

Outland Empire: Prolegomena to Speculative Absolutism¹

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translated by Taylor Adkins

In what follows we shall outline a possible definition of speculative philosophy by re-activating, distorting and entangling four regulative concepts of German idealism, namely the *absolute*, the (philosophical) *system*, *phenomenology* (of ‘spirit’) and (absolute) *knowledge*. According to the speculative knot that we shall propose, knowledge will be locally inscribed in the philosophical system, the latter being a free falling *organon* for forcing the phenomenological mediation of the immanent and concrete self-experience of the absolute.

Far from simply rejecting the Kantian legacy and its contemporary avatars, the activation of such a post-critical conception of philosophy requires us to overcome the reactive pre-modern components of critical philosophy and to direct the resulting weapon of criticism towards a truly transcendental dehumanization of experience. Indeed, from a historical point of view, the critical motif inaugurated by Kant has been split by a crucial ambiguity. On the one hand, the Kantian project of exponentiating the Copernican revolution to an infinite series of transcendental powers constitutes an unavoidable regulative idea for the infinite tasks of (absolute) knowledge. The legitimate project of constructing an unconditional and universal rational knowledge of the real will remain intrinsically limited by a transcendental anthropocentrism if the subject of science does not perform a reflexive analysis on the different ‘transcendental’ conditions of research. However, instead of directing this necessary reflection on the transcendental localization of the subject of science towards a truly transcendental Copernican revolution, the critical motif has mainly triggered a ‘Ptolemaic counter-revolution’ (Meillassoux) that seeks to preserve the pre-modern landscape and stitch up the cosmological narcissistic wound. Rather than accepting that a genuine transcendental revolution is nothing but the angelic beginning of inhuman terror, even Kant used his critique to demonstrate that science would never be able to sublimate the

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humanity of its subjective local supports. Whereas the Copernican ‘critical’ reflection on the contingent spatiotemporal localization of the earth was a ‘determinate negation’ that made the development of a rigorous astronomical science possible, the Kantian conservative revolution was an ‘abstract negation’ that did not produce what we could call a ‘speculative cosmology’, that is to say a conceptualisation of the real’s global structure projectively absolved from the transcendental conditions presupposed by scientific cosmology. The persistent hegemony of a certain number of reactive pre-modern components of the critical motif implies that to a large extent modern philosophy is still yet to come. Philosophy will finally be modern only if it can sublimate the critical moment, crush the Ptolemaic counter-revolution and deepen the narcissistic wounds inflicted by modern science.

THE FOURFOLD CRITICAL LANDSCAPE

First, we shall arrange the reactive pre-modern components of the critical motif in what we shall call the *fourfold critical landscape*. To do so, we can begin by remarking that the critical gesture tends to present itself as a healthy way of overcoming a supposed crisis. The pathetic announcement of a crisis seems to be the necessary prolegomenon to an articulated set of reactive ‘critical’ operations, such as a dogmatic limitation of theoretical reason, a reterritorialization on an unmoving last ground, and the concomitant theo-philosophical projection of a ‘noumenal’ transcendence. The canonical form of such a supposed disaster is the ‘crisis of foundations’, which is to say the loss of a firm ground, the occurrence of the fall and exile, the ‘illness of uprootedness’². In particular, if we forget that every veritable science must take root in the positive ground of experience, if we forget that the abstract constructions of the understanding are anchored in a *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) that precedes all the scientific procedures of progressive idealization and convergence to the ideal limit-poles, and if we forget our finitude and the transcendental limits associated with it, then we fall into speculative waywardness, metaphysical folly, and transcendental illusion to the detriment of the patient construction of a well-founded theoretical edifice. *Vis-à-vis* such a crisis of foundations, the critique of reason must allow the judicious philosopher to travel upstream through the different forms of mediation—be they physiological, technical, imaginary, symbolic, linguistic, etc.—in order to reconquer the ‘immediate’ stratum that supports them (like, for example, sense-certainty, the *Lebenswelt*, the living present of the transcendental ego, the unveiling dehiscence of pre-objective *physis*, pre-symbolic duration, etc.). The critical overcoming of the crisis thus rests upon the pre-modern hypothesis according to which both human existence as well as any intellectual construction could be founded upon an immediate and unilateral last instance of experience. Hence, the authenticity of existence and the well-founded legitimacy of thought depend upon their distance in relation to such a privileged ‘immediate’ stratum. The first operation of critical redemption therefore corresponds with the reterritorialization upon a transcendental earth capable of establishing a legitimate orientation for thought, of healing its amnesiac waywardness and of supporting a new foundation. In this way, the mirage of a promised land necessarily follows exile and ungrounding. If the obscure disaster is to have lost the ground, it is necessary to conclude the Icarian odyssey of space by landing on an immobile earth, at home, here below, under the un-touchable stars. As Husserl claimed, this rooting in an ‘arche-originary Earth’ (*Ur-Arche*

2. cf. Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, trans. A. Wills, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952.

Erde) that ‘does not move’ constitutes in the last instance a transcendental reduction of the Copernican revolution: the infinite spaces in which the decentred planet earth freely falls unfold in a phenomenological horizon constituted in the dreamlike immanence of the recentred transcendental ego. In this way, the conservative counter-revolution allows us to regain in a transcendental realm what has been lost in the empirical domain, namely an ultimate ‘immediate’ foundation for existence and a first ‘Ur-axiom’ for thought. By doing so, the critical motif substitutes the hapless rhetoric of crisis and the pre-modern myth of a transcendental ‘immediate’ ground for knowledge through the abysses of modern science.

An entire ensemble of operations and affects articulated around the master-signifiers *limits* and *finitude* follows the diagnosis of the crisis, the transcendental rescue and the Ptolemaic arche-foundation. The rooting of existence and thought upon an ‘immediate’ last instance necessarily conveys a sedentary fixity, a ‘nationalist’ attachment to the ground. The catastrophic declaration of a pestilent crisis and the concomitant construction of a protective wall of critical demarcation allows for the emplacement of a transcendental jurisprudence capable of sieving between the autochthonous and the foreigners, between ‘true positivists’ and intellectual imposters, between the thinkers of what merits being thought and calculative technocratic scientists of the uninteresting, and between those who hold onto a well-founded existence and the uprooted who have forgotten their at-homeness. However, this self-enclosure is lethal after all: if the critical delimitation restrains the range of possible movements, the projectively ideal accomplishment of this operation converges towards a stillness that coincides with terrestrial immobility. The immobile earth contains the black hole of the tomb: transcendental territorialization is always mortal, for it inexorably leads to the calm of interment. Here below, upon the *Ur-erde* (arche-earth), stands the calm monolith, there where the fall from an obscure disaster becomes a mortal crash.

In particular, the tracing of a demarcation line capable of defining theoretical reason’s unsurpassable limits is the operation par excellence of this critical self-enclosure. We could thus say that *sedentary anchorage upon a transcendental earth* is necessarily coupled with the *theoretical inaccessibility of a ‘noumenal’ sky*. The horizon that defines the theatre of operations of worldly movements thus separates the immobile earth from the impossible sky. By reducing the Newtonian coalescence between the apple and the moon, the critical delimitation reestablishes a theoretically unsurpassable bifurcation of the real, namely that which divides the phenomena from the noumena, the knowable from the unknowable, the sayable from the showable, the physical from the metaphysical, being from ‘beyond being’, and totality from infinity. Once the Copernico-Newtonian revolution has been reduced, the blue of high noon can once again manifest the self-concealment of the unknown god. The homogeneity and isotropy of the real are therefore broken: the vertical gravitational field binds us to the immobile earth and prevents the light of reason from effectuating movements other than horizontal. Instead of spreading itself out in the indistinct homogeneity of the infinite spaces, the world of mortals henceforth extends itself—as long ago—between the hyper-transcendence of the most high and the earthly transcendental soil.

Even if it is impossible to access the noumenal sky via theoretical reason, there would be ‘practical’ means of crossing the horizon that separates the world of mortals from hyper-transcendence. We can thus say that the two principal problems of the critical motif are on the one hand the rootedness upon an immediate foundation and, on

the other hand, the non-theoretical access to the hyper-transcendent sky. Inner experience, the mystical exhibition of the unsayable, acts capable of touching upon the non-symbolizable ‘real’, poetic infiltration through the limits of discursive language, the sovereign experience of the impossible, liturgy, laughter and ecstasy, are all non-theoretical protocols of transgression seeking to pierce the worldly-linguistic horizon and give access to a noumenal (non-)experience of that which remains prohibited to terrestrial phenomenality. In the framework of the critical motif, the *limitation of theoretical reason* and the *practical* ‘thought of the outside’ are two sides of the same critical demarcation: the limits of the scientist are the hope of the prophet, the apostle and the mystic. In this way, critical (theo-)philosophers can dispense with the patient work of the concept by instituting protocols of immediate access to a hyper-transcendent (pseudo-)absolute. If one accepts that ‘the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking’³, then it might seem legitimate to take the gun when we heard the word ‘science’: ‘knowledge’ of the ‘absolute’ will simply be ‘shot out of a pistol’. By essentially being powerless to think the ‘thing-in-itself’, the authenticity of theoretical reason depends upon its capacity to recognize its own traits on the surface of the transcendental glass and to reflexively deconstruct its own metaphysical ingenuity through an endless work of rereading of its own textuality and history.

The anchorage in a fortified transcendental earth whose gravitational field prevents any possible uprooting spontaneously secretes the promise of a salutary grace. The transcendental bifurcation that separates the immobile earth from the noumenal sky therefore becomes an event horizon that can only be traversed by the unforeseeable advent of an appropriating grace, i.e. by a punctual and miraculous irruption of noumenal transcendence within the phenomenal world. By compactifying the continuity of angelic mediations, the discontinuity of the Christlike event hypostatizes the imaginary line that separates terrestrial existence from heavenly transcendence. The formal simplicity of the notion guarantees its secular perpetuation: as a singular point of junction capable of setting two ‘regions’ of the real in discontinuous relation (earth and sky, phenomena and noumena, finite and infinite, nature’s nomological structure and hyper-chaotic multiplicity, etc.), it necessarily exceeds any production, causality, militancy, foresight and intelligibility immanent to the worldly stratum into which it bursts. Even when it is purified of every theo-philosophical transcendence, by reducing an effective process (be it politic, scientific, artistic, etc.) to an ideally punctual and gratuitously inflicted break, the pre-modern motif of the event renders any ‘revolutionary’ sequence illegibly opaque: a ‘radical trembling’ can neither be induced nor retrospectively understood, it ‘can only come from the outside.’⁴ Far from being the arduous result of the human labour of the negative, political revolutions, scientific discontinuities, and artistic subversions seem to fall haphazardly from heaven.

The subjective typologies that support these diverse types of correspondence between terrestrial finitude and the heavenly infinite take on three emblematic figures, namely the *prophet* who announces the unforeseeable advent of grace—always to come—through the opening of a messianic (non-)horizon, the *apostle* who declares and deploys his fidelity to the vanishing advent of a supernumerary event, and the *mystic* who forces an immediate and sovereign (non-)experience of the impossible and un-

3. Martin Heidegger, ‘Nietzsche’s Word: “God is Dead”’, in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 199.

4. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 134.

sayable outside. All in all, it would not be—as Husserl believed—through a heroism of reason that we shall be able to overcome the crisis, but through prayer, ecstasy, or the expectancy of a grace to come. The critical fortress upon the immobile earth—the waiting room of interment—reveals itself to be a monastery whose only true aperture is directed towards the sky. Only a god, a grace, or a ‘practical’ act of transgression could save us from gravity, critical self-enclosure and red death. The fourfold critical landscape is henceforth complete: rooted upon the immobile earth under the inaccessible sky of immortals, those who exist for interment build, dwell, and think in the phenomenal world, between the downward pull of gravity and the promise—on the verge defined by the ‘theo-critical’ horizon—of appropriating grace.

ABSOLUTELY MODERN

In order to propel human thinking and dwelling out of the fourfold critical landscape, we shall claim that philosophy has to be *absolutely modern*, which is to say a modern philosophy of the absolute in the double sense of the genitive. More precisely, by *absolutely modern* philosophy we mean a philosophy capable of overcoming the Ptolemaic and narcissistic counter-revolution through which certain orientations of critical philosophy have attempted to reduce the consequences of the advent of modern science. Yet a philosophy capable of overcoming a critical moment and absolving itself of the transcendental limitations that follow must by definition be, as was the case for German idealism, an absolute philosophy of the absolute. By *absolutely modern* philosophy we mean a philosophy strictly ‘synchronous’⁵ with modern science, which is to say with *Galilean, Copernican, Newtonian, Einsteinian, and Heisenbergian* science. Following Badiou, we shall say that philosophy is *synchronous* with modern science if the former is both *conditioned* by and *desutured from* the latter. On the one hand, philosophy will be *conditioned* by modern science if it assumes the following theoretical and existential conditions provided by modern science. First, modern science is essentially Galilean, which means, in Husserl’s terminology, that mathematics is a *formal ontology*, i.e. a theory of the generic categories of *being qua being*, like for instance the categories of *multiplicity* (set theory), *relation* (category theory), *quantity* (number theory), *localization* (geometry), *operativeness* (algebra), *symmetry* (group theory), *predication* (logic), *stability* (dynamical systems theory), and so on⁶. In other words, modern science is essentially determined by the *physical* entanglement of mathematical *logos* and natural *existence*, an entanglement which implies both the Galilean mathematization of nature and the Husserlian (and Badiouian) ontologization of mathematics. Second, modern science is essentially Copernican, Darwinian, and Freudian, which means that the narcissistically wounded subject of science can no longer be considered a (self)-centred fundamental first or last instance. Third, modern science is essentially Newtonian, which means that nature is *one*, i.e. that the pre-modern (transcendental) bifurcation between the (unmoving) *earth* and the (noumenal) *sky* has been definitively removed. Fourth, modern science is essentially Einsteinian, which means that nature suspends itself in its (cor)relational immanence by absorbing (or physicalizing) any sort of transcendental or metaphysical (back)ground. And finally, modern science is essentially *Heisenbergian*, which means that the phenomenological objective consistency of nature

5. cf. Jean-Claude Milner, *L’Œuvre claire. Lacan, la science, la philosophie*, Paris, Seuil, 1995, p. 38.

6. cf. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. D. Cairns, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, § 24, pp. 77-78.

depends upon a certain number of quantum categories, which define the general conditions of logical predicability, (in)deterministic predictability, physical individuation, temporal reidentification, experimental observability, and intersubjective objectivity. Rather than supporting the anthropocentric critical reduction of the Copernican revolution, this (non-transcendental) quantum ontology implies that the count-as-one of the manifold of experimental intuition, far from being provided by a noetic synthesis performed by a transcendental ego, is the result of the immanent self-constitution carried out by the object in question itself.⁷

On the other hand, philosophy and science will be *desutured* if they manage to establish effective relations between themselves which preserve their respective sovereignties, i.e. if their relations assume neither the form of a subordination of philosophy to science ('only science thinks') nor the form of a philosophical domination of science ('science does not think'). On the basis of the birth of modern science, philosophy has had to confront a mode of thought which seems to be able to effectuate with rigor and virtuosity that which philosophy has always coveted, namely understanding the rational structure of the real. We can thus say that the existence of modern science has forced philosophy to reevaluate its theoretical prerogatives over the real. Faced with such a query of its theoretical authority, we can distinguish two principal kinds of philosophical reactions.

In the first place, we can say that philosophy has laid down its weapons and renounced its own sovereignty in order to proudly institute itself as the (non-requested) valet of science. Such a servile capitulation can take place in several ways. Philosophy can try to supply science with methodological, epistemological, hermeneutical, or metaphysical appendixes. It can pretend to provide a 'supplement of soul' capable of concealing the inhumanity of science under a 'human face'. It can attempt to orient the development of science through 'metaphysical research programs'. It can try to assure the conditions of mediation and translatability between different theoretical fields. It can endeavour to localise the 'epistemological obstacles' that impede the development of science and help science get over its 'foundational crises'. It can intervene in the 'spontaneous philosophy of the scientists' in order to trace a demarcation line between the 'ideological' and the 'scientific' components of science. It can furnish criteria so as to distinguish the legitimate sciences from pseudo-science. In the worst case, 'philosophy' becomes a sort of intellectual police apt to denounce the illegitimate uses of scientific knowledge and pursue intellectual imposters. But, we shall argue that there is no synchrony possible between science and a philosophy which sacrifices its sovereignty, resigns itself to leading a parasitic and secondary existence, and institutes itself as a self-proclaimed guardian of scientificity. We could affirm of this kind of relationship between philosophy and science what Friedrich Schlegel says of the philosophy of art, namely that 'one of two things is usually lacking', either philosophy or science.⁸

In the framework of the second kind of philosophical reaction to the emergence of modern science, philosophy has begun a struggle seeking to regain the theoretical prerogatives over the real usurped by science and to reduce the theoretical hegemony of the latter. In order to submit science to philosophical authority, establish its juridi-

7. cf. Gabriel Catren, 'A Throw of the Quantum Dice Will Never Abolish the Copernican Revolution', in *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, vol. 5, Falmouth, Urbanomic, 2009 (and references therein).

8. Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. P. Firchow, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 2.

cal limits, and occupy an overarching position in relation to it, philosophy has tried to define itself as a discourse with a wide range of capacities, including the ability to explain the conditions of possibility of science (be they transcendental, ontological, pragmatic, technological, discursive, institutional, etc.), subordinate *de jure* regional ontologies to a 'fundamental' ontology, ground science in a pre-scientific stratum (*Lebenswelt*, etc.), clarify its 'destinal' essence (be it technical, metaphysical, ontotheological, etc.), 'demonstrate' that science is nothing but an inductive stamp collection incapable of unveiling any rational necessity, or denounce science as a 'rationality of domination' and the ultimate cause of contemporary barbarism. In the first place, these attempts to trace the insurmountable limits of scientific thought permit philosophy to know what science does not know about itself. They therefore allow philosophy to formulate a *theory of science* by assuring a position of theoretical domination over the latter. The philosophical theory of science allows philosophy to think the relation between the immanence of scientific practice, on the one hand, and the transcendental, ontological, or metaphysical significance and consequences of science on the other. In this way, science becomes the object of a philosophical theory capable of founding and juridically circumscribing its field of validity. In the second place, this philosophical domination of science enables philosophy to know what scientific faculties cannot grasp concerning the real. Philosophy can thus establish itself as a *first, rigorous, and fundamental science* of the real. In order to trace the juridical limits of science and assure its submission to philosophy, philosophy proceeds to an operation that we can locate in almost all the arrangements that we have just enumerated, namely the bifurcation of the real in two. If science can construct a *knowledge of reality* (i.e. of phenomena, regional beings, structures, actual configurations, the 'contingent' laws of nature, etc.), only philosophical *thought* can with any legitimacy seek the *truth of the real* (i.e. of noumena, *being qua being*, pre-structural multiplicity, the virtual all-embracing 'apeiron', hyper-chaos, etc.). Thus philosophy justifies its existence by trying to localize a stratum of the real that would be subtracted *de jure* from scientific knowledge. Faced with the implacable progress of modern science, the philosopher—like the priest—is forced to constantly redefine his own tasks and pathetically crawl into niches each time more 'subtle', more 'profound', more 'transcendent', more 'generic', and more 'eminent' of the real. In the worst case, this pretension of philosophy to be the first science *par excellence* allows it to justify its *docta ignorantia* and abstain from the patient and arduous work of the genuine sciences (mathematics, physics, biology, etc.).

These different kinds of philosophical reactions to the emergence of modern science tacitly accept the postulate according to which philosophy will be theoretical knowledge or will not be at all, either a second and subordinate knowledge (namely 'epistemological' knowledge), or a knowledge alongside scientific knowledge (namely 'analytical' knowledge), or a first and fundamental knowledge (namely transcendental, ontological or metaphysical knowledge). Philosophy wants to be science, second science in the worst case, first science in the best. In this way, the philosophy of the modern times seems incapable of accepting the sovereignty of modern science as the canonical and eminent form of theoretical knowledge, and consequently it is incapable of definitively renouncing its theoretical prerogatives over the real. Following Badiou's terminology, we can say that philosophy remains *sutured* to (the idea of) science. Hence, philosophy does not manage to establish itself as a sovereign form of thought capable of involving relations with science which are not those of domination, submis-

sion, imitation, concurrence, juxtaposition, or identification. The theoretical domination of philosophy over science and the submission of philosophy to the idea of science are nothing but two sides of the same suture scenario. We shall say that a philosophy sutured to science remains in a state of pre-modern minority. The modernity of philosophy therefore depends upon its capacity to auto-determine itself in the suspension of every tutelary role exerted upon science and every mimetic submission to the tutelage of the latter.

In order to avoid any form of suture between philosophy and science and to put an end to their struggle for theoretical authority over the real and the corresponding conflict of the faculties, we shall follow the regulative imperative of forcing a hyperbolic divergence between them. In other words, instead of trying to weave any form of epistemological relation, ontico-ontological junction, empirico-transcendental division, or physico-metaphysical complementation whatsoever, instead of trying to relate philosophy and science either by means of a philosophy of science or by means of a non-philosophical 'science' of philosophy, instead of defining philosophy as a first, rigorous, or fundamental science, we shall attempt to heighten the divide between science and philosophy, deepen their difference, and break any form of identification between them. In particular, there will be no epistemological, analytic, transcendental, or ontological relation between science and philosophy. In order to guarantee the irreducible autonomy of science in relation to philosophy, we shall argue the necessity of expanding the definition of what we understand by science under the form of what we shall call (*absolute*) *knowledge*. By knowledge we mean a sovereign mode of thought that seeks to infinitely expand the theoretical experience of the real, i.e. to projectively construct a universal and unconditional rational knowledge of the real that does not recognize any form of aprioristic uncrossable limit to the development of its own infinite tasks. To achieve this, knowledge must expand what we understand by science in two senses. In the first place, far from limiting itself to studying the various ontic *regions* of the real (physics, chemistry, biology, etc.), knowledge must also examine its various *strata* (be they ontic, ontological, metaphysical, etc.). The philosophical assignation of science to a single stratum allows philosophy to proclaim science's constitutive incapacity to think the real, which necessarily exceeds the ontico-objective stratum. The infinite regulative idea of (absolute) knowledge contests this so-called essential limit of scientific thought by means of a stratified extension of science. This stratification permits knowledge to guarantee its self-sufficiency vis-à-vis other thought procedures. In order to characterize this stratified extended scientificity, we could adapt the following description: 'the stratified multiplicity of [knowledge, GC], which is inherent to the process of scientific production, is irreducible to any of its orders. [...] And this is a resistance (or limitation) only from the viewpoint of a [philosophical, GC] will. The will of [knowledge, GC] is the transformation-traversal of a stratified space, not its reduction.'⁹ In the second place, knowledge must reactivate and generalize the Hegelian gesture through which *intentional* science and *transcendental* critique are subsumed in the self-reflection proper to *speculative* knowledge. The speculative movement *par excellence* is in effect the subsumption of extrinsic transcendental critique within an immanent speculative self-reflection. The reflexive passage from a *knowledge-in-itself* (i.e. a theoretical procedure

9. Alain Badiou, 'Mark and Lack: On Zero', trans. Z.L. Fraser and R. Brassier, in P. Hallward & K. Peden (eds.), *Concept and Form: The Cahiers pour l'analyse and Contemporary French Thought*, London, Verso, 2010 (forthcoming), <http://www.web.mdx.ac.uk/crmep/varia/TR10.8Badiou15.2.2009RB.pdf>. Badiou writes 'scientific signifier', 'metaphysical', and 'science' instead of 'knowledge', 'philosophical', and 'knowledge' respectively.

that does not reflect in its own transcendental conditions of possibility) to a *knowledge-for-itself* would thus constitute the immanent dialectic of speculative knowledge itself. Since we can neither exit the real in order to turn it into an intentional object nor project it into any form of 'noumenal' hyper-transcendence whatsoever, the ultimate gesturality of speculative knowledge can be neither objectifying intentionality nor the hyperbolic 'intentionality' of the 'practical' protocols of transgression, but instead reflexivity. Far from being an extrinsic philosophical operation capable of localizing the insurmountable limits of science, transcendental critique must allow the subject of science to identify and speculatively subsume the various transcendental conditions of scientific research. Among these conditions we can include: the (gravitational, thermodynamic, biologic, etc.) conditions that make the emergence of localized and temporalized cognitive entities possible; the conditions defined by the anthropic principle; the physiological conditions of sensible intuition; the technological conditions of instrumental observability and experimental verifiability; the associated limits to the possibility of gaining empirical access to the different regions, strata, scales, and dimensions of the real; the 'categories' of human understanding, the available 'imaginary' schemata that allow us to connect these categories with sensible intuition, the formal and linguistic structures that convey theoretical reason, and the technical and conceptual operations of analysis, synthesis, abstraction, selection, coarse-graining, decoherence, and renormalization through which we can constitute finite objects and define what is relevant at a given stage of research. One of the essential contributions of German idealism is the thesis according to which the transcendental critique, far from demonstrating the impossibility of absolute knowledge, constitutes its very condition of possibility. Indeed, the problem is not how to pierce a hole in the walls of the transcendental prison (built by philosophy itself), but rather to acknowledge that transcendental reflection is a necessary moment for absolving knowledge from the too human transcendental conditions of research. The infinite process of theoretical knowledge does not advance by attempting to grasp an 'uncorrelated absolute' through a philosophical 'ruse' capable of discontinuously leaping over the subject's shadow, but instead through a continual deepening of scientific labour seeking to locally absolve it from its conjunctural transcendental limitations, expand its categorical, critical, and methodological tools, and progressively subsume its unreflected conditions and presuppositions. Far from any 'humanist' or 'idealist' reduction of scientific rationality, this reflection upon the transcendental localization of the subject of science should allow the latter to radicalize the inhuman scope of knowledge by producing a differential surplus value of unconditionality and universality. In other words, such a reflexive torsion should permit the subject of science to continuously go through the transcendental glass and force its progressive escape from the transcendental anthropocentrism of pre-critical science: it is necessary to think the particular—empirical and transcendental—localization of the subject of science within the real in order for theoretical reason not to be too human.

According to this speculative sublation of transcendental critique, we must disclaim the dogmatic thesis according to which we cannot vary our transcendental 'position' vis-à-vis a given object. Indeed, transcendental reflection opens the possibility of generalizing Husserl's method of variation to transcendental variations, which is to say to modifications of the particular transcendental structure that makes our experience possible. In this way, transcendental critique must permit us to absolve our experience from its pre-modern attachment to a particular transcendental Arche-Earth.

Whereas each particular transcendental structure—like for instance the transcendental structures of a crystal, a baobab, an elephant, a human being, or a robot—defines a horizon of co-given profiles for every adumbrated object, the transcendental variations define a (non-)horizon of co-given horizons, which will be called *extended phenomenal plane*. Strictly speaking, the extended phenomenal plane is not itself a sort of ‘cosmic’ horizon, since it is not defined by any particular transcendental structure. In other terms, the extended phenomenal plane of impersonal experience is not Arche-Earth-centered. In this way we can oppose the infinite ‘adumbrated’ depths of the extended phenomenal plane—with its intrinsic structure of unveiling and concealment—to the unsurpassable critical bifurcation between phenomena and noumena. We can then define the *eidōs* of an object as the germinal generator of its extended phenomenal sheaf of ‘profiles’. This means that the *eidōs* generates one set of orbits of profiles for each possible phenomenological horizon. Hence, the phenomenological dehiscence generated by the object’s *eidōs* extends far beyond the horizon defined by any particular transcendental structure. We could say that the suspension of the critical restriction of experience to a single phenomenological horizon opens experience to the extended phenomenal plane into which ‘flowers endlessly open’.¹⁰

More generally, we shall maintain that not only transcendental reflection but also any other form of theoretical reflection upon science—be it epistemological, ontological, etc.—will by definition be included in the stratified extension of scientificity that we have called (absolute) knowledge. The self-reflexive immanence made possible by this heuristic expansion of the notion of science allows us to affirm the irreducible theoretical sovereignty of knowledge in relation to any other mode of thought. A theoretical procedure that legitimately wants to be absolute (i.e. universal and unconditional) cannot admit aprioristic extrinsic limits to its own immanent movement and to the process of mediation through which it reflexively enriches its (self-)critical weapons, assumes its presuppositions, and traverses its conjunctural limitations. This sovereignty of knowledge vis-a-vis any other mode of thought is the counterpart of its submission to the authority of the absolute real. The feigned modesty proper to the critical limitations of science constitutes an idealist ultra-dogmatism, the self-sufficient position of a supposedly irrevocable knowledge about the unsurpassable limits of theoretical reason. By using Adorno’s terms, we could say that the critical tribunal overthrows ‘the authority of the absolute’ by ‘absolutized authority’.¹¹ The only way of exerting a radical self-critique capable of preventing the degeneration of theoretical reason into dogmatic knowledge is to not give up on the desire to projectively construct an universal and unconditional knowledge of the real. In other terms, only the infinite idea of absolute knowledge can impede the dogmatic crystallization of knowledge. Far from tracing dogmatic delimitations between the knowable and the unknowable, the speculative appropriation of transcendental critique must assume the form of a determinate negativity on behalf of an effective production of knowledge. A determinate negation is a critique that works, i.e. a critique that supplies the means of effectively overcoming the limits it reveals. Far from legitimating a *practical* (namely poetic, aesthetic, ethical, liturgical, mystical, etc.) access to the absolute, the transcendental (self-)critique of science instead requires an expansion of the theoretical resources of the latter. Instead of impeding the necessary perfecting of the critical apparatus, this speculative *Aufhebung*

10. R.M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. S. Cohn, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1989, p. 65.

11. Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. K. Tarnowski & F. Will, New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 3.

of the transcendental critique must simply allow us to interrupt the unproductive, parasitic, and reactive redundancy of abstract negativity.

In short, we can say that the various forms of theoretical reflection upon the sciences (epistemology, transcendental critique, etc.) and every theoretical field seeking to rationally understand any stratum of the real whatsoever (be it ontic, ontological, metaphysical, etc.) will henceforth be a part of the stratified extension of scientificity that we have called knowledge. Thus a certain number of theoretical apparatuses historically introduced by philosophy will be transferred from philosophy to knowledge. We could say that philosophy will finally be desutured from modern science if it recognizes the unconditional autonomy of (the stratified extension of) science as a mode of thought that legitimately examines the real in its truth, and accepts delegating all its theoretical prerogatives over the real in order to affirm its own specificity as an autonomous form of thought disjoined from any form of scientificity (be it ontic, ontological, metaphysical or transcendental). This expropriation of philosophy in relation to any theoretical faculty generalizes and radicalizes Badiou's seminal thesis according to which (formal) ontology must be separated from philosophy. Far from being unfaithful to the philosophical tradition, 'this is a pattern spanning philosophy's entire history. Philosophy has been released from, or even relieved of, physics, cosmology, and politics, [...]. It is also important for it to be released from ontology',¹² epistemology, transcendental critique, metaphysics, and, in general, any theoretical field. Instead of simply being a terminological redefinition, the inclusion of these theoretical procedures in an expanded definition of science must enable their liberation from their reactive philosophical uses. In other words, such a scientific reappropriation of 'philosophical' theoretical faculties must allow us to differentiate what science can effectively recuperate from the theoretical contributions of inherited philosophy against the philosophical operations that merely seek to distort, limit, and dominate science (including, for instance, the philosophical utilization of transcendental critique in order to establish the juridical limits of science, or the various philosophical attempts of *founding*—an anti-Copernican gesture *par excellence*—science).

It is also important to emphasize that this stratified extension of science stems from a requirement posited by the regulative idea that opens and orients the infinite tasks of science, namely the idea of *truth*. Truth is an idea of reason deprived of any canonical conceptual representation. Being a regulative idea of reason, truth is nothing but the formal imperative to not give up on the desire to infinitely expand the rational comprehension of the real. However, the formal infinitude of the eidetic prescription can orient the effective local protocols of research by means of different conceptual representations of its local goals (adequacy, objectivity, experimental verifiability, formal demonstrability, nomological unification, etc.). We could say that the idea of truth is an eidetic operator that encompasses all the different local criteria of scientific selection. Hence, knowledge must be capable of absolving itself from the global canonization of any particular conceptual representation of truth, including, for instance, the 'truth of judgment' of representative understanding. Instead of being that which exposes itself to knowledge, truth is the regulative idea through which humanity opened at a particular moment of its history to a completely singular form of experience of the real, namely that of its rational comprehension. We can say that under the light of truth,

12. Alain Badiou, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. N. Madarasz, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 59.

the real exposes itself as that which is capable of being rationally understood. The fidelity of science to the idea of truth requires that it be able to expand all of its thematic regions, examined strata, conceptual, technical and methodological tools, and procedures of validation (hypothetical-deductive method, experimental protocols, formal and conceptual consistency, etc.). In particular, if the real cannot be reduced to the innerworldly beings or intentional objects studied by the natural sciences, then it is necessary to expand what we understand by science. If a theoretical problem posed by science cannot find a solution in the framework of the latter, then it is necessary to expand the scientific field by forcing the adjunction of the theoretical procedures that can generate the corresponding solutions. (Absolute) knowledge is by definition the projective compactification of the successive extensions of the scientific field required by its infinite regulative idea.

DAS GLASPERLENSYSTEM

The regulative extension of the idea of science deprives philosophy of a number of theoretical fields that traditionally define it (including, in particular, epistemology, transcendental critique, and ontology). It is thus necessary to evaluate what the specificity of philosophy could be if we unburden it from all its theoretical claims and faculties concerning the real. As we shall see, this ascesis will allow us to characterize the singular tasks and faculties of philosophy and resist the different attempts to overcome philosophy by means of a marginal, poeticizing, theological, deconstructive, or non-philosophical ‘thought’.

Philosophy will be defined as a mode of thought that seeks to *systematically* mediate the experience of the real. The specificity of philosophy therefore depends on what Badiou calls its *systematicity*, i.e. its capacity of globally *compossibilizing* the different local procedures—such as science, art, or politics—in the horizon of a general economy of thought. Local thought procedures are by definition *virtuously* abstract, which is to say partial and unilateral. They mediate and expand the experience under the monochromatic light projected by the regulative ideas that orient their infinite tasks. On the contrary, philosophy can be defined as a non-local procedure whose aim is to unfold a *concrete* and *polychromatic* experience of the real. If each mode of thought forces the mediation of a certain dimension of *doxa* and labours inside a given *prismatic projection* of the real, philosophy is endowed with a systematic or global degree of variation. In more classical terms we could say that, instead of restricting itself to the tasks prescribed by a single eidetic ‘transcendental’, philosophy’s mediation of the limits of experience orients itself by constellating the *Verum*, the *Bonum*, and the *Pulchrum*. A philosophical experience depends upon a *stereoscopic* co-deployment of the complementary intentional goals defined by the diverse local procedures. In other words, the philosophical disindoxication of experience exerts itself via a systematic *composition* and *concertation* of the mediating vectors that operate within the multiple spectral sections of the real. Even if a given local procedure can legitimately use operations and materials coming from other procedures (including, for instance, aesthetic criteria in scientific research or scientific operations in artistic compositions), its tasks continue to be regulated by its eidetic ‘tonality’. On the contrary, the systematic variations performed by philosophical composition allow us to unfold an *atonal* experience of the real. The transversal ‘atonal chords’ produced in this way by definition exceed that of which the local modes of thought are capable. We could thus say that philosophy is an effective

practice of the abolition of the division of labour among the different abstract modes of thought. This implies that *systematic ubiquity* does not impede its *specific productivity*. In other terms, philosophy forces the productive localization of a global systematic transversality. Far from being an abstract survey, an ‘empty transcendence’, an encyclopedic classification, or even a parasitic and stagnant exploitation of what is produced by these local procedures, the philosophical system opens up a polyphonic horizon of labour towards the effective production of *diagonal* or *non-local* forms of enacting and expanding experience. We could say that through the philosophical system, all the local modes of thought ‘become one, and are increased by one’ (Whitehead). In other words, each *concrete mediator* produced by the systematic composition is ‘nothing more than a part alongside other parts, which it neither unifies nor totalizes, though it has an effect on these other parts simply because it establishes aberrant paths of communication between [them]’¹³. Analogously, the idea of producing a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) capable of synthesizing all the existing arts brings forth nothing but a new artistic form among others, an operatic ‘whole’ which coexists with the local arts and is ‘contiguous to them’, a virtuous excrescence through which the set of artistic forms productively avoids its impossible totalization.¹⁴ A given composition will be called philosophical only if it entangles a set of abstract mediating operations provided by the different local modes of thought in a non-trivial global section, i.e. in a concrete mediator that cannot be completely localized in the space of abstract procedures. In other words, the philosophical system is a delocalized concrete machine capable of connecting and articulating the various local abstract machines (be they artistic, political, scientific, etc.) in a non hierarchical way so as to set in place a generalized constructivism, a general *music* of thought. Paraphrasing Xenakis, we could say that such a ‘symphilosophy’ (F. Schlegel) *should be able to construct the most concrete musaical organon in which the disindexating vectors of Bach, Freud, Grothendieck, and Marx, for example, would be the singular components of a polyphonic mediator*.¹⁵ Whereas the various local modes of thought are characterized by their subjective typologies (the scientist, the artist, the analyst, the militant, etc.), their regulative ideas (the True, the Good, the Beautiful, etc.), the typology of their productions (works, theories, effects, interventions, etc.), their modes of discourse (the university’s discourse, the analytic discourse, etc.), and so on, philosophy’s own task is that of diagonalizing these different local structures via operations of *translation/transduction, synthesis, transposition, crossbreeding, resonance, grafting, connection, and counterpoint*. It is only through this systematic transversality that it will become possible to produce mutant forms of ‘spirit’, inject new plugs into the (immanent) real, generate hybrid corporeal supports, project new infinite tasks, and evaluate, reactivate, and constellate the inherited regulative ideas. More importantly, such a philosophical diagonalization allows us to insert the sheaves of scientific, artistic, and political abstract perspectives into a concrete unfolding ‘vision’ of the real¹⁶. Due to the philosophical production of mutant

13. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 43.

14. It is worth stressing that, from a philosophical point of view, the Wagnerian project of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, far from being too ambitious, lacks systematic generality, since it circumscribes itself to the restricted composition of artistic procedures and orients its tasks by means of a single regulative idea.

15. cf. Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Music*, Stuyvesant, Pendragon Press, 1992, p. 207.

16. cf. Alexander Grothendieck, *Promenade à travers une œuvre ou L'enfant et la Mère*, p. 16-17 (<http://www.grothendieckcircle.org/>).

forms of experience, the multiplicity of local forms of 'spirit' continuously avoids either any sort of totalizing closure or any form of innocuous cultural juxtaposition. Moreover, instead of subsuming the different forms of 'spirit' in a linear and convergent series of potentializations, their systematic composition must hinder the serialization, totalization, or hierarchization of their egalitarian plurality. In this way, far from interrupting the immanent procession of 'spirit', the philosophical system is nothing but the beginning of an atonal and stereoscopic form of the mediation of its concrete self-experience.

The systematic composition of science, art, and politics has always been a hallmark of philosophical production. However, the latent systematic conception of philosophy has been hindered by the privilege of an eidetic 'transcendental' to the detriment of the others. In particular, the theoretical suture between philosophy and ontology allowed the former to justify its 'systematic' delocalization with respect to the different 'ontic' regions. The proposed break with the suture between philosophy and theoretical reason, and the concomitant inclusion of ontology in a stratified extension of science allows us to release philosophy from such an ontological validation of its systematicity. Thus the horizon of systematic concretion furnished by the philosophical plane of composition is a non-theoretical 'image of thought' deprived of any ontological foundation. Far from subordinating the different interests of reason to theoretical interest and effectuating a teleological closure of the philosophical system, the stratified extension of science is nothing but a local mode of thought. Knowledge is only one form of 'spirit' among others, an abstract mode of thought whose objective is to infinitely expand the *theoretical* experience of the real, a local form of experience *that only examines the real in its (rational) truth*. Since by definition philosophy no longer has any theoretical prerogative over the real, this local inscription of knowledge into the system does not risk disrupting the theoretical autonomy of knowledge. In other words, even if the system incorporates knowledge as a singular form of 'spirit', knowledge henceforth will have no theoretical need of philosophy at all, since it is by construction autonomous in its own form of virtuous abstraction.

THE WORLDLY ABSOLUTE

The critical conception of philosophy orients its own activity by means of the 'cardinal points' provided by the pre-modern fourfold critical landscape. In order to continue the characterization of an absolutely modern conception of post-critical philosophy, we shall use the conditions provided by modern science to posit a new provisional scenario for philosophical activity. It is worth stressing that the resulting *speculative landscape* is simply intended to sketch a provisional imaginary envelope of modern being-there whose only heuristic purpose is to propel the philosophical experience beyond the arche-terrestrial limits defined by the fourfold critical landscape.

In what follows we shall choose the term *absolute* as the name of (what we have previously called) the real. The thesis according to which speculative philosophy must be a philosophy of the absolute in the double sense of the genitive implies that philosophy will neither be an ontological first science of *being qua being*, nor a thought of an 'Other' beyond (or otherwise than) *being* (the arche-difference, the infinite Other, the supernumerary event, the non-philosophical One, etc.), nor an 'analytic' localization of a 'real' ring that would be in a relation of noumenal excess or inconsistent subtraction with respect to the phantasmatic consistency of phenomenal reality or the structural properties defined by the symbolic order. As we shall show in what follows, the term

'absolute' has two important advantages, namely the impossibility of opposing the absolute to a separated non-absolute instance and the fact of conveying operations of absolutism. By definition the absolute cannot be (hetero-)relative to something other than itself. Therefore the absolute cannot be found on this side of or beyond any line of demarcation whatsoever, including, for example, the line that separates the 'infinite' from the finite, the 'real' from the symbolic and the imaginary, the intelligible from the sensible, the noumena from the phenomena, *being qua being* from beings, the inconsistent multiple from structural consistency, the undifferentiated *apeiron* from differentiated structures, or the virtual from the actual. Instead of resulting from a theo-philosophical bifurcation, the absolute engulfs every 'wild blue yonder'. Since by definition the absolute cannot be a term of a duality, any form of difference, opposition, bifurcation, schism, transcendence, horizon, or polarization must unfold within its unitive neutrality. The absolute is thus the *one* that encompasses any division. In what follows we shall use the term *immanence* for denoting the impossibility of opposing the absolute to a separated (or *transcendent*) non-absolute instance.

If the absolute is one, if any form of horizon unfolds in its neutral immanence, then we cannot access it, there is no trajectory or operation capable of leading us there, for we are already within the absolute, *hic et nunc*. In Hegelian terms, we can say that the absolute, far from being a lost homeland or an eschatological kingdom, is always already with us, in and for itself: *das Absolute ist an und für sich schon bei uns*¹⁷. Philosophy therefore cannot have the objective of clearing a path towards the absolute, of setting in place, as if it were an absolutescope, a protocol of access capable of traversing the walls of the critical prison via a 'speculative' demonstration, an act of transgression, or an intellectual intuition. Every possible experience, be it doxic, illusory or ideological, is already an experience of the absolute: the 'falsehood' is nothing but a (partial and unilateral) moment of the 'truth'. Therefore, it is a question on the one hand of inserting the 'falsehood' in its proper place within the 'truth' and of understanding in this way the sources of its unilaterality, finitude, and abstract character. On the other hand, it is a question of deploying the concrete experience of the 'truth', i.e. of unsettling its conjunctural limitations and forcing its immanent unfolding. A philosophy of the absolute in the double sense of the genitive is a philosophy that seeks the absolute from the absolute itself, i.e. a philosophy that, far from attaining the absolute at the end of any process or operation whatsoever, expands the possible forms of the absolute's self-mediation. In order to do so, philosophy always acts upon a particular *envirning world* (*Umwelt*) characterized by a certain restrained experience of the absolute: everything begins in our garden, sovereignly, in strict floral observance, narcotized in the midst of the worldly capsule. More precisely, we can identify the *Umwelt* with the Arche-Earth-centered phenomenological horizon of anticipations and possibilities defined by a particular transcendental structure. The doxic belief in the naturalness of the *Umwelt* as a unique and unsurpassable horizon of possibilities for the human experience of the absolute constitutes what we shall call—borrowing from Lacanian terminology—*reality*. We shall thus call *ideology* any theoretical and practical technology of legitimation and perpetuation of reality. The ideological prevention of any possibility of mediating the *Umwelt* and overcoming its limitations depends upon a certain set of narcotic operations seeking to hypostatize its partiality, unilaterality, and finitude. Due to ideology,

17. cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988, p. 58 (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 47).

that which is nothing but a local fluctuation of the absolute's self-experience is fixated and endowed with an unshakeable necessity. Far from guaranteeing an access to the absolute as if it were an *instrument* or a *medium*, philosophical labour seeks to systematically mediate every form of doxic or ideological limitation of its self-experience. We could say that speculative philosophy depends upon the postulate according to which any form of finitude enfolds a renormalized infinity. As Whitehead writes: 'We are instinctively willing to believe that by due attention, more can be found in nature than that which is observed at first sight. But we will not be content with less.'¹⁸ The dialectical blow-up of infinity within finitude requires a continuous mediation of any fundamental, archaic, elemental, unilateral, immediate, or eventual 'last' instance of experience. It is in this sense that philosophy can be defined as a systematic phenomenology of 'spirit', i.e. a work seeking to expand the absolute's 'self-consciousness' on the basis of a dialectical resolution of any given form of experience, a forcing of transcendental variations seeking to submerge the local subjects into the extended phenomenal plane, a production of new 'forms of spirit' (or formal subjective typologies), and a stereoscopic co-deployment of the mediating vectors that operate within the different spectral sections of the absolute. In the words of Novalis, we can say that philosophy must systematically 'romanticize' the absolute's experience, which is to say that philosophy must variously raise it to new powers and compose concrete mediators out of its different prismatic abstractions.

In the aftermath of Cartesian doubt and the Husserlian *epokhe*, the first operation of the protocol of philosophical production is the formal suspension of *doxa*, i.e. the bracketing of both the finitist naturalization of the conjunctural limits of experience and the ideological hypostasis of a given local configuration in a perennial *Weltanschauung* (worldview). We could say that a philosopher, being an inhabitant of a bracketed *Umwelt*, is an abducted subject '[...] who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things [...]'.¹⁹ Unlike for Descartes and Husserl, the *epokhe* as we understand it here does not grant access to an indubitable subjective foundation on the basis of which we could construct a first and rigorous science definitively subtracted from any critical mediation. Whereas the scope of Cartesian doubt and the Husserlian *epokhe* has been limited by a reterritorialization in the *ego cogito*, whereas the Heideggerian *Unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness) of the existential *Unzuhaus* (not-at-home)²⁰ has been betrayed by the bucolic nostalgia of the Greek *Heimat* (homeland) and the substitutive military rootedness in the German *Lebensraum* (vital space), whereas the 'non-philosophical unilateralization' of worldly transcendence operates via a radical emplacement in a last subjective instance 'immediately' proven, the speculative suspension of the doxic capsule drops away every *Ur-Erde*, every ultimate enclave of an 'immediate' experience subtracted from mediation, and every salutary interruption of the Ur-fall. In other words, the speculative *epokhe* formally brackets the fundamental, radical, or immediate obstacles which impede the free fall down the rabbit-hole that winds through the transcendental earth. In turn, the launching of the *Ur-Erde* into orbit implies the suspension of the critical thesis according to which the unfolding of experience is restricted to the phenomenological horizon defined by a particular

18. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, New York, Dover Publications, 2004, p. 29.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. J. Norman, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, §292, p. 174.

20. cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1962, § 41, p. 234.

Umwelt. Such a suspension makes the teratological conception of new forms of ‘spirit’ possible. The resulting mutant transcendental structures span new phenomenological horizons for hosting the dehiscence of every germinal *eidōs*. In this way, the *epokhe* opens the possibility of passing from the closed environing world to the infinite phenomenal plane. If the critical *epokhe* roots in an immobile earth, the speculative *epokhe* suspends worldly reality and opens experience to ‘[...] the immanence of the absolute to which [speculative, GC] philosophy lays claim.’²¹ The *epokhe* can then be understood as a local subjective activation of the *Umwelt*’s immersion into the groundless absolute. Faced with the pre-modern nostalgia of a rootedness in an original earthly ark, the fidelity to the Copernican revolution requires us to conceive the absolute as a phenomenal plane of abyssal immanence capable of receiving the successive launching into orbit of immobile earths. We could thus say that in the bracketed world, all that is the case freely falls. Far from any reterritorialization on an immediate apodictic experience or sacred Place, ‘thinking consists in stretching a [phenomenal, GC] plane of immanence that absorbs the earth [...]’²² The absolute thus constitutes the ‘open’ where the radical foundations and the last instances are suspended and towards which the successive transcendental potentializations of the Copernican revolution never cease to release experience. The plunging into the solaristic solution—and the concomitant ungrounding of any transcendental *Heimat*—blasts off the philosophical experience: twenty thousand leagues under the centre of the earth to the moon.

It is worth stressing that the *epokhe* does not entail an effective mediation of the doxic capsule. Simply being a formal bracketing of the naturalization of a given phenomenological horizon, the *epokhe* does not authorize dispensing with the labourious and patient work of mediation, resolution and fibrillation of reality. We could say that the *epokhe* just induces the *being-attuned* (*Stimmung*) to the absolute which is necessary for performing every effective mediation of the ‘invisible and imperious circles that delimit’²³ the subject’s *Umwelt*. Even if the effective experience of the abducted/attuned subject continues to be structured by the imaginary *Weltanschauung* that covers the inner surface of his *Umwelt*, ‘the state in which he may be found’ (*Befindlichkeit*) differs from that of those who assume the restriction of experience to the renormalized phenomenological horizon defined by their transcendental structures. This psychedelic coexistence between the suspension within the extended phenomenal plane of immanence activated by the *epokhe* and *being-there* in the worldly capsule will be called *coalescence*. Even if ‘there is ever a World’,²⁴ and never the uncapsulated absolute, worldly experience can be set in coalescence: through the *epokhe*, the philosopher can act upon the doxic capsule from the ‘point of view’ of the immanent absolute which is always already present. Paraphrasing Laruelle, we could say that the *epokhe* allows the philosopher to access a ‘vision-in-absolute’ of the world. The philosopher is a ‘character who, believing in the existence of the sole Absolute, imagines he is everywhere in a dream (he acts from the Absolute point of view)’.²⁵ Instead of giving access to a transworldly outer space, the suspension of the renormalized world triggers the possibility of unfolding the ‘world’s inner space’ (*Weltinnenraum*), i.e. of blowing-up the ‘atoms’

21. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 91.

22. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 88.

23. ‘Grothendieck, *Promenade à travers une œuvre ou L’enfant et la Mère*, p. 7.

24. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, p. 64.

25. Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Igitur’, in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, trans. M.A. Caws, New York, New Directions, 1982, p. 100.

of reality and releasing new dimensional ekstases and new immanent horizons of possibilities beyond the limits defined by the corresponding *Umwelt*. Rather than a 'cosmic' all-embracing *Umwelt*, the absolute is the immanent projective abyss continuously opened by the mediation of any hypothetical last instance of experience. As Žižek writes: 'transcendence is absolutely immanent, what is 'beyond' finite reality is nothing but the immanent process of its self-overcoming'.²⁶ In Heidegger's terms, the absolute can be surpassed '[...] only by itself [...] by expressly [falling, GC] into its own. Then [the absolute, GC] would be the unique which wholly surpasses itself [...] this transcending does not go up and over into something else; it comes up to its own self [...]. [The absolute, GC] itself traverses this going over and is itself its dimension'²⁷ Unlike the world renormalized by the natural attitude, the world submerged in coalescence within the solaristic solution is an interzone permeable to the floral resolution of experience. If we call *germ* every local instance of a dialectic flowering and *stalk* every systematic fibration of a germ, we can say that the philosopher is a *stalker* capable of systematically localizing, following, and intertwining the serpentine lines of mediation.

PRE-BREATH AND HYPER-CHAOS

The project of defining a post-critical philosophy of the absolute synchronous with modern science must demarcate itself from certain contemporary attempts seeking to reactivate what could be called a pre-modern synchrony between philosophy and theology. Such a theo-philosophical synchrony can be defined by the projection—and consequent relativization—of the absolute in a trans-worldly transcendence, which can be either external (i.e. trans-objective) or internal (i.e. pre-subjective). If we assume with Deleuze and Guattari the definition according to which 'there is religion every time there is transcendence',²⁸ then we can conclude that any attempt to localize the absolute in a trans-worldly outer space effectively submits philosophy to theology. In opposition to such a theo-philosophical relativization of the absolute, a properly speculative philosophy aims to systematically deploy an immanent experience of an 'absolute absolute' (F. Schlegel).

In order to characterize these theological deviations of the speculative turn, we can begin by remarking that the intentional correlation between a subject and an object (or, more generally, between two prehensive objects) prevents any attempt seeking to identify one of these terms with the absolute. Both the subject and the object are co-determined and co-constituted by the intentional correlations that unfold in the horizons of their phenomenal worlds. Hence, one possible strategy for overcoming the critical prohibition of an 'absolute knowledge' could be to try to attain an 'uncorrelated absolute' by going beyond intentional correlations. In order to do so, it is necessary to identify the absolute either with an outer superlative transcendence beyond the object or with an inner immediate experience on this side of the subject. According to theo-philosophy, the absoluteness of a hyper-transcendent 'relative absolute' relies upon its capacity to absolve itself from any worldly correlation.

26. Slavoj Žižek, 'Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today?', in this volume.

27. Martin Heidegger, 'What are Poets for?', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1975, p. 131. Heidegger writes 'entering' and 'Being' instead of 'falling' and 'Absolute'.

28. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and J. Tomlinson, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 46.

On the one hand, we could try to go beyond the intentional object with the hopes of attaining what we shall generically call a 'thing-in-itself'. The phenomenal transcendence opened by the transcendental faculties does not exhaust the outside. In order to access the supposed trans-objective 'great outdoors'—or non-transcendental transcendence—it would be necessary to suspend the transcendental sovereignty of the subject and go beyond the phenomenal horizon set in place by its constituting spontaneity. To do so, one should be able to force a (theoretical, ethical, or aesthetic) 'relationship' with a trans-objective instance absolved from any possible over-determination conveyed by such a worldly (cor)relation. Several alternatives have been proposed to accomplish this strategy. For instance, such a suspension of transcendental activity could be ethically brought about within the framework of a 'sublime' experience of the 'infinite' Other capable of deregulating the harmonic arrangement of distinct faculties and reducing every subjective effort seeking to impose the formal framework of objective recognition. We could alternatively try to construct a 'speculative demonstration' seeking to pierce a theoretical hole in the walls of the critical fortress and peep at an uncorrelated absolute subtracted from the laws of the phenomenal world. We could also attempt to 'show' *sub specie aeterni* the existence of the world as a limited whole—which by definition cannot be the object of a phenomenal experience—through a 'mystical feeling' capable of silently transcending linguistic objectification. In all these cases, 'how things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world'.²⁹

The second possibility of breaking the correlational circle is to move upstream to this side of the subject in order to attain what we shall call a 'human-in-itself', which is by definition subtracted from the objective transcendence of the world. If we accept that the conditions of possibility of objective phenomena are also the conditions of possibility of the subject's experience, then we have to conclude that the subject of the transcendental tradition is a subject mediated by the experience of the transcendent world, an interiority from the start alienated by the threads of intentionality, an ego essentially determined by its being-in-the-world. The transcendental ego is by definition open to a transcendent experience, even when—as it is the case in Husserl—the corresponding horizon of transcendence is constituted in its subjective immanence. It would therefore be necessary to radicalize the phenomenological return upstream towards the transcendental ego in order to attain a 'human-in-itself' which does not lapse into the transcendent world, a non-transcendental ego subtracted from any dependence and co-presence vis-à-vis the world. If the thing-in-itself is irreducible to any form of objectivity, the 'absolute' humanity of the human-in-itself is irreducible to any form of worldly subject. Whereas Henry understands this radical subjective 'immanence' in terms of a self-affective life subtracted from light, language, and worldly experience, Laruelle argues—even more radically—that every form of self-affection, self-manifestation, and self-position would open a distance of itself to itself, would dislocate subjective immanence, and would make the proof of itself into a mediate experience. Hence, whereas Henry radicalizes the Husserlian return upstream towards the transcendental ego by means of a radically 'immanent' pre-worldly subjectivity, Laruelle radicalizes Henry's project by ejecting every form of residual self-affective mediation outside the human-in-itself.

29. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, § 6.432, p. 88.

In this way, the attempt of attaining a hyper-transcendent ‘absolute’ instance subtracted from intentional (or prehensive) correlations can assume either the form of a *thought of the outside* seeking ‘an outside more distant than any external world’, or the form of a *thought of the inside* turned towards ‘an inside deeper than any internal world’. Whereas in Levinas the hyper-transcendence of the ‘infinite’ Other overturns the transcendental experience of the world (for the latter, not being sufficiently transcendent, cannot put the objectifying imperialism of the subject in question), in Henry and Laruelle radical immanence ‘unilateralizes’ the transcendental experience of the world (for the latter, being too transcendent, puts the self-sufficiency of absolute humanity in question). In terms of the fourfold critical landscape, these strategies seek to transcend the phenomenal world either by leaping over the subject’s shadow in order to attain a trans-constellational altitude, or by radicalizing Husserlian archaeology in order to rediscover an opaque, muted, and unworldly life in the immediacy of self-interment. This bifurcation of theo-philosophy between a pre-subjective ‘human-in-itself’ and a trans-objective ‘thing-in-itself’ has been clearly described by Laruelle in the following terms:

The thinkers of extreme transcendence and radical immanence, the Jew and the non-philosopher, are thus opposed to the philosopher. Because the Real is the infinite of God or the Other or even the intrinsic radical finitude of Man-in-person, these are both foreclosed to representation, and hence a backwards transcending which is the effect or consequence of the leap into the Real [...]. The radical transcendence of the infinite, the radical immanence of Man-in-person, this radical characteristic separates Transcendence and Immanence from the world.³⁰

By means of this theo-philosophical bifurcation between a hyper-transcendent uncorrelated ‘absolute’ (Good beyond Being, omnipotent hyper-chaos, immediate self-affective Life, the non-philosophical ‘One’) and a relativized phenomenal world (Being, the nomological consistency of phenomenal nature, the alienated subject, the ‘non-One’), theo-philosophers try to reject outside the absolute what seems to threaten its absoluteness. The theo-philosophical projection of the absolute into a (trans-objective or pre-subjective) hyper-transcendence always depends upon a relativization of (every rational thought of) the world. Instead of being the immanent draft that draws the absolutized world into its inner phenomenological depths, the absolute becomes ‘a beyond whose shadow darkens the [world, GC]’.³¹ This explains why the scientist will always remain the enemy *par excellence* of the theo-philosopher: the establishment of a first science of a hyper-transcendent ‘Father’—or of his radically human Son—requires reducing and relativizing the ‘second’ science of phenomenal nature.

In sum, we can say that both the thinkers of the ‘thing-in-itself’ and the thinkers of the ‘human-in-itself’ agree in the attempt to identify the absolute with a hyper-transcendent uncorrelated instance to the detriment of mediated and alienated worldly experience. As Novalis writes, whereas ‘one still seeks a country behind these distant and bluish forms [...]’, another believes that a full future of life is hidden behind [himself]. Very few pause calmly amidst the beautiful forms that surround them and are content to grasp them in their integrity and their relations. Few do not forget the point when they are held fast by the details and sparkling chains that reconnect the parts with order [...]. Few feel their soul awaken to the contemplation of this living treasure that

30. François Laruelle, ‘Les effets-Levinas. Lettre non-philosophique du 30 Mai 2006’, 30 May 2006, <<http://www.onphi.net/lettre-laruelle-les-effets-levinas-12.html>>.

31. R.M. Rilke, ‘Letter to W. von Hulewicz (November 13, 1925)’, in *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke—Vol. II: 1910-1926*, trans. J.B. Green, Leiserson Press, 2007, p. 374. Rilke writes ‘earth’ instead of ‘world’.

floats on the abysses of the night'.³² In order to grasp and unfold the correlational order which ties together the floating life that surrounds us, we shall assume the following 'Hegelian' inference. On the one hand, we have to be absolute beginners: the philosophical experience of the absolute must begin from an absolute which is already present. The absolute cannot be identified with a trans-objective 'thing-in-itself' or a pre-subjective 'human-in-itself' localized outside the phenomenal world, save to relativize it. A hyper-transcendent and relativized absolute, i.e. an absolute that coincides with the term of a duality, is a squared circle. On the other hand, it is an existential condition of the factice being-there that we are always already thrown into an alienated and mediated worldly experience. Therefore, we have to conclude that phenomenal experience is itself absolute and that any form of 'relative absolute' separated from the world is, like Husserl's immobile *Ur-Erde*, nothing but a pre-modern theo-philosophical myth. Thus in the horizon of an absolutely modern philosophy, it is neither a question of coveting a beyond more transcendent than any worldly exteriority, nor of returning upstream towards a pre-subjective experience of a radical immediacy. It is instead a question of remaining in the world by having activated its transfinite suspension, by means of the *epokhe*, in the absolute which is always already with us. Far from transcending the phenomenal world, the speculative leap into the absolute brings the absolutized world with it: we do not fall from the absolute into the world, it is the worldly blossom that falls and opens endlessly in the immanent absolute.

MÜNCHHAUSEN'S BOOTSTRAPPING

In order to maintain that the transcendence of the world is a phenomenological distance opened within the immanence of the absolute, it is necessary to analyze to what extent correlational mediation and worldly alienation are necessary conditions for the effective realization of the absolute as absolute. In other words, it is necessary to evaluate the thesis according to which the immanent alienation of the absolute within itself is one of the conditions of possibility of its ascent to absolute existence. Instead of trying to extract existence from the concept as in the ontological argument, we can begin to unfold a rational mediation between the *logos* and *existence* by attempting to identify the conceptual constraints imposed by the supposition of an absolute existence. In other words, we can legitimately ask what an *existing* absolute must be like. The (supposed) impossibility of deducing existence from a mere concept does not entail the impossibility of deducing the 'concept' from existence. In other terms, we can legitimately analyze the consequences of the regulating postulate according to which the rational structure of an existing absolute is not contingent. In particular, this programme should allow us to evaluate the possible range of variability of this rational structure and localize the hypothetical kernels of irreducible contingency. Such a strategy seeking to deduce the 'speculative categories' of the absolute and reactivate the problematic opened by the ontological argument from a certain angle, requires us to overcome one of the seminal theses of critical philosophy, namely the thesis according to which there would be an uncrossable disjunction between being and beings. According to this thesis, if the 'how' of the world is the legitimate 'object' of the natural sciences, its very existence, juridically subtracted from any sort of analytical deduction, could only be attested through a synthetic position of intra-worldly beings in percep-

32. Novalis, *The Novices of Sais*, trans. R. Manheim, Brooklyn, Archipelago, 2005.

tion. ‘Kant’s thesis about being’ (and its Heideggerian variation³³) only serves to obstruct the possibility of subtracting existence from its purely irrational contingency. The non-trivial Heideggerian thesis according to which being cannot be understood as a supreme being does not necessarily imply that it be impossible to construct a theoretical discourse—belonging by definition to the stratified extension of science that we have called knowledge—seeking to establish the aprioristic conditions of effective existence. It is worth remarking that, due to its very definition, (mathematical) formal ontology, which is a theoretical field seeking to unfold (the interrelations between) the generic categories of *being qua being* (multiplicity, localization, relation, and so on), does not address the effective givenness of beings. Formal ontology must therefore be supplemented by a new theoretical apparatus, which will be called *phenomenological ontology*, capable of speculatively spanning the gulf opened by ontological difference. By definition, phenomenological ontology is the science of the *being* of beings, insofar as ‘being’ names their effective givenness, which is to say their phenomenological *appearing*. It is perhaps time to advocate an active ‘forgetting of being’ and to reactivate the theoretical project of deploying conceptual mediations capable of continually rebinding being to (the effective givenness of) beings. Whereas formal ontology is an extension of mathematics capable of recognizing and unpacking its ontological scope, phenomenological ontology can be analogously considered an ontological extension of the natural sciences such as physics and biology. As we shall succinctly see in what follows, the concept of nature constructed by modern science furnishes a provisional model of a process of realization via an immanent specular procession and a continuous potentialization of nature’s self-experience.

By definition, the existence of an ‘absolute absolute’—i.e. of an absolute which is not relative to a separated non-absolute instance—must be an immanent property of the absolute, i.e. a property gauged against the standard of itself. As Kant argued in his refutation of the ontological argument, the effective existence of intra-worldly beings can only be established through a synthetic position in perception. As Hegel writes, ‘this means simply that something, through its existence [...] is essentially in relationship with others, including also a percipient subject.’³⁴ We could thus say that a being exists insofar as it appears in a phenomenological plane, which is to say insofar as it is prehended by other beings (be them human or not). Indeed, ‘if this content is considered as isolated, it is a matter of indifference whether it is, or is not; it contains no distinction of being or non-being [...]’³⁵ But the intentional (or prehensive) relationship between a perceived object and a perceiving subject (or between two prehensive objects) is, from the absolute point of view, a self-relationship of the absolute itself. Being both the subject and the object local concrescences of the absolute, their transcendent intentional prehension is a singular vector of the absolute’s immanent reflexion. The speculative sublation of the critical refutation of the ontological argument amounts to the fact that the absolute exists if it is capable of positioning itself vis-à-vis itself, which is to say if it can become for itself through a self-differentiating and self-organizing process seeking to guarantee its self-manifestation, which is to say its self-interaction, self-perception, self-affection and, at the limit, self-comprehension. The categor-

33. ‘Kant’s thesis that being is not a real predicate cannot be impugned in its negative content. By it Kant basically wants to say that being is not a being’, Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 55.

34. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, London, Allen and Unwin, 1969, p. 88.

35. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 87.

ical conditions of possibility of the absolute's existence are nothing but the conditions of possibility for its self-manifestation. The dawning process through which the absolute gradually awakens to itself therefore coincides with its effective *realization*, i.e. with the immanent deployment through which it takes out its being from itself. As Hegel writes, the absolute '[...] is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself [...]'.³⁶ Hence, the realization of the absolute depends upon its capacity to posit itself through an immanent correlational reflection and a phenomenological reflux. We could thus say that the absolute lifts itself to existence by means of a self-relational M \ddot{u} nchhausen's bootstrapping.

If we assume (in the wake of Henry) that self-manifestation—which is the capacity to appear for itself within itself—is one of the defining properties of (not uniquely organic) *life*, we can say that absolute nature exists if it is a 'living substance' (Hegel). As Henry argues:

The fact that life perseveres in its being is only possible because, given to itself in each point of its being and never ceasing in its self-affection of being, it does not at any moment fall into nothingness but, supported by itself in some way and taking out its being from the feeling that it has of itself, it in effect never stops being and being life.³⁷

Nevertheless, unlike Henry, for whom the self-revelation of life springs up in an ego that precedes the intentional alienation of the subject in the transcendence of objective exteriority, the living self-manifestation of nature such as we understand it here can only take place within the phenomenological milieu of spatiotemporal transcendence, objectivity, and light.³⁸ Even before the emergence of local living organisms, nature phenomenalizes itself within worldly exteriority and bestows existence upon itself. The phenomenological dehiscence of '*physis*', far from being simply an ontic process causally unfolding in a pre-existent natural horizon, is the very condition of possibility of its continuous raising to existence. In this way, the speculative spanning of the ontological difference amounts to claim that self-appearing (or, in Hegelian terms, the 'reflection of itself within itself') constitutes the continuous mediation between being and beings. This immanent realization of nature through its phenomenological becoming-for-itself is nothing but the process of its subjectification. A living substance is indeed a self-organizing substance capable of diversifying and progressively deepening its reflexive self-experience. We can thus conclude with Hegel that 'everything turns on grasping and expressing [absolute nature, GC], not only as [living, GC] *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*'.³⁹ We could say that Hegel elicited the properly speculative—i.e.

36. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

37. Michel Henry, *La Barbarie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2004, p. 169.

38. Concerning the differences between Henry's concept of revelation and Hegel's concept of manifestation, see the remarkable appendix titled 'The Bringing to Light of the Original Essence of Revelation in Opposition to the Hegelian Concept of Manifestation (*Erscheinung*)' in Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. G.J. Etzkorn, Springer, 1973. It is worth stressing that Henry's attempt to clarify these differences begins with a critique of the simplifying reduction of Hegel's thought to an anthropocentric idealism: 'The central affirmation of Hegelian philosophy is that the real is Spirit. What is proposed in such an affirmation is not an idealism [...]. Only a superficial interpretation aimed at degrading the thought of Hegel, from the ontological level on which it moves, to an ensemble of considerations of the ontic order can pretend to force philosophy, and that of Hegel in particular, to pose the question of knowing which is first the real and Being or Spirit. For example, the problem of an ontic deduction of the real beginning with the spirit does not arise. [...] Now to say that the real is Spirit, is to say that it is essentially *the act of revealing itself and manifesting itself*, it is to say that the real is phenomenon.', Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, p. 689.

39. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

neither anthropological nor transcendental—content of the Cartesian ‘theorem’ *cogito, ergo sum*. The becoming-for-itself of nature through a process of self-differentiation, self-organization, and self-affection is a necessary and sufficient guarantee of its immanent realization as existing ‘substance’. Nature exists because it is subject, which is to say because it is capable of positing itself through a process of self-manifestation. The existence of nature stems from the uninterrupted unveiling through which it actively absolves itself from its pre-subjective inexistence. We could thus say that even before the emergence of human beings, the existence of nature was strictly ‘correlated’ with its subjective self-experience. However, instead of positing itself in the pre-worldly immediacy of a radical Ego (like in Fichte and Henry), this speculative self-position can take place only through its worldly mediation. In this way, nature never ceases to engender itself through the specular deployment of its alienated, mutant, and mediated self-experience. Instead of being a last basis subtracted from restlessness and mediation, the absolute as subject constitutes itself in the phenomenological *Abgrund* opened by its immanent alienation. The absolute’s subjectivity is alienated, abyssal, and barred: it ‘only gains its truth insofar as [it] finds itself in absolute disarray’.⁴⁰ The absolute will thus have to stretch out upon its own couch and pass through the mediation of its self-analysis.

THE SPECULATIVE FALL

The natural realization of the absolute through its becoming-for-itself is possible if the absolute opens within itself an immanent phenomenological distance. The immanent scission is thus one of the conditions of possibility of its self-manifestation. The self-splitting of the absolute under the form of an immanent horizon of transcendence defines what we shall call an *immanent plane*. As Deleuze writes in a sort of speculative extroversion of Husserlian idealism: ‘[...] all transcendence is constituted solely in the flow of [impersonal, GC] immanent consciousness that belongs to this plane. Transcendence is always a product of immanence’.⁴¹ In particular, far from being transcendental obstructions to the knowledge of the ‘absolute’ thing-in-itself, the threefold pit and the unidimensional irreversible pendulum are necessary conditions of possibility of the absolute’s self-experience.

But this immanent scission must itself be absolute, which means that it cannot be relativized in relation to a ‘*fundamental*’ last instance subtracted from absolutory mediation. A philosophy of the *speculative absolute* only becomes possible on the basis of both a launching into orbit and an ungrounding of every *metaphysical foundation*. Hence, the immanent transcendence that the absolute opens within itself must be abyssal. The ‘unconscious’ abyss—i.e. the horizon of the absolute’s immanent alienation—is one of the phenomenological conditions of possibility of its effective realization under the form of a ‘self-consciousness’. The maintenance and potentialization of such a barred subjectivity require that the absolute be capable of detaching itself from the various local moments of its self-manifestation. Due to this immanent absolutism, the bottom drops away: the anarchic absolute has no (back)ground, it is turtleless all the way down. Hence, any form of local ‘last’ instance descends everlastingly into the Maelstrom. Rather than any sort of crisis, the shipwreck is an ‘eternal circumstance’

40. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 19 (trans. modified).

41. Gilles Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life’, in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. A. Boyman, New York, Zone Books, 2005, p. 31.

of the absolute's life: the absolute is the immanent phenomenological 'draft [*Bezug*] to which all beings, as ventured beings, are given over', for absolute 'means something that does not block off. It does not block off because it does not set bounds. It does not set bounds because it is in itself' absolved from all bounds. The absolute 'is the great whole of all that is unbounded. It lets the beings ventured into the pure draft draw as they are drawn, so that they variously draw on one another and draw together without encountering any bounds. [...] They do not dissolve into void nothingness [...]', but they endlessly fall into the open.⁴² Due to this absolution in relation to every uncrossable transcendental bound, every finite product, every form of 'immediate' experience, every ideological hypostasis of a given horizon of possibilities, and every unilateral foundation capable of obstructing its self-mediation, the absolute never stops dissolving any reification of itself and reaffirming its turbulent absoluteness. The immobile transcendental earth, the supposed last instance capable of imposing an insurmountable limit to the restlessness of the negative, is nothing—from the absolute point of view—but 'a rock, a false manor right away evaporated in mists'.⁴³ We could thus say that the absolute lifts itself to existence by falling into itself. Due to this speculative fall, the absolute ungrounds and deepens its self-experience. To unground here means to penetrate the *Urgrund*, to mediate the 'impenetrable' basis in order to rediscover the opening in which every 'transcendental' earth is suspended. It is worth stressing that—unlike the theo-philosophical rejection of the 'relative' outside the 'absolute'—the speculative absolution with respect to any local ground does not flush the latter into an outer space. Since by definition nothing can fall outside the plane of absolute immanence, absolution can only be a free-falling immersion into the inner abyss. In this way, the eschatology of the absolute depends upon the scatological procession that provides the propulsion for the immanent unfolding of its self-experience. Through 'this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable',⁴⁴ the absolute absolves itself from its appropriating retention and fertilizes its self-manifestation.

If critical rootedness entails a transcendental bifurcation between a constituting last instance and a constituted world, absolution vis-à-vis any *Urgrund* turns absolute nature into a *suspended circle*. This means that, far from being a unidirectional and irreversible procession stemming from an 'axiomatic' infrastructure (transcendental ego, physical matter, primordial chaos, etc.), constitution is a circular and non-founded self-positing process. In particular, any intentional transcendence from a local subject towards a finite object is, from the absolute point of view, a reflexive immanent loop. The only means of suspending every metaphysical foundation, the only means of assuring that no instance is either first or last, is to accept the speculative circle of correlation, the circle through which nature can be called *causa sui*. There is no privileged instance or stratum: all local concrescences mutually involve themselves with one another due to the specular play of suspended correlation, for it is a 'daydream prohibited by Science [...] to find out if such an element is the supreme'.⁴⁵ Hence, we shall respectively substitute *correlational suspension* and *reflexive circularity* for the *transcendental foundation* upon an 'immediate' last instance and the corresponding *unidirectional constitution*. The absoluteness of the absolute entails in this way its immanent self-relativity.

42. Heidegger, 'What are Poets for?', p. 106.

43. Mallarmé, 'Dice Thrown Never Will Annul Chance', in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, p. 121 (trans. modified).

44. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 117.

45. Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Les mots anglais', in *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1945, p. 1048.

As Novalis writes:

[Speculative, GC] philosophy *detaches* everything—relativizes the universe—. And like the Copernican system, eliminates the *fixed* points—creating a floating system out of one at rest. Philosophy teaches the relativity of all foundations and all qualities [...].⁴⁶

The critical foundation constitutes a philosophical motif completely foreign to modern science. There is an irreversible divergence between modern rationality on the one hand and the pre-modern nostalgia for a foundation upon an archaic, infrastructural, or axiomatic ground on the other: ‘earthly alienation is and has remained the hallmark of modern science.’⁴⁷ The regulative idea that orients the infinite tasks of the stratified extension of science does not call for establishing an ultimate foundation, a transcendental ‘axiom’ (*Grundstaz*), a ‘material’ infrastructure (be it corpuscular, economical, libidinal, etc.), or a last point of genesis for any logical deduction or ontic causality. The advance of modern science shows that the height of rationality comes hand in hand with the progressive implementation of the regulative principle of (*cor*)relational suspension or *self-consistent bootstrapping*. For instance, in the framework of the geometric theories of space-time, this principle requires substituting new interactive degrees of freedom immanent to nature itself for the aprioristic conditions or transcendental foundations of experience. The provisional recourse to a pre-natural transcendental condition is nothing but a local impasse of theoretical reason, a symptom of the fact that the prevailing concept of nature is still too restrained, for it does not suffice to hold its occurrence within its own immanental plane. More generally, the necessity of adding a transcendent ‘agent’ to the natural ‘substance’ (like, for instance, an organizing transcendental subject to the inconsistent multiplicity of hyletic data, a vital force to mechanistic inanimate matter, a supernumerary event to the inertial repetition of an unhistorical structure, mental states to material bodies, or a God-given existence to the purely ideal concept of nature) shows that the corresponding concept of substance is still too poor. Rather than adding a transcendent agent to the substance—and thus accepting the irreducibility of the corresponding dualism—the faithfulness to the absolute immanence of nature requires us to enrich the very concept of natural substance. In the case of Newtonian mechanics, the stakes were not that of philosophically founding its validity by considering ‘absolute’ space-time as a transcendental condition of possibility of every sensible intuition of natural phenomena. Instead, as Leibniz already understood, it was a question of performing an effective critique of Newtonian physics by considering the necessity of an ‘absolute’ spatiotemporal framework as a conceptual impasse to be overcome by means immanent to physics itself. It was thus necessary to traverse the bifurcation between the pre-natural spatiotemporal container and contained physical phenomena by *suspending* nature. Indeed, in the aftermath of Leibniz, Einstein’s general theory of relativity replaces Newtonian space-time with new dynamic degrees of freedom (modulo the residual background dependence of Einstein’s theory⁴⁸). These degrees of freedom describe the inertio-gravitational field, which is nothing but the geodesic texture of relativist space-time itself. Weight can thus be understood as a symptom of

46. Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia (Das Allgemeine Brouillon)*, trans. D.W. Wood, New York, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 111 (trans. modified).

47. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 264.

48. The residual background dependence of general relativity depends on the fact that the *dimension*, the *topology* and the *differential structure* of the spatiotemporal manifold constitute a fixed non-dynamical geometric structure.

the very opening of the immanent phenomenological horizon. In order to guarantee nature's absoluteness, it was necessary to extend the concept of nature: far from being a transcendental pre-natural framework of experience, space-time is henceforth a physical component of nature universally coupled with any physical field (including itself). In this way, the different physical components of the ungrounded natural circle that results from this relational suspension hold each other through their reciprocal interactions. We can thus maintain with Mallarmé that 'Nature takes place, we shall not add to it [...]. Every available [theoretical, GC] act simply [...] remains to grasp the rare or multiple relations [...] according to some internal state'.⁴⁹ The amphibology between the gravitational spacing of the absolute within itself and its self-affective occurrence guarantees its suspended existence. Phenomenological ontology must unfold a conceptual interpolation—without adding any pre-natural transcendental condition—between the spanning of its (temporalized) place and the taking place of its self-awakening. Every available act will be to grasp the internal correlational states, i.e. the immanent relations through which absolute nature extracts its being from itself at each stage of the specular exponentiation of its self-experience. If we perform an angelic diagonalization of the pre-modern quadripartition between the earth and sky, the divines and the mortals, absolute nature remains as *the ring that encircles itself while it plays the game of reflections*.⁵⁰ Every local instance *exists* insofar as it is grasped in correlational transpropriation and specular potentialization. In the absence of every extrinsic foundation, reflection is the mirror-play of powers through which nature bestows existence upon itself: the game of nature 'cannot be explained by anything else [...] causes and grounds remain unsuitable'⁵¹ for fathoming its immanent dehiscence.

THE AIR IS ON FIRE

Yet, as Hegel affirms, the immanent plane that nature opens within itself is nothing but 'the abstract universality' and 'mediationless indifference' of 'Nature's self-externality [...] the possibility and not the actual positedness of being-outside-of-one-another'.⁵² In particular, the space-time manifold is nothing—modulo its dynamical affine and metric structures—but a '*principium individuationis*' which allows for the introduction of a non-qualitative difference between indiscernible terms, which is to say a primitive *thisness* irreducible to *suchness*. In order to become an externality-for-itself, nature radiates *interactions* capable of connecting what will then be localized in spatiotemporal extension. The paradigmatic example of a connective interaction is light.⁵³ Due

49. S. Mallarmé, 'La Musique et les Lettres', in *Igitur, Divagations, Un coup de dés*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 2003, p. 376.

50. cf. Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 180.

51. Heidegger, 'The Thing', pp. 179-180.

52. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences Part II*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, §254, p. 28-29.

53. This 'speculative' utilization of scientific concepts needs some clarifications. As we claimed above, modern philosophy must by definition be conditioned by modern science, which is to say that it must submit itself to the provisional theoretical representations of the real provided by the latter. The theoretical characterization of the speculative landscape for philosophical activity in terms of concepts coming from modern physics (including, for instance, the characterization of the immanent phenomenological distance and the internal correlations in terms of space-time and physical interactions respectively) is just a provisional description subjected to the progress of physics. In particular, the construction of a satisfactory quantum theory of gravity capable of harmonizing general relativity and quantum mechanics will probably entail a radical modification of the speculative landscape. However, we claim that modern philosophy must always prefer

to the iridescent fields that traverse the open, nature escapes from darkness. Its night-like abyss thus becomes a *clearing* (*Lichtung*), i.e. an *illuminated space*. The gravity's rainbow that entwines spatiotemporal geodesics and the free falling radiance defines the causal conification of the open. In order to concretely occupy the clearing and reveal light, nature distils chromatic matter fields, i.e. continuous extensions of local qualities. The connective interactions mediate these qualitative fields by providing them with a *cohesion*, which is to say by connecting local qualities situated in different spatiotemporal positions.⁵⁴ It is remarkable that the inertio-gravitational field that opens and weaves together the spatiotemporal extension simultaneously supplies the contraction principle for the stellar concrescences which will fall into it. Indeed, the flexibility of the gravitational tissue induces an attractive 'force' that concentrates matter and locally breaks the homogeneity of space-time. Thus the dialectics of nature becomes a galactics. The thermodynamic conditions of non-equilibrium induced by the gravitational inhomogeneities of space-time make the emergence of local morphogenetic self-organizing processes possible. Hence, the stellar self-positioning of nature in its local positions supplies the entropic conditions necessary for the embodiment of local points of view, which is to say for the localization of its global and impersonal subjectivity. In this way, the immanent structure that enables nature's self-experience brings forth the emergence of local organisms (vegetal, animal, human, etc.) endowed with particular transcendental faculties. In turn, these transcendental structures allow these local subjects to navigate through the transcendent experience of the immanent nature in which they are immersed. Nature exponentiates its immanent self-experience by producing and multiplying 'transcendent' perspectives on itself carried out by local subjects endowed with transcendental structures. In this way, every intentional (or prehensive) experience—enabled by the local subject's transcendental structure—must be understood, from the Absolute point of view, as a reflexive relation of nature to itself, which is enabled by the immanent structure of the latter. The resulting local subjects effectuate perspectival prehensions of nature and radiate phenomenological sheaves for other prehensions. We could say that the opening of a gravitational clearing criss-crossed by connective light rays requires the germination of floral mirrors and *vitraux* capable of locally effectuating reflection and diffraction: '[...] the silent and nocturnal growing of vegetation prepares an oval and crystalline identity, where an isolated group achieves a communication similar to a universal mirror'.⁵⁵ In this way, the self-manifestation of nature in its abyss nourishes on its own light. Vegetal photosynthesis is nothing but an exponentiation to a superior power of such a phenomenological principle. Whereas the inertio-gravitational field splits nature under the form of an abyssal opening, electromagnetic radiance slides into the scission by making possible its immanent dehiscence. The speculative role of these various perceptive and expressive

the possibility of being 'wrong' by being conditioned by modern science than to disdainfully avoid any commerce with it with the hopes of being preserved from the perishable character of every scientific world-view. Indeed, the 'falsifiability' of scientific theories is just an index of the extent to which scientific labor does grasp the rational structure of the real. A (partially) successful theory (like for instance classical mechanics) which comes to be superseded by a more satisfactory one (like quantum mechanics), far from being simply false, is just a partial and unilateral moment of the truth. Paraphrasing Lacan, we could say that science *always speaks the truth. Not the whole truth [...]. Yet it's through this very partiality that science holds onto the real* (cf. Jacques Lacan, *Television*, trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss, and A. Michelson, MIT Press, 1987, p. 6).

54. cf. Gabriel Catren, 'Geometric Foundations of Classical Yang-Mills Theory', in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*, 39, 2008, p. 511-531.

55. José Lezama Lima, *Paradiso*, Madrid, Ediciones Cátedra, 1997, p. 298.

subjects is thus to locally support, unfold, and potentialize the specular self-affection of this cosmos in bloom: 'only from the chalice of this realm of spirits foams forth for [it its] own infinitude'.⁵⁶

A local subject is not simply a mirror capable of prehending and reflecting phenomenological sheaves, but also a germ of an internal fibration of the abyss. Far from being the enclave of an immediate and apodictic arche-experience, nature's local subjectification opens up new forms of abyssality, namely inner voids. The potentialization of nature's self-manifestation requires both a deepening of the spatiotemporal chasm and the fibrated opening of new spaces towards which to descend. The irruption of these private vortices will thus enable the diffraction of the shipwreck into several gulfs: through the local foldings of its impersonal subjectivity, nature can intensify its disarray by multiplying the ways of falling into itself. Far from opposing itself to a non-conscious nature that would be seamless, unbarred, unreflected, gapless, un-historical, and entirely exteriorized, the (vegetal, animal, human, etc.) contraction of 'spirit' is nothing but a local instantiation of nature's abyssal subjectivity, of its intrinsic castration and constitutive being-for-itself. We can thus say that nature potentializes its inherent reflexivity by means of a local subjective fibration of its unconscious chasm. This local subjectification in turn entails a 'spherical' Umweltification of experience: every local subjective germ is surrounded by a worldly capsule, which partially extends throughout spatiotemporal extension and its private unconscious abyss. The intentional polarizations of the subject-object type are nothing but a particular sort of specular correlation among the infinite local diversifications of nature's reflexivity. Nevertheless, 'we risk more' than plants or animals because we also fall into internal spaces. And the angel will risk even more than us, because he will fall into the projective gulf $n \rightarrow \infty$ opened by the n-Copernican revolutions.

GRAVITY'S ANGEL

The speculative sublation of transcendental philosophy implies that the phenomenological potentialization of the 'experience of consciousness', far from being constrained to unfold within the horizon defined by a fixed transcendental aprioristic structure, can submit the very conditions of possibility of experience to the dialectic restlessness of natural, historical, and technical genesis. Hence, the aprioristic structure of human experience can be the object of a reflexive labour of mediation and transcendental variation explicitly assumed. In particular, the effective subjective embodiment of the advocated speculative absolutism requires us to subsume the pre-modern components of the critical philosopher's formal subjective typology.

It must first be emphasized that strictly speaking the modern subject—i.e. a subjective typology synchronous with modern science—is yet to come. Through the most various forms of narcissistic reterritorialization, human building, dwelling, and thinking continue to take place in a Ptolemaic pre-modern landscape. Strictly speaking, the subject of modern times constitutes a transitory subjective typology which is no longer that of pre-modern subject, but is still not that of the subject of science. In order to indicate the gap between the subject of enunciation of scientific discourse and a subject capable of assuming the very consequences of this discourse regarding its existence within the absolute, we shall characterize a new subjective typology, namely what we shall designate by means of the acronym *angel*, which means *Absolunaut.Navigating in*

56. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 493.

Gravitational Extraterrestrial Levitation. Paraphrasing Heidegger, we could say that we are too late for the gods and too early for angels.⁵⁷

By definition, the angel results from the mediation of the pre-modern subject's existentialia (*Existenzialien*). First, this means that the angel is a human who irreversibly fell from transcendental earth. In other words, the angel is a subjective form that assumes the lack of a transcendental anchorage. The longing for an immediate and unilateral *Urgrund* subtracted from orbital revolution is a reactive passion elicited by the abysses opened up by modern science. In opposition to this pre-modern nostalgia, the angel's desire is not homesickness, but the desire to be at home nowhere: being-angel [*être-ange*] means nothing more than being-there as stranger [*étranger*]. In this way, if Narcissus is the subject of the Ptolemaic counter-revolution, the angel is the subject of the Copernican revolution, i.e. a subject capable of assuming the passage from earth as a transcendental dwelling of an authentic existence to 'spaceship earth' (Buckminster Fuller) as a decentred and contingent support of an epiphytic mankind. Far from being an accident brought about by his egotism, Narcissus' fall into the spherical liquid sky that surrounds him is nothing but a speculative passage to the act seeking to sublimate his transcendental solipsism. If Narcissus sees in the objective world nothing but the harmonious ensemble of his properties reflected upon the surface of the transcendental glass (namely the reflection of his physiological structures, his measuring devices, his categories, his imaginary schemata, his linguistic structures, and so on), the modern angel—by overcoming the mirror stage—becomes a stranger to himself: 'Some sort of angel was sitting on the edge of a fountain. He stared there... His own figure and the pain that plagued him seemed foreign to him.'⁵⁸

Whereas the landing on a transcendental earth necessarily projects a sheltering sky, modern deterritorialization triggers the gravitational venture. Without a transcendental support capable of compensating for the force of gravity and unilaterally founding existence, gravity acts freely. However, the resulting state of free-fall takes place in complete immobility. As we know from Galileo and Einstein, without a fixed geometric background endowed with an 'absolute' reference frame capable of breaking the physical indiscernibility between different locations, free fall in the groundless abyss is indistinguishable from rest. The geodesic 'lines of beauty and grace' interweaving space-time trace the paths of the still fall. The incorrectly labelled 'state of weightlessness' (or 'zero gravity') is nothing but a state upon which gravity freely acts. In particular, the orbital revolution is nothing but a closed instantiation of the gravitational subversion: 'Subversion, if it has existed somewhere and at some time, is not to change the point of that which circles—it is to replace *it turns* with *it falls*.'⁵⁹ Hence, modern being-there is not a rooting upon, but a suspended falling through. In order to be there, it is no longer possible—nor even necessary—to find an immobile earth capable of preventing the fall and supplying a last instance upon which to build and dwell. Whereas the critical fall is a crisis that must be overcome by a transcendental interment, the speculative fall is a groundless levitation, an immobile sliding—*mobilis in mobili*—along geodesic tracks. If 'the place, before being a geometric space [...] is a base',⁶⁰ the prop-

57. Heidegger's original text reads: 'We are too late for the gods and too early for Being'. Martin Heidegger, 'The Thinker as Poet', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 4.

58. Paul Valéry, 'L'Ange', in *La Jeune Parque et poèmes en prose*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1974, p. 39.

59. Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, trans. Bruce Fink, New York, Norton, 1998.

60. Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. A. Lingis, Plattsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2001.

erly modern experience of geometric space takes place by means of a covariant abolition in relation to every transcendental base. Whereas the transcendental earthly base is the pre-modern Place of mortals, modern 'geometry expressly concerns angels'.⁶¹ The speculative utilization of transcendental reflection aims to recognize the aprioristic stages that made a given form of experience possible in order to let these conditions of possibility fall away into the unconscious abyss when they start to impede phenomenological unfolding. Like a multistage rocket, the launch of the 'experience of consciousness' out of the *Lebenswelt's* atmosphere requires unburdening itself from its propulsive stages. We could thus say that the abolition into the unconscious is the condition of possibility of the progressive sublation of the 'experience of consciousness'. In particular, whereas the Husserlian variation of transcendental critique seeks to ground geometry in the ante-predicative *Lebenswelt*, the speculative sublation of the 'origin of geometry' intends to use the more 'concrete' branches of geometry (including, for instance, algebraic geometry or quantum geometry) to absolve being-there from the abstract unilaterality of the 'immediate' experience of lived space. The angel floats far above the transcendental earth: he 'left the Place. [He exists] beyond any horizon—everything around [him is] sky or, more exactly, everything [is] geometrical space'. The angel exists 'in the absolute of homogeneous space'.⁶² If, by launching the earth into orbit, the Copernican revolution brings forth the terror of the uprooting fall, the Galilean-Einsteinian subversion shows that, strictly speaking, existence can dispense with every transcendental reterritorialization: a fall from no disaster, gravity is grace [*la pesanteur est la grace*]. If the angel goes 'where there is danger', if he goes deeper into the 'distress of modern times', it is not so that he might sense the trace of fugitive gods, but to establish itself in groundless flotation.

The relativist indiscernibility between the immobile suspension and the free fall allows the angelic subject of science to relieve himself of the orni-theological mystification according to which angels would have wings. Instead of having wings that would allow them to avoid the fall, angels absolved themselves from any metaphysical foundation capable of preventing it. Far from imitating the flight of birds, the angels 'fly' because they have learned 'again to fall and go with gravity's law'⁶³. Instead of attempting to critically overcome any crisis whatsoever—*crisis? what crisis?*—, a philosophy synchronous with modern science must be able to shy away from the reactive litanies that diagnose crises and promise transcendental lands. For the falling angels, the only veritable 'crisis' would be the presence of an ultimate earth capable of turning their fall into a flattening, transforming that which falls [*ce qui tombe*] into a tomb. As Poe has definitively informed us, the angel of the odd has no wings, his flight is his fall:

And I ventured to reply 'but I was always under the impression that an angel had wings'.
'Te wing!' [the angel of the odd] cried, highly incensed, 'vat I pe do mitt e wing? Mein Gott!! Do you take me vor a shicken?'⁶⁴

In the framework of the fourfold critical landscape, the revolutionary abolition of the transcendental ownership of land unleashes dread vis-à-vis the inhumanity of the in-

61. Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XXIV, L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, session of 15 March 1977 (unpublished).

62. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Heidegger, Gagarin and Us', in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. S. Hand Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1997, p. 223.

63. R.M. Rilke, *The Book of Hours*, trans. A.S. Kidder, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. 127.

64. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Angel of the Odd', in *Poetry and Tales*, New York, Library of America, 1984, p. 758.

finite spaces and the loss of an *Urgrund* capable of stopping the fall. In particular, the philosopher of the sacred Place is authentically frightened by the lunatic uprooting and technical devastation of the *Heimat*:

[...] technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them. [...] I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the earth taken from the moon. We don't need any atom bomb. The uprooting of man has already taken place. [...] This is no longer the earth on which man lives. [...] According to our human experience and history, [...] I know that everything essential and everything great originated from the fact that man had a home and was rooted in a tradition.⁶⁵

Faced with this diagnosis, the duty of speculative absolutism is to save us from a theo-philosophical salvation: if only a god can save us from the worst [*pire*], only absolute immanence can save us from the hyper-transcendent Father [*père*]. Instead of leading back towards the hominess of a transcendental land, the mediating tasks prescribed by the infinite regulative ideas (the Beautiful, the True, the Good) are—*Worstward Ho!*—‘the beginning of the terrible’.⁶⁶ In particular, it is necessary to become transcendental vandals and, as Levinas writes in his call to waste the land, ‘destroy the sacred groves’ and ‘disenchant Nature’, relieve ourselves of the superstitious nostalgia of the Place and the idolatry of the (arche-)earth, uproot existence and launch the transcendental diaspora⁶⁷. In this way, the concrete universality of the high-tech angel crushes the metaphysical hypostases of tribal and national particularisms, and abolishes the abstract difference between autochthonous and foreigners. The angel’s self-expropriation vis-à-vis his reifying properties—i.e. the release of a generic subjective essence capable of perduring, without attempting to stitch up the narcissistic wounds inflicted by modern science, through the continuous forcing of his alienation—does nothing but bet from the turning-away from the hyper-transcendent Father to the worstward life in the unshielded absolute: ‘*De ce qui perdure de perte pure à ce qui ne parie que du père au pire*’.⁶⁸

In the wake of the Newtonian homogenization of nature, the characterization of the angel as a *messenger* capable of crossing the pre-modern bifurcation between the earth and the sky follows from the fact that for the angel the absolute is *one*. As Heidegger notes, Rilke’s angel is ‘the being who brings out the radiant appearance of the way in which that oneness unifies’.⁶⁹ Strictly speaking, the angel is not a *messenger*, but rather a local *mediator* of the absolute’s self-experience. Without a transcendental earth there is no longer an event horizon capable of establishing an uncrossable limit to the mediation of experience. Without a hypostatized horizon, there is no longer an inaccessible transcendence. The Copernican launch to orbit of the ‘Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky’ and the ‘turning-away [...] from a god who was the father of men in heaven’⁷⁰ are the two faces of the same secular absolutism. In this way, the angel overcomes the ‘objectifying turning away from the open’,⁷¹ i.e. the theo-philosophical projection of the absolute into any form of trans-objective or

65. Martin Heidegger, ‘Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel’s Interview with Martin Heidegger’, trans. M.P. Alter & J.D. Caputo, in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, New York, Continuum, 2006, p. 37.

66. R.M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, p. 20 (trans. modified).

67. cf. Levinas, ‘Heidegger, Gagarin and Us’.

68. ‘From that which perdures through pure dross to that which does nothing but bet from the father to the worst’, Lacan, *Televison*, p. 50 (trans. modified).

69. Heidegger, ‘What are Poets for?’, p. 136.

70. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 2.

71. Heidegger, ‘What are Poets for?’, p. 120.

pre-subjective hyper-transcendence whatsoever. Without theological transcendence, the deepening of experience neither depends upon the promise of an eventual grace nor upon a liturgical protocol of transgression. We could say that the absolute is the (ab)solvent solution that dissolves the narcotics division and makes the mediation of the transcendental boundaries of *Geviert* possible: ‘Angels, it’s said, are often unsure whether they pass among living or dead’⁷², mortals or immortals. The angel is thus a subjective diagonalizer of the *Geviert*, i.e. a subjective typology capable of locally supporting and effectuating the unbounding oneness of the absolute. As Rilke writes:

The true figure of life extends through *both* spheres [life and death], the blood of the mightiest circulation flows through *both*: *there is neither a here nor a beyond, but the great unity in which the beings that surpass us, the ‘angels’, are at home.*⁷³

In Rilke, the angelic sublation of the theo-philosophical relativization of the absolute—i.e. the Newtonian conversion of the transcendental bifurcation between the immobile earth and the noumenal sky ‘into an arriving into the widest [gravitational, GC] orbit of the Open’⁷⁴—is symbolized by ‘the passing over of the balance from the merchant to the Angel’.⁷⁵ Whereas ‘the customary life of contemporary man is the common life of the imposition of self on the unprotected market of the exchangers’,⁷⁶ the life of a properly modern subject depends on the abolition of every identification between its generic subjective essence and its particular (private) properties. More generally, the holy family, the national *Heimat*, the division of labour, monolingualism, and private property all prevent the speculative fall into the ‘identical neutrality of the abyss.’ From this point of view, Marx did nothing but bring the vast process of expropriation that begins with Copernicus even further: if humanity is no longer at the centre of the universe, if humanity is nothing but a local link in an evolutionary chain which, far from any metaphysical eschatology, results from a blind play between chance and necessity, if ‘the ego is not master in its own house’,⁷⁷ Marx calls to reactivate the ‘good infinite’ of generic human subjectivity via the abolition of private property. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the generic ‘[...] subjective essence is discovered by capitalism only to be put in chains all over again, to be subjugated [...] in the element, itself subjective, of private property [...]. It is the form of private property that constitutes the centre of the factitious reterritorializations of capitalism’.⁷⁸ Only the activation and deepening of Marx’s fourth narcissistic wound would enable the angelic sublation of the ‘merchant’. The angel has nothing but his pure subjective capacity of going beyond himself, dissolving any appropriating retention, and mediating any essentialization of his existence: having no country, the angel is a stranger without nostalgia; having no profession, he can systematically abolish the division of labour; always speaking in a sort of foreign language, he can practice a generalized translatability between the local modes of thought and aspire to ‘pure language’ (Benjamin); in short, being nothing but a local germ of subjectification, he can be everything. In particular, the angel opposes the expropriating di-

72. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, p. 24.

73. Rilke, ‘Letter to W. von Hulewicz (November 13, 1925)’, p. 373.

74. Heidegger, ‘What are Poets for?’, p. 131.

75. Heidegger, ‘What are Poets for?’, p. 137.

76. Heidegger, ‘What are Poets for?’, p. 136.

77. Sigmund Freud, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919)*, trans. J. Strachey and A. Freud, London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955, p. 143.

78. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 303.

alectic to the appropriating event, the alienating self-sublation to the self-affirmation in vital space, and the orbital land revolution to the 'inner truth and greatness' of National Socialism. All in all, we could say that Hegelian speculative absolutism (and its Marxist outcome) is the most powerful weapon against the Heideggerian critical fundamentalism and the concomitant pre-modern theo-philosophical landscape.

Hence, in the properly modern stage of the potentialization of its self-experience, the immersion of the absolute in its phenomenological depths coagulates into falling angels. We could thus say with Artaud that 'an Angel is born from this Manifestation [of the Absolute in its, GC] Abysses'.⁷⁹ The angel is a subjective typology synchronous with modern science, which is to say a barred, errant, (trans)finite, mutant, and outcast human being; an unidentified flying subject lacking any transcendental at-homeness; an alien whose transcendental structure, far from being the enclave of an immediate and apodictic experience, is the condition of possibility of its irreversible alienation in an uncanny immanent plane. The grace of angelic descent and the unconditional confidence in gravitational fall, the indifference vis-à-vis any pathetic announcement of a crisis and any promise of critical salvation, the mediation of any event horizon whose opacity could impede the whole phenomenological draft through the immanent 'open', the dialectical blow-up of any appropriating event, the resolution of any supposed last instance of experience, the scatological absolution from every retentive identification with its properties, and the willingness to deepen and multiply the narcissistic wounds inflicted by modern science are some of the modern existentialia that turn the angel into a formal subjective figure capable of dropping away the *Ur-Erde*, navigating the system and 'storming heaven'.

1807: A SPIRIT ODYSSEY

It would be misleading to establish a break between the 'terrorist' Hegel on the one hand—i.e. the Hegel of absolute unrest, the melting-away of every substance, and dialectic negativity—and, on the other, the 'bureaucratic' Hegel of the system, absolute knowledge, and the state. By extolling the young incendiary to the detriment of the old Berliner fireman (or vice versa), we would lose what constitutes the core of his *anarchic constructivism*, namely the ultramodern bond between *speculative ungrounding* on the one hand and *systematic construction* on the other. Far from having 'worked out the system in order to escape [...] the extreme limit' that it touched upon and to attain salvation as Bataille maintains,⁸⁰ the system is a perforating concrete machine seeking to wriggle through the *Urgrund* and regain the abyss. The speculative operation that makes the system possible is not the *foundation* upon an immobile earth, but instead the *absolution* vis-à-vis any fundamental last instance. Hence, the architectonic of systematic reason can no longer be that of a cathedral enrooted in the arche-earth and raised towards the inaccessible sky, but rather that of a spatial station, i.e. a Laputian outland empire freefalling into the absolute. The philosopher, that is the local subjective support of this speculative absolunautics, glides in coalescence upon the surfaces of the extended phenomenal plane, composing concrete mediators out of the prismatic vectors of scientific, artistic, and political disindoxication, potentializing the phenomenological unfolding of the self-experience of the absolute which is always already with us.

79. Antonin Artaud, 'Lettre à Jean Paulhan (Kabhar Enis—Kathar Esti) du 7 octobre 1943', in *Œuvres*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 2004, p. 901.

80. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. L.A. Boldt, Albany, SUNY Press, 1988, p. 43.