of reason, which though they cannot be exhibited adequately, are aroused and called

[273] Quotation after: Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 99

[274] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 103

to mind *by this very inadequacy* [italics are Nancy's], which can be exhibited in sensibility."[275]

The fact that we have the sense of its limitation implies that we have also a capacity for an understanding not limited to and by the sensible. In the sublime, we feel the chance and the fascination to transcend our sensuous experience and to be on a threshold to something like a possible second nature. This second nature is nevertheless unable to present itself, because it is the pure legality of reason and the foundation of its own autonomy. Kant explains that if one tries to realize the ideal in an example this would lead to the collapse of its own edifying structure. The 'good' of the Idea, if brought in appearance, will appear suspect and fictional. We ourselves won't believe in it. What is sensed and encountered in the feeling of the sublime, this 'second nature', is precisely this impossibility and inadequation of the presentation of the grounding law of reason itself. In this sense, the sublime is dis-placement, it is the place of dis-placement. "The sensible sense of absolute sense" is what makes for the "supreme beauty, or the brilliant flash of truth" to go beyond itself and to expand and extend into the "sublime" that becomes "the terrible", "the grotesque", "an implosion of irony" or even "the simple position of the ready-made".[276] The difference between "exaggeration" and " disproportion" is infinitesimal, Nancy explains, the fleeting difference of an instant that allows the one to be mistaken for the other and both at the same time. Thus the sublime can be either the sublime manifestation of the Critique in the face of the writer of philosophical prose or the grotesque and terrifying mask of the same.

"The sublime is written"[277], Nancy explains, as it "occupies the thin and perilous line of partition [partage] that Dichtung traces, the line that cuts and disarticulates, die *kante* of philosophy". For Kant the nature's style in the sublime is "simplicity" that he exposes it as the style of morality. Thus Nancy, asserts that apathy and the absence of affect and tone, of style, that Kant claims to be the true nobility of the

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[275] Quotation after: Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 103; from: Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987, p. 106

[276] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Muses, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 90

[277] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 99

sublime, is nothing else than the "edifice", the architectonic of the system – that is "the palliative [pallium] of presentation, a *manner of writing*: prose, a *posture* […]"[278], a style without style. The sublime is like "the well-armored treatise of mathematics"[279].

10.2. Heidegger's Interpretation of the Image

After engaging with what is at stake in the Kantian schema, Nancy moves forward at Heidegger's attempt to "lay bare" the secret of the schematism, to image the self-imagining of the schema. Nancy points exactly at which text he is looking: the section 20, "Image and Schema" from "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics". In criticizing the tradition of Metaphysics of the Western thought, Heidegger is questioning the status of the image as finitude. His understanding of the image comes from the meaning of the Latin word 'imago', which is the representation of the dead and Nancy will connect it also to 'imago', to '*imitor*' and '*aemulus*' that means emulator or rival. In following Heidegger's analysis of the schematism, Nancy aims to show to what extent Heidegger successfully accomplished what he aimed for.

To evoke the pure image that makes every image possible in first place, Heidegger will take the death mask as an example. The death mask is the objective adequation of a dead person's features, since it is made as a physical mould of the face of a dead person. The death mask is the representation of the visage, the "Antlitz" of a dead person, and this representation can additionally be itself reproduced and thus 're-presented' again. The encounter with the death mask is not something that happens usually and 'the look' depicted in it is so direct and real, that it results in most cases in a neglection of and an unawareness of the material composition of the thing; in a concentration on and perceiving of the look of the mask as something real. The viewer's gaze penetrates the look of the mask and it infiltrates life in the dead person's look. The death mask represents the expression of a face in the moment it died, and is characterized by

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[278] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p.102

[279] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Discourse of the Syncope. Logodaedalus, trans. Saul Anton, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 102

the dissimilar similarity between a living person's and a frozen in death face. But the death mask depicts also something else than 'the image qua depiction' – it depicts also another concept of the image. And it is through this second concept and through the space opened now between the empirical and dissimilar sensory material and the rational unity of concepts, why it can explain the Kantian schematism. With Nancy we will see, that it is not only some example, but the 'exemplary example' due to the concealing role of the mask (which Heidegger himself did not considered in his analysis).

The death mask is an image, a Bild that is also 'look' or 'Sicht' as it shows in a visual form death. The death mask shows the aspect of death. All images, the pure image of the image and the image of the image, which is the reproduced image, in order to be images they have to show the "primary monstration". For Nancy, "the *Gesicht* (face) of the one without *Sicht* (sight)" is the exemplary image.[280] An image exists or comes into being only through the move into the "blind depth" of the world without subject.

Nancy begins with looking at Heidegger's etymological exposition of the German word for image, "Bild", which, as he writes, has a different meaning from the Latin 'imago' that "implies rather form, aspect, or overall outward appearance".[281] In German, the meaning of 'Bild' is closely linked to that of 'Anblick', which means "glance" or "look". And Nancy cites from Heidegger: "First of all [*Bild*] can mean: the look [*Anblick*] of a determinate being insofar as it is manifest [*offenbar*] as something at hand [*Vorhandenes*]. It offers the look."[282] Bild is the glance or the look of the thing pointed towards us in offering its aspect. Abbild, Nachbild, Vorbild are all different types of Bild that offer the same glance and look, even if they copy or reflect (Abbild), reproduce or imitate (Nachbild) or only fore-see ('vor-bilden'), providing a model for something yet to be created. Heidegger emphasises the difference between these three different types of images, Vorbild, Nachbild and Abbild, which, he claims, in the Kantian text got mixed up. This distinction alone is not enough to, Heidegger knows, disclose the

[280] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005,p. 24

[281] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 24

[282] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 24

secret of the schematism. Heidegger wants to show that the possibility to produce an image, to create a 'look', happens prior to any formation of a mimetic image and that it refers back and is weaved in the originary meaning of the German word for image, "Bild", as the aspect that makes itself seen. The image as "Bild" is of the order of the 'monster', being 'monstrative', since it warns and since it is the miraculous sign that has a prodigious force, which is the meaning of the German root 'bil-'.[283]

The question and what is important for Nancy, when one does reflect on the nature of the image and of visual representation, is to grasp "how the image is not a form and is not formal"[284], how "it is what does not show, but what gathers itself into it". The image is 'Abbild' or copy or imitation, it rivals the presence of the thing, it is competition for presence, because it presents absence in presence. It shows that something is and how it is and brings therefore the thing beyond the simple form of presence to the realm of '*pre-saentia*', where the thing is brought 'outside-in-front-of-itself'. This is the moment, when the thing, the object becomes subject, when it presents itself being not a 'presence for the subject', but 'presence as subject', "*Gegenwärtigkeit"*. Following this, the image is touching at the limit of truth, but a truth that is different from the metaphysical truth and also from the truth that is "at work" in the Heideggerian sense. It is a truth understood as the sense of all senses.

For grasping the manifold and dealing with ambivalence there has to exist a certain unity, even if it is in a minimal form. And this unity that holds together the ambivalent, the multiple and the fragmented is the pure unity of the "being-one" of the image, the pure image that is in itself violent. And, the opening or possibility for the shared worldly existence and for the diffuse sense of the world can only happen in the passage of this unity.

This is the unity that makes every image and presence possible for us to comprehend. It is the Kantian transcendental unity given by time that allows

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[283] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 22

[284] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 22

everything to show itself in such a way that is given to the subject, that gives itself to itself and by itself - and with Nancy now – it also means, that it gives its 'self' to the outside, to the radical exteriority of the sense of the world and of the 'body'. It is the unity of the "effraction" of the "partes extra partes", the sharing of embodied sense which gives us a world of bodies. The "groundless unity", rather the excess of the "groundless unity" that exceeds any signs, any form of fixed symbolic order of concepts that reveals nothing else than this excess is the way one can speak of a ground in Nancy's thinking. The violence of the force of the pure image, the image of the image is the violence without violence that reveals only the fact that there is nothing to reveal, as the revelation never takes place remaining only imminent. The excess of this groundless unity is "imminence infinitely suspended over itself".[285]

What Heidegger is doing in "Image and Schema" is to demonstrate that "every creating-a-look" can be traced back to a "primordial putting-into–the-look" of the schematism. This 'putting-into–the-look' of the schematism has to be understood literally as a put-into-a-visage, put-into-a-face, to give it a face, a look – that of the death mask. They way Heidegger proceeds from here, is by discussing the three senses of 'Abbild', 'Nachbild' and 'Vorbild'. "The ordinary mode of the *Bild* is empirical intuition". The empirical intuition is always "a this-here [*Dies-da*]" for Heidegger. "Empirical intuition" is the way we comprehend presence, presence, which can be either in singular or in plural form, but which nevertheless is always 'one', the 'one' of the "grasped in presence". Intuition is the how and the condition for grasping presence. "Abbild" is for Heidegger the copy "of what shows itself", the "copy that copies the thing and the thing's showing-itself"[286]. Therefore 'Abbild', 'Nachbild' and 'Vorbild' always "show the Bild, while also showing itself as something that shows itself".[287] The originary "monstration" of the image is therefore repeated in the copy that restages it in the ground of a second monstration. The force of unity of the pure image, the primary, originary

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[285] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 26

[286] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 86

[287] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 85

and proper value of any image is the gaze of the image that looks at us 'offering-its-look' by 'seeing-outward'. Each thing in presenting itself to us and in showing itself, it brings itself to presence and therefore is in its ground a subject, an ipse. Heidegger wrote that: " Dasein is face to face with what-is in itself".[288] Whereas the concept of the image as the representation of the thing for the mind positions the thing face-to-face with the subject, in Heidegger's concept of the image as depiction, the thing as 'becoming' is also at distance, but in terms of a temporal distance – "Entfernung" understood as "Ent-Fernung" and thus as an abolition of "Ferne", of the distance itself.

Each "Bild", Heidegger affirms, shows the "Bild", but it also shows itself as something that shows itself. This 'showing' takes place in each "Bild", being it "Abbild", Vorbild", or "Nachbild". The image always shows itself, gives itself to be seen and offers its 'look', its "*Aussehen*", its "looking-like-while-showing-itself of every thing understood at the same time", "as if it were looking at us (*aussehen*, "to look" or to seem like breaks down literally into seeing-outward")".[289]

In other words, we could say, that the original image shows itself as the resemblance of a monstration, that is under and as the aspect of a miraculous sign; "the primary image is always an image of an image" and "the image makes an image by resembling a gaze".[290] The image emerges and gathers itself into presence only by resembling a gaze. The image of all images presents the visible only by being itself a look that gazes at us and is therefore both what stays on the other side of the look, on the side that confronts the look and also on the side of that that opens as a look. Nancy relates this to the speech figure "sage comme une image", explaining that the meaning of this speech figure might come from this primary monstration. And, it can also be read as an account of the knowledge and

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[288] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 86

[289] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 86

[290] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

art that is at work in the originary image, the knowledge "of making activity out of passivity, of seeing by being seen".[291]

Things that are "vorhanden", 'present-at-hand', have already showed themselves, have presented themselves to the subject already – otherwise, they would be not available yet. They can now be represented in copies, but they do this only in their showing-themselves in each copy of the copy. Before 'availability' there is the moment of 'becoming presence' and this moment precedes every being present. In the ground of the image, "at the bottom of showing itself", the image is a subject, an '*ipse*'.[292]

The photograph or the reproduction of a 'death mask' shows the death mask, it shows what the mask shows, and how it shows it, and it also shows itself in showing the death mask and what the death mask shows, the dead man. This is also showed in the corpse of a dead person, because the corpse shows the face, the look, the look outward of the dead person – how the dead man looks outward. Heidegger, explains that the look of death shows itself as if it would gaze and look at us, "als blicke sie uns an"[293]. On this Nancy comments, that this "as if" refers and implies resemblance as in being the same as what it faithfully resembles. This means, and Nancy extracts this from Heidegger's own example, that the primary image, the schema, contains already the "copy" or "das Abbild" in itself – "it shows itself as a gaze directed to us"[294]. For Nancy, Heidegger's thought might as well say that the primary image is concomitantly always image as monstration and image as resemblance. The image gives itself to be seen by resembling a gaze.

What does it mean for Heidegger the fact that the originary image originates itself in an image, is "like an image"? The Idea, in its Greek meaning of "*eidos*",

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[291] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

[292] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

[293] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

[294] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

denotes a "carrying-itself-outwardly in general of every possible particular aspect".[295] Idea is then the "how of self-showing in general", the schema and the unity of representation, which is the unity of the concept with the manifold of the sensible forms. This unity gives rules by which plurality is drawn out and inscribed, marked, made distinct and made thus image. The force of the schema is to, on the one hand, to open the possibility for presentation and knowledge, and on the other hand, it regulates and sets the limit of concepts in giving the rules of how the "plasmatic chaos of sensation" is to be marked in terms of "drawn', traced or sketched – con-figured. Thus what presents is not a kind of unity in a numerical sense "that would capture and make rational what is given as the sensible flux".[296] The look or the Idea that lodges in the ground of every image is a "Bilden", as in forming, making or shaping, as in framing. It is showing as figuring and establishing. Innovation, creation and production. What it gives is not an image or form that represents, but more and especially an image or form that sets the con-figuration of the possibility of every image in motion.

The schematism then, does not provide an image, but something that is "like an image, (it) is something like an image and an image of all images at the same time. This means it already anticipates itself in taking place, it is the 'antecedence of the image to itself', the imagination of the image. This imagination is what sees before and outside itself the look that it will present to us and allow us to represent to ourselves. The schema then, in Kant's thinking, is the image of imagination, the self-imagination and the foreseeing of the imagination itself. The schema is what makes every look possible. It is an "anticipation of an and in apprehension".[297]

The look in this sense is different from both the "*intuitus originarius*" that arises from nothingness and it does not give itself completely in the "*intuitus*

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[295] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 87

[296] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 88

[297] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 89

intellectualis". The look "precedes itself and therefore always succeeds itself".[298] It is able to fore-see itself but it is and will never be able to visualize the totality of its form, as this is already past or soon to come. Heidegger, in following Kant, shows that the pure image or what he calls "the schema-image" is time, but he goes much further than Kant does. There is no presence that is not preceded by its own "givability identical to its own receivability: Vor-stellung of its Stellung, pre-positing of a being-posited".[299] Time is what is the non-present of the look that cannot grasp it's own unity directly, but only as "Bildung" as formation or configuration of the unity of the manifold. But this unity is in itself manifolded: "the self-imagining unity is the unity unifying itself as a sensible unity".[300] At the same time, "the sensible images itself by sensibilising itself as a *thing* that is sensed".[301]Heidegger closes the example of the death mask prematurely and Nancy proposes to further investigate those implications that were left out in the Heideggerian analysis.

10.3. The Death Mask

In 'laying bare' his understanding of Heidegger's example, Nancy refers first of all to the difference between the example of the death mask and the next example given by Heidegger in his book - that of the house, explaining that the death mask refers to the "look of the production of an image", of the way in which the dead man shows himself, whereas the house exemplifies only the "production of a look", of the house in this case. Obviously, both examples refer to the eidetic that is a non-sensible image, but the house refers to the "imaged image" ("ein-bilden") and the mask to an "imaging image" that looks back ("einbildend"). In this case, Nancy claims, that the really exemplary example is that of the death mask, which has a special status because it shows an "originary showing-itself through the

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[298] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 89

[299] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 90

[300] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 90

[301] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 90

showing-itself and the outward-seeming of a dead man", this is through the look of someone who doesn't show itself, but who withdraws himself by definition. I have mentioned already, the empirical context that seemed to influence Heidegger to choose this example, however, Nancy gives also another specific reason for why one needs to use precisely this example – reason that Heidegger missed out to understand, probably because he refused to think of the notion of the 'mask' in itself as something that is used for hiding and masking, for covering a face. Nancy asks what is manifested by the "face of a dead human being in general"[302] and he argues, that it is this generality given by every corpse of a dead individual that implies also a 'transcendental' reason for the death mask as an example that can explain the method of schematism. Nancy is intrigued by the fact that Heidegger, the thinker of Dasein as "being-towards-death", is not concerned of the dead person as being-dead, and of the fact that the aspect of the dead person confronts us face-to-face with someone who is blind. It is the look or aspect as a face-to-face with the look that does not see anymore. This means that whereas we look at the dead person, the dead person does not see. And Nancy explains, that this is "as if the before (the look) remained in the now (the non-look), or as if the now (the non-look) retroactively affected the before (the look)".[303] Thus, in this example we are encountering a merging of the look as 'a dead look or aspect" and the look as "the looking aspect". This means that the aspect of the dead look presents and shows its past aspect as the look that sees – and this is "the present past" of the withdrawal of a look. Nancy affirms, that it is this "look of the withdrawal of the look" that opens the possibility to 'for-see' the rules that are constitutive for the schematism of imagination and for the understanding and the reason. 'The look of the withdrawal of the look' is what makes possible the '*eidos*' of that for which there is no intuition possible, the pure synthesis of the understanding, the representation of apperception and the 'I'.

It is an interesting move that Nancy undertakes now – he draws a parallel between a double impossibility of every 'self': the impossibility to substitute oneself for

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[302] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 92

[303] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 92

the death of someone else and the impossibility of being in the place of the '*intuitus originarius*'. Both these cases imply an access without access, which is also the access to that that has no look or aspect. What is attempted in art or in the thought of the '*intuitus originarius*', in the schematism, stretches always between to extremes: either it attempts to bring the invisible to the surface or to depict the look of that that looks through. Nancy writes that the gaze without gaze or the withdrawal of the gaze, or the gaze as withdrawal is "the fore-look of the look, the Ein-bildung of the Bild and the fore- or forthcoming [prévenance] of presence".[304] In the same way in which 'dying' is not deceasing but the condition of "the thrown being toward the ownmost potentiality-of-being", the look of the dead person, the aspect it presences, is not only the aspect, the 'Abbild' of the dead man's face, but it is the possibility for the schema, for the pure and simple image. Death and the secret of the schematism are the ungraspable and the ownmost as the two impossibilities of being either in the place of the dying other or in the place of the "absolute seer", however death in itself doesn't die, on the contrary it passes through "Ableben" and demise by being 'the ownmost potentiality-of-being' for every 'thrown being', and the 'bilden' of the schema escapes every 'Bild', 'Abbild', 'Nachbild' or mask as the face, the look (das Gesicht) of the dead man that is made distinct and marked by 'its being past'. Every 'I die', Nancy emphasizes, is in close proximity to every 'I imagine'. And this reflects itself also in the thing that the gaze of the dead man can be seen as a model for a twofold being of the look – as the look that looks but doesn't see, and as the one that sees without looking. These two different hypostases of the look of the dead man that are conjoined now in one look, in one model at the same time, implies that the gaze of the dead man is "the model of the fore-vision of the unity that anticipates itself in the precession of its succession", which is also "time as a series of time, which forms the first schemata".[305] This model images, which is 'bildet', and 'in-images' as 'ein-bildet' a 'Bildung', an imaging in general; it images the '*one*' of the unity of the image, the 'Einung' of the 'Bild' in a 'Bild'. But because it is what for-sees the look in general or "the general imagery of the

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[304] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 94

[305] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 95

image", it has in itself no look. It "fore-images" and 'vor-bildet' the one, the unity and unicity of the image, but it is in itself without look or gaze, that is the empty gaze that imagines itself as '*one*' and "bears itself ahead of itself as that which succeeds itself".[306] What Nancy puts forward here is, that in order to imagine the '*one*' and to imagine oneself as the '*one*', the look's path to imagine starts from death, that is: from the very point where it ceases to exist. This means that the only way the '*one*' appears as such to itself is in its vanishing point and moment, in its disappearing. The death mask shows that death as the non-presence of the '*one*' is also its birth, in which the '*one*' 'pre-sents' itself in preceding itself. The '*one*' shows itself in the moment it disappears; it shows itself in hiding itself.

This side of the look that has been opened by Heidegger's example of the death mask was excluded from his analysis, probably because Heidegger refused, as he himself wrote, to engage with the mask as a specific form of presentation – that of the showing in hiding. This stated disinterest in the mask as the self-showing that withdraws, as hiding and self-hiding, or as a "monstration in concealment", might also be due to the fact the Heidegger was guided and followed in his '*Kantbuch*' "a logic of self-showing". In a very strange way, Heidegger seems to obey, in the way he is structuring his thoughts, to the form of presentation given by the mask – he shows something and at the same time he also hides something. He shows the truth of the look of the dead man, but at the same time he also leaves it veiled, in the fact that he doesn't uncover it as the death of the look. This play of veiling-unveiling, of '*aletheia*' is at work in the '*eidos*', in the '*Idea*", which implies also that the Idea occupies ("from the Latin 'capio', to take, to grasp"[307]; and also: in German with the meaning of (be)greifen) already a look in '*aletheia*' – this means that the Idea grasps for the play of veiling-unveiling, that is: it 'gives a hand' and it 'takes a hand' in the self-showing of that that has no look or image. This logic, Nancy observes, will be used later on by Heidegger, to think being as an 'event of becoming' and to overpass thus the fix and eidetic notion of being. However, in "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics", he seems not to observe the

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[306] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 95

[307] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 55

demand that is at stake, that is: there has to exist a self-showing of the unshowable and there has to be an '*eidos*' of the '*aletheia*'. And, Nancy insists, this is the most important thing gained by Heidegger's thought in his appropriation of the Kantian schematism, whose possibility hasn't been opened in any work after the Critique. Thus Nancy, announces that death – a death however that is not linked to the discourse of death, but "*as the dead one's apparition*, in the final discreteness of its spacing: not the dead body, but the dead one as body – and there is no other"[308] (the italics are Nancy's) - is the movement of self-presenting and that in the ground of every image there is the 'unimaginable imagining', the sublime as "the presentation of the subject without objectising schema". "The image always promises more than the image, and it always keeps its promise by opening its imagination onto its own unimaginable."[309]

'*Aletheia*', as the play of veiling-unveiling, was also seen as a sort of expecting revelation, an imminent revelation that will never take place because it is always (only) imminent. Temptation of vision, of revelation and of illumination of a 'thing in itself'. There is this ongoing and desperate desire to dis-cover and un-cover and to bring to light a hidden meaning either in text or in image. To read and to see something that has not been written or figured. This is the desire to reveal the secret, and this is what the death mask opens – the abyss ('Ab-grund') of the mystery that lays bare to the point that there is nothing else than absence of self-evidence. Where Heidegger uses the death mask, Blanchot refers to the 'corpse', the dead body of a human being that is neither a thing nor present. The strangeness of the corpse is the strangeness of the image and of Being: both are there while at the same time, they are both neither there nor elsewhere, being both concomitantly in the 'here' and in the 'nowhere'. The corpse, the absence of a body fills space with its absence – it has absolute freedom of movement and it paralyzes the power of doing of the living beings. Everydayness is held 'syncopated' by the corpse, in the same way, as a thing without utility is becoming only the image of itself that has no use anymore, and that appears for

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[308] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 53

[309] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 97

itself for the first time as itself. Ahead of the presence as appearance, as availability and presence-at-hand, there is nothing left. There is no place for the corpse and no place for the image – both are errant and wandering.

For Nancy, the corpse is the cadaver without body. The corpse is not the body. The 'dead body' is an apparition and discreteness that remains – the body of the decay, the "declension of occurrences" that is the instant of spacing the most proper and individuating distinctness. The dead body remains in the areality of bodies. In Heideggerian terms, it is "der Verstorbene", a being more than just being-there ready-at-hand, an (embodied) being outside factical presence in the absolutely and irreducibly most authentic mode of being to oneself. Dasein's ability to be throws constantly existence towards its ownmost and uttermost end and bodies as the existence addressed to the out-side is the excription of Being as an ontology of the body[310] - but for Nancy only in the 'here and now' of the body. Not as project towards something, but as the spacing of the expansion and areality of bodies.

However, whereas Heidegger understood errancy as the search for truth, for Blanchot and Nancy errancy is the truth of the image and the body. The corpse resembles the dead person, however the person that was before is not the same with its corpse. In order for the dead person to resemble itself, it has to become impersonal and anonymous, that is: it has to move to the zone of "the neuter", in which the self will become infinitely errant.

Nancy remarked the proximity between 'I die' and 'I imagine'. He also explained how the '*one*' of the image has no look beside its 'fore-tracing' and 'fore-seeing' of its own look that originates in the face-to-face look with the gaze that doesn't see, in "death as the unseeing gaze face-to-face with my own gaze as it sinks in turn into its withdrawn image"[311], and thus how the '*one*' has its birth in the look of the '*other*' and not, as Kant claimed, in the auto-intuitive self. The '*other*' does not present itself as such, but only as its '*same*'. The '*other'* shows itself only

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[310] Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, Corpus, trans. Richard A. Rand, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 2-122, and Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 2001, 18. Aufl. P. 237-240

[311] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 97

through its image as the '*same'* in being itself, but always as an '*altered same'*, altered in the fact that it is visible and imaginable. In the ground of the image there is the look of the other, "the schema of the same in its other".[312] And for Blanchot death is never the death of the 'I', as the self can never resemble itself as itself, but only as the 'neuter *other*'. At the same time, death is also the unavoidable and unapproachable, as 'I' is deprived of any power to die or not to die. Death is always something that remains exterior to the 'I', as does the unimaginable imagining.[313]

In the imminence of any revelation that remains only imminent, the presence offered in the image is the vestigial presence, the trace of a movement that doesn't head towards self-apprehension, but towards self-abandonment. A movement that happens always at risk, at the limit, and in the dangerous zone of that that has not yet been grasped, but which is threatened at any moment to be. The image doesn't own anything to the self, as it comes always from the other. It is its own sufficiency, a masked and extreme fragility, since it is only opulence and superabundance of its own bedazzlement as surface without depth, strange and foreign from every ideality.

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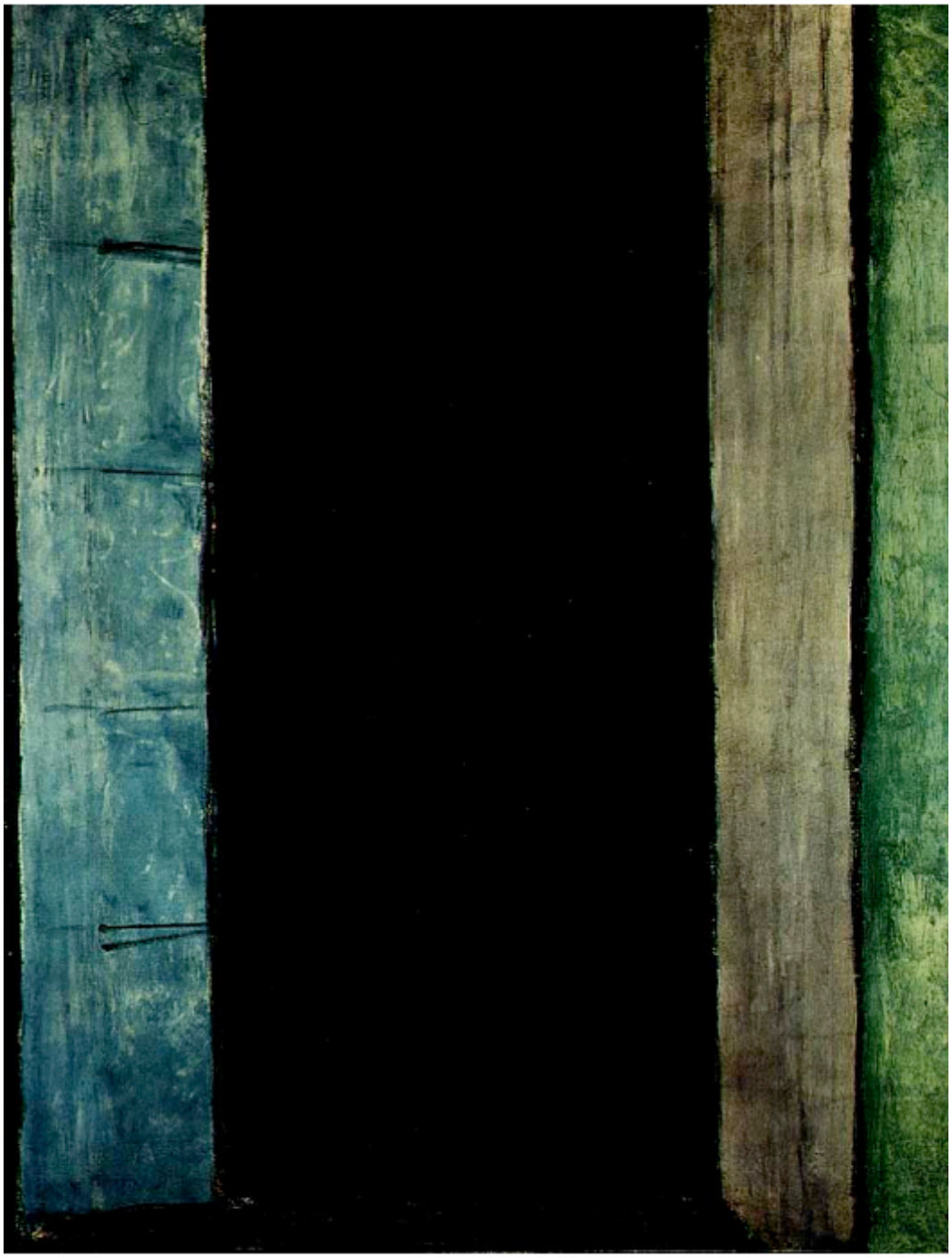
[312] Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image, trans. Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 99

[313] Cf. Emanuel Alloa, Bare Exteriority: Philosophy of the Image and the Image of Philosophy in Martin Heidegger and Maurice Blanchot, trans. Millay Hyatt, http://colloquy.monash.edu.au/issue010/index.htm, July 2009

11.with-*Drawing* a Conclusion



Henri Matisse, *French Window at Collioure*, oil on canvas, 116x89 cm, 1914
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Marina Abramovic and Ulay, *Expanding in Space*, performance 32 minutes, Documenta 6, Kassel, 1977, www.youtube.com, September 2009

Abstract

Das Thema dieser Diplomarbeit ist die Behandlung von Jean-Luc Nancys Buch "Am Grund der Bilder", die Auseinandersetzung mit Nancys ontologischem Verständnis vom Bild und der Thematisierung der visuellen Perzeption in dem Kontext der Wende von einem metaphysischen Präsenzbegriff zu einem 'Praesentia'-begriff als 'Ex-sistenz', 'Ex-zedenz', 'Ek-stasis', und 'Ek-phanes'. Mein Augenmerk liegt daher auf dem Bildbegriff, sowie auch auf dem Verhältnis zwischen dem Bild und dem Einbildungsvermögen. Zu untersuchen, ist in welcher Art und Weise das Bild und welche Bildart den Anspruch erheben kann, Dasein und den 'Sinn' der Welt in einer direkten und unmittelbaren Weise zu treffen und zu berühren. In dieser Hinsicht ist die Methode der Diplomarbeit, die eines close-readings von Nancys Buch, und zwar in der Form einer als Dialog poststrukturalistischen Denkern und Nancys selbst konzipierten Interpretation seines Bildvesrtändnisses. Ich werde mich daher in einer indirekten Weise auch auf Kants Schematismustheorie und auf Heideggers Auslegung derselben aus dem Buch "Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik" beziehen.

"Am Grund der Bilder" ist eine Sammlung, ein *Corpus*, von neun Abhandlungen die zwischen 1999 und 2004 publiziert worden sind. Gemeinsames Interesse dieser Aufsätze ist der Begriff des Bildes und Nancys These, dass das Bild eigentlich eine „Dardichtung" ist in dem 'Alterität' (Lévinas) verkörpert wird und in dem das '*Da*- des Jen-seits' dargestellt werden kann. Alle Abhandlungen wurden ursprünglich für andere Kontexte geschrieben und die ersten sechs, die schon 2003 zum ersten Mal gemeinsam unter dem Titel "Am Grund der Bilder" publiziert worden sind, sind auch schon in Ausstellungskatalogen, akademischen Zeitschriften und einer Anthologie zum Verhältnis zwischen Kunst und der Erinnerung an Konzentrationslager erschienen.

Abstract

This research project engages with J. L. Nancy's book "The Ground of the Image" and his ontological understanding of the image in the context of the turn from the metaphysics of presence towards a presence as presentation in 'ex-cess'; that is: as 'ek-sistence', 'ak-cedence', 'ek-stasis' and 'ek-phanes'. The main focus, throughout the text, is the notion of the image in relation to representation and arts, the faculty of imagination and the way in which Nancy establishes the claim that the image 'touches' in an immediate and direct way worldly existence and the sense of the world. In this respect, this thesis takes the form of a close reading of Nancy's book in and as a dialogue with other poststructuralist thoughts in discussing also "On the schematism of pure concepts of the understanding", a chapter from Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" and Heidegger's take on Kant in his book, "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics", especially chapter §20 "Image and Schema" to which Nancy himself refers directly in "The Ground of the Image".

"The Ground of the Image" is a collection of nine essays written between 1999 and 2004. In all these essays, Nancy appropriates the meaning or sense of the image and puts forward his belief that the image is the medium of presentation in which "alterity" can be embodied and in which the "there of the beyond" is presented. All essays were originally written for various other contexts and the first six essays were published for the first time in 2003 under the same title. These essays have been included previously also in exhibitions catalogues, academic journals, or in an anthology that explored the relation between art and the memory of concentration camps.

Curriculum Vitae

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Group Exhibitions (selection):

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2008	Pentimenti, Permanent Gallery, Brighton, Uk
2006	Spent, Three Colts Lane Gallery, London, Uk
2005	Aquarelle Happening, Mehlerhaus, Tux, Austria
2005	Young Art Europe, MOYA, Vienna, Austria
2005	artposition 2005, Ottakringer Bräuerei, Vienna, Austria
2005	spiel(t)räume I, Wolfgang Exner Gallery, Vienna, Austria
2005	That's New, IG Bildende Kunst, Vienna, Austria
2004	Eröffnungsausstellung, artposition Gallery, Vienna, Austria
2001	Bild. Lust-Junge Malerei, Palais Harrach, Vienna, Austria

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