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Book of Abstracts

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Panel 1A: German Phenomenology

Pure Nihilism'? Heidegger's Critique of 'Value-Thinking'
Jack Wearing (University of Oxford)

Abstract: In his later works, especially in the early 40s, Heidegger frequently criticizes 'value-thinking'. His critique is aimed not at any particular values, but at thinking in terms of values at all: in the *Letter on 'Humanism'*, he makes the provocative claim that "thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being". At the same time, he denies that thinking "against values" commits him to maintaining that everything we now value is worthless. On the contrary, he suggests that it is "precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' [that] what is so valued is robbed of its dignity", "subjectiviz[ed]", "admitted only as an object for human estimation." More provocatively still, in his later writings on Nietzsche, he suggests that thinking in values amounts to "pure nihilism".

If compelling, this critique would have wide-ranging significance, since talk of values – moral, aesthetic, cognitive, and cultural values – is utterly pervasive in contemporary philosophy and the modern world more broadly. Indeed, 'value-thinking' is so pervasive that it is difficult to see what Heidegger's critique could amount to. What could it mean to abandon 'thinking in values'? Would this not itself be a form of nihilism, characterized by a sense that the world has become 'value-less'?

In this paper, I draw on Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche to clarify what his critique of 'value-thinking' amounts to. First, I determine more precisely what Heidegger takes the term 'value' to mean. Next, I reconstruct Heidegger's genealogies of nihilism and the concept of a 'value'. By showing how nihilism is intertwined with 'value-thinking', I offer a rationale for Heidegger's claim that, *contra* Nietzsche, nihilism cannot be overcome through any 'revaluation of values'. I conclude with a preliminary sketch of what a genuine overcoming of nihilism might involve, drawing on Heidegger's suggestive but cryptic remarks about 'dignity'.

"It is not in Heaven!" Hannah Arendt's notion of world and the Talmudic tale of Achnai's Oven in Bava Metzia 59b
Juliana de Albuquerque (University College Cork),

This paper will explore the extent to which Hannah Arendt's notion of "world" and her expression "amor mundi" or love of the world, as well as her emphasis on the importance of "plurality" has its conceptual origins in the broader Jewish tradition. Over the last 49 years since Arendt's death much has been written about her Jewish identity. Scholars such as Young-Bruehl, Vromen, Benhabib, Kohn and Bernstein have written extensively on how Arendt's experiences as a German Jewish woman who escaped Nazi Germany, and for a while led the life of a refugee and of a stateless person, inform her philosophy and political thought. However, by and large scholars have not paid much attention to how far some of Arendt's core ideas like that of "world" may also reflect her Jewish background. One exception to this rule is Curthoys' text on Arendt and Jewish Virtue Ethics (SUNY, 2023). Another is Bernstein's comment in the concluding pages of *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (MIT Press, 1996) that Arendt's "amor mundi" reveals how she became a part of European life and culture while at the same time remaining a daughter of her people. Bernstein does not elaborate any further on this suggestion, but I believe that if we consider for instance the Talmudic tale of Achnai's Oven in Bava Metzia 59b, we find a clue to Arendt's notion of "world" and to her understanding that this is a place made by human beings and meant to be shared with others human beings in the sense of a "plurality". Through an examination of this Talmudic tale in the context of Arendt's notion of "world", my paper aims at elucidating some of the ways in which she integrated the perspectives of a minority culture in her works on philosophy and political theory.

Meditative thinking, in Heidegger and Nishida

Ana-Maria Pascal (University of Oxford)

Over the last two decades, there has been increased interest in exploring links between Heidegger and non-Western philosophy – especially Chinese and Japanese. But relatively little attention seems to have been given to the type of thinking that Heidegger used more and more in the later part of his life, namely 'meditative thinking' as he called it in his *Discourse on Thinking*, or poetic thinking as some critics describe it (see, for instance, Katherine Davies 2024). Our aim in this paper is to focus precisely on this type of thinking – one that is closer to meditation or mindfulness (as in some translators' rendering of *Besinnung*) than to analytic or conceptual thinking – and explore the possibility that this may, in fact, be one of the key areas of overlap with Asian philosophy. In other words, we suggest, it is *how* one thinks – rather than *what* the outcomes of that thinking may be – that brings late Heidegger and some Asian philosophers in close proximity.

We investigate this possibility by looking into links with Nishida Kitaro's philosophy (itself, significantly influenced by Zen Buddhism). Again, we ask if there is any significant rapport between *the type of thinking* at work (whether we call it meditative, or poetic), rather than the object of that thinking (be that nothingness, being, or place, for instance). In particular, we look at the way in which Heidegger's final work, his *Thought Poems,* and Nishida's *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, may be seen as illustrations of this meditative thinking, and we use their letters and diaries, to guide our investigation.

Panel 1B: Michel Foucault

« Plants Must be Defended » : Vegetal Bodies and Networks of Domination
Shaan Lepaul-Picolet (Université de Bordeaux)

Drawing on Foucauldian philosophy, this presentation investigates the biopower dynamics in relation to plant corporeality, focusing on how power dynamics, social structures, and historical traditions shape our perception of plants. Our relationship with the natural world is intricately linked to the cosmological and epistemic frameworks we inherit. Exploring this connection could shed light on the fact that our treatment of plants goes beyond ecological or practical concerns, showing that it is deeply rooted in a historical and philosophical tradition that shapes our broader worldview.

While alternative perspectives increasingly draw parallels between the devaluation of plants and the treatment of marginalized bodies (Chen 2012, Plumwood 2013, Kimmerer 2013, Myers 2015,) contemporary ecological and ethical thoughts and practices still grapple with deep-seated historical assumptions (Margulis & Sagan 2002). This is primarily the case because many alternative approaches—such as certain strands of ontological, poststructuralist, and eco-philosophical frameworks—remain abstract and speculative or fail to engage with practical applications that don't reproduce the same systemic dynamics of power and exploitation at stake (Stengers 2010, Moore 2015, Haraway 2016).

Applying Foucault's genealogical, critical, and archaeological methods to plants enables us to build a new critical framework to reassess their role in the natural world and human society. It challenges the hierarchical models that tend to overlook plants as living beings. The body is socially constructed as a site of individuality and identity, yet it echoes how scientists study and understand plants. This presentation seeks to examine the social dynamics that shape our understanding of plant corporeality to reassess the epistemic status of plants and provide actionable, transformative insights that can shift how we interact with the natural world in general and plants in particular.

Oedipalization and Love in The Use of Pleasure and The Care of the Self

Bryan Knittle (Villanova University)

In the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault is concerned primarily with the ways in which the citizens of the ancient Greek and Hellenistic societies conceived of technologies of the self, and the role these arts of existence played in the relations of the self to itself, the private household, and the public/political community. Self-mastery is the dominant theme of these studies, uniting what can seem like disparate topics and subjects of analysis. As interesting as Foucault's insights on the status of self-mastery and the care of the self might be, however, I am not entirely interested in that here. Instead, I explore a topic which appears less conspicuously in these texts, but which nevertheless appears in both volumes: the theme of love. In particular, I highlight the ways in which Foucault's presentation of the discourse on love in ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period can be made sense of in terms of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as a process of "oedipalization." I suggest that the shift in emphasis on general techniques in relation to a multiplicity of non-conflicting forms of love to more specific practices arranged in a fixed hierarchy demonstrates precisely this delimiting ordering process.

The Subject and Power": The Normative Foundation of Foucault's Genealogical Project?

Lena Güldner (London School of Economics & Political Science)

One of the main criticisms raised against Michel Foucault's genealogical method is that it supposedly lacks normative grounding. Most influentially, this critique has been for- mulated by Nancy Fraser (1981) and Jürgen Habermas (1985). Daniele Lorenzini (2020) responds to this criticism, contending that Foucault's project possesses normative force sui generis through what he identifies as its possibilising dimension. He claims that through this possibilising dimension, genealogies create a normative claim for resistance by creating a sense of political commitment to a trans-historical "we". In my paper, I begin by arguing that Lorenzini's account fails to address the problem of grounding Fou- cault's genealogical project. Even if genealogy understood in this way can provide positive normative reasons for resistance in particular instances, it cannot ground the normative claim for critique itself. As a consequence, the possibilising dimension can be only seen as the result of the normative claim for genealogy, not its foundation. Therefore, I contend that Lorenzini's account lacks such a foundation. I then suggest an alternative solution based on the structure of power relations laid out in Foucault's text The Subject and Power (1982). I will use Foucault's analysis of modern power relations and the formation of modern subjects to lay out the conditions of a coherent will formation of the modern subject. I will use Foucault's analysis of modern power relations and the formation of modern subjects to lay out the conditions of a coherent will formation of the modern subject. For this, I will argue that for Foucault, power relations are always at least in potential conflictual. Together with the productive dimension of power, this leads to a paradoxical structure of willing in the subjects. I argue that to avoid this paradoxical structure, subjects ought to engage in critique. This suggestion provides a more funda- mental normative grounding of Foucault's genealogical project.

Panel 1C: Post-WWII French Thought (I)

All Together Now: Philosophy and Collective Action in Post-68 France
Eve Judah (University of Cambridge)

This paper will explore the relationship between philosophy and the political in post-68 France by focussing on the work of 'La Philosophie en effet'. This book series was launched at the éditions Galilée in 1971, and is one in a series of collaborations undertaken by its four founders: Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The series is perhaps best known for publishing major works like Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993) and Nancy's *The Sense of the World* (1993) in the second half of its existence. However, this paper seeks to avoid the critical over-emphasis on individually famous works and authors in order to address more carefully, firstly, the dynamics of intellectual production through which the series came into being; and, secondly, how it pursued its mission to interrogate the contemporary institutional conditions of philosophical work.

To do so, this paper analyses a selection of short paratexts which served as blurbs and adverts in literary magazines. These were mostly co-written at the time of the series' foundation and defined its scope and aims. They tell us that the series saw itself as "critical and militant", and that resistance must take the form of concrete engagement: "to act on institutions […]: school and university". The blurb also situates Derrida, Kofman, Nancy, and Lacoue-Labarthe as institutionally marginal and politically mobilised, claiming that they "have in common […] neither tenure nor professorial authority and are all mobilised in struggles concerning the education system". What is the link between the experiences of collective action evoked here and 'La Philosophie en effet', and how did these experiences of politics shape Derrida, Nancy, Kofman and Lacoue-Labarthe's idea of philosophy?

Philosophy's stagecraft: Jean-Luc Nancy at the Théâtre National de Strasbourg, 1975-1982'

Kemal Sultanov (University of Cambridge)

This paper follows Jean-Luc Nancy backstage into the rehearsal rooms and onto the boards of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg (TNS), reconstructing a period of intense and variously pursued theatrical activity, ca. 1975-1982, which sees him take the stage as part of both large-scale in-house productions and smaller-scale experimental performance projects outside the theatre's walls. This paper considers the ways in which the theatre advances into the philosophical foreground of Nancy's thought, becoming both practically and conceptually consequential to its development in this period. Training its focus on a corpus of lesser-known early writing – 'Le ventriloque' (1975), *Le partage des voix* (1982) and a range of shorter unpublished texts – this paper demonstrates how various forms of theatrical play emerge as a method of ontological investigation and, in turn, how theatrical technologies and techniques offer alternative modes and models of philosophical articulacy, such that thinking itself and the philosophical disclosure it aspires towards come to rely on a kind of philosophical stagecraft. In turn, the paper considers the quiet theatricality of Nancy's own thought and the often performative context of its emergence. Rehearsed and developed in a range of (quasi-)theatrical settings – from coups de théâtre in the lecture hall to 'reading performances' and staged dialogues – this paper reflects on how performance, improvisation and actorly play become a method of philosophical composition and discusses how such strongly performance-based practices of thought both shape and respond to the broader concerns of his philosophy. It concludes by showing how this philosophical practice emerges from Nancy's practical involvement in the theatre and is shaped by the theatre-theoretical investigations of various figures surrounding the TNS, offering some broader reflections on the interactions between intellectual history and the history of the theatrical avant-garde in the latter half of the twentieth century.

'Inner Experience' and the Politics of Intellectual Authority

Eugene Brennan (University of London Institute in Paris)

In post-war Paris, Dionys Mascolo and a group of friends known informally as the 'Groupe de la rue Saint-Benoît' reconsidered the role of the intellectual through a set of conversations, writings, and anticolonial interventions, the most well-known of which is the *Manifesto of the 121* (1960). These texts and interventions were animated by a unique reading of 'intellectual authority' in which the role of 'experience' was continuously problematised. My paper will unpack the philosophical underpinnings of this 'intellectual authority' which I characterise in terms of a 'counter-phenomenology'.

The group's understanding of 'intellectual authority' was strongly influenced by Georges Bataille's wartime writings on 'inner experience' and Robert Antelme's experiences in Dachau and Buchenwald. While Antelme's experience was essential to the group, they searched with Antelme to avoid turning it into a stable foundation upon which subsequent thought and action could find authority. Philosophical resources to do this were found in Bataille's *Inner Experience* where, in the words of Maurice Blanchot, experience is an authority but only to the extent that it calls into question the very notion of authority. Mascolo and Blanchot later politicised this movement of thought and creatively interpreted it in the development of the Manifesto. Mascolo's politicisation of Bataille's work offers a fresh perspective on vexed debates concerning the extent to which 'experience' can ever be considered an 'authority' within intellectual thought and practice. My paper will explore the distinction between a politics based on a phenomenological 'lived' experience and one underpinned by an 'inner' experience, proposing this latter be read in terms of a 'counter-phenomenology'. The focal point of the paper will be the philosophical underpinnings of Mascolo's conception of the intellectual. The concluding section will demonstrate the contributions this line of thought can offer within wider critical debates on the relationship between experience and intellectual practice.

Panel 1D: Tragedy, Boredom, Temporality

On *Catharsis* and Anamorphosis: from Aristotle to Lacan
Andrea Romani Lopez (King's College London)

Catharsis is considered by Aristotle to be part of the aesthetic experience of tragic *mimesis.* However, since Aristotle does not provide a systematic philosophical conceptualisation of the term, its meaning remains open to discussion. This paper – part of a wider project to analyse how Freud and Lacan can help us to elucidate the concept of *catharsis* in Aristotle's *Poetics* – proposes that Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis, and its relationship to *das Ding*, as elaborated in his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (2007), can bring clarification. Specifically, it can elucidate the pleasure that arises from the recognition of the impossible symbolic position that the tragic hero assumes before the tragic events and how this is central for our understanding of *catharsis*.

Following Lacan's discussion on anamorphosis, I will argue that tragic pleasure not only derives from the process of recognition described in Chapter 4 of Aristotle's *Poetics* but specifically recognition of what emerges from the unintelligible, as in the case of the image of an anamorphic painting. This will be shown by comparing Lacan's example of Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* with Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

By putting into dialogue the tragic hero's assumption of the tragic events with Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis, we can gain a deeper insight into what is pitied and feared and, therefore, a more secure understanding of *catharsis* as a key term for tragic *mimesis*.

'The Everyday with Its Lack, Boredom, and City Wanders: A Conversation between Bolaño, Blanchot, and Nancy'
Chenyuan Liang (King's College London)

This essay takes as its point of departure unexpected similarities in the ways that Bolaño, Blanchot, and Nancy conceptualize the elusive phenomenon of everyday. The everyday emerges against the background of Bolaño's prescription of the human condition, in his essay 'Literature+ illness= illness', as the impossibility to get rid of 'ennui' as *nothing*, which marks the fundamental lack of life that incites transgression. Drawing on Bolaño's analysis of literature and violence as two different modes of transgression that respond to the emptiness of everyday, I then turn to Blanchot's less pathological account of the everyday as an affirmation of *chance* that bears wit itself transgressive potentials to *play* with the law, in his text 'The Everyday Speech' published initially as a review to the Situationist Henri Lefebvre's work *Critique of Everyday Life.* In addition to its relevance with Blanchot's interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return in dialogue with Pierre Klossowski, the everyday also embarks on a radical politics of exteriority that 'impugns all values' transcribed in our society, by displacing the authenticity of discourse with what Blanchot calls 'the irresponsibility of rumour'. This prompts my investigation of Nancy's discussion of rumour as an avatar of everyday urban life in *The City in the Distance*, as Péter Szondi notes that the topic of rumour offers an in-depth engagement between Blanchot and Nancy: both thinkers address the emptiness of the everyday by envisaging its daily formlessness on the street, in the market, where anonymous and rumorous words are announced as 'a mere propagation that is still not yet propaganda'. For Nancy, the everyday is illustrated by the excessive disposition of Los Angeles as a desert city, 'a place where something other than the place takes place'.

A Clandestine Platonism: Emil Cioran's Exile in an Archipelagic World

Lucas P. Depierre (University of Chicago)

This presentation argues that Emil Cioran (1911–1995), despite his disdain for systematicity, covertly develops a Platonic worldview. For example, in what may be termed a Cioranian cosmology, time exists as something detached from the events it contains. In this worldview, ecstasy becomes the mode of metaphysical inquiry, "soul" is favored over "conscience"; "eternity" and "infinity" emerge as ultimate responses and consolations.

This Platonism can be qualified as "clandestine" because Cioran inhabits it ambivalently, scorning the very metaphysical framework he presupposes. In this regard, his stance echoes the medieval doctrine of double truth, wherein one lives between two incompatible registers, adhering to both under different existential modes. Besides, it is clandestine because Cioran assumes, in front of his Platonist worldview, the position of an exile, a metaphysical vagabond. This posture helps explain why scholarly portrayals would rather present him merely as the anti-Platonist philosopher par excellence, rejecting any reality behind conceptual entities.

Yet, Cioran develops another layer to his essentially Platonic worldview by taking the opposite movement of the one preached by Platonist predecessors of every age: instead of an elevation into the intellectual realm and the One, he encourages reiterating the primitive fall by falling from time itself. This second Platonic fall will be an opportunity to dissolve the self by quitting temporality (through desindividuation), and to return from actuation into potency (through desactuation). Fraught with ambiguities and doomed to a tragic end, this peculiar attempt outlines the contours of an anti-cosmos; the preference for the side of the anti-God described in Gnosticism or Bogomilism.

Finally, Cioran forged a singular medium of philosophical expression attuned to the very nature of his thought, in order to reflect the two realms of truth together: the aphorism. He adapts the aphoristic tradition of the French Moralists to evoke the scattered, archipelagic reality of a cosmological nowhere, in which he wanders.

Metacognition and phenomenology: bridging the gap
Calum Sims (University of Bristol)

This paper argues that metacognition and phenomenology have much to say to one another. I bring the disciplines into dialogue by highlighting a mapping between key distinctions in the metacognition and phenomenological psychopathology literatures: the distinction between type-1 and type-2 (implicit/explicit) metacognition (i.e. Proust 2014) on the one hand, and between minimal and narrative selfhood (i.e. Feyaerts et al 2023) on the other. In the study of metacognition, much is made of the distinction between 'implicit' (subpersonal, automatic, nonconscious, affective) and 'explicit' (personal, deliberate, conscious, propositional) processing: 'explicit' metacognition is taken to be a human-unique executive control process that improves on the implicitly-mediated control processes shared with other animals. This has led to a flurry of work on explicit metacognition and a relative neglect of the implicit variety, which I argue is a mistake. In phenomenology, the distinction between pre-reflective awareness of oneself and conceptually-enabled, deliberative self-reflection has been used to develop a 'bottom-up' model according to which psychopathologies can be understood as issuing from disturbances to minimal selfhood (the 'ipseity disturbance model' ['IDM']). I show how this model can be usefully applied to metacognition. A long-standing debate in cognitive science (i.e. McGeer 2007, Carruthers 2014, Heyes 2014, Proust 2014, Zawidzki 2013) asks how best to represent the relationship between metacognition and mindreading so as to develop a plausible story of human behavioural flexibility. This debate concerns which of metacognition and mindreading exerts control over the other, but has been until recently (i.e. Fleming 2024) largely blind to the idea of 'bottom-up control'. Focusing on crosscultural variation in metacognitive ability, I argue that the data from metacognition studies points towards this form of control, an idea that can be explained using the resources of the IDM. The result is a useful cross-pollination of disciplines.

Unravelling binaries: Perception/action and Ur-intentionality
Hannah Moss (University of Liverpool)

Those who seek to radicalise enactive cognition attempt to reconceptualise the philosophy that underpins an enactive cognitive science. The perception/action of basic living organisms exhibits *directedness* by dynamically coupling with some features of the environment rather than others. This Ur-intentionality is a modest version of the intentionality that is characterised by *aboutness,* has semantic content, and emerges through linguistic practices. Yet, pertinent questions remain about the emergence of Ur-intentionality.

My poster will suggest that the dynamic coupling between minimal life and the environment should be understood as an intra-active rather than an interactive relation. This entails that the organism and features of the environment are both performative and transformative and recognises the co-constitutive ways that perception/action emerge from this reciprocal relation. Adopting this view involves a blurring of the boundaries between epistemology and ontology and acknowledges the ways in which these disciplines are co-implicated.

I suggest that this approach avoids the anthropocentric binarism that is evident in much cognitive science and raises significant questions about the nature of observation. Ultimately, I wish to invite considerations and questions about what philosophical issues are raised within an onto-epistemological enactive science and the potential implications for radicalising enactive cognition.

When Time Halts: Grief as an Attention to the Extended Present
Boram Jeong (University of Colorado Denver)

The temporal experience in grief has largely been characterized as a form of disruption or suspension. Much of the existing phenomenological reflections on grief emphasizes how a griever feels disconnected from the external world that continues to move forward in time, while their own time has been *halted*. Thus, phenomenologists often describe the temporality of grief in terms of a 'frozen' time, 'stuckness in the past,' or 'foreclosure of the future,' emphasizing that grief de-synchronizes one from the shared time of one's surrounding world.

While acknowledging the significance of this view, I intend to complement it by examining closely what happens in the so-called 'suspended' time of grief and what it may accomplish. I aim to identify particular temporal relations that a griever engages in, which cannot be adequately captured by the standardized view of time as a linear passage from the past into the future. Drawing on Denise Riley's work on grief and Henri Bergson's theory of duration, I claim that grief's temporality is better understood as an attention to what I call the *extended present*. The extended present includes the possibilities involving the deceased that are considered no longer present, yet real. As ordinary objects become *suggestive* of these possibilities, the griever comes to live in a 'thick' present. This notion of grief, while revealing a deeper structure of time beyond the conventional view of time as succession, challenges the linear narrative of recovery and the 'chrono-normativity' around grief.

How perception shapes symbols in autism
Elisabetta Angela Rizzo (Independent Scholar)

This research explores how different sensory experiences can fundamentally shape how autistic individuals use symbols, often in ways that are less conventional. Taking into account the work of philosophers like Alfred N. Whitehead and Ernst Cassirer, who emphasised the connection between perception and symbols, this study argues that communication problems often arise when neurotypical ways of communicating are imposed on autistic people, without truly understanding how they perceive the world. This research examines how autistic individuals, often characterised by heightened sensitivity (Markram & Markram, 2010) and more focused on immediate sensory experience (Pellicano & Burr, 2012), may develop symbolic systems that prioritise concrete, tangible things. Interviews conducted as part of this research with parents and siblings of autistic individuals provide empirical support for this claim, suggesting difficulties with linguistic symbols like 'tomorrow' or 'yesterday' unless they are linked to concrete referents. This research posits that these diverse symbolic practices are not indicative of a social or cognitive deficit, but rather reflect fundamentally different, yet equally valid, modes of perceiving, interpreting, and engaging with the world, given that symbolic reference, including language, is also shaped by perception. Through the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and empirical data, this study aims to contribute to a more informed understanding of autistic communication, moving beyond deficit models to recognise the inherent validity of diverse symbolic practices. It also seeks to illuminate how philosophy can foster greater awareness among non-autistic people, promoting more qualitative inclusion by revealing close connection between perception and symbolic reference.

Political Philosophy of Neurodiversity

Ewa Winiarczyk (University of Warsaw/Jagiellonian University Kraków)

Since its emergence in the 1990s, the concept of neurodiversity has gained increasing recognition both within and beyond psychiatric discourse. Unlike many medical frameworks, this paradigm shift originated not from experts, but from directly affected communities. Initially focused on the autism spectrum, neurodiversity's scope has since expanded to include ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia. More recently, some have proposed extending it to encompass conditions such as personality disorders, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia, further challenging the notion of medical norms.

Neurodiversity may be understood as a continuation—or even a replacement—of the philosophical concept of madness. Often positioned as an alternative to the biomedical model of mental health, it challenges conventional notions of pathology and the norm. It echoes elements of classical anti- psychiatric thought in the tradition of R.D. Laing or Michel Foucault, while also diverging from them in important ways. At the same time, neurodiversity remains largely rooted in biological essentialism, with brain functioning frequently emphasised as central to both identity and social recognition.

My research examines the political philosophy of neurodiversity, situating it within historical discourse on madness and the philosophy of disability. It critically assesses the paradigm's anti-capitalist potential and its ambivalent relationship to the biomedical model. I argue that neurodiversity's biological grounding aligns with Gayatri Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism—a form of identity politics that enables collective recognition and resistance, while also entailing long-term challenges.

Panel 2C: Other Epistemologies

The Aesthetic Plenitude of the Natural Element: Hegel and Brazilian Meta-logical approaches
Rodrygo Rocha Macedo (Instituto Federal do Pará - Campus Breves)

This paper discusses the concept of natural beauty according to Hegel's *Aesthetics* (1820-1829) from a non-European rational perspective. According to Hegel, Nature has a beautiful vitality, insofar as its natural Form is closer to the "Idea" as life and movement. However, the living natural beauty was not a beauty unto itself. Hegel states that the elements of nature, such as mountains, creeks, and valleys, have a core of artistic content not inherent in themselves, but rather in the vitality and soul of the conceptions of these elements in which the artist's spirit is "mirrored" (*abspiegelt*). The "mirroring" is a projection of the object's aesthetic potential deposited in the image by the artist. However, a question arises: is it possible that in such a mirroring game, vitality is not an action originated by the artist's spirit, but by the depicted object itself? This paper admits that the natural element is the very agent of the vitality mirrored in the artist's subjectivity. By agreeing with Hegel that "all reason is a syllogism", this paper understands that aesthetic reflection, as a work of reason, is also in the field of Logic. By accepting the premise that Nature dynamically mediates beauty *via* artistic subjectivity, we engage with two Brazilian thinkers' new logical perspectives: the notion of "plenum" circumscribed to that of "blackness" offered by Denise Ferreira da Silva in *The Unpayable Debt* (2022), as well as the work on "paraconsistency" by Newton Carneiro da Costa found in *On the Theory of Inconsistent Formal Systems* (1974). This work stems from the research project *"*Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art: Connections Between Art and Politics," conducted at the Federal Institute of Pará (IFPA) – Campus Breves, located on Marajó Island in the Brazilian Amazon.

Grada Kilomba and the Western Tradition: The Urgency of Epistemic Disobedience

Luciana da Costa Dias (University of Brasília)

The exhibition *Poetic Disobediences*, by philosopher and multidisciplinary artist Grada Kilomba, presented at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo in 2019, critically interrogates the epistemological primacy of European – a hence, "white" – Western thought. Through a series of performative installations (*Illusions Vol. II – Oedipus, Table of Goods,* and *The Dictionary*), Kilomba articulates a powerful critique of colonialism, proposing a rereading of knowledge and historical narratives that have been systematically marginalised. The exhibition not only dialogues with her written work but also raises crucial questions about the epistemological foundations of art history and aesthetic theory, long shaped by Plato's ideal forms, Kant's transcendental aesthetics, and Hegel's teleological approach to art. This paper examines how Kilomba's practice challenges the ontological and epistemic assumptions underpinning these traditions, particularly from a decolonial, feminist, and intersectional perspective. This paper analyses how Kilomba's performative works contribute to contemporary debates that seek to subvert the "modern logic" of knowledge – one intrinsically tied to the modernity/coloniality framework (Quijano, 2000). In addition to Kilomba's work, this paper engages with seminal decolonial thinkers such as Zulma Palermo (2010) and Walter Mignolo (2010), who advocate for a reassessment of traditional aesthetics through the concept of *decolonial aisthesis.* Mignolo (2010) suggests that colonisation not only targeted bodies and territories but also shaped our sensory perceptions and ways of engaging with the world. By bringing Kilomba into dialogue with both decolonial thought and canonical aesthetic theory, this paper explores "epistemic disobedience" to tradition as an urgent and necessary practice within Continental Philosophy of art.

Rethinking the Images of Philosophy: Towards an Ethics of Inclination

Hannah Wallenfels (Independent Scholar & diffract)

In the practice of academic philosophy, texts are often regarded as the only legitimate philosophical sources, and publications — alongside conferences and lectures, albeit with certain limitations — as the primary venues for philosophizing, while images are mostly regarded as illustrations or didactic tools. However, images from allegories of philosophia to canonical portraits, profoundly shape the self-conception of the discipline. In my talk, I examine how philosophy has represented itself visually and what epistemic and institutional structures these visualizations reinforce.

I argue that these images reflect the increasing institutionalization of the discipline — from the mother of all sciences to the conquered queen, from trees to ultimately the exclusive knowledge practice of the ivory tower. At the same time canonical portraits of philosophers, such as Hegel's "gallery of the heroes of thinking reason", reveal that the history of philosophy is less a textual canon and more a cult of personalities. These forms of representation stabilize certain traditions while perpetuating exclusions — from non-Western modes of thought to the marginalization of women in philosophy.

Building on Adriana Cavarero's critique of the "geometry of verticality", I propose an ethics of inclination as an alternative to all these upright and hierarchical figures of thought in philosophy. Such an ethics could not only open new perspectives on the history of philosophy but also enable different ways of philosophizing. My talk suggests exploring this "inclined" philosophy as a model for a more plural and relational mode of thinking.

Panel 2D: Music & Listening

From Reduced Listening to Enhanced Hearing

Filip Mattens (University of Leuven)

In the mid-twentieth century, Pierre Schaeffer envisioned a novel form of music that harnesses the inherent qualities of everyday noises; a sonic art sculpted from living sound. To appreciate recorded noises as music, however, it was essential to detach the sonic material from its worldly origins in order to prompt a shift in the listener's focus from the world of objects to the realm of sound itself. This shift would foster a new mode of listening, which Schaeffer termed 'reduced listening', referencing the phenomenological reduction. Despite the revolutionary nature of his perception-centered musical project, Schaeffer's theoretical reflection reveals an underlying assumption shared with a long-standing philosophical tradition: namely, that the experience of sounds is purely auditory when isolated from the other senses. In this talk, I will challenge this traditional assumption by approaching auditory experience from a novel perspective. My intention is not to criticise Schaeffer's project; after forty years of research, Schaeffer himself concluded that no music is possible outside *DoReMi*. Instead, I want to indicate a path to a richer understanding of auditory experience and suggest a possible reason why we are, despite Schaeffer's abandonment, often intrigued by environmental noises.

At the borders of experimentation: histories and territories of 'experimental music'
Iain Campbell (Independent Scholar)

The geographer Thomas Jellis is among those who have noted that 'the injunction to be experimental' is a defining refrain in much contemporary research in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. 'Experimentation' has become associated with tendencies in research and practice such as an openness to surprise and to change, an embrace of uncertainty, and a blurring or transformation of boundaries, especially boundaries between scholarly disciplines. However, as Jellis notes, the expansion of the notion risks a loss of specificity and analytical purchase. It can seem to apply to a spectrum of approaches ranging from modest challenges to existing standards up to a complete disarticulation and destruction of such standards, with methodological issues arising at both ends. A curious opposition to traditional scientific senses of experimentation adds more complexity. What, then, does it mean to experiment?

This paper sets out to clarify some of this usage of the notion of experimentation, taking as its central case study a field where the status of experimentation has been especially contentious, that of 'experimental music'. The notion of experimental music aptly prefigures this recent scholarly sense of the experiment, being applied to approaches that value openness, uncertainty, and departures from convention. Yet recent scholarship has brought into focus another side of 'experimental music', where purported openness and inclusivity masks exclusivity at other levels, as in the racialised opposition between the 'indeterminacy' of experimental music and the 'improvisation' of jazz, as highlighted by George E. Lewis. Here I aim to put into focus how the claim to experimentation in the field of music not only names a set of methodological virtues, but also functions as a staking out of territory by which 'experimental music' as a concept, field, and practice is produced and reproduced, with implications for the contemporary scholarly sense of 'experimentation'.

The Momentum is the Message: Analogue Philosophy for Analogue Music
Cian O'Farrell (Kingston University)

Since the expansion of digital technologies in the latter decades of the twentieth century, the distinction between the analogue and the digital has become a persistent site of philosophical inquiry. Nowhere is this distinction more pronounced than in music, where analogue and digital technologies are often framed in opposition. Yet, discussions of analogue music technologies frequently remain vague, bound to romanticised notions of 'authenticity' and 'presence.' This paper moves beyond such narratives by using the analogue philosophies of Bergson, Simondon, and Deleuze to understand the role of analogue technologies in music composition.

In *Laruelle: Against the Digital*, Alexander Galloway argues that the analogue/digital distinction extends beyond its technical applications and must be understood as a fundamental philosophical problem.[1] Taking up this claim, I will stage a critical encounter between analogue philosophy and analogue music technology. Rather than treating analogue music as a nostalgic counterpoint to digital production, I will examine how the concepts of continuity, transduction, and ontogenesis, central to the work of Bergson, Simondon, and Deleuzem provide a framework for understanding analogue processes in music composition.

The fundamental distinction between the analogue and the digital in music production is that analogue technologies operate continuously, while digital technologies function through discrete, logico-quantitative processes. Deleuze's work offers a particularly productive way to theorise this distinction. His writings articulate key oppositions between the analogue and the digital: the virtual versus the actual, smooth versus striated spaces, and rhizomatic versus arborescent structures. These pairings correspond closely to the analogue/digital distinction. Smooth spaces resist binary codification, reflecting the continuous variability of analogue processes, while striated spaces structured divisions, reflecting the operations of digital computation.

Following Galloway's argument that Deleuze, with his emphasis on continuity and smoothness and his rejection of formal axiomatics, is a "pro-analogue, anti-digital" philosopher, I will examine how Deleuze's analogue philosophy can illuminate the role of

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[1] Galloway, A. (2014) Laruelle: Against The Digital. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

analogue music technologies in composition. By bringing Deleuze, Bergson, and Simondon into dialogue with music technology, this paper will show that the analogue/digital distinction is not merely a technical matter but a philosophical problem that shapes the ways in which music is composed, structured, and understood.

Panel 3A: Forgiveness & History: German Phenomenology (Book Panel)

Joseph Cohen (University College Dublin)
L'Adversaire privilégié. Heidegger, les juifs et nous **(Galilée, 2021)**

Nicolas de Warren (Penn State University)
Original Forgiveness **(Northwestern University Press, 2020)**

This panel will allow for both a presentation of the two works proposed as well as a critical discussion of these two publications with and between their authors. Joseph Cohen's work, in *L'Adversaire privilégié. Heidegger, les juifs et nous*, engages an in-depth study of Heidegger's relationship to Judaism. Nicolas de Warren's work, in *Original Forgiveness*, proposes to re-examine the question of forgiveness, and therefore of reconciliation, mercy, guilt, evil and history, through a number of authors from the philosophical and literary traditions. This discussion will be conducted in two parts (presentation of the works and critical discussion) and animated by the authors themselves. We will also leave an appropriate time for questions from our public.

Panel 3B: Refusals: Care and Temporality Beyond Colonial Imaginaries

This panel explores the complex dimensions of refusal in colonial and anti-Black contexts. Drawing on thinkers like Glissant, Fanon, Hartman, and Mbembe, the papers examine how refusal operates beyond simple opposition to power. The presentations investigate refusal's ambivalent nature in colonial trauma, its manifestation in Black improvisatory practices, its relationship to care work and liberation, and its temporal dimensions in fugitive spaces. Together, these papers expand our understanding of refusal as both a challenge to colonial systems and a generative force for alternative modes of being.

'Refusal's Ambivalence'

David Ventura (Newcastle University)

In *Le Discours Antillais*, Édouard Glissant frames refusal as a deeply ambivalent practice. While he famously locates marronage as "an incontestable example of systematic opposition, of total refusal" to coloniality (104), he also insists that the conditions of "non-history" imposed by transatlantic slavery have produced more "negative" forms of refusal that express "the ignorance or denial performed by Martinicans with regards to the Black reality of their culture" (290f7). As Glissant puts it: "non-history simultaneously leads to the refusal of history ('what's the point of revisiting the issues of slavery'?) and to the search for a reassuring pseudo-history ('we have been recognized as humans')" (290f7). In this paper, I identify in Fanon's 1952 paper "The 'North African Syndrome'" a similarly ambivalent notion of refusal. While Fanon's text articulates how his patients' refusal of diagnosis implicitly challenges the Western medical apparatus' pathologizing logic, in it, he also addresses a more negative facet of refusal which consists of his patients' denial to acknowledge the traumatic impact that colonialism's "burning past" continues to exert on their lived experience (4). As such, I contend that what is offered across Fanon's and Glissant's texts is the dual sense in which refusal, alongside indexing a challenge to systems of racism, can also denote a continuation of the lived, unconscious traumatisms imposed by coloniality. I conclude by briefly reflecting on what this more ambivalent figuration of refusal can bring to contemporary Black studies debates on refusal as an insurgent nexus for superseding the world's constitutive anti-blackness.

'Black Noise as Refusal: Improvisation, Speculative Narratives, and the Limits of the critical tradition'
German Primera (University of Brighton)

This paper examines the generative force of refusal and the fugitive nature of Black social life, situating it within debates in critical theory and the Black critical tradition. I explore improvisation as a form of refusal that suspends the struggle for recognition and re-establishes itself otherwise—a "black noise" that challenges the ontopolitical conflation of Blackness and social death. Drawing on Saidiya Hartman and Black feminist speculative practices, such as critical fabulation and Black redaction, I extend and depart from Foucault's history of the present and archaeological method. Like Foucault, Hartman insists on narrative restraint and the refusal to fill archival gaps for the sake of closure. Yet Hartman's method, as Lauren Guilmette observes, makes imaginative leaps that strain against the limits of the archive, painting as full a picture of captive lives as possible while honoring their irreducible opacity. In doing so, Hartman offers an alternative to Foucault's critique, expanding its experimental potential and illuminating the anti-dialectical, generative, and improvisatory repertoires and tonalities of Black social life.

'The Freedom of Passing By (Care Work): Care and Refusal Beyond Mbembe's "Ethics of the Passerby"'

Lucile Richard (University of Oxford)

Over the past decade, political theory has undergone a significant reconfiguration of dissenting politics through the concept of refusal, a notion distinct from, yet genealogically linked to, resistance. Emerging from critical reassessments of Michel Foucault's influence on postcolonial studies—particularly by scholars engaging with indigeneity, coloniality, and slavery—refusal transcends the binary logic of domination and subjugation. It foregrounds practices such as withdrawal, concealment, endurance, and fugitivity, shifting focus from universalized conceptions of resistance to alternative modes of life and sociality amidst systemic violence and subjugation (Simpson, 2007; Coulthard, 2014; Harney and Moten, 2013). Despite its conceptual richness, the interplay between care, refusal, and liberation remains underexplored, with care frequently relegated to a secondary or incidental role (Hsueh, 2023). This article critically examines how post-Foucauldian discourses on biopolitics, sovereign power, and racialized violence have reinforced this marginalization. Revisiting Achille Mbembe's *ethics of the passerby* as an early articulation of care's place in theorizing freedom beyond necropolitical logics, the article questions whether critiques of Foucault's framework must extend further to fully integrate care as both a site of struggle and a foundation for liberation. Through a critical engagement with Mbembe's work, the article demonstrates how post-Foucauldian thought often perpetuate androcentric assumptions about care and freedom, inadvertently consolidating patriarchal and colonial biases. Drawing on Black feminist and decolonial perspectives (Collins, 1997; Davis, 1981; Spillers, 1987; Sharpe, 2016), the article underscores the need to address the subjugatory dimensions of care work. It argues that such a focus compels a reconsideration of the very notions of freedom and liberation within refusal scholarship.

'Apprehending Wayward Lives: On Diachronic Spaces of Fugitive Refusal'
Timothy J. Huzar (King's College London)

In this paper, I examine the philosophical stakes of Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* through a dialogue with Hannah Arendt and Adriana Cavarero. I argue that Hartman's work transcends a politics of representation and recognition to offer an onto-ethico-political articulation of existence, while reconceptualising Arendt's and Cavarero's "space of appearance" to encompass fugitive intimate relations across both space and time. Hartman's method of fabulation centers on refusal: she rejects both the archive's erasure of Black life and Black life's violent representation as commodity. Instead, she illuminates how young Black women in the early twentieth-century urban United States enacted forms of refusal through waywardness and improvisation. Beyond merely representing these women, Hartman's fabulation attends to their specific existence — what in philosophical parlance could be called their singularity. Further, as Fanny Söderbäck has noted, Hartman makes patent the imbrication of the singular and relational in her understanding of the chorus as a heuristic for thinking the sociality of the people whose lives she narrates. I argue that this attending to another's singularity is best understood as "apprehension," filling a lexical gap in philosophical considerations of singularity. Distinct from representation, apprehension is essentially relational and reveals the singularity of the one narrating (Hartman) as well as the one narrated.

While this resonates with Arendt and Cavarero's concept of the "space of appearance" — a plural attending to unique singularity — Hartman's work expands this framework in crucial ways. Where Arendt and Cavarero emphasise spatial presence and, particularly for Arendt, recognition in the polis, Hartman reveals how spaces of appearance operate temporally and through refusal. Through fabulatory narration, Hartman creates an onto-ethico-political poetics that transforms our understanding of how existents attend to one another across space and time.

Panel 3C: Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Love's Retrospective Epiphany: The Sense of Love in Merleau-Ponty
Heidi Knechtel (University of Toronto)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty addresses love throughout his work, although not to the extent that he attends to art, language, politics, and history. His most direct engagements with love occur in "The *Cogito*" section of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and love plays a central role in his *Institution and Passivity* lectures from 1954 - 1955. Three features of love may be identified in Merleau-Ponty's work – the acts of relating to the beloved wherein love develops; the temporal dimension of love revealed in Merleau-Ponty's account of *institution*; and the act of reflection that love requires to be known. While these features are not made explicit by Merleau- Ponty, I demonstrate that his discussions reveal these features as essential to love's sense. Section I addresses Merleau-Ponty's motivations for discussing love by introducing a problem for ordinary accounts of emotions, the case where one can be in love and not know it. The remaining sections (Sections II-IV) identify and examine the three features of love necessary for understanding this case. Clarifying the sense of love within Merleau-Ponty addresses what is evidently a phenomenon of interest to him, but that is not recognized as a customary theme in his phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's discussions elucidate love's world-changing character. In contrast to love understood as a mere feeling, mental state, or constitution of the other, love is an embodied, ongoing, and passive acquisition. I conclude in Section V by returning to the question of how love may be analogous with other phenomena, anticipating that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of love fits into his ontology of the flesh.

Towards an aesthetic (counter-)reading of Eurocentrism: Merleau-Ponty's conceptless universality

Andréa Delestrade (London School of Economics & Political Science)

What, if anything, does a phenomenologist like Maurice Merleau-Ponty have to say about philosophical Eurocentrism, in a tradition pervaded by Eurocentric assumptions (Mignolo 2018), which equates Europe and universalism (Delestrade 2024)? This paper *divides* Merleau-Ponty's philosophies of universality in order to draw on conceptual resources which effectively displace, rather than reproduce, the logic of Eurocentrism. A critique of Merleau-Ponty's *lateral universality* allows a more discreet, and yet more radical, universality to emerge: *aesthetic universality*.

First, the paper examines a classical reading of Merleau-Ponty's contribution against Eurocentrism in scholarship (e.g., Jung in Cataldi and Hamrick 2007; Hountondji 2017), which focuses on the essay "Everywhere and Nowhere" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b), in which Merleau-Ponty engages in a critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism through the concept of "lateral universality". However, I argue that this concept remains caught up in a *Husserlian* variation of Eurocentrism, which still conceives of Europe as a space of truth and hence as a *universal* space. Against this Eurocentric universalism, the paper then develops the concept of an *aesthetic universality* through original archival work of his unpublished manuscripts and a critical reconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's ontological writings (Merleau-Ponty 1989; 1964a; 2015). This aesthetic universality derives from Merleau-Ponty's ontology five core characteristics which constitute aesthetic universality: conceptlessness, grounded/lessness, embodiment, intertwinement, and anarchy. I argue that this ontological structure disrupts the logic of Eurocentrism in three fundamental ways. The aesthetic logic prevents an ordering of bodies by presenting a radical *equality of sensibility*; it rethinks the development of institutions as *body politics*; and it displaces a Eurocentric identification of *exemplarity* by stripping normativity from the (political) example. This paper therefore recasts Merleau-Ponty as operating an internal displacement of phenomenology towards a political aesthetics which seriously contends with the logic of Eurocentrism in continental philosophy.

Merleau-Ponty on painting as a cognitive act

Andrew Inkpin (University of Melbourne)

Merleau-Ponty is widely acknowledged as having anticipated recent conceptions of embodied-enacted cognition in important ways. However, based on his discussions of Schneider – and partly misleading terminology – in *Phenomenology of Perception*, he is often read as advocating a view of embodied behaviour as noncognitive, nonrepresentational, and self-less 'coping'. By focusing on the two examples of the act of painting Merleau-Ponty considers in *The Prose of the World* this talk shows, by contrast, how these outline a sui generis form of cognition. First, I argue that his discussion of a slow-motion film of Matisse commits Merleau-Ponty to conceiving painting as an act of embodied-enacted deliberation. On this view, painting is a process that requires pervasive choice-making while operating in a possibility space that is – due to its enacted and embodied character – finite, situated, unique and subject to the constraints of motoric executability. Second, I explain how the painter's relation to the world should be understood in the light of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Renoir at work. As part of an ongoing debate with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty uses this example to argue that painting requires a non-correspondence-based conception of truth and that painting exemplifies an 'indirect' and 'allusive' relation to reality. Having briefly considered how it is to be interpreted, and contrasting it with Heidegger's view of the artwork as unconcealment, I argue that this claim is vindicated by the kind of modern painting Merleau-Ponty focuses on. I conclude that, by thus combining a distinctively embodied mode of deliberation with the inflection and expression of a determinate relation to the world, Merleau-Ponty provides a description of the act of painting that a) is phenomenologically robust while remaining agnostic about its underlying causal mechanisms, and b) should be recognized as inherently cognitive in character.

Panel 3D: Life, Death, Voice

Bichat-Schopenhauer-Foucault - The minor tradition of life death?
Timothy Secret (University of Winchester)

The advance between the biological theories of pre-Darwinian Xavier Bichat and the post-Darwinian August Weismann, in relation to their different concepts of life, death and immortality, finds clear moments of parallel in later philosophers who explicitly aligned their positions with references to Bichat or Weismann. We can find a parallel step between the Bichatian Schopenhauer and the Weismannian Freud in relation to drive theory, then later between the Bichatian Foucault and the Weismannian Deleuze in relation to the death of man. Those who align themselves with Weismann and a post-Darwinian biology focused on the immortal germ plasm, while classing as secondary the mortal bodies that are reduced to their host, have been taken to be the more radical and contemporary in breaking with anthropocentrism. In particular, Deleuze in his *Foucault* was able to paint his friend as constrained by the residual concern with death attached to the name Bichat, limiting his capacity to think beyond the human whose death he had prophecised in *The Order of Things*. While Bichat's vitalism-as-mortalism encouraged reflection on Being-towards-death in an anthropocentric and phenomenological descriptive era, Weismann opened a vitalism for those who wanted with Spinoza to think least of death in a dawning post-human and metaphysically constructive age.

Against such a narrative, in this paper I will argue that there remain untapped resources in the vitalism-as-mortalism of Bichat and in the non-Darwinian theory of evolution of Schopenhauer's late works, and that these can allow an alternative critical angle on the Foucault-Deleuze relationship than the one Deleuze himself presented. My particular focus will on Schopenhauer's account of blood and evolution which, for all their problematic inconsistencies, offer an alternative path for thinking the beyond-of-man.

'O flower…Can you fathom the song?': Vegetal Voice in Clara Schumann's 'Die stille Lotosblume'
April Wu (Royal Holloway, University of London)

In German Romantic culture, the flower is a symbol that gestures beyond its symbolic function. On one hand, it weaves an elaborate network of meanings centred on decorative sensibilities associated with women's material culture; at the same time, the 'blaue Blume' (Novalis) disrupts representational economy, epitomising the Romantic penchant for secret languages and distaste for direct signification. The Lied, considered to embody unmediated, authentic expression, is usually associated with the privileged interiority of the human subject. However, it also lends itself to a posthumanist reading: the poetry it draws on frequently centres the nonhuman inhabitants of the world, particularly the flower.

Musical Romanticism often comments on the unrepresentability of the world, for which music's own ineffability offers a powerful parallel and thus expression. Lied composers, then, are uniquely positioned to capture this elusive 'voice 'of flowers—beyond the artificial 'flowers of rhetoric'—through the non-discursive capacities of sound. Clara Schumann's 'Die stille Lotosblume' begins by sonically conjuring the flower's luminous emergence. As the song unfolds, the human singer attempts to capture the flower through gestural mimesis at the same time as he questions his own mimetic endeavour. The flower, embodied in an enigmatic open sonority that resurfaces at the end of the song, escapes human attempts at 'verstehen'. Its alien, unrepresentable sonic presence evokes a sense of 'vegetal Being' (Marder 2015). The song points to the genre's tension between textual symbolics and an impulse to inhabit or become a vegetal other. In ceding epistemic authority to the latter—in privileging the alien 'stillness' of the lotus flower over logocentric 'understanding'—it questions the exceptionalism ascribed to the human—specifically male—subject of metaphysics, resonating keenly with contemporary philosophical efforts to restore the ontological exuberance of plant life.

'Towards Some Considerations on 'a life...'

Jamie Davies (The Global Centre for Advanced Studies)

In this paper, I will offer some philosophical comments on the theme of Deleuze's final text, 'Immanence: A life.' In sum, using this text as a departure point, I will explore the destabilisation and destitution, or ruination, of subjectivity and individuation that literature is in a privileged position to perform. Focusing on how in writing (whether that be a writing of one's life or the allegorisation of life itself) one submits this life to the virtuality and indeterminacy of literature, I will argue that the logic of the subject thus comes undone, such that all which remains is the destitute, ruined singularity; the 'neuter,' in Deleuze's words, exposed by every writing. I will begin by exploring Deleuze's brief text and outlining its significance for what I will call, following Agamben, the useless form-of-life. I will then move to Benjamin, looking at how his work on allegory and the ruin offers a mode of thinking the ruination of subjectivity that is subsequently figured in his autobiographical sketches. From here, I will move to Montaigne's *Essays* and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, considering them as exemplars of the writing which is a living of 'a life' outside of the paradigm of subjectivity, a life that is, in Agamben's words, naught but its very living; the living of the unmistakable, though non-recognisable, singularity: the useless self. To conclude, I will turn to the useless form-of-life figured in these texts and explore how what for Deleuze constitutes 'a life' is precisely a form-of-life entirely otherwise than the logic of subjectivity or individuation, one wherein the self's gesture's of *poiesis*, as seen by the writers considered, is precisely the undoing of the substantialised subject.

Panel 4A: Jacques Derrida (I)

Silence, Political Space, and the "Muteness" of the Animal
Danielle Sands (Royal Holloway, University of London)

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida frames logocentrism as "a thesis regarding the animal" (27), maintained from Aristotle to Lacan and beyond. Nonhuman animals, the thesis presupposes, can communicate their physical sensations through cries and squeals, but their expression is not imbued with reason; they cannot *speak*. Accordingly, if speech is the precondition of political agency, nonhuman animals cannot be political actors. In her 2019 monograph *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* Eva Meijer disputes the assumption that nonhuman animals lack access to the *logos*, instead venturing "a theory of political animal voices" (10). Whilst acknowledging a debt to Derrida, she argues that he fails to engage meaningfully with nonhuman life and "runs the risk of reinforcing a view of other animals as silent" (29). One can imagine a deconstructive critique of Meijer: her emphasis on animals' "speech" fails to challenge the fundamentally anthropocentric framing of political agency and space.

From this context, this paper will re-examine the apparent "muteness" (Derrida 19) of the nonhuman animal through a broader examination of philosophical and political conceptions of silence. Demonstrating that this "muteness" should be understood neither as nonsignifying noise nor as misidentified speech, it will do two things: First, return to Derrida's earlier work on negative theology to consider how its disruption of the opposition between speech and silence might impact our construction of political space. And, secondly, turn to recent scholarship, including Naomi Waltham Smith's *Shattering Biopolitics: Militant Listening and the Sound of Lif*e (2022) and Mónica Brito Vieira's *Democracy and the Politics of Silence* (2024), which offers practical suggestions as to how silence might be productively reframed as a political category.

Detour de Force: Nietzsche in Derrida's *Life Death*

Tracy Colony (Bard College Berlin)

Derrida presented his seminar *Life Death* in 1975-76 at the École Normale Supérieure. This title was a modification of the official theme of "Life and Death" that was to guide the seminars preparing students for that year's *agrégation* exams. Derrida's altered title announces a questioning of both the meaning and relatedness of both terms. Although roughly six sessions from this seminar have already appeared in slightly different forms in three major texts, the remaining material has only been widely available since the original French publication of the seminar in 2019 and its English translation in 2020. While a vibrant reception is ongoing, there has been almost no treatment of Nietzsche's role in this seminar. As I will argue, a key theme that comes to the fore in Derrida's explication of Nietzsche in *Life Death* is force. My paper is structured in three sections. In the first, I briefly introduce the seminar and the singular role Nietzsche is given in it. In the second section, I trace the theme of force in what Derrida describes as a "Nietzschean kind of claim" in his engagement with François Jacob's *The Logic of Life.* In the third section, I show how the theme of force is also at the center of the second thematic detour through Heidegger. In conclusion, I suggest that one of the most important implications of Derrida's reading of Nietzsche in terms of force is that it presents Nietzsche as thinking the living beyond any mere ontological determination. This explication articulates a crucial difference between Nietzsche's and traditional accounts of the living.

"Vivre (bien) ensemble avec les animaux": Derrida and the subject-to-come

Mariana Almeida Pereira (University of Coimbra)

In Western societies, we live with other animals, but we do not live *well* with them. Rather, we currently kill and harm them in unbearable numbers. Taking this problem in consideration, in this paper I suggest that only, what I call, the subject-to-come can live well with other animals. First, I will develop the idea of "living (well) with" according to Derrida: I will problematise the traditional idea of "community" in its privilege of unity and *oikeiosis*, and I will make explicit that, following Derrida, "living well" ("*vivre bien*") means "living with heart (*avec coeur*)", that is, living compassionately and responsibly. Second, I will demonstrate how this appeal to "live well with other animals" amounts to an injunction for an anarchic, anachronic and hyperbolic responsibility. The subject of such a responsibility, as I will explain, is the subject who is in constant ex-appropriation, as Derrida understands it; I will argue that this subject can be understood as a subject-to-come, showing it to be constituted by, on the one hand, the messianic time and, on the other, the promise as a task of infinite and unconditional responsibility. Third, and in conclusion, I will demonstrate how the only subject capable of living well, responsibly or compassionately with other animals (and with life in general) — thus sacrificing the sacrificial logic of Western philosophy and culture — is the subject of ex-appropriation or the subject-to-come.

(Wo)Man and People: Ortega y Gasset's Problematic Phenomenology of Sexual Difference

Gregory Morgan Swer (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

In his 1957 work, *Man and People,* Ortega applies his existential phenomenology to the analysis of society. Central to his account of the formation of society, and the implicit and explicit social norms that govern it, are his analyses of the discovery of the Other, the discovery of the Self, and the formation of inter-personal relations, and the ways in which they all arise from the fundamental structural laws of phenomenological reality. Overlooked within Ortega's social phenomenology is his discussion of the phenomenological appearance of sexual difference. Ortega's puts forward an extremely gendered description of female existence as characterised by 3 'essential' phenomenological features: confusion, weakness, and corporeality. Not only is Ortega's essentializing treatment of sexual difference phenomenologically problematic, it also violates his own existential phenomenological account of the formation of the Self. This paper offers an immanent critique of Ortega's account of Woman. It also considers, by connecting his analysis in *Man and Crisis* to other reflections on sexual difference scattered across his works, that the intention behind Ortega's analysis may have been ironic, and that his objective might have been to emphasise the phenomenological effects of the male gaze on the female Other in particular, and the polyvalent effects of the 'look' in inter-personal encounters in general.

Feminine Virtues and Moral Imagination in Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir

Martina Barnaba & Bianca Monteleone (Sapienza, University of Rome)

Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir are often regarded as precursors of contemporary gender constructivism. Recent studies, in connection with their constructivist approaches, have highlighted an intriguing similarity in their viewpoints: the concept of "de-gendering of virtue" (Joseph, 2024). Both Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir argue that within a patriarchal society, feminine virtues are detrimental to women's freedom, as they confine women to an impoverished and subjugated identity. However, when viewed through a "de-gendering" lens, feminine-gendered virtues can take on significant moral value. For instance, qualities such as attentiveness and empathy, which may be interpreted as passive maternal instincts under patriarchy, could be considered as ethical behaviours when understood as human virtues exercised freely. This means that traditional feminine virtues should not be condemned in themselves but rather disentangled from the oppressive patriarchal system that forces them on women alone. To carry out this "redescription", one must rely on a virtue in particular that, according to Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir, women under patriarchy are paradoxically forced to develop: moral imagination. This paper investigates this particular virtue, examining how these two thinkers outline an equivalent project of creative morality in which women can re-invent themselves and their future. Both Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir envision a post-patriarchal world where humans, women and men alike, are free to conduct their lives and make moral choices without adhering to preordained roles. After a brief recollection of Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir's accounts of feminine virtues, we will first focus on Wollstonecraft's "feminist imagination" (Taylor 2004) and then explore Beauvoir's "political virtue of moral invention" (Vaccarino Bremner 2022). In our conclusions, we will address the accusations of "masculinism" directed at the positions of Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir by appreciating their critiques of what the contemporary feminist debate refers to as identity politics.

Nation-State and Matricide

Maddalena Cerrato (Texas A&M University)

Important works have highlighted how the hegemonic male gaze in the theorization of the nation has overlooked the role of women in national cultural and biological reproduction (Yuval-Davis), forgotten crucial function of the race/reproduction bind (Weinbaum), and failed to recognize the entanglement of sexism and racism inherent to nationalism (Balibar). And yet, rather than an unfortunate theoretical oversight, the long-standing disregard for the significance of gender relations in the constitution of the political order of the nation state depends on the very economy of its symbolical and imaginary infrastructure. Such an infrastructure is organized around a complex economy of suppression, incorporation, and repression of "the mother." A thorough deconstruction of the nation state and its persistent phantasmatic hegemony should then start by questioning its multilayered relation to maternity. By bringing together deconstruction, feminist thought, and psychoanalytic theory, this paper suggests a perspective to tackle such a deconstructive project.

The argument is organized around three main conceptual axes: the notion of *phantasm* in Derrida, Irigaray's hypothesis of the centrality of *matricide*, and Loraux's the analysis of the discourse of *autochthony*. First, in dialogue with the Derridean text, the paper discusses the unity, self-coincidence, and sovereignty of the national community– by virtue of which the nation state claims political legitimacy– as a phantasmic phallogocentric formation built upon the suppression and incorporation of the maternal. Second, it analyzes the phantasm of the nation capitalizing on Irigaray's suggestion (significantly expand by Amber Jacobs) that a matricide, rather than a patricide, organizes Western symbolic order. Finally, turning to Loraux's discussion autochthony as founding myth of Athenian citizenship, the presentation focuses on the technology of motherland and its fundamental role in linking the territorial boundaries of to the nation-state and to the fictional limits of race.

Critical Theory and Freudian Drive Theory: Unreason and Political Agency

Gavin Rae (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment occupies a central role in both the works of the so-called Frankfurt School and, to a less explicit degree, critical theory more broadly understood. They demonstrate how enlightenment reason arose from the experience of myth, before arguing that enlightenment reason itself depends both upon certain myths and the structures of irrationality and power that it claims to have superseded. For a variety of commentators, such as Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty, and György Lukács, this famously means that Adorno and Horkheimer have driven themselves and us into a dead political end: by associating reason with instrumentality and working with a binary reason/irrationality (i.e. myth) opposition, they can only overcome the former by appealing to myth, which reinstantiates the dialectic of enlightenment that, on their telling, can only logically lead to the political domination of instrumental rationality to be overcome. The purpose of this paper, however, is to call into question that conclusion by arguing that it not only misunderstands the nature of the "dialectic" inherent in Adorno and Horkheimer's critique, but also fails to appreciate the fundamental, albeit implicit, role that Freud's drive theory plays in Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of political agency. To do so, I first outline the basic problem of Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment paying attention to the argument that it leads to a political dead end. I then tie Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis to Freudian psychoanalysis, before turning to the relationship between reason, irrationality, and political agency. The aim is to both correct a longstanding critique of the dialectic of enlightenment and argue, from that amendment, that their dialectic offers a particularly sophisticated understanding that undermines any reason/unreason binary opposition to insist upon reason's entwinement with the irrational; an entwinement that ensures that political agency is not a fundamentally rational pursuit nor does it entail the overcoming of the irrational but is instead activated by and so dependent upon, without being determined by, the irrational.

"Rethinking the relation between Sovereignty and Democracy in Hannah Arendt, Antonio Negri and Chantal Mouffe"
Reginald Nagaiya (Western Sydney University)

Throughout contemporary political theory, there has been a widespread consensus that democracy is in crisis. This is owing to recent events such as the invasion of Iraq in 2004; the collapse of the financialized economy in 2008; the rise of nationalist populism in both Europe and North America, the ongoing refugee crisis, the persistent failure of democratic states to address the legacies of colonialism; and the increasing marginalization of minorities. Such events prompt us to rethink the nature and meaning of democracy. This article does precisely that, namely it investigates the question: to what extent can we think of a democratic politics without presupposing a unified conception of the people. It does so through a theoretical analysis of the political theories of Hannah Arendt, Antonio Negri and Chantal Mouffe. The first section of this article will show that despite the differences among these theorists, what they all have in common is a shared commitment to conceiving of politics without presupposing a homogenous conception of the people. Instead, they place central emphasis on a specific form of action which both establishes the identity of the people and the power that they possess. I demonstrate this by providing an overview of their respective positions, elucidating how they each attempt to conceive of a politics without a unified conception of the people through placing an emphasis on a conception of action that is devoid of a means and ends logic. The second section draws on the recent work of Dimitris Vardoulakis to argue that by accounting for the identity of the people and the power that it possesses through one form of action, Arendt, Negri and Mouffe do not adequately solve the problem as it leads to the reaffirmation of a politics that is facilitated by an exclusionary logic.

Metaphysics as Semblance? Kant, Adorno, and the Ambivalent Necessity of Transcendental Ideas
Mang Su (Temple University)

In this essay, I will examine the critical-systematic ambivalence in Kant's reformation of metaphysics through the lens of Theodor Adorno's reading of Kant, as well as Adorno's reflections on the fate of western metaphysics through Kant. First, I will lay out the ambivalence in Kant's theory of transcendental illusion [Schein]: on the one hand, it is necessary because of reason natural tendency and should be kept in check; on the other hand—and this aspect is often overlooked in English literatures—it also provides the necessary condition for the unity of reason and hence for cognition in general. I suggest that this ambivalence, instead of any metaphysical doctrines, is the Kantian metaphysical legacy for Adorno. I will then examine Adorno's thoughts on the task of metaphysics, what he deems to be "in a precise sense […] the unity of a critical and a rescuing intention."[2] I will argue that in emphasizing the critical-rescuing aspect of metaphysics instead of seeing it as onto-theology, Adorno is continuing Kant's critical-rational project. Then, moving to the last chapter "Meditations on Metaphysics" in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, I will show how the critique-rescue of the transcendental ideas as in Kant's first *Critique* motivates Adorno's late philosophy. In particular, I will show that the common accusation of Adorno's reliance on the concept of semblance misfires, because instead of a retreat into the aesthetics, the rescue of semblance expresses a metaphysical intention and should be read within the context of post-Kantian metaphysics. At the end, I will also examine Adorno's critique of Kant vis-à-vis this metaphysical vision, and examine whether Adorno's insight of the convergence of metaphysics and materialism could provide us with an alternative insight regarding the post-Kantian metaphysics.

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[2] Theodor Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 51.

Panel 4D: Martin Heidegger

Heidegger on Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and the Overcoming of Aesthetics

Andrea Vitangeli (University of Oxford)

In a retrospective note to his 1929 *Kantbuch*, Heidegger suggestively, if cryptically, claims to have found in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CPJ) the 'highest confirmation' of his own reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. What exactly about Kant's aesthetic theory could have been seen by Heidegger as corroborating his controversial interpretation of Kant's theoretical philosophy? Until recently, readers could only speculate. With the publication of the latest instalment of Heidegger's complete works (*Gesamtausgabe* Volume 84.2), however, we are now in a position to fully address Heidegger's engagement with Kant's aesthetics and to properly assess its significance. In this presentation, I aim to extract from the rich but highly unsystematic textual material now available – consisting primarily of preparatory notes and student transcripts relating to a seminar Heidegger held in 1936 – what I regard as the key threads of such engagement. As I will attempt to elucidate, Heidegger's overarching thesis is that in CPJ Kant arrives at a more fundamental philosophical insight into the nature of art than had previously been achieved in the history of Western thought – an adequate grasp of which, however, is foreclosed to Kant by the basic premises underlying his inquiry. Such premises are those that make his inquiry an *aesthetic* inquiry into art, where 'aesthetics' names for Heidegger the fundamental framework through which the realm of artistic production and reception is (and can only be) understood within metaphysics. Kant is thus read as articulating aesthetically (hence ultimately inadequately) something essential to artistic phenomena (to which he is nevertheless responsive). He is thereby seen as implicitly laying the groundwork for the project of an 'overcoming' of aesthetics which Heidegger himself undertakes in the mid-1930s, with the aim of liberating the ontological potential of art for a new understanding in terms of his being-historical thinking.

Learning to Dwell: Revisiting Ontological Reflections on the Substance of Things, through Heidegger and Descartes.

Jessica Lombard (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Our paper aims to address a foundational and urgent question for contemporary thought: the metaphysical inquiry into the substance of things and, by extension, the essence of the world. In light of the ongoing appropriation of the environment driven by efforts to rationalize its resources, we argue that this ontological issue is a critical challenge for our societies, rooted in a fundamental inadequacy within contemporary conceptions of worldliness. For instance, a natural space is not seen as open countryside or free land but is immediately considered as a field—already a form of property, symbolically exploited and empirically exploitable. This ontological bias restricts political reflection, making it difficult to conceive of the world in terms beyond utility, production, and productivity, which Peter Sloterdijk famously describes as a form of "ontological enslavement[3]" for things and entities.

To address this critical issue, we draw from important works of European philosophy, focusing primarily on Heideggerian phenomenology and Cartesian metaphysics. We first draw from sections 19 to 21 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger critiques Descartes' metaphysical interpretation of the world's Being, to address an inherent ethical issue: historically shaped by the philosophical tradition of considering matter as *res extensa[4]*, our societies no longer engage with the world *per se* but instead perceive it as a collection of measurable entities, subordinated to human activity and appropriation. This reduction shapes how we perceive and relate to the world, to nature, and to other beings. As such, this paper highlights the need to revisit the metaphysical foundation of the world in Descartes' work and its implications through Heidegger's reinterpretation, particularly concerning the ethical and aesthetic question of the thing-in-itself, which reaffirms the necessity of the ontological distinction between Being (*Sein*) and beings (*seiende*).

More profoundly maybe, we then draw on Heidegger's later works such as *The Question Concerning Technology* or *What is a Thing* to argue that this is also an aesthetic concern, by

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[3] P. Sloterdijk, *Règles Pour Le Parc Humain. Une Lettre En Réponse à La Lettre Sur l'Humanisme de Heidegger ; Suivi de La Domestication de l'Être. Pour Un Éclaircissement de La Clairière*, Mille et une nuits, Paris, 1999, p.176.
[4] If Descartes puts forward the notion of *extensio*, this tradition in itself is grounded on Greco-Ancient metaphysics, which introduces the association between *hypokeimenon* (substance) and *sumbébèkos* (accident).

highlighting the need to rethink our relationship with the world in the phenomenological terms of perception and sensitivity. The ontology of the thing thus becomes a critical issue, not as a mere bearer of beauty but as something engaging us through *aisthêtikós*. This perspective challenges the instrumentalization of entities, calling for a transformation of the human gaze toward a metaphysical approach to worldliness that prioritizes presence and proximity over utility. This paper thus engages with the necessity of a genuine human responsibility to inhabit the world aesthetically, i.e. allowing things to emerge as enduring presences, irreducible to human control yet central to our being-in-the-world, and based on the idea that humanity first "must ever learn to dwell[5]"

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[5] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971, p.161.

"Heidegger's realism and his appropriation of Kant"
Fridolin Neumann (University of Warwick)

Heidegger's early phenomenology centres on an idea which can be summarised as follows: intending entities presupposes an understanding of the being of the respective entities. Accordingly, entities are only accessible within an understanding of their ontological features, which differ across different kinds of entities. Heidegger thereby commits to a version of Kant's transcendental turn, since he replaces a first-order ontological investigation with an inquiry into the subjective conditions that make entities accessible. In my paper, I argue that – contrary to a widely held claim – this does not make Heidegger an idealist, insofar as idealism is understood as the claim that we are closed off from 'reality' in a proper sense, or from entities as they are 'in themselves'. This is because Heidegger's version of transcendental philosophy also assigns a central normative role to entities, advancing the additional claim that our understanding of being must be apt to the entities it enables us to encounter. I proceed in three steps. In the first part, I introduce key terms and ideas. In the second part, I discuss and criticise the popular 'transcendental idealist' interpretation of Heidegger, which entails that the ontological features of entities derive from the human standpoint. I argue that – due to Heidegger's commitment to both an ontological pluralism and what I call 'ontological freedom' – this reading makes his position collapse into a relativism about entities. This calls for a more favourable interpretation. In the third part, I focus on a central idea this account neglects: the ontological normativity of entities. Centrally, for Heidegger, our understanding of being is no mere imposition on entities but reciprocally constrained by the entities it enables us to intend. Since Heidegger thereby transforms the Kantian transcendental by tying it back to what it conditions – suggesting a co-dependency between the transcendental and the empirical – I cash this out as a realism.

Proletarianization, Deproletarianization, and Epistemic Agency: Bernard Stiegler's Weak Epistemic Perfectionism

Ben Turner (Queen Mary University of London)

A persistent criticism of contemporary technological developments, encompassing algorithms, machine learning and artificial intelligence, is that they engender the loss of knowledge. This complaint consists primarily of opposition to totalising forms of control in which decision making and judgement are delegated to algorithmic processes. Bernard Stiegler's concept of generalized proletarianization represents one such claim. He argues that algorithmic governance anticipates thought as far as possible, engendering a massive loss of capacities for judging on and responding to technological, social, and political problems. What marks Stiegler's approach out as unique is his solution to this issue. Rather than simply affirming epistemic pluralism in opposition to the control of knowledge, his concept of deproletarianization advances what I will call weak epistemic perfectionism. That is, deproletarianization advocates for habits and practices that underpin the appropriate epistemic agency required for pluralism to flourish. In this paper I contribute to our understanding of Stiegler's philosophy by giving an account of why his work should be read in this way and by articulating the stakes of this form of perfectionism.

The paper begins with a critical introduction to Stiegler's concept of proletarianization. Stiegler defines proletarianization as the loss of knowledge, but he relies on multiple, sometimes conflicting conceptions of knowledge which make it difficult to specify proletarianization's distinct harm. I then resolve this tension by arguing that the underlying harm of proletarianization is not loss of knowledge, but loss of epistemic agency. In the light of this revised understanding of the harm of proletarianization, the correlative concept of deproletarianization should be read as a novel form of weak perfectionism regarding the habits that should be cultivated to restore epistemic agency. I conclude by considering the consequences of this perfectionism for Stiegler's place within continental philosophy of technology, and for the politics of technology more widely.

Prehistory, Cinema and Baroque Temporalities

Bill Marshall (University of Stirling & School of Advanced Study, University of London)

In the context of grappling with the contemporary externalizations of the digital era and its consequences for consciousness, dreams, creativity, and new forms of thought, Bernard Stiegler in *The Neganthropocene* (2018) harnesses Derrida and Husserl to discuss processes of primary, secondary and tertiary 'retention' in the temporal flow of consciousness. The consequence is that 'all technical production of the technical form of life, by the desiring and dreaming beings that we are, constitutes […] a spatialization of experience and thereby also enables its intergenerational transmission'. In this to-ing and fro-ing between technics and dreams, Stiegler names 'grammatization' as 'the process by which the mental temporal flows experienced by the psychic individual are recorded, reproduced, discretized and spatialized'. Stiegler can thus write of an 'arche-cinema' when he draws on archaeologist Marc Azéma's work on graphic narration in the palaeolithic cave paintings at Chauvet, and on his claims of the existence of moving images in that epoch.

In this paper I shall place this material in dialogue both with Werner Herzog's 2010 3D documentary on the Chauvet cave, and with the understated (in Stiegler) Bergsonian/Deleuzian dimensions of attentive recognition in time, and transindividualism. With a moving light source (the flickering lamp) taking us far from the subject of apparatus theory, and the cave artists' use of reliefs in the rock face, we seem to be in the territory of folds and prehension. Here there is a passage or 'folding' between states: 'everything prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and by degrees prehends a world' (Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 1988). I argue that Herzog's film holds in tension, on the one hand, haptic presence and notions of the 'modern', and on the other a folding, mobile, baroque temporality involving a play of immanence and emergence.

The nature and limitations of Jacques Rancière's concept of stultification.

Jake Matthew Parkins (Newcastle University)

Jacques Rancière claims that we live in a "society of contempt" which is constituted by stultification (1991, p. 75). Stultification, in short, involves the assumption and demonstration that there is a hierarchy of intellectual capacities. In my paper, I inquire into two interlinked questions. First, to what extent do existing interpretations of Rancière provide a comprehensive account of his concept of stultification? Second, what are the descriptive limitations of Rancière's account of stultification? In the first section, I argue that some existing interpretations of Rancière, e.g., Goele Cornelissen (2011), Chris Bateman (2018) and Kate Seymour (2019), have insufficiently identified the four key components of stultification: 1) the belief that there is a hierarchy of intellectual capacities; 2) a set of demonstrations that verify that belief; 3) a specific set of effects that are caused by these demonstrations; 4) the reproduction of the belief in intellectual inequality. In second part of my paper, I argue that my interpretation of Rancière can help identify the limitations of Rancière's concept of stultification. By critically comparing Rancière's, Tyson Lewis' (2012) and Daniël van Dijk's (2022) accounts of stultification, I argue that Rancière's account suffers from three main limitations. First, that Rancière's account of stultification overtly focuses upon explanatory demonstrations of stultification – at the expense of alternative forms – and he prematurely closes off the possibility that these alternative forms can interact and compete. Second, Rancière lacks an account of how and why certain stultifying effects arise, particularly when those subject to stultifying practices react by reversing the hierarchy of intelligence. Third, it remains unclear how distinct the hierarchy of intelligence needs to be before it meets the criteria for stultification. I contend that this last limitation is the most important since it undermines the possibility of effectively diagnosing everyday stultifying practices.

Why Home Matters: A Phenomenological-embodied defence of secure tenancy

Jonathan Wren (University College Dublin)

In the 80s and 90s scholars questioned the value of a concept of home for liberatory politics. First and second-wave feminism identified the deeply problematic nature of the home, traditionally framed as a place of comfort and safety, but which in actuality served (and continues to serve) as the primary site of repression, gendered oppression and violence. The home was recognised as being predicated upon notions of defence, security and exclusion. Furthermore, through the work of de Lauretis and Honig the link with the patriarchal tendency towards individualism was identified meaning that home was considered an obstacle to relational and ecstatic interpretations of selfhood. Young, amongst others, by contrast argues that we should not reject home outrightly but rather seek to "extend its positive values to everyone." This paper develops this debate departing from Young's observation that our material home-spaces serve as an extension of our bodily habits and routines. Recent sociological and psychological research into insecure accommodation highlight the harms experienced when home-spaces are often violently seized, displaced or destroyed. Developing the links between this research and phenomenological explorations of racism, precarity and unhomeliness, this paper presents a defence of the experience of home. Rather than providing a normative assessment of the value, it proposes that a radical political response to such crises may find resources in the habitual embodied conditions of our experience. It focuses upon the forms of embodied injury that are inflicted under the guise of contemporary accommodation crises, to suggest that a critical notion of home – in what Ngo proposes as its "porous" dimensions – may be necessary. In conclusion, it argues that homes (plurally conceived) matter because of the embodied and material supports they provide to our being-in-the-world; a fact evidently overlooked in a global situation increasingly characterised by loss, displacement and instability.

Vocation as ideology: a phenomenological critique

Jakub Kowalewski (St Mary's University, London)

Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of texts critical of contemporary ideologies of work. However, this important body of literature has, rather surprisingly, failed to engage with the notion of *vocation.*

It can be hypothesised that the omission of vocation has two causes: firstly, due to its anachronistic religious heritage, the concept of vocation may appear irrelevant for a materialist analysis of modern work-ideologies; secondly, vocation evokes images of meaningful and fulfilling work – a picture which goes against the programmatic presuppositions of authors critical of work under capitalism.

The aim of this paper is to address the above gap in literature. My contention is that vocation is an important element of ideologies of work because it plays a specific role in the ideological constitution of subjectivity. To substantiate my claim, I will turn to phenomenology.

The phenomenological accounts of vocation are built on two contrasting models of subjectivity. While for Husserl vocation presupposes an active, wilful, and reflective subject, for Marion and Henry vocation is an experience proper to a passive and pre-reflective subjectivity. My suggestion is that these two models become reconcilable if we understand vocation as involving a *substitution* of a primarily passive self-experience with a sense of oneself as active and wilful. This process should be of interest to critics of work-ideologies: as I argue, vocation's ideological effect consists of dissimulating our constitutive passivity in relation to our calling which attaches us to our present working conditions.

I will conclude this paper by addressing the hypothesised reasons for the absence of vocation in the recent analyses of work-ideologies. I will demonstrate that as an experience, vocation precedes its bifurcation into concepts with distinct religious and secular meanings; and that, while promising fulfilment, vocation is often evoked when work proves most gruelling and senseless.

Indifference – A Moral Problem?

Mihály Szilágyi-Gál (ELTE University of Sciences, Budapest)

Indifference is a moral problem by virtue of being a normative inquiry. This normativity emerges from comparing acting identified as indifferent with acting taken as non-indifferent. By making this distinction we are on a normative terrain. Thus indifference is part of the register of moral phenomena, by having a special normative relevance. By raising the issue of indifference as a moral problem one is situated in a normative framework in which indifference appears as a moral problem in the first place.

What makes indifference a special topic of moral theory is its apparent extra-moral position; indifference seems to be lacking any moral attitude rather than being an attitude itself. A possible way to study indifference is to explore examples and identify types among them.

The degree of reflection turns the issue of the location of indifference in its relation to various normative stances. If we affirm the normative character of indifference, we can only describe it as an attitude that emerges between options rather than one staying outside any option. Viewed from this perspective indifferent action is not accidental, but one that emerges in the web of possible normative actions.

Unlike any other moral category, like the right, the just and the virtuous, indifference appears to be meta-theoretical, because it turns moral behaviour as a general issue rather than turning one particular moral issue.

Indifference as a moral problem implicitely appears in various philosophical inquiries throughout the history of European philosophy. This essay explores some stoic and existentialist arguments, paying special attention to the stoic notion *apatheia* and the *stranger* of Albert Camus.

Panel 5C: Friedrich Nietzsche

The Janus-faced object of visual experience: *Simulare*, Klossowski and Nietzsche

Zhifeng Zhan (King's College London)

Stemming from Plato's distinction between ideas and phantasms, the "simulacrum" imitates the phantasm as a concrete manifestation of the idea but emphasizes its affirmative dimension. Through the interpretations of Deleuze, Foucault, and Baudrillard, the simulacrum becomes a revolutionary concept that challenges Plato's hierarchy of representation. On one hand, it embodies a singularity that escapes the rigid regime of subjectivity, as seen in Deleuze's *Renverser le platonisme* (1966) and *Différence et répétition* (1969). On the other, it exposes the imitative process underlying the fabrication of objects, prompting a reflection on the human sciences from a technical perspective, as pursued by Baudrillard in *Simulacres et simulation* (1981).

However, Pierre Klossowski, a key figure in this lineage, has often been overlooked in comparison to these three influential thinkers. In the 1950s, he experimentally drew "simulacrum" from the Roman visual experience of the image of Gods before Christianisation and illustrated it in literary writings (*La Vocation suspendue*, 1950), mythical writings (*Le bain de Diane*, 1956) and philosophical interpretations (collected in his *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, 1969). Klossowski observed that during festivals, statues of Gods (simulacrum) can temporarily transcend divine laws and their responsibilities, becoming objects of pure entertainment and pleasure. In this paper, I argue that beyond the philosophical notion of the simulacrum as a differentiating individual, Klossowski's interest in religious experience reveals a latent dynamic between art (as the technique of appearance and duplication) and identity (as the capacity for continuity). For Klossowski, this Janus-faced nature is the underlying truth of art, semiotics, and visual experience—the very foundation of any possible autonomy of a living body. In his interpretation of eternal return as the simulacrum of doctrine, he also views Nietzsche's parodical and aphoristic style as techniques on an ontological par with his philosophical propositions.

Beware of the Monsters: On Monstrosity in Nietzsche and Deleuze

Emma Ingala (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

While much work has been done on the influence of Nietzsche's thinking on Deleuze and on the relationship between their philosophies, the role of the notion of monstrosity in this relationship has been relatively ignored. This paper argues that both Nietzsche and Deleuze generate and develop a teratology that has two fundamental axes: (a) an ontology of the monstrous, wherein reality is understood in terms of monstrosity; and (b) a praxis of the monstrous, that is, a reflection on how we should act regarding monstrosity. By examining these two axes, I aim to show that (1) the topic of monsters is a fundamental point of intersection between their philosophies; (2) they do not simply celebrate nor do they straightforwardly condemn the monstrous; rather, what is original about Nietzsche's and Deleuze's stances is that their ontological approach brings to light the complexity of monsters and therefore promotes (i) a subtle and nuanced engagement with monstrosity and (ii) a praxis articulated in terms of prudence and caution; and (3) the feminine is invoked by both Nietzsche and Deleuze as the most suited position to engage with monsters.

Reassessing The Naturalistic Credibility of Nietzsche's Will to Power

Joseph Coppin (The Open University & University of the West of England)

This paper challenges the dominant scholarly consensus that Nietzsche's broader claims about the will to power (WTP) lack naturalistic credibility. While scholars such as Kaufmann, Clark, and Leiter have interpreted WTP as a primarily psychological construct and dismissed its cosmological or biological dimensions as metaphysical or rhetorical, this paper reassesses Nietzsche's claims in light of contemporary scientific developments. Drawing on Jeremy England's theory of Dissipation-Driven Adaptation (DDA), which posits that living systems evolve toward configurations that maximize energy dissipation, the paper argues that Nietzsche's descriptions of life as driven by growth, discharge, and squandering of power align, at least partially, with thermodynamic principles. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates Nietzsche's engagement with notions of energy and force (Kraft) in ways that anticipate modern scientific concepts. Rather than advocating a return to speculative metaphysics, the paper proposes a cautious, conditional re-evaluation of Nietzsche's naturalism, suggesting that the will to power may serve as a proto-theory of energy-driven adaptation that warrants renewed philosophical and scientific attention.

Panel 5D: Silence, Testimony, Care

"Silence, yes, but what silence!": quiet encounters in Samuel Beckett's prose

Alexandra Cengher (King's College London)

As a liminal concept, situated at the outermost edge of meaning and understanding, silence has long been a subject of philosophical enquiry. Its volatile nature seduces and eludes at the same time, simultaneously offering the promise of a 'perceptual and cultural clean slate ' (Sontag 2002, 20) while opposing any empirical or critical observation — as well as the means to potentially achieve it. Moreover, as any marginal notion, silence serves both as realm of liberation and anxiety, challenging the limits of language and knowledge. This paper explores the polyvalence of silence and its increasingly prominent role in modernist art. It specifically examines its function as the end goal of literature through an analysis of Samuel Beckett's prose work.

Beckett's relationship with silence has been extensively scrutinised, both by researchers and by the author himself. Whether depicted as a distant point of horror and deliverance, through his characters' voices, or as an elusive but compulsory end goal of modern literature "for the writer today" (Beckett 2009b, 518), its presence unfurls throughout the corpus, demanding the critical attention of the reader. Much of this attention has been directed towards the textual and linguistic dimension, "building silence into words" (Brater 211, 119), in an attempt to capture the limits of language and the points where the thread of words unravels. In this paper, I argue for a reevaluation of our understanding of the concept, situating silence within Beckett's narrative strategies, while raising a critical issue: has the discourse on silence conflated its causes with its manifestations?

By exploring Beckett's use of denarration (Richardson 2001), fragmentation, and gaps, I highlight how silence asserts itself even in prose's unforgiving landscape. Through a comparative analysis of literature, philosophy, and sound studies, my research rethinks silence as an asymptotic goal—a goal which, however paradoxical, compels literature to go on.

"La date est un témoin": Derrida and the (im)possible testimony of dates

Cameron Etherton (University of Oxford)

In his text dedicated to the figures of circumcision and dates in Paul Celan's poetry, *Schibboleth: pour Paul Celan* (1986), Derrida, following an aporetic logic common to his later writing, presents a thinking of the possibility of testimony founded upon its own impossibility. We can understand such a contradictory idea through recourse to the date, particularly, the *poetic* date and its various modalities. It is through the date — that which marks singularity as it effaces it — that we can understand how testimony must always testify to its own failure to testify. As Derrida explains, the date witnesses, but "Il est toujours possible qu'il n'y ait plus de témoin pour ce témoin." Yet, for Derrida, such an absence of witnesses does not *absolutely* interrupt the date's testimony. This is because the date is still able to testify to the *absence* of testimony; in this way, it opens testimony to its other: the silence of those (or that) who (which) cannot testify. It reveals a form of witnessing *without* witnessing. To understand Derrida here, we must reflect on what he considers to be the "affinité entre une date, un nom," and, crucially, "la cendre": that which "garde pour ne plus même garder," as he says in *Feu la cendre* (1987). By way of dates and cinders, we can theorise a testimony of the Nothing ("une écriture du rien"). A secret testimony, beyond knowledge, that must always testify and will never be able to exhaust its attestation, but that, simultaneously, will always fail to testify — that will testify by *not* testifying.

The Ethics of Flight: Nietzsche, Bachelard, and the Poetics of Care

Erik Brownrigg (York University, Toronto)

Nietzsche's critique of the spirit of gravity frames overcoming as a flight from burden and excessive seriousness, yet it is often seen as lacking an ethic of care. I reinterpret Nietzschean overcoming through Gaston Bachelard's poetics of reverie, space, and imagination, drawing on his reading of Nietzsche in *Air and Dreams*, his interpretation of Buber in the French preface to *I and Thou*, and his spatial philosophy in *The Poetics of Space*. I argue that lightness and movement provide a new vision of care — one rooted in possibility rather than duty.

Rather than responsibility or attachment, care is a practice of flight, a movement beyond limits, an act of dreaming. Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* reveals that care is not about possession, but about cultivating the conditions for expansion and transformation. His reading of Buber's I-Thou relation suggests that poetic reverie fosters openness as a non-dominating encounter rather than a constraining conceptual synthesis. Care, in this sense, is not a moral obligation but an aesthetic and imaginative force that resists fixity. Through Bachelard's Air and Dreams, Nietzsche's overcoming appears not as an assertion of power, but as an existential reorientation — a will to ascent rather than submission.

Care here does not reject struggle but refuses to let suffering become gravity. Flight is not an escape, but a resistance to stagnation — allowing life to remain in motion. To overcome is to cultivate spaces where dreaming remains possible, where life expands without the weight of imposed seriousness. Overcoming, then, is an act of poetic resistance against closure, against the reduction of life to repetition, duty, and limitation. In an era of increasing rigidity and rationalism, Nietzsche and Bachelard offer an ethics of flight — an untethered care that fosters imagination, transformation, and possibility.

Panel 6A: The Philosophy of Raymond Ruyer

Raymond Ruyer is the new Simondon – another 20th-century French philosopher of striking originality and encyclopaedic scope whose work was seemingly appreciated only by Gilles Deleuze. Ruyer's work is finally starting to achieve the attention it deserves, with his magnum opus *Neo-Finalism* having been placed on the French *agrégation* examination, and a number of English translations appearing in the last few years: in addition to *Neo-Finalism* (2016), *The Genesis of Living Forms* (2019) and *Cybernetics and the Origin of Information* (2023). Ruyer sought to provide a metaphysics adequate to contemporary science, especially quantum physics and embryology. His extensive work on consciousness, cybernetics and the limits of automation make him a timely philosopher to rediscover in the context of contemporary AI hype. The papers on this panel each take up Ruyer's legacy from a different angle.

Causality and Information

Gus Hewlett (Newcastle University)

Perhaps against his own intentions, Ruyer's critique of the mechanism of cybernetic theories of information serves to highlight a non-teleological or mechanistic understanding of homeostasis or regulation, sometimes missed by early cyberneticians focussed on conceptions of centralised control. Today this is identifiable in various scientific theories, such as the 'punctuated equilibrium' theory of genetic evolution, population dynamics, and the mechanical view of earth-systems regulations (the Gaia hypothesis without Gaia, as it were). Ruyer, on the contrary, maintains a teleological view of information and regulation, associated with a broad view of generation around 'themes' (in-keeping with his finalist philosophy and the Lamarckism apparent in much twentieth century French epistemology), making a number of original interpretations of negentropy and information. This raises the age-old question as to how to define vital causality, and more particularly whether Ruyer is correct to affirm thematic teleological causation against a combination of chance and mechanism. This pertains to machinic and formal descriptions of negentropy and information, both in thermodynamics and information theory, and raises significant questions, such as, whether the thermodynamic concept of 'work' is inherently teleological and relative, as intimated by Ruyer, and whether the action of genes is only metaphorically formal, as Susan Oyama has more recently argued. Ultimately, Ruyer's problem might be put to him in reverse. If ends are not necessary for regulation, are they required for generation?

Must information be considered thematic and thus teleological? Or, to pose the question in classical terms, is the origin of information mechanistic or purely teleological?

The Transindividual in Ruyer and Simondon

Giovanni Menegalle (University of London Institute in Paris)

This paper will compare Ruyer's and Simondon's conceptions of the 'transindividual'. Designating a zone 'prior to' or 'beyond' (though not exactly 'outside') the 'individual'—a notion that both philosophers also seek to complicate in their accounts of physical, vital, and psychic activity—the 'transindividual' occupies a central place within their respective ontologies. The term makes a brief appearance in Ruyer's 1952 work *Neo-Finalism* as a synonym for the 'transspatial' and 'transtemporal' dimension of pure consciousness from which spatiotemporal forms, such as those of organisms and machines, derive their unity and dynamism. The transindividual constitutes one of the key concepts of Simondon's 1958 theses, where it refers to a relational dimension of communication or mediation linking individuals through their capacity to collectively transform their interior psychic organisation. While Simondon's debt to Ruyer on these questions remains hypothetical, the fact that both philosophers employ this term calls for a closer examination of their similarities and differences. This paper will suggest that their conceptions of transindividuality are best understood as flowing from divergent responses to the same problem of ontological modality. Both regard a reduction of being to actuality as an obstacle to a proper accounting of the becoming of forms: if what is at any one place and time is always already everything it can be, then what explains the passage from one form to another? Instead, both seek to locate a principle of potentiality within being itself—one that would not be a formal domain of possibility, defining a range of possible actualities, but an active basis for the actualisation of forms. However, while for Ruyer this transindividual domain of potentiality is defined as one of pure mind, in advance of its hierarchised spatiotemporal individuations, for Simondon it is contained collectively, within and across individuals themselves, through the pre-individual charge preserved in their interior environments.

What is Quasi-Information?

Ashley Woodward (University of Dundee)

As the title suggests, the modest aim for this paper is to explain what Ruyer meant by the term "quasi-information." It refers to an idea Ruyer developed in several essays he wrote after *Cybernetics and the Origin of Information*, and is one of many neologisms he proposed in working through the limits of the cybernetic theory of information, and supplementing it. Specifically, "quasi-information" refers to information as it appears in psychology and culture, where it has links to the quantifiable information of physics, mechanics, and the exact sciences, but has quite unique properties of its own. While physicists and psychologists tend to be dismissive of the others' concept of information, Ruyer insists that both are quite real and that there is a two-way transmission between the two types, in which the human brain acts as a converter. However, there is no common scale between the two: physical information can be measured and treated scientifically, but psychological information ("quasi-information") cannot. Physical information is a structured form, but quasi-information is a theme, a *dynamic tendency* towards the formation of structure. Quasi-information is the meaning that we understand messages (both linguistic and non-linguistic) to have, which concerns quality and not quantity. It is associated with the inspiration in creative endeavours, and the "expressivity" before all specific expressions. With "quasi-information" Ruyer expands his philosophical vision of the usefulness of the cybernetic idea of information – provided it is properly understood – extending it beyond basic metaphysical concerns and its applications in the natural sciences, to the social sciences, humanities, and arts. This is an important move, as it allows Ruyer to incorporate the dimensions of "ontological" and "humanistic" meaning into a revised theory of information, in contrast to philosophers such as Heidegger who were only able to see a stark opposition between them.

Panel 6B: Nomadic Subjectivity as "Subjectivity without Subject"

This panel addresses Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjectivity as process or "a mode" throughout which dominant formations of identity and the self are actively reinvented. This leads to a novel ethical accountability of becoming, where transformation, collectivity, and the vital force of desire are central. The talks in this panel aim to bring together these two aspects – ontological and ethical: (a) by reconstructing the ontological foundations of nomadic subjectivity in Spinoza and Deleuze, Braidotti relies on; (b) by reconsidering the ethical dimensions of nomadic subjectivity in the construction of sex and gender within contemporary feminist debates (Butler, Haraway).

Some Spinozistic Remarks in Deleuze's Mode
Bojana Jovićević (Univerza v Ljubljani & Università "G. D'Annunzio" di Chieti-Pescara) & Paolo Maria Aruffo (Università "G. D'Annunzio" di Chieti-Pescara)

In this talk, we will consider Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "body without organs" as a form of nomadic subjectivity, as opposed to subjectivity conceived of as a rigid, fixed relation. Specifically, both authors reject the idea of a unified subject - "a singular body that thinks" – and subsequently enters into relations with the external world. This process, which they call "subjectification," ties the subject to the "dominant reality," rendering it rigid and inflexible, and therefore incapable of any political or social transformation. In contrast, the "body without organs" represents a disposition of subjectivity in which any such predetermined relation is subverted, unfolding "indefinite articles," within "collectivity, multiplicity, inside an assemblage." (Deleuze, Guattari 1980:165) In a word, subjectivity becomes a dynamic, open-ended process – what we call "relation without relata" – held together not by structured interactions but by the force of intensity or desire (Spinoza's *conatus*).

Building on these Spinozistic and Deleuzian ontological assumptions, we will consider Chapter IV of *Anti-Oedipus* to draw the implications of the nomadic subjectivity within the psychological constitution of the individual. In this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari address the question of psychoanalysis and sexuality, critically engaging with both the Freudian and anthropomorphic approaches. The authors propose a potentially infinite number of sexes within a single individual, aligning with the anarchic multiplicity of desiring production.

Additionally, referring to Plateau 12 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, we will illustrate the social and political significance of these concepts through an analysis of the war machine-state apparatus pairing. This reconstruction aims to highlight the theological-political nature of these ontological premises, deconstructing cultural matrices that constrain the vital force of desire, in a distinctly Spinozistic way.

Re-inventing the "Human": Feminist Cartographies of Nomadic Subjectivity for an Ethics of Becoming

Vincenzo Maciocia & Elisabetta Angela Dilucca (Università "Aldo Moro" di Bari)

In our talk, we will consider the concept of "nomadic subjectivity" at the core of Rosi Braidotti's philosophical project. As she formulates it: *We are maybe in this together, but we are not all humans, and not the same* (*The Posthuman, vol. III, 2023*). The ethical-political project of nomadism focuses on becoming and transformation, offering a practical philosophy that emphasizes action and new ways of constructing subjectivity. Nomadic subjectivity can redefine our relationship with technology, the environment, and the non-human, providing an epistemological and political tool for building a sustainable future. This leads to an affirmative ethics of the subject, who is capable of dissolving the boundaries of individualism and reinventing itself as a collective, multilayered entity.

Braidotti's philosophical nomadism constitutes the theoretical tool for the "transformative politics of posthuman feminism" (*The Posthuman, vol. III, 2023*), aiming to cultivate a "transformative process of exploring alternative paths of thinking and becoming." Braidotti rejects the idea of a unitary "feminist community," embracing the concept of a dynamic, nomadic "us" instead. This further leads to re-imagining subjectivities throughout deconstruction of predetermined identities based on categories such as gender, class, and nation.

Nomadic feminism is fundamentally a relational ethics grounded in care. It draws from the theory of sexual difference feminism and the innovative approach proposed by Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, guiding the subject towards new and unprecedented possibilities. This does not only involve deconstructing the sex/gender system (Butler, 1990), but multiplying that system as well, overcoming the binary logic. As a result, this approach validates the virtuality of the subject and its potentials.

Panel 6C: Gilles Deleuze And … (I)

Perversion and Humour: On Deleuze's Political Ethics
Nathan Widder (Royal Holloway, University of London)

This paper will examine Deleuze's discussions of perversion and humour, particularly as they are articulated in relation to irony and particularly as they appear in Deleuze's book on Sacher-Masoch and his essay on Michel Tournier's *Friday*, a revised version of which is appended to *The Logic of Sense*. These discussions may seem to be primarily ethical, and Deleuze does link humour and perversion to what he calls the "ethics of intensive quantities" that he outlines in *Difference and Repetition*. However, there are also explicit connections to politics, particularly in the way the discussions in Deleuze's study of Masoch are constructed around questions concerning the law and contract. In this regard, humour and perversion are part of what Foucault would call an ethics that feeds into politics – that is, a political ethics. The overall aim of this chapter will be to show why humour is for Deleuze fundamentally a more subversive (politically and otherwise) than irony and other forms of critique. I will relate this idea to Nietzsche's proclamation in *The Genealogy of Morals* that the greatest threat to the ascetic ideal and its will to truth today are the "comedians" who can arouse mistrust of them, and to a 2010 interview with American television host and comedian Jon Stewart where he explains what he sees as the political role of humour.

Deleuze and Malabou on the Authority of the Always-Already

Evrim Bayindir (Royal Holloway, University of London)

This paper examines the philosophical tension between Malabou and Deleuze, focusing on their respective attempts to overcome what Malabou terms 'the transcendental principle of the always-already'. For Malabou, this principle traps thought within the illusion that experience is always-already conditioned by a 'transcendental trauma' – a claim Deleuze would not reject.

Malabou mobilises contemporary neuroscience to identify a 'post-traumatized subject [which] disconnects the structure of the always-already'. She positions this subject as the 'figure' for cultivating a new faculty of thought, one that emerges *after* the exhaustion of the transcendental and becomes capable of thinking this post-traumatic interruption. Deleuze's solution, by contrast, unfolds through *Difference and Repetition*'s three syntheses of time, which reconfigures the always-already transcendental into an 'always-variable' pure past (Mnemosyne) and penetrates its 'lived experience' (Eros). The subsequent *desexualisation* of Eros (reflux) enacts a *depotentialisation* of the transcendental as an already-given potential, producing the difference that predominates the faculties organised around the transcendental trauma, thereby effecting an irreversible rupture from the always-already as such.

Thus, while Deleuze subordinates this always-already trauma to a supra-traumatic, differential transcendental, Malabou pursues the inverse trajectory, exploring a more destructive trauma that 'relinquishes' the transcendental itself. The decisive distinction lies in their divergent outcomes: Deleuze's three syntheses yield a 'genital' thought, one neither ready-made nor 'regresses' to a pre-given trauma, whereas Malabou's new faculty is not only 'born' but also confronts the 'indifference' revealed in its own death. 'The book that needs to be written today', she declares, is '*Indifference and Repetition*', wherein repetition becomes a '*metamorphic power*' expressing an indifference beyond 'the production of difference'. In closing, we note the convergence with Deleuze's essay 'The Exhausted', which may be read as his own sketch toward this imaginary *Indifference and Repetition* – a book Malabou envisions to be more attuned to our contemporary post-traumatic condition.

Critique between Irony and Humour: The question of 'who speaks in philosophy' in Deleuze and Kierkegaard.
Kynthia-Anastasia Plagianou (Independent Scholar)

In *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze praises Kierkegaard - along with Péguy and, of course, Nietzsche- for elaborating a concept of repetition, which, against the forms of generality, the natural and moral law, posits the singular as primary, turns the singular into the universal (Deleuze 1994: 7). For Deleuze, thought can attain the ontological power of repetition in two ways: either through the ironist gesture that overturns the law by denouncing its principles as secondary or through the humorist gesture that submits to the law's consequences with a mocking meticulousness subverting the law by its own means. As Deleuze notes, Kierkegaard explores both strategies. The ironist denouncement of principles expressed in Job's infinite contestation and the humorous subversion of the law in Abraham's infinite resignation (*Fear and Trembling/Repetition/ Concluding Unscientific Postscript).* Eventually, in *Difference and Repetition,* Kierkegaard's repetition appears inadequate to serve as the pure 'form of time' Deleuze needs to sustain his concept of difference. However, in the *Logic of Sense,* Deleuze returns to Kierkegaard's critical reflections on irony with an extensive quotation from *The Concept of Irony*. His discussion there escalates with a nuanced classification of three instances of philosophical irony that demarcate three types of discourse: the Socratic, the classical pre-Kantian, and the romantic post-Kantian (Deleuze 1990: 139). In this paper, I aim to unpack Deleuze's view of the ironist stance in philosophy and its methodological implications for thought vis-à-vis Kierkegaard's themes of irony, humour and repetition in the works mentioned above. I will argue that Kierkegaard's critical discussion of philosophical irony from Socrates to Postkantian Romanticism is crucial for Deleuze's final rejection of the ironic stance, favouring, in the *Logic of Sense*, the humorous art of surface events.

Panel 6D: Torture, Labour, Affliction

Jean Améry: the philosophical meaning of torture
Christopher Hamilton (King's College London)

Jean Améry (Hans Mayer) was a Jewish member of the resistance to the Nazis during WWII. In July 1943 he was arrested in Belgium and tortured, before being sent to Auschwitz. His book *At the Mind's Limits* (*Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne*, lit. *Beyond Guilt and Expiation)* is an attempt to make sense of his experiences.

My aim is to explore some of the key themes of this book, focusing on the idea of Améry's wounded humanity.

Améry's writing here, as elsewhere, is characterised by 'positions of intransigeance' (Primo Levi), positions that left him no peace but to which he remained faithful. And he did so, not in spite of the torment he felt in them, but precisely on account of it. This is where Améry's wounded humanity shows through most clearly. It is expressed in his clinging to an idea of resentment; in his claim that the most Jewish thing about him was the tattoo on his left forearm; in his sense of being disinherited of his mother tongue owing to the Nazis' assault on it; in his hostility to Hannah Arendt's thesis concerning the banality of evil; and in much else. Améry's woundedness, I wish to suggest, is something that he did not want to leave behind: he felt it a moral imperative to hold on to it and thought that, to find peace in the world, would have been a betrayal of himself and of the world at the same time. We see thus a woundedness in Améry that demands its own continuation, a woundedness invested in itself in a way that cannot but evoke a feeling of horror in us and yet also a deep admiration, a sense that he bears witness in an unparalleled way at immense personal cost, a cost he was willing to pay even as he knew it would destroy him.

The Workers Need Poetry: Simone Weil on Beauty and the Time of Capital

Christopher Thomas (Manchester Metropolitan University)

For Simone Weil, one of the enduring problems of modernity is the human being's changing relationship to work and labour. As early as her 1930 dissertation, *Science and Perception in Descartes*, Weil argued that *work* was the site at which the human being could exercise both a thoughtful and material relationship with the world, and a way through which one could make contact with necessity, with 'real life'. For Weil, then, work is not only an unavoidable and necessary part of human life, but when carried out under the right conditions it also has the potential to be a site of freedom.

And yet the potential for freedom that work holds is, under modern forms of mechanised labour, rarely realised. In her analysis of this problem, Weil argues that "Time and rhythm constitute the most important factor of the whole problem of work" (Weil 1999:69). This paper will take up this problematic and show how Weil's analysis of the ills of modern labour as rooted in the problem of 'time and rhythm' have an *aesthetic* corrective. More precisely, this paper will take up Weil's claim that 'Workers need poetry more than bread. They need that their life should be a poem. They need some light from eternity' (Weil 1956: 596) to argue that, for Weil, the shift in the human being's relationship with time that aesthetic experience entails is directly opposed to, and a corrective of, the human being's temporal experience of modern wage labour. Where modern forms of wage labour leave the worker living and acting in a world of directionless necessity, the aesthetic experience allows the human a glimpse of time beyond capital, a time that doesn't relentlessly point towards an horizon – towards the end of the month –, but that allows for an attention to the present as a 'finality here below'. As an exercise in attending to the present, therefore, the aesthetic, and poetry in particular, becomes a model for work and labour such that the workers need that 'their life be a poem'.

The ethics of affliction: between acceptance and transformation
Silvia Caprioglio Panizza (University of Tübingen)

One of the most sustained and striking reflections on suffering in recent European philosophy is represented by Simone Weil's idea of affliction. Weil presents affliction as suffering that is extreme and totalizing, physical, mental, and social. While offering an entirely non-consolatory approach to affliction – where any attempt to change or even understand it is distorting and unhelpful – Weil also suggests that it is precisely through affliction that we can come to realise our true nature in the face of necessity: utterly powerless. Such realisation can bring about a moral and existential transformation, whereby the subject comes to see herself and the world in a new more truthful light.

I want to raise two questions concerning respectively the moral psychology and normativity of affliction. The first regards the way in which affliction can be transformative. Weil writes that in affliction there is nothing to love, yet we must keep loving. How does the possibility of love present itself, if no object of love is present, and the dispositions that enable love are suppressed?

The second question is normative: to see affliction as transformative as Weil does seems to make affliction desirable. How do we square this with the imperative – which Weil herself supports – to alleviate affliction whenever we see it? One answer may lie in a form of self-other ethical asymmetry, whereby affliction can only be transformative if we willingly submit to it, and this is only something we can do for ourselves.

At the beginning of her brief essay on affliction, Weil writes that affliction is hanging over us all, and that help lies in preparing each other for affliction. This sense of doom may resonate in our times too. That is why I suggest returning to Weil to understand affliction, and what the correct responses to it may be.

Writing Her(self): Epistemic Injustice and Reparative Agency
Sukalpa Bhattacharjee (North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong)

One of the crucial concerns of feminist philosophy has been to locate the space from which feminine writing emerges as a reparative agency, within the dynamics of 'epistemic injustice' (Miranda Fricker) and 'epistemic oppression' (Kristie Dotson) imposed by phallocentric cultures. Feminist scholars have argued that 'epistemic oppression' and 'epistemic injustice' operate as exclusionary politics of phallogocentric cultures and are non-reducible to other forms of social and political oppression.

The paper in general proposes to revisit the dialogues, differences, overlapping and intersections between various traditions of feminist thought on the issues of anxiety of female authorship, gynocritics, female body as 'already text' and women's writing as reparation. I use the idea of reparation particularly, as used by Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida. Again, Mary Wollstonecraft's rejection of the privileging of epistemological concerns over the moral and political in canonical philosophical discourses, constitutes her critique of "artificial structure" of patriarchy which represses writing by women as subjugated subjects. French feminist philosophers such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous have particularly emphasized that feminine writing as *Écriture féminine* is produced by the female body and by articulation of female difference.

Such diverse feminist positions on women and writing raises several questions- What is the relationship between body, writing and autonomy of the self? How does a woman writer construct a writerly-self, 'a room/space of one's own' in non-essentialist terms? How does the act of writing become reparative in a context of epistemic injustice? The paper shall attempt to address these questions in formulating the idea of feminine writing as reparative agency.

The Spectral Woman of Philosophy: The Unresolved Problem of the Post-Revolutionary Subject in the Philosophy of Marx
Jane Connell (University of Melbourne)

In 1856, in a letter to his wife, Marx likened his role as her husband to "playing the romantic lead in a second-rate theatre" proposing that "Had [my enemies] . . . possessed the wit, they would have depicted the 'productive and social relations' on one side and, on the other, myself at your feet. Beneath it they would have written '*Look to this picture and to that*.'" He quotes from *Hamlet*.

The woman in the history of philosophy is not only the occasional woman philosopher nor the sometime subject of enquiry, she is also, as Marx knew, a spectre that haunts philosophy in the imprint of gendered praxis on theorisation. Marx's comments—prescient of a revolution, inaugurated in social media, that may disrupt the collusions informing this split *a propos* oppression of women—invite interrogation of this spectre in his work. As Laclau says "the ghost becomes constitutive of the social link" if "the split between being and appearance" is unreconciled.

The explicit, lively critique of the socialised heterosexual dynamic published by Marx and Engel's in 1845 remained undeveloped. Marx's ensuing silence about gender politics—at odds with many of his contemporaries—was broken only by Engel's posthumous publication of some of his more perspicacious remarks. This silence parallels the emergent risks of Marx's concurrent marital conduct and suggests a tense withholding of critique of gender.

Readings of the traces of these tensions enriches rather than depletes interpretation. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* addresses the failure of radical social change in the aftermath of revolution—another undeveloped aspect of Marx's theorisation. Here, briefly, the puzzles of the social relation and the gendered relation—the latter as metaphor—are mutually interrogated. Possibilities for Marx's vision of socio-political liberation are clarified in the light of his own discomposure and lived contradictions.

Neither Immediate nor Totalising? Machiavelli and Freedom

Melanie Erspamer (London School of Economics & Political Science)

This paper seeks to analyse a tension within modern freedom regarding the relationship between *immediacy* and *totality*. On the one hand I will make a critique of the immediacy of many modern interpretations of freedom. With 'immediacy', I am borrowing a Hegelian term that describes the initial being (or seeming) of something before its development through mediation and reflection. Here I am using it to indicate a concept that has a certain intuitive definition (e.g., liberal freedom) but upon further analysis, is shown to require greater determinateness and refinement.

However, on the other hand, I will acknowledge that it is precisely the movement towards the total that will be critiqued in much 20th century philosophy, particularly with the normative imperative to resist totalitarianism. According to thinkers like Adorno, the very logic within totality (and many forms of organisation) is the transformation of power into domination. Yet I will claim that theories that specifically resist totality and power often construct concepts and principles that are just as one-sided as liberal freedom (we can think for instance of certain anarchist or democratic precepts like Malabou's 'non-governable' (2023) or Abensour's 'insurgent democracy' (2011)). Even where thinkers seek to articulate a *modus operandi* and not a principle to replace others, I claim, horizontalism or resistance themselves remain only *immediate* and *one-sided* approaches to the political whole (as Nunes 2021 and Gilbert 2014 also point out).

My suggestion, therefore, for helping us think of the possibility of a *good totality* (Abizadeh 2020), is to turn to Machiavelli. Machiavelli has often been summoned by thinkers who want to defend politics as fundamentally pluralist, democratic, and indeterminate (e.g., Abensour, Lefort). Here instead I'd like to propose that rather than give us a democratic or anti-systematic *principle*, Machiavelli reveals a vision of the free state as an articulation of a historically grounded and indeterminate social whole.

Panel 7B: Jacques Derrida (II)

Ethics Without Exclusion: Derrida, Responsibility, and the Stone
Joshua Luke Williams (Royal Holloway, University of London)

This paper examines Jacques Derrida's reconceptualization of responsibility, particularly his critique of the distinction between beings capable of ethical responsibility and those that merely react. Derrida calls this distinction 'the first ethical abdication', even though it underlies the traditional ethics we inherit, because it institutes an exclusion right at its heart. I will explore the possibility in Derrida's work of an ethics *without* exclusion. This begins by asking whether he will extend ethics even to the inanimate, whether he will say that even a stone is responsible.

Echoing Jean-Luc Nancy, I posit that exploring an ethics without exclusion – unthinkable as it sounds – is 'a necessity of thinking, a political and ethical exigency'. Today, this is inseparable from the ecological crises that face us. As long as ethics institutes an opposition between human beings and their others – animal, vegetal, or mineral – those beings assigned to Nature are always already relegated to the status of resource for human use, and the exploitative structures responsible for environmental destruction are perpetuated. Hence, the indirect aim of this paper is to interrogate the relevance of Derrida's thought for rethinking ethics in the context of the climate crisis.

The immediate aim, however, is to explore whether Derrida is true to his own standards. He said in his final seminar series that ethics begins only with the engagement of one's responsibility by 'the unrecognisable' – or by what he calls 'the monstrously other'. Such an 'unconditional ethical obligation', he says, binds us not only 'to the life of any living being', but also 'to something non-living'. Yet in the same work he ties responsibility to mourning and to death – which implies, also, to the living. Thus, this paper will examine whether he genuinely escapes the anthropocentric trappings of ethics or whether, by tethering responsibility to mourning, Derrida inadvertently reinscribes the exclusions he seeks to overcome.

(Un)Consciously (Un)Ethical: The Post-Ecology of Jacques Derrida's *Oikology*

Sam La Védrine (Independent Scholar)

When Donald Trump returned as the US president in January of this year, weeks of unprecedented Los Angeles wildfire were disregarded as he signed off exit from 2016's Paris climate agreement. Will future humans *forgive* such actions? Can humanity *heal* itself from perpetuating conditions for catastrophes and trauma? Indeed, will it even *remember*? This paper departs from this first question to consider consequences for survival and memory in Jacques Derrida's understanding of *oikos*. Particularly extending and attending to his use of *oikonomia* and *oikesis*, I posit an era of post-ecology – *oikology* – read out of Derrida's recently published late lectures.

Concentrated around two passages in his 'questions of responsibility' seminar series, respectively within its first theme, the secret,[6] and its penultimate one, the death penalty,[7] Derrida engages with Freudian psychoanalysis to discuss: consciousness' recognition of the (im)possibility of death; his disagreement with Freud concerning the aneconomy of the death drive; and a further, defining dispute on the unconscious' inherent economism. Interweaving these three points with a re-reading of Freud's own conception of economism as it runs throughout the entirety of his published oeuvre, this paper attempts to unpick an increasingly entangled ecological-economical bind, one which is dependent, I suggest, on reconsideration of the status of the proper (*propre*).

Given Freud's insistence that 'no' doesn't exist for the unconscious,[8] I conclude with some open questions regarding the slippage between deliberate and accidental intent, and just as much, ambiguous distinctions on ethical and unethical ecological conduct. My biggest question concerns Derrida's speculation on the promising evolution of psychoanalytic reason. It is said to offer a potentially radical form of forgetting distinguished from repression; but it appears worryingly dialectical in relation to Derrida's support, elsewhere, for absolute memory.

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6 Jacques Derrida, *Répondre – du secret. Séminaire. Secret et témoignage. Volume I (1991-1992)* (2024), pp. 523-544.
7 Jacques Derrida, *Séminaire. La peine de mort : Volume II (2000-2001)* (2015), pp. 219-250.
8 Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII (1901-1905): A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays, and Other Works* [Trans. James Strachey] (2001), p. 57.

'Who fired this arrow?': The implications of Derrida's personal identity reductionism for understanding *Politics of Friendship*
Kit Barton (Regent's University London)

Jacque Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* often contrasts the act of philosophizing in the present with philosophizing that may be done in the future. He shows how these acts might have similarities as well as differences, and how it is difficult for acts in the present to anticipate those in the future despite links between them. He utilises terms such as '*teleiopoesis'* to describe the connection of present and future and '*perhaps'* to indicate its contingency. In addition, the person acting in this way, in the present, philosophizing, may be a recognisable subject, but the philosopher of the future may be someone other, not straightforwardly recognisable, different from the philosopher now. These claims are consistent with Derrida's Nietzschean and Levinasian influences and align with Derrida's overall deconstructive method.

If one were to accept that Derrida's conception of personal identity is reductionist however, then the claims concerning the philosopher of the present and the future are given an added layer of significance. Reductionism argues that identity is reducible only to facts about minds and bodies and not to a putative 'further fact' such as a Cartesian ego or soul. Understood as a reductionist, Derrida's analysis of how the present philosopher relates to the future philosopher is liberated from more conventional understandings, allowing for a diversity of interpretations that include: a possibility of the philosopher connecting to a future philosopher who shares the same ideas but not same body, a future philosopher who shares the same body but not the same ideas, and a future philosopher who shares neither the same body nor the same ideas. With this diversity, the future philosopher may be temporally distant, the more common view, thus requiring a Nietzschean arrow fired in hope of hitting an unseen target, or, counterintuitively, surprisingly close, explaining how Derrida sees an arrow "whose flight would return to the bow", where the addressee is also the addresser, the same philosopher. This further raises a question of partiality versus impartiality regarding the relationship, consistent with Derrida's deconstruction of friendship, where both the difference between the self and the other and the distinction between self-interest and responsibility to the friend is questioned. This paper will demonstrate how a reductionist account of personal identity explains some of Derrida's conceptual choices in *Politics of Friendship* and perhaps enhances a general understanding of his work.

Panel 7C: Gilles Deleuze And … (II)

Spinoza contra Affect Theory: Somatophilia and its Discontents
Chrys Papaioannou (Independent Scholar)

"One arrives in the middle of Spinoza, one is sucked up, drawn into the system or the composition", proclaimed Deleuze in *Practical Philosophy*, one of his dedicated studies on Spinoza. Deleuze might have been referring to the fortuitous moment when one encounters Spinoza's thought – unexpectedly finding oneself 'becoming-Spinozist' – but, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, arriving in the middle of Spinoza also inescapably entails arriving in the middle of a tenacious proliferation of multiple, often competing, Spinozisms. Deleuze's own Spinozism is, of course, largely responsible for this continuing renaissance, especially in the philosophically inflected strand of affect theory, following Brian Massumi's influential interventions some thirty years ago. Anchoring itself in a sanguine adoption of Spinozism, affect theory has not only held onto a venerable image of Spinoza as the philosopher *of affect*, but it has arguably also given rise to a somatophilic attention to the (post)human body, however techno-scientifically or organically construed. This paper thinks through the philosophical and political problem of what might be termed 'Spinozist somatophilia', identifying the qualities that distinguish it from a French post-war phenomenological tradition of embodiment and lived experience, whilst examining how such a fetish of the affective body, and of bodies as affect, might be more closely and dangerously aligned with certain forms of vitalism that eschew their complicity with protofascist ideology. Doing so means revisiting Spinoza's *Ethics* alongside Deleuze's lectures in Paris Vincennes (1980-1981), the studies *Practical Philosophy* (1981/1988) and *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1968/1992) and the essay 'Spinoza and the Three "Ethics"' (1993), examining Deleuze's vitalist rehabilitation of Spinoza and interrogating specific lines of argument, such as the constitutive link between *conatus* and acceleration. If we are to continue thinking with Deleuze's Spinoza after affect theory, then we urgently need to reassess what this doctrine of the body can do.

Matter as Difference In-Itself and the Affirmation of Chance, in Plotinus and Deleuze

Brian Anthony Smith (Independent Scholar)

The paper will focus on a reading of Poltinus' understanding of matter, in *The Enneads*, as difference in itself and as an affirmation of Chance. This reading will be linked with Deleuze's analysis in *Difference and Repetition*, specifically the chapters *Difference in Itself* and *The Image of Thought*.

The syncretic absorption of Plotinus' form of Platonism into Christian thought means that it is an important influence on what we understand as the Platonic dogmatic image of thought that comes to characterise Western Thought. In particular, its perceived denigration of matter, and pursuit of a soteriological journey of purification that rises to a purely intellectual realm.

The result will be to develop an understanding of Deleuze's conception of matter and materialism, finding in Plotinus' work a supressed seed, a temptation to think difference in itself that is not fully foreclosed in the system that Poltinus develops.

For Plotinus, matter sits at the limits of his philosophical system. Beginning from the *Fourth Tractate* of the *Second Ennead*, *On Matter*, Plotinus explores the familiar Platonic theme of matter as a receptacle for the forms, but moves beyond a solely negative conception as not-being, or being without form. Plotinus begins to describe a positive conception in a variety of paradoxical formulations, such as something we think without thinking, or a type of seeing in the dark. And this thinking utilises an alternative, bastard or spurious, reason (λογισμῷ νόθῳ). Matter's peculiarities become visible and, through a process of individuation, diverge from the world of the forms. Matter comes to express that which escapes capture by reason/identity by way of the forms, appearing monstrous and chaotic and characterized by Plotinus as evil, when acting as a distraction or threat to our salvation. But, for Deleuze, this orgiastic representation is a disruptive and creative affirmation of Chance.

Rhizome Road Trip

Moritz Gansen (Centre Marc Bloch / ZfL Berlin)

In November 1975, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari participated in the "Schizo-Culture" conference held in New York City, organised by the Semiotext(e) collective. Following the event, they travelled across the country, by car and by plane, from New York to Massachusetts and to Southern California, accompanied by Jean-Jacques Lebel and Claire Parnet. Along the way, they met the poet Alan Ginsberg and attended Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue as well as a concert by Patti Smith, and Lebel shot one of the most iconic images of Deleuze, sat at the beach of Big Sur. Over the course of the following years, Deleuze and Guattari published *Rhizome* (1976), and Deleuze and Parnet published *Dialogues* (1977); both included various references to this trip to the United States, some extensive (such as the chapter "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature" in *Dialogues*), others brief and sometimes obscure (think of the phrase "The American singer Patti Smith sings the bible of the American dentist: don't look for the roots, follow the canal…" in *Rhizome*). The proposed paper will map some of the connections between Deleuze, Guattari, and Parnet's voyage and their publications of the subsequent years, inquiring into the conceptual productivity of contingent encounters more generally. Given that both *Rhizome* and *Dialogues* are riddled with manifold references, what can we learn from a historical and biographical contextualisation of material otherwise difficult to decipher? And how does the landscape of "America" painted in these works fit into the larger body of works that followed and preceded them?

On the Desire for "Good Advice": The Unhappy Consciousness and Its Ambiguous Mediator

Lilja Walliser (Freie Universität Berlin)

One of the most famous passages in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the section on the "Unhappy Consciousness." Hegel uses this figure to describe a form of self-consciousness that experiences itself as essentially contradictory and separated from any essential substance. Many readers have interpreted these passages not only as Hegel's critique of Catholicism—particularly the institution of the priesthood—but also as his engagement with a certain form of modern subjectivity, characterised by inner conflict, self-negation, and self-alienation.

In my talk, I will focus on the closing paragraphs of this chapter, where a "servant" or "mediator" (*Diener*) appears, acting as an intermediary between the Unhappy Consciousness and the Unchangeable beyond. While many interpretations of these passages focus almost exclusively on Hegel's critique of the priesthood, they often offer an overly simplistic account of the shape of consciousness and its mediator. Such a narrow focus tends to obscure both the asymmetry and the mutual dependence that emerge between consciousness and its mediator, each arising from consciousness's own acts of self-deception.

Contrary to Judith Butler's interpretation—which compellingly reconstructs the self-deceptions of the Unhappy Consciousness but ultimately reads the appearance of the final figure of the mediator as effecting a reconciliatory integration of consciousness into a chain of wills: priest, God, and Spirit—I will argue that this relationship is, in fact, more complex. The servant's message to consciousness remains a "fractured certainty," and consciousness, in its insubstantial self-negation, is thrown back upon itself. The communicative situation between consciousness and its advising, mediating *Diener* thus reveals a structural dynamic in which consciousness attempts to have another speak on its behalf—an act of one-sided self-negation that proves particularly insightful for feminist readings of Hegel.

Mutual Recognition in the Philosophy of Physics: Hegel, Phenomenology, QBism
George Webster (University of Oxford)

In recent years a growing number of philosophers of physics, and indeed physicists themselves, have turned to the phenomenological tradition to make sense of quantum mechanics. The most prominent among this group advocate a view called "quantum Bayesianism" ("QBism" for short), according to which the quantum formalism represents not the world but rather one's expectations about measurement outcomes, themselves understood as one's measurement experiences. And recently the work of Merleau-Ponty has caught their eye, especially with respect to their response to so-called "Wigner's friend" scenarios—thought experiments which pose the difficulty of making sense of multiple agents' applications of quantum theory to one another. Appealing to his later ontology of "flesh", QBists describe agents who are *constitutively* embodied and embroiled within an external world and who are *constitutively* available to public scrutiny. In this paper, I trace the provenance of Merleau-Ponty's ideas back to Hegel's account of mutual recognition. Not only are there striking analogies to be found, but Merleau-Ponty clearly derived these analogous elements (at least in part) directly from his engagements with Hegel's thought. Though the influence of Hegel, and specifically his account of mutual recognition, on phenomenology is broadly acknowledged, I argue that the *details* of this influence are either neglected or misrepresented in the literature. My analysis therefore: (i) provides a clear statement of the explanatory relationship between QBism and phenomenology; (ii) sheds light on the philosophical relationship between Hegel and Merleau-Ponty; (iii) reveals a new (and surprising) extension of Hegel's influence into contemporary philosophy of physics; (iv) opens up fresh conceptual resources to QBists (and other similarly open-minded philosophers of physics); and (v) generates a deep irony concerning the distinction between the so-called "analytic" and "continental" traditions in philosophy.

Playing at Being: Sartre, Theatrical Incarnation, and the Paradox of the Actor

Thomas Payré (Cardiff University & CY Cergy Paris Université)

Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenology of imagination offers a unique perspective on the art of acting, framing it as an 'irrealisation' of the self. Unlike dreamers, whose consciousness is entirely captive to their imaginings, actors must sustain a paradoxical awareness: they identify irreally with a fictional character while knowing they are not the character they embody. This paper explores Sartre's reflections on theatrical performance, particularly his idea of the actor's 'imaginary incarnation.' At the core of Sartre's analysis lies the actor's body, which functions as an analogon – a material support that allows the imaginary world of the stage to appear. Unlike mere mental imagery, the theatrical imaginary is perceptible and shared, requiring both the actor's physical presence and the audience's reception. The actor, Sartre suggests, manipulates their own kinesthetic, coenesthetic, and affective experiences to manifest a character's emotions. Yet, this embodiment remains structurally incomplete: the actor does not 'become' the character but rather sustains a gap between what they feel and what they express. I will argue that this constitutive gap – the *hiatus* between the lived experience of the actor and the public display of the character – prevents complete identification and protects against psychological alienation. Drawing on Sartre's *L'Imaginaire* and *L'Idiot de la famille*, as well as comparisons with Brechtian and Stanislavskian approaches, I will show how the actor's paradoxical task of 'incarnation through desincarnation' illuminates a broader Sartrean concern: the fragile relationship between reality, illusion, and the gaze of the Other. By rethinking the actor's craft through Sartrean phenomenology, this paper contributes to philosophical debates on embodiment, imagination, and the ontology of performance, offering a fresh perspective on what it means to 'become' another on stage.

Totality and Transparency: Logical Empiricism in Francophone Philosophy (1934-1969)

Ties van Gemert (Tilburg University)

This paper explores the role of logical empiricism as an antagonist in shaping the metaphilosophy of French philosophy from the 1930s to the late 1960s. The focus will be on two themes: the critique of transparency and the concept of totality (Geroulanos 2017; Jay 1984). In the first section, I will discuss Ernst von Aster's introduction of logical empiricism at the *La Société Française de Philosophie* (SFP) in 1934. Next, I will analyze the reviews of and introductions to the French translations of works by members of the Vienna Circle, alongside the debates held at the First International Congress for the Unity of Science in Paris in 1935. In the third part, I will focus on the growing antagonism towards logical empiricism around the Descartes Congress of 1937. After the Second World War, the critiques of logical empiricism of the 1930s were taken up by Louis Althusser and his students. In the conclusion, I will show how Althusser's caricature of logical empiricism as the exemplification of bourgeois ideology played a decisive role in shaping the metaphilosophy of the new generation of French philosophers.

Against Genesis: Althusser's Metaphysical Criticism of Lacan

Charles Bowen (Independent Scholar)

This paper considers how Althusser's later speculative metaphysics can elucidate his earlier criticisms of Lacan. In his essay "Freud and Lacan" from 1965, Althusser praises Lacan for identifying the role of the symbolic in subject-formation. In this the two align on what would become Althusser's theory of interpellation. But in correspondence about this essay, Althusser would later say that he had "understood [Lacan's] importance, but not what he meant" and that Lacan in fact became "unhinged". My goal here is to explicate this criticism, and to suggest an implicit metaphysical basis for it.

In his 1966 letters to René Diatkine, a psychoanalyst, Althusser says that the "genesis" of childhood language must be replaced by its "irruption", which has no "origin" but is rather the "*reproduction* of an *already existent language* in the very milieu in which the child 'appears'". Elsewhere, Althusser describes this reproduction as "interpellation" – the subjectification of the individual. But interpellation has no origin, because individuals "always-already" exist in ideology. The idea of genesis is then an "ideological illusion" because it assumes a "before" prior to ideology. The child's psyche does not come into relation with its world, therefore, but is always-already structured by this world, which it reproduces.

This can seem to efface the psyche and replace it with ideology. My claim is that it need not. In Althusser's posthumous work, he theorises the "encounter" that has always-already taken place. The encounter is not produced but "thrown" into the world. It is therefore metaphysically primary, but it also does not precede the world it explains. The point is rather that everything exists *as encounter*, and is as such always-already determined. This is the metaphysical basis of ideology. The psyche does not disappear, but is ideological in its very being. By starting from irruption, not genesis, Althusser believes he can account for this, and overcome the illusion of existence prior to or outside of ideology.

The Phantom Concept: Powerlessness in Francophone Philosophy in the 20th Century

Laure Barillas (University of New Hampshire)

A rapid survey of 20th-century Francophone philosophy presents a striking paradox: while phenomenological descriptions of powerlessness-adjacent phenomena are abundant, there is no explicit conceptualization of powerlessness itself in this corpus. Objectification in Beauvoir, alienation in Fanon, angst in Sartre, the condition of hostage in Levinas, oppression in Weil, unavailability in Marcel, the absurd in Camus, the irrevocable in Jankélévitch, and failure in Nabert—all speak to various forms of thwarted agency, of imposed passivity, yet none fully articulate powerlessness as a concept in its own right. This paper seeks to examine two interrelated questions: first, a doxographic question—why is there a relative absence of a conceptualization of powerlessness in 20th-century Francophone thought? Second, a conceptual clarification question—what is powerlessness? Situations of powerlessness all seem to share a fundamental lack of self-efficacy. Powerlessness emerges when we are confronted with situations that disorient our moral lives as individuals—such as grief, illness, or violence—as well as situations that disorient us as members of a political community, such as climate change, sexism, war, or racism. However, Francophone philosophy in the 20th century has, to some extent, has been more fixated on freedom, on giving an account of what human beings *can do*. It has emphasized angst as a disclosive affect over fear, projects over impossibilities. This paper offers an account of what is experienced as "I can't." Building on the phenomenological descriptions of powerlessness provided by Francophone philosophers in the 20th century, I propose that we define powerlessness as the non-morally productive experience of an asymmetrical relationship between agents and the force exerted upon them—one that renders the future difficult to imagine and actions impossible to undertake.

Inhospitable Spaces: On Belonging and Exile

Wahida Khandker (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Amongst the preoccupations of the late physicist, Carl Sagan, which included research on the origins of life and the search for extraterrestrial life, was a concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Across a number of collaborative works, notably Ehrlich et al. (1983), and in solo work, Sagan published predictions covering the effects of multiple thermonuclear detonations on biological life and on the climate, as well as their impacts on civilian infrastructure. In their article, Ehrlich et al. focus on the longer term effects on life on the earth up to a decade after the initial detonations, predicting that '30 to 50 percent of the total human population could be immediate casualities.' (Ehrlich et al., p. 1293) The potential scale of such a disaster would be a consequence of the upscaling of modern nuclear weapons which, as Sagan (1983) observes, are several times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb responsible for up to 200,000 deaths. (Sagan, 1983, p. 260)

In this paper, I consider concepts of the earth from the perspective of our alienation from it. The nuclear winter, envisioned by the above, faces us with an extreme, but one that is based on materials and capabilities presently in our possession. This paper draws on the works of Gregory Bateson, Félix Guattari, and Edward Said on concepts of 'belonging' and 'exile', with reference to a number of recent reflections on the material and ontological impacts of environmental shocks such as the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011, and to the role of animism in Japanese thought that suggests some potential responses or alternatives to thinking about the environment in light of the doomsday scenarios sketched out by Sagan and his contemporaries.

Freedom, Nature and Ecological Crisis in Marx

Andrés Saenz de Sicilia (Northeastern University London)

This paper argues that the present ecological crisis demands a reassessment of the relation between freedom and nature in Marx's thought. Beginning with his early writings, Marx develops a radical and distinctive conception of human activity, which he comes to conceptualise as a *metabolic* relationship between human beings and nature. Marx goes on to show how the social relations which structure capitalist society organise this metabolism in such a way as to both suppress the principle of freedom inherent to it and generate a tendency towards ecological catastrophe. Yet, for all its social radicality Marx's account of action and freedom faces the charge of endorsing a 'promethean' vision of the human as heroic master of nature which runs throughout much of the so-called 'western' philosophical tradition (From Aristotle and Aquinas to Kant and Hegel). Overcoming the social contradictions of capitalism, might then simply imply the realisation of a purer, 'enlightened' domination of nature, as Heidegger, amongst others, have suggested. Drawing on writings of Latin American Philosopher Bolívar Echeverría and recent work in ecofeminism, I claim that in order address this charge it is necessary to (i) seek an alternative interpretation of Marx's principle of freedom not premised on the reduction of nature to a mere instrumental means to human ends and, relatedly, (ii) foreground *reproduction* rather than production in Marx's schema of the human metabolism.

Temporalities of Collapse

Andrea Rehberg (Newcastle University)

Too often, especially from a white, Western, majoritarian perspective, and especially in popular or non-specialist discourses, e.g., media items, the climate catastrophe is implicitly being portrayed as a singular event that has a unified temporal dimension, one that has clearly started, or whose prehistory has started, or which has been underway for some time, or is yet to occur, but perhaps imminent, as well as being marked by acceleration, intensification and expansion.

By contrast, scholars from various disciplines (Apel 2015, Bould 2021, Bowden et al. 2019, Ghosh 2016, Haarstad et al. 2023, Parker 2025, Singleton 2024, etc.) have in recent years attempted to come to terms with different aspects of the climate catastrophe, acknowledging that it is now fully upon us. Although they look at climate breakdown from different – topical, disciplinary, discursive – perspectives, there seems to be one, as it were subterranean constant, namely the emphasis on the different temporalities involved, depending on the perspective from which the catastrophe is approached.

This paper seeks to examine 1) what these different temporalities are; 2) what discursive functions generate them; 3) what effects these temporally distinct explorations in turn can be seen to have. In short, this meta-textual presentation ultimately asks 'what are the overlapping and intersecting temporalities in texts on climate breakdown?'

At the same time, what is also at stake here is a negotiation of the constraints of the anthropocentric perspective, from which climate change appears as a human doing that can be stopped and reversed by human doing. It will be asked whether in actual fact, if the climate catastrophe is capable of being abated, this can only get underway if the anthropocentric perspective, which is at the same time the perspective of a unified temporality, can be left behind, since the conception of a unitary time and an agential conception of the human being are inextricably linked.

Panel 8C: Critique in a Technoscientific World

Through three critical interventions into contemporary technoscientific problems, this panel argues that a return to Kant, and critical philosophy in general, has become a necessity. This return is predicated on the recent concomitant return to paralogistic metaphysical claims by philosophers and transhumanist technologists alike that have attempted to think beyond the limits of reason: the possibility of absolute digital memory, pure informational communication and ASI, and cybernetic AI driven perpetual peace. This panel argues that speculation must be sidelined, and critique championed if the technoscientific world in which we live, think and act is to be truly understood within the limits of reason.

The Ideal of Pure Communication: Disciplining Artificial Super Intelligence
Joel White (University of Dundee & Staffordshire University)

We are once again being haunted by Laplace's demon, this time in the guise of Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). Following in the footsteps of French priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "Omega Point"—a theorized future event in which the entirety of the universe spirals toward a final point of informatic noospherical unification—philosophers and transhumanists such as Nick Bostrom and Ray Kurzweil have begun arguing for the possibility of God-like ASI capable of determining the causal informatic content of both the past and future. I argue that this claim necessarily surpasses what I call the thermoinformatic conditions of possibility of existence. It is perhaps time, therefore, to exorcise it. To exorcise these hubristic and illusionary metaphysical claim claims, this paper will offer a transductive reading of Immanuel Kant's "Ideal of Pure Reason" insofar as it offers us the critical means to discipline these recent claims.

Kant, Forgetting, And Technics

Franziska Aigner (New Centre for Research & Practice*)*

My talk will examine the intersection of Kant's late philosophy, technics, and —forgetting by way of a critical discussion of the reception of Kant's Opus Postumum. The late Kantian corpus has historically been read through a symptomatic lens, with claims of senility overshadowing its philosophical significance. A key focus of my talk will be formed by a historiographical construction of Kant's alleged cognitive decline, tracing its origins from early biographical accounts to critical appraisals of Erich Adickes and Gerhard Lehmann. Maja Schepelmann's recent scholarship challenges this assumption, arguing that Kant remained intellectually active and productive in his final years. This talk does not aim to validate or refute the senility hypothesis but rather interrogates the philosophical stakes of framing Kant's late work through a discourse that distinguishes the universal from the symptomatic, pathological and clinical. The ongoing attempts to distinguish between the healthy and senile Kant reveal the perceived threat that forgetting poses to philosophy's universal project, reflecting a broader philosophical anxiety toward forgetting and technics. By examining Kant's own reflections on memory, forgetting, and technics, alongside his personal experience of forgetfulness, this talk aims to critically re-evaluates the discourse surrounding his final writings. Rather than viewing the *Opus Postumum* as a symptom of deterioration, this study proposes that it constitutes an experimental engagement with the conditions of philosophical thought itself. It questions the stakes of interpreting philosophy through the lens of pathology and reclaims the *Opus Postumum* as a site for rethinking philosophy's relation to technics and forgetting. Ultimately, this talk thus aims to shed light on the broader philosophical implications of memory, technics, and the conditions of philosophical inquiry itself.

Setting Out To Conquer – Kant And Clausewitz On The Idea Of Peace
Nathaniel Wooding (Kingston University)

With significant research being done into the possibility of AI to predict conflicts, allowing timely preventive action, and hence bringing about "world peace", this talk proposes to enquire once more into the meaning of such a project. Taking as its starting point Kant's text "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" and what Kant considers to be the conditions for transitioning out of a state of war into a state of peace, this talk will go on to outline the complex and ambivalent role that war plays in Kant's political, anthropological, and philosophical writings. What will be shown in these different contexts is Kant's repeated need to pass through war coupled with the need to transcend it. However, a complete overcoming of the state of war (or "state of nature") is fraught with problems for Kant. Indeed, the conformity of war to the interests of peace is explained in two different but equally problematic ways by Kant: forced conformity by means of the application of violence, and conformity by means of voluntary capitulation. Both of these entail difficulties for the installation of peace, especially for a peace that is to be conceived of as just, neutral, and perpetual. Reading the Kantian philosophy through the critical lens of one of his disciples, Carl von Clausewitz, the complicity between the idea of peace and that of conquest will come to the fore. This talk will end with an interrogation of Clausewitz's insistence that peace is nothing other than the successful imposition of a structure of domination and, engaging with Herman Siemens' work on Kant as a "philosopher on conflict", will see whether it is possible to salvage an idea of war distinct from that of conquest.

Panel 8D: Walter Benjamin

On the (Fascist) Aestheticising of Politics, Once More
Liam Jackson Abellán (Independent Scholar)

We are all familiar with Walter Benjamin's definition of fascism as an aestheticizing of politics, 'grant[ing] expression to the masses' while leaving property relations 'untouched'. But what is the nature of this 'expression' – and why does Benjamin's analysis remain so relevant? In this paper, 'expression', or the mobilisation of affects, will serve as the medium through which the expanded realm of the aesthetic subsumes that of traditional political philosophy, understood (following Rancière) as the organisation of the sensible through the appeasement of sentiment (call it Rousseau's general will or Hobbesian self-preservation), a process necessarily (aesthetically) mediated through a representative organ. Consequently, fascism and the alt-right's co-optation of negative affects must be seen as the dialectical culmination of representational politics - so that any antifascism must also be a critique of said representational politics, in the vein of what Badiou calls 'non-expressive dialectics'.

Starting from the recent work of Josef Vogl (via Max Scheler), *ressentiment* will be argued as the main affect given expression by (contemporary) reactionaries, with the obfuscation of capitalist relations compounded by the increasing abstraction of the digital finance economy. The fungibility of finance will thus serve as the materialist basis for the power of reactionary rhetoric and the eclecticism of its ideology, with the erosion wrought upon political language by finance and its alt-right emissaries finding its echo in the hollowing-out of discursive hierarchies deployed by Bakhtin's carnivalesque - yet devoid of the emancipatory potential initially ascribed to it. For once words like 'freedom' or 'the people' have been subverted to the point of farce, what release is there in political laughter? Finally, my paper hopes to respond and complement prevailing philosophical studies of fascism (as libidinal release, variously treated by Bataille, the Frankfurt School or Guattari) as well as critiques of post-fordism from Deleuze to *Autonomia*.

The End of the World as Experience of Historical Time
Tiger Liu (Kingston University)

The idea of human extinction has acquired a hegemonic status in recent debates, specifically in discourses surrounding environmental/ecological crises. It is against the supposedly imminent possibility of mass extinction of species that urgent thinkings and actions are called forth. Such a narrative is at the same time new and old. It is new in the sense that seemingly for the first time in human history, the anticipation of human extinction acquired scientific and "concrete" backing; but the structure of such a narrative, once being critically examined, repeats old if not ancient discourses of apocalypse and the philosophical idea of the "end of history". Particularly, with a quick survey of the available critiques against the emerging discursive landscape after the invention of the concept of Anthropocene, the idea of human extinction appears heavily mythologised, politicised, and relies on "not-so-concrete" ground. For this reason, appropriate historicization is necessary.

In the history of modern thoughts, the narrativization of the theme of human extinction appears frequently, especially in post-Kantian philosophy, from Kant's later writings to Schelling's geo-mythology, from the Weimar debates on photography between Benjamin and Kracauer to the lament on planetary technology by Heidegger and Günther Anders, from the crisis of historicism in post-war Germany to the crisis of conceptualism and inauguration of earth art in America. Little known in these historical interludes is a posthumously published collection of texts by Italian anthropologist/ethnographer Ernesto de Martino, titled *Fin du Monde*, who spent his final years investigating the phenomena of "*Weltuntergangserlebnis*", often poorly translated as the delusion of world destruction, which was briefly classified by Swiss psychiatry as a schizophrenic disorder. This paper proposes to investigate de Martino's obscure text, explore the significance of de Martino's unresolved attempt at deciphering the concept of *Weltuntergangserlebnis*, specifically in relation to the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* that we find in post-Kantian philosophical thinkings, and particularly, the writings of Walter Benjamin. In doing so, the paper will attempt to rethink contemporary crises as a specific kind of crisis of experience of historical time.

Voice Land: Walter Benjamin and Radio
Caroline Wilkins (Independent Scholar)

From 1927 to 1932 Walter Benjamin made at least 86 radio programs - including plays, youth programs, lectures, book reviews and readings of his own works - with German radio stations in Berlin and Frankfurt. His attitude towards the then new medium remained ambiguous and was reflected both in a lack of a personal inventory and a dismissal of interest in these productions, apart from an economic one. Sadly, no archive records remain of his voice. However, Benjamin managed to change things, as far as he could, within the rigid institution of radio's early days, moving towards a style of contemporary cultural narration in his last broadcasts.

I propose to examine the ways and means that he employed to this end, having realized the interactive potential of radio on his listeners by challenging and engaging them. Indeed, the questions he posed then have been answered by modern media technology. I shall quote excerpts from a published archive of some scripts,[9] as well as an audio example from a recent production of his children's play *Radau von Kasperl* (*Caspar's Chaos*) by South West German Radio in 2018. Many of his themes subverted the idea of a stable truth, using a political application to tease, warn and provoke the society of the time. In his reflections on the radio, Benjamin insisted on the voice as a guest invited into the listener's home. Thus, the audience became a contemporary witness of radio's earliest days. As a philosopher, he mobilized his public in the direction of knowledge, employing an awareness of audience sociology that was embedded within an approach that captivated both the specialist and the lay-person.

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[9] *Radio Benjamin* ed. Lecia Rosenthal, Verso 2021