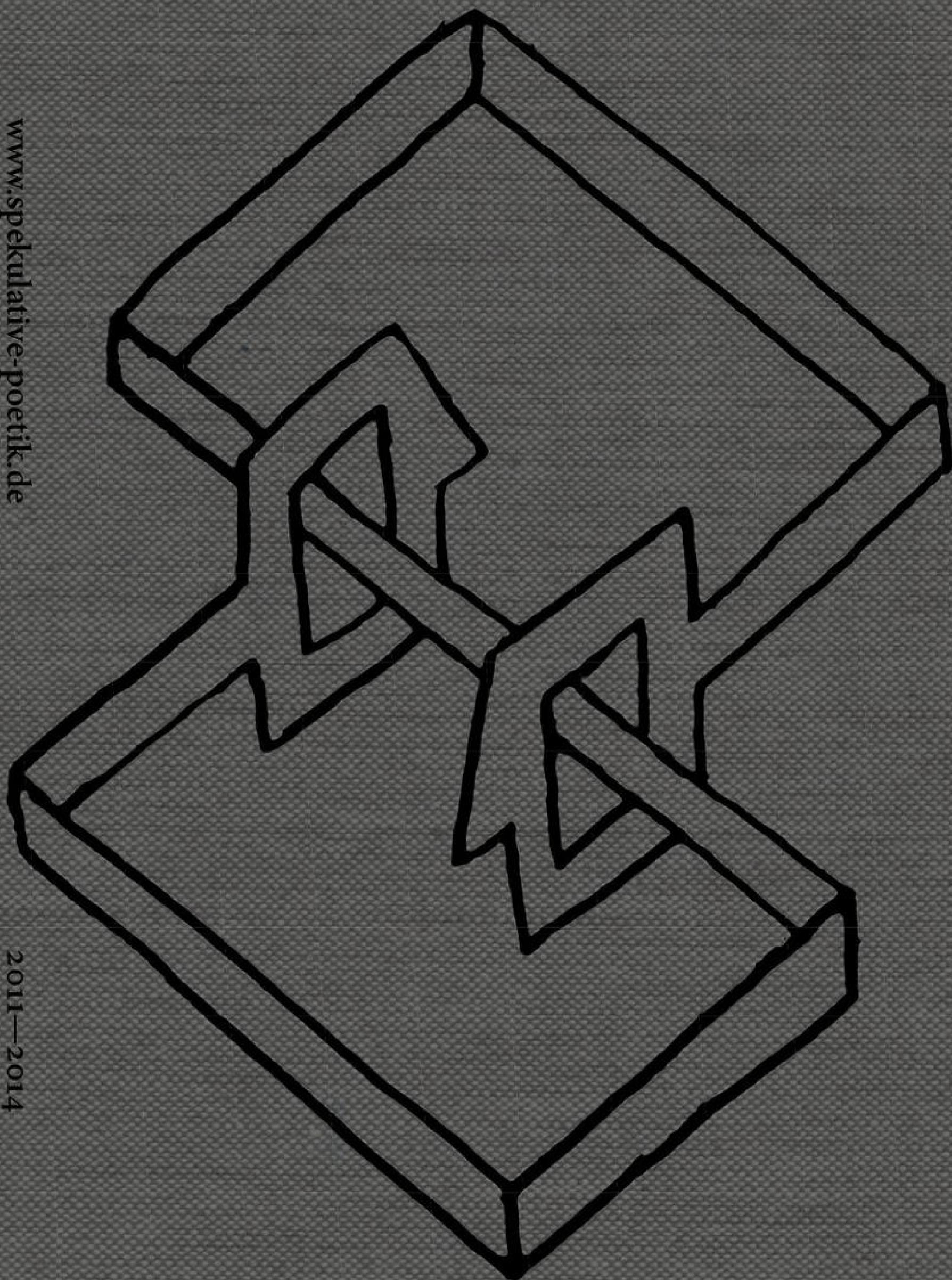


Armen Avanesian
Andreas Töpfer

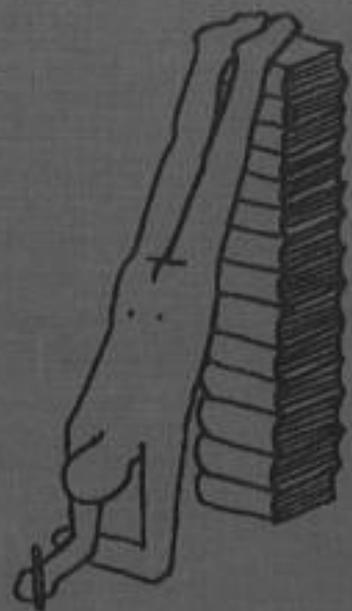
Speculative
Drawing

www.spekulative-poetik.de



2011—2014

SternbergPress 



Speculative Drawing presents fifteen books—from monographs and translations to collections of essays—that emerged from the research platform Speculative Poetics, conceived by Armen Avanesian in 2011. This book gives a somewhat different introduction to contemporary speculative philosophy, raising questions on how thinking works and how thinking occurs in drawings or illustrations. How does a poetic thinking work that's not *about* but *with* art?

Andreas Töpfer's drawings in this book are not illustrations of the texts. Rather it's the other way around: they need to be read so that the texts can start to refer to them. In this sense, *Speculative Drawing* does not provide a shortcut to the theories presented; it does not aim to build a representational relationship between a pictorially correct understanding and a correlative conceptual thought. Instead, the drawings provide an occasion to think about thinking—a speculative thinking and writing in concept and through images.



Armen Avanesian
Andreas Töpfer

Speculative
Drawing

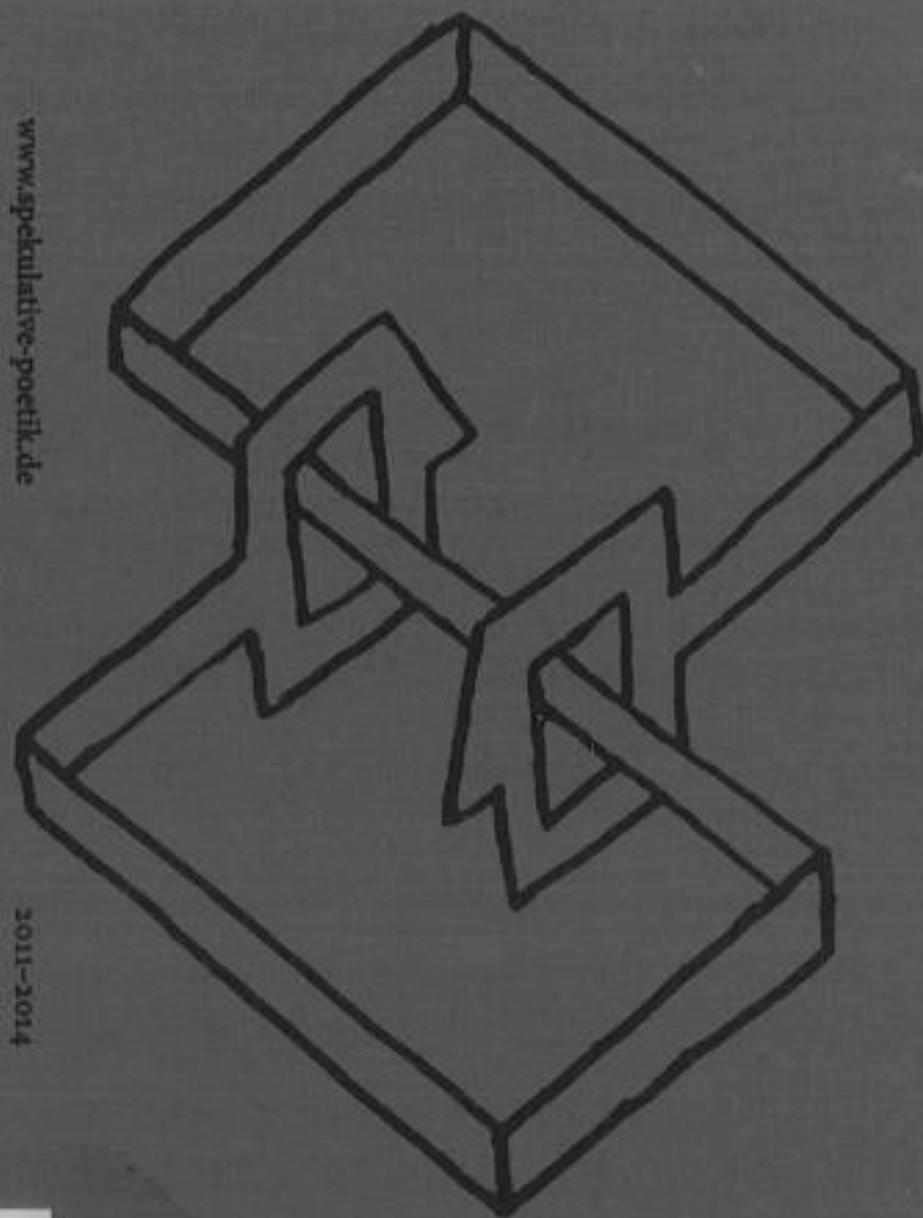
2011-2014

Armen Avanesian
Andreas Töpfer

Speculative
Drawing

www.speculative-poetik.de

2011-2014



KONST
laa
Avanes

ernbergPress*

Armen Avanesian
Andreas Töpfer

Speculative
Drawing

www.spekulative-poetik.de

2011-2014

SternbergPress 

BIBLIOTEKET
KONSTFACK

For Bernd Klöckener

Armen Avanesian and Andreas Töpfer
Speculative Drawing: 2011-2014

In collaboration with Bernd Klöckener

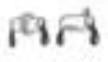
Published by Sternberg Press

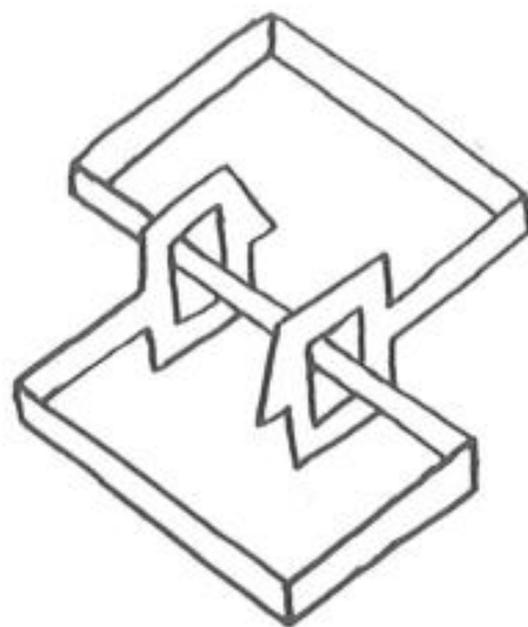
© 2014 Sternberg Press, the authors
All rights reserved, including the right of
reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

Translation: Nils E. Schott
Copyediting: Niamh Dunphy
Proofreading: Max Bach
Design & typesetting: Andreas Töpfer
Printing and binding: Steinmeier, Deinigen

Sternberg Press
Caroline Schneider
Karl-Marx-Allee 78
D-10243 Berlin
www.sternberg-press.com

ISBN 978-3-95679-044-7

	Introduction	9
1	 The Present-Tense Novel	41
2	 Present Tense: A Poetics	55
3	 Time and Verb	75
4	 Poetics: Past Narratives, Current Positions	97
5	 Poetry and Concept	113
6	 Abyssus Intellectualis: Speculative Horror	129
7	 Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials	145
8	 Genealogies of Speculation: Materialism and Subjectivity since Structuralism	159
9	 The Concept of Non-Photography	175
10	 The Quadruple Object	199
11	 Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign	213
12	 Metanoia: Speculative Ontology of Language	225
13	 Irony and the Logic of Modernity	245
14	 Ethics of Knowledge / Poetics of Existence	267
15	 #Acceleration	283
	References	309



Introduction This volume presents fifteen books—monographs, translations into German, and collections of essays—that emerged from *Speculative Poetics*. Conceived in 2011 as a research platform in literary theory intended to complement my own work, *Speculative Poetics* has since been expanded to include a book series and events that serve to establish a wide network of academic and nonacademic fellow thinkers, writers, and artists (see chapter 4). The initial aim in 2011 was to define the necessity, potential, scope, and limits of a new literary theory, but questions surrounding art theory, ethics, and politics have become increasingly important (see chapter 13).

* Peter Osborne, "The Fiction of the Contemporary: Speculative Collectivity and Transnationality in The Atlas Group," in *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, ed. Armen Avanesian and Luke Skrebowski (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 118.

One premise of *Speculative Poetics* is that contemporary post-medium or post-conceptual art itself articulates a post-aesthetic poetics.¹ The dominance of the aesthetic,

however, prevents these tendencies from being noticed. Another focus lies on the current speculative philosophy that tries to overcome a correlationist aesthetics and to relativize correlationalism. (Correlationalism, according to Quentin Meillassoux, is the inability to think objects or things independently of a thinking, sensate subject.) Speculative realism takes an emphatically rationalist approach that does not shy away from metaphysical or ontological questions. Meillassoux's speculative materialism, for example, radically questions the dualism of thought and perception that has dominated philosophy and art theory since the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline in the eighteenth century. What alternatives are there to what Jacques Rancière has called the "aesthetic regime," to an aesthetic paradigm stuck on the perception (*aisthesis*) of objects?

Isn't it possible that the still-dominant correlationist mode of thought precludes an understanding of important developments in contemporary art? And are there already examples of non-correlationist art? Such questions lead to the more general one of whether we can connect philosophical thought with artistic/literary thought in new or different ways that no longer seek to mediate between perceiving subjects and perceived objects or texts. What would a collaboration of philosophy and literary or artistic production look like that would abandon the idea that works of art illustrate theories or that theories explain works of art, thereby discovering the "critical potential" they contain?

I. Poiesis

Speculative Poetics above all attempts to link the language-focused philosophy of the last few decades with a contemporary interest in ontology. By this, I do not mean the correlationist myth of a creation of the world through language.

On the contrary, I mean an ontological reinterpretation of the (post-)structuralist thesis that language changes the world. At the same time, the world-changing function of language can only be adequately described with a linguistic-ontological approach (see chapter 12). Speculative Poetics situates itself within a tradition of speculative linguistics and semiotics (from the medieval universal grammarians' mereology to C.S. Peirce and contemporary linguistics) and does not lose sight of the *poietic* function of language, i.e., its capacity to produce something new, something that could not have been there before language made it possible and brought it into existence. (What is often overlooked is that, since Leibniz and Hegel, speculative thought has always also defined itself in terms of its use of language.) We find a more recent example of such an approach in the work of the linguist Gustave Guillaume (see chapter 3).

All too often, however, proponents of the *speculative turn* (whose number is on the rise) one-sidedly see this turn as a wholesale rejection of the linguistic turn, which has been dominant since the early twentieth century (see chapter 10). According to a popular myth, the linguistic turn allowed deconstructivists, structuralists, and analytic philosophers to maintain power over discourse for a whole century. Yet such a reading of the history of discourse reveals a deep misunderstanding that calls for a genealogical clarification of contemporary speculative thought (see chapter 8). The misunderstanding arises from a simplification as common among the new speculative realists as among the language-oriented philosophers (see chapter 6). They all share the dogma of the arbitrariness and non-referentiality of language (see chapter 12), simply accepting a fundamental break between the philosophy of language and ontology.

From the perspective of Speculative Poetics, which opposes postmodernism without dismissing its important insights and achievements, both speculative realist and analytical philosophers assume the same (limited) point of view because they are unable to acknowledge the speculative and ontological potential of a linguistic theory. Oriented, since Baumgarten and Kant, toward aesthetics and dominated (i.e., instrumentalized) in recent years by image theory, both of which give in to the demands of the art market, philosophy has lost sight of the poietic dimension of language. To point out the poietic moments of language and of knowledge is precisely not to continue aestheticizing theory. Rather, it is part of the attempt to poeticize philosophy (see chapter 14). This effort opposes the correlationist dualism of sensibility and knowledge.

Philosophy knows literature, literature produces theory, and language itself is a form of knowledge (see chapter 5): “speculative language” (Jacques Derrida) and “poetic ontology” (Valery Podoroga)³ are immediately related to literary production. To make this relationship productive, authors, literary theorists, and speculative philosophers need to work together—not in the usual way that hides immobility and separation behind the facades of academic transdisciplinarity (see chapter 14), but by swapping the roles of philosophy and literature, by acknowledging that literature knows something about philosophical problems and that philosophy has something to tell us about, for example, narratological questions about time and temporality (see chapter 2).

To counter the aesthetic skepticism that characterizes modernism and postmodernism, Speculative Poetics draws, for example, on Walter Benjamin’s method of “immanent critique” (as described by Howard Caygill) and his “elaboration

³ Podoroga’s *Mimesis I: Materialien einer analytischen Anthropologie der Literatur* will be published within the framework of Speculative Poetics.

of a non-Hegelian speculative philosophy of experience.”⁴ Rather than dwelling on the limits of our experience, poiesis creates possibilities that can become conditions of experience and make (absolute) knowledge attainable. In order to explain what is, a rationalist speculative philosophy must take the path of abductive reasoning, of experimentation and recursion. Recursion, based on part-to-whole relations, works along the lines of the integration of parts into a (new!) whole. It is—on an ontological and logical level—a precision instrument for the production of ordered complexity. At the same time, it can explain how something can come about that seems arbitrary, but once it’s there, appears to possess absolute necessity.

In one of the workshops organized at the Free University Berlin, Quentin Meillassoux explained why “facts are contingent, necessarily contingent” (see chapter 11). This is where poetics has its place: the creation of something that could not even have been imagined before it was produced and was, for that matter, impossible before it was real; the production of a novelty whose genesis cannot be explained via any causality but remains contingent; an artistic act that, ultimately, opens up a space for truth, always to be revised.

Speculative Poetics is not interested in aesthetic negativity or in the eternal or transcendental nature of our faculties; its gravitational pull is toward the future (see chapter 15). New things only emerge in the differential field between future and past, or in the context of a philosophical (“ancestral”) or poetic (asynchronous) conception of time. The old springs from something new; the past springs from the future. Indeed, the ancestral past is a past that never happened, that has never been present, that returns from the future to itself instead of going forward from itself into the

⁴ Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), 34.

future. This, in a sense, is the speculative materialist equivalent of Guillaume's linguistic account: the openness of the future is directed toward the scission between the present and the past. Just as described in Guillaume, the present has no other function than that of reversing time. And, as will become clear, questions of asynchronous or speculative temporality play an important role in almost every chapter and every aspect of this book.

II. Praxis

As Speculative Poetics advanced, collaborations with contemporary artists, galleries (Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin), museums (Fridericianum, Kassel), and journals (*Texte zur Kunst*) became increasingly important. From the very beginning, Andreas Töpfer has accompanied the project with his drawings—initially drafts for event posters, then drawings for the book covers and the design of the bilingual website www.spekulative-poetik.de. Finally the idea emerged to do a book together.

In a way, it was a remark made during the first “lecture drawing” we did together—“Überstürztes Denken” (Precipitating Thought) at the invitation of Marcus Steinweg at the Volksbühne, Berlin—that led to this decision. After our presentation, in which I talked about “thinking in literature” accompanied by Andreas projecting his drawings onto the wall behind us, someone in the audience noted that at times Andreas was already done with his drawings before I had even presented my “content.” Although this perception (in later lecture drawings corroborated by other observers) is empirically wrong in at least two respects—neither does Andreas know in advance what I will say nor is his aim to illustrate the arguments I try to make—we were not only surprised by this “wrong” observation, but also thought that

there is something “right” about it. Drawing might always be anticipation, and to see a drawing, correspondingly, may trigger a foreseeing, which turns the empirically false observation into a speculatively true one.

Thinking about precipitating thought, about the thoughts that were developing while I was speaking and Andreas was drawing next to me, a distinction of Derrida's suddenly made sense to me: “Different than precipitation, which exposes the head (*prae-caput*), the head first and ahead of the rest, anticipation would have to do with the hand. The theme of the drawings of the blind is, before all else, the hand. For the hand ventures forth, it precipitates, rushes ahead, certainly, but this time in place of the head, as if to precede, prepare, and protect it.”⁴ In an exemplary fashion Andreas, I sometimes think, rushes ahead hand first. And even when he doesn't see what I mean, he may foresee what I'm about to know, or rather, he gives me something to see that connects with what I try (to give) to understand. But at no point do we know the same at the same time, and I doubt if we ever knew the same at any point.

How should we work in such a speculative setting? One constant preoccupation of mine since the beginning of the project has been the question of certainty in writing and of confronting my own non-knowledge or the knowledge of the other. Who is writing when one writes together? How do we know what who has written when? The experience my colleague Anke Hennig and I had as we were writing several books, volumes, and essays together we summed up in the formula “you know it.” When thinking alongside Andreas, this formula acquires new significance.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 4.

⁵ Many of the ideas in this introduction and in this book came out of thinking about (the programatics) of speculation and poetics together.

"I don't know what you mean" in this case means, "I can't see what you mean." A new facet is added to the meaning of seeing and knowing, *voir* and *savoir*.

Andreas and I cannot deny that every time we work together we both don't know what we're doing when we comment on each other in our respective medium of thought, in language and in images. This impression became even stronger when "writing" this book together: we did not know what we were doing, and precisely because of that, we wanted to keep on working, to keep on seeing what form our work would take.

What are we to make of such a collaboration given the non-understanding, the non-communication, and the fundamental difference between what either of us means when we say, "I see"? When I ask, "You see?" this means something completely different to Andreas, who does indeed provide something to see. Perhaps this communication and unification of conceptual and visual thought can be conceptualized in terms of Roberto Esposito's notion of a *communitas*, which "is the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an 'addition' [*più*] but by a 'subtraction' [*meno*]: by a lack, a limit."⁶

⁶ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6.

This communitarian collaboration is not mediated by shared knowledge but by non-knowledge. It involves a writing (in a broader sense) that goes beyond a knowing subject. None other than Hegel has described this process. In one of the most lucid definitions of what speculation is about, Hegel writes that if a speculative proposition is to be understood, it has to propel the mind of the reader, who thus becomes its author, to another level. "This movement, which constitutes what formerly the proof was supposed to accomplish, is the

dialectical movement of the proposition itself. This alone is the speculative *in act*, and only the expression of this movement is a speculative exposition. [...] The *proposition* should express what the True is; but essentially the True is Subject. As such it is merely the dialectical movement, this course that generates itself, going forth from, and returning to, itself."⁷ Understanding a speculative proposition (as opposed to a common predicative proposition) presupposes the demise of the subject: the subject disappears in the predicate, which turns out to be substance.

⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), §65:39–40.

In the case of this book, this concerns the amplification of the already mentioned irritating effects that came up in our drawing-lectures. The temporal irritation affects the status and ownership of "my" texts themselves, the constant impression that they belong to me less and less or have not even been written by myself. The loss of a secure sense of authorship I felt during several other coauthorships was amplified in the collaboration with a co-illustrator. And in reading many of the texts I wrote, including this introduction, I can't help but feel they weren't "penned by me."

The same goes for some "illustrating" quotations I chose from other authors: they all seem to take on a different meaning when images dominate the page. Accordingly, this book, as we were working on it, developed its own dynamics and made decisions of its own. The only thing that did not change in the process was the general outline: the books published in the framework of Speculative Poetics readily provided the structure of one chapter per book—monographs I've (co)written, collections that came out of the events I organized with several colleagues in Berlin or abroad, and the translations into German, which form an important part of the project.

At the beginning, we used the procedure employed in earlier collaborations (on book covers, for example). I sent Andreas texts and briefed him, explaining which line of argument they follow.

As the work progressed, this procedure changed for three main reasons. First, this changed because of the sheer abundance of text and books. Second, many of the texts central for Speculative Poetics were not yet finished, and some are still in production with several publishers.⁸ Third, we experienced a general methodological destabilization that made it impossible to assume the traditional roles of one single author or project manager expressing his or her views. Instead, we began to bring in as many collaborators on the various projects as possible.

These later preparatory briefings with others made me realize more than ever—more than in cowriting (e.g., with Jan Niklas Howe and Björn Quiring), more than in coteaching (e.g., with Anke Hennig), more than in public conversations (e.g., with poet and novelist Steffen Popp), how different and unique the intellectual characters of my collaborators were. Andreas's drawings, it seemed to me, brought these differences out even more clearly.

The gradual transition from the two somewhat "interior dialogues" (mine and Andreas's), to a polyphony of voices between various friends and colleagues has also left its mark on the introductions to the individual chapters in this book, which often take up ideas and thoughts developed and articulated together with others. It makes sense, therefore, that some introductions were not written by me: chapter 12 was written by Bernd Klöckener (who has participated in various projects in the series as editor, translator, and in a way as a secret cowriter of many texts of mine), and

⁸ This also has to do with the increasing shift from questions in literary and art theory to ethical and political problems in my own thinking (see chapters 12 and 14).

the non-introduction to chapter 9 on *Non-Photography* was written by Andreas despite his writing phobia.

The conversations with Caroline Schneider and Tatjana Günthner of Sternberg Press finally led to the publication of this book, which contains more text than we had planned at first. Including additional writing, however, was not to reintroduce an (intellectual) textual primacy. On the contrary, together with the hierarchy between the two realms, their ontological specificities seem to have been destabilized as well. To use Peirce's semiotic triad of icon-index-symbol: taken out of their context some text passages change their symbolic status and transform into icons. And the same goes for the images they are connected to; the drawings are not to be read as meaningful, individual images but as a (syntactically structured) series, in which a seeing knowledge develops—a knowledge closed to (or enclosed in) the texts. That's why these speculative drawings need to be read.

III. Poietic Practice

Who is Andreas? Or more precisely, how does Andreas think? My first encounter with his work was in the designs published by Kookbooks, a publishing house for contemporary poetry he cofounded. What struck me at the time was the hypersensibility to lyrical language Andreas's designs revealed. In our very first meeting, I noticed him obsessively drawing; he is in fact drawing in every situation imaginable—a confirmation, it seems to me, of Benjamin Buchloh's thesis that modern drawing traces a "neuromotoric and physiologic-libidinal performance." Surely, if Heinrich von Kleist had met Andreas, he would not have written "On the Gradual Production of

⁹ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," in *October: The Second Decade, 1986–1996*, ed. Rosalind E. Krauss et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 16.

Thoughts Whilst Speaking," but "On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Drawing."

But, what are thoughts? And who thinks, or how does thinking occur in drawings or illustrations? The questions that Andreas's production brings up are, to begin with, my own questions: How do I think? What makes it possible for something new to come about? Who writes when I write? And why do these questions become even more urgent for me when I'm confronted with an illustrator who untiringly repudiates the allegation of being an illustrator? Because indeed, the drawings in this book do not illustrate the thoughts of the author(s) from whose texts they have emerged.

But let's leave abstract thoughts about thinking aside and look at the differences in the practice of our thinking—for conceptual and visual thinking precisely do not come together in something they share. *Speculative Drawing* does not provide a shortcut to the theories in the books presented. And although the drawings in each chapter try to give an overview of a particular book, oversights remain central—oversights, for example, of central arguments expounded in the books, or oversights of what could, from the perspective of the authors of those books, be called misunderstandings of their arguments. But from the perspective of the drawings it is not clear anymore if these are "mistakes" that need to be "corrected." And that is true even more for the written captions, which do not always contain (correct or incorrect) quotations and are no longer part of the theory they refer to, but are always already part of the drawings. These drawings (which I, too, do not always understand!) don't aim to build a relationship between a pictorially correct understanding and a correlative conceptual thought. Instead, they provide an occasion to think about thinking, a thinking both in concepts and in images, a thinking with one's hand or with one's eyes.

What is the relationship between writing and drawing, or, more generally between language and image, or with regard to this book, between the words and pictures it contains? These drawings are not mere illustrations of texts Andreas has read and is referring to. Rather it's the other (temporal) way around: the drawings themselves want to be read, and only once they are being read, the "illustrated" books can start to refer to them. Andreas's practice of drawing, then, initiates a process of defamiliarization and othering. It converges with the fundamental methodological tenets of Speculative Poetics on at least three levels, commonly described as the aesthetics of production, the analysis of works of art, and the aesthetics of reception.

1) A speculative poetics does not simply hold that philosophy is able to think literature, but, as importantly, that literature itself (and not just literary theory) is capable of producing theory and that language has a form of knowledge of its own. But how does literature think? How do poets create concepts as compared to philosophers (see chapter 5)? And how does a (non-)illustrator like Andreas think? The drawings in this book thus ask how they show a certain kind of thinking, how thinking finds its language. Like thinking that is communicated by words, these theory-drawings produce sense in a complex syntactic correlation. It is only in this context that they attain the status of a speculative theory in the original sense of both the Greek *theorein* (to watch, to view) and the Latin *speculari* (to observe).

2) The altered ontological status of literary works concerns literature at large and makes the usual focus on individual works or (male) genius of their creators obsolete. One of the books (see chapter 1) takes up the question how twentieth-century present-tense novels not only provide literature with a new kind of narration but also enrich the system

of tenses—the question is thus relevant not only for the history of literature but for the study of language as well. The invention of a new narrative tense is the work of literature and language at large, not singular *événements* of masters or masterpieces since declared to be canonical.

3) The third speculative-poetic aspect of Andreas's drawing practice, which I have already mentioned in connection with Hegel, are the oscillations between a reading and a writing subject. This concerns what within an aesthetic paradigm is usually identified as reception theory. From a poetic point of view, however, the distinction between production and reception obscures what is most important. As in the present-tense novels mentioned above, whose authors, narrators, or protagonists tend to turn out to be readers themselves, Andreas's production, too, is a reader's production. His images are drawn into the writings. Andreas writes his illustrations—and maybe that's why I am so drawn (in)to them.

Andreas's work can be described in a somewhat paradoxical question: How can we avoid seeing an image? How can the drawings be read like written texts? How do certain techniques such as montages, cuts, serializations make it possible to overcome the high and mighty aesthetic status of individual images containing a rich and hidden meaning the spectator has to discover and unfold? What if instead we started *reading* those images, seeing them as parts of a recursive structure in which new meaning comes about?

The fact that Andreas's drawings require and allow (this kind of) reading also has to do with his longstanding engagement with poetry. His main interest is not in individual poems. I seem to recall him saying that for him the perfect poem is the one that stands in a perfect series. And, by analogy, he's not interested in perfectly illustrating a single verse or idea, but to advance an experimental process of thought.

The constellation of images and words or sentences, therefore, must be understood as a constant temporal othering. *Speculative Drawing* seeks to render productive an asynchrony in which images are no longer seen as the opposite of or a post-facto addition to (theoretical) language. The images call for a different understanding of the relationship between theory and drawing, a reciprocal othering of image and word.

I've stressed that the drawings in this book are not reproductions of my ideas or of someone else's. Or if they are, then in the sense described by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe: "The true character of mimesis is to be *without model*." According to Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Pleasure in Drawing*, "mimesis is neither a copy nor an imitation that reproduces. It reproduces, in the sense that it produces the form (i.e., the idea or truth of the thing) again—in other words, like new."¹⁰ This book is an experiment in such a non-reproductive mimesis that also concerns the relationship between reception and production, between reading/seeing and drawing/writing.

¹⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 20, 61.

Nothing could be more incorrect than to understand these speculative drawings as if they evoked something that words, thoughts, or language cannot grasp. Such an aesthetic explanation goes too much along the lines of a philosophically normalized concept of "aesthetic experience," which was *the* key concept of an entire aesthetic tradition inaugurated by Kant, a tradition that sees the beautiful as the harmony of sensibility and understanding, and the sublime as overwhelming them by pushing them beyond their natural limits. The drawings in this book aren't the "aesthetic other" of anyone's thinking, nor do they explain philosophical ideas, and they do not need (critical) explanations either. It is in this sense that rather than continuing the historical trend of aesthetic

philosophy and "critical" theory, *Speculative Poetics* seeks to poeticize them; it aims for a more experimental *praxis* and shared *poiesis*.

The aestheticist model is structurally anchored in aesthetics and its correlationist dichotomy of word/thought vs. image/experience. It seems to me that this model also dominates most (post-) structuralist reflections on drawings that see drawings as critically directed against semantics, e.g., Roland Barthes's fascinating reading of Cy Twombly's "interventions of writing" as profoundly unsettling painting,¹¹ or Michel Foucault's lucid interpretation of Magritte's non-pipe: "What misleads us is the inevitability of connecting the text to the drawing (as the demonstrative pronoun, the meaning of the word *pipe*, and the likeness of the image all invite us to do here)—and the impossibility of defining a perspective that would let us say that the assertion is true, false, or contradictory."¹² Even more clearly, Foucault describes what *Speculative Drawing* is not about: "The text must say nothing to this gazing subject who is a viewer, not a reader. As soon as he begins to read, in fact, shape dissipates. All around the recognized word and the comprehended sentence, the other graphisms take flight."¹³

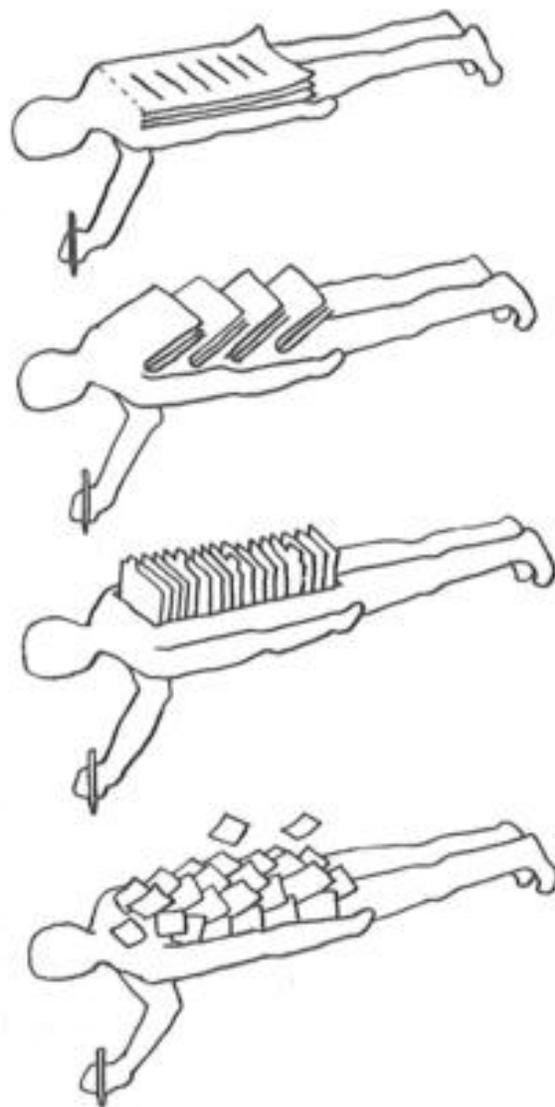
Speculative Drawing is a project within *Speculative Poetics* in its attempt to test theories and to move from a structuralist universe determined by oppositions to an othering of what might just *seem* like opposites. This must not be confused with an enduring modernist gesture of purification

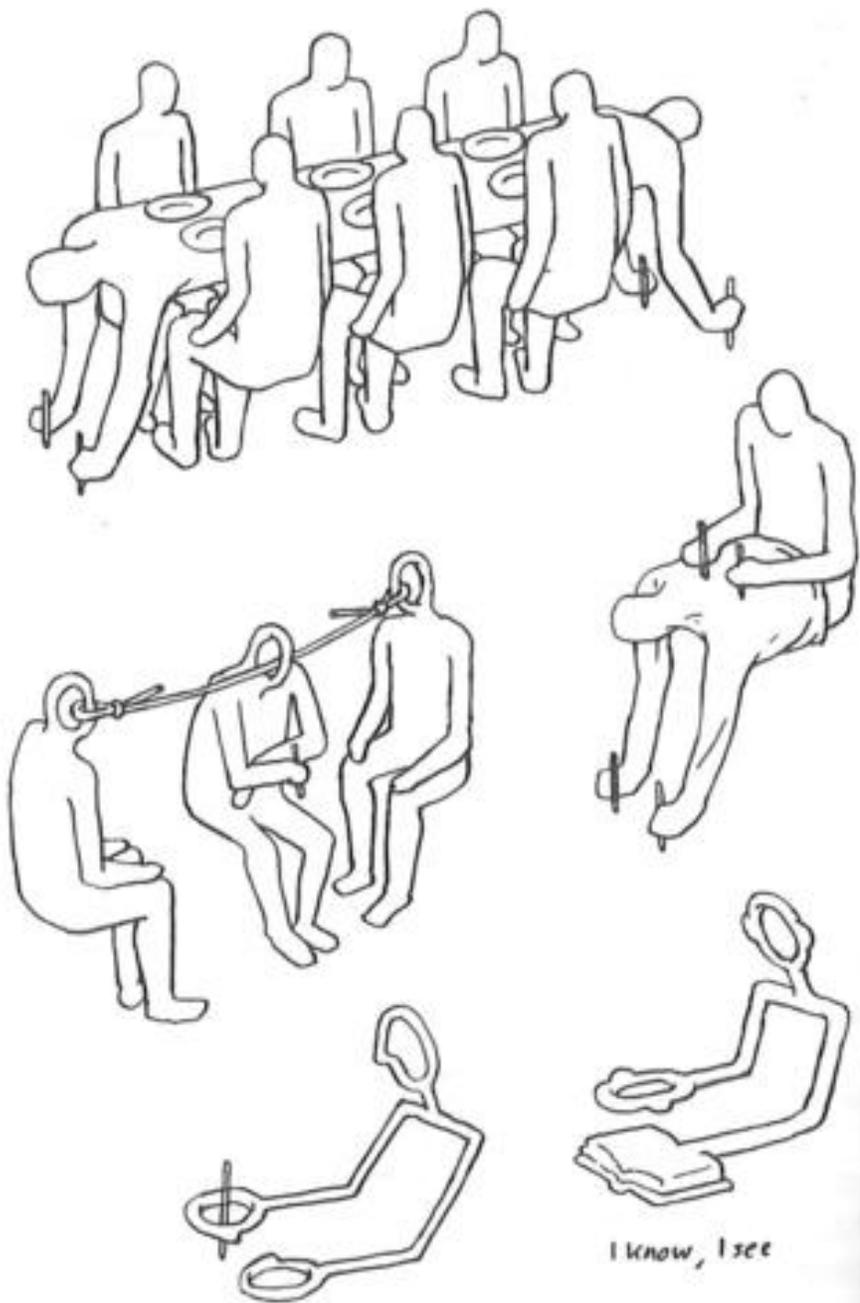
¹¹ Roland Barthes, "Non Multa Sed Multum," trans. Henry Martin, in *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*, ed. Simon Schama and Julie Sylvester (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2004), 23–40. "The Rare, that is [...] spacing out" is a "notion [...] crucial in Japanese aesthetics, which does not know the Kantian categories of space and time, but only the more subtle one of interval. [...] We must count as such surprises all the interventions of writing in the field of the canvas: any time Twombly uses a graphic sign, there is a jolt, an unsettling of the naturalness of painting."

¹² Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, ed. and trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

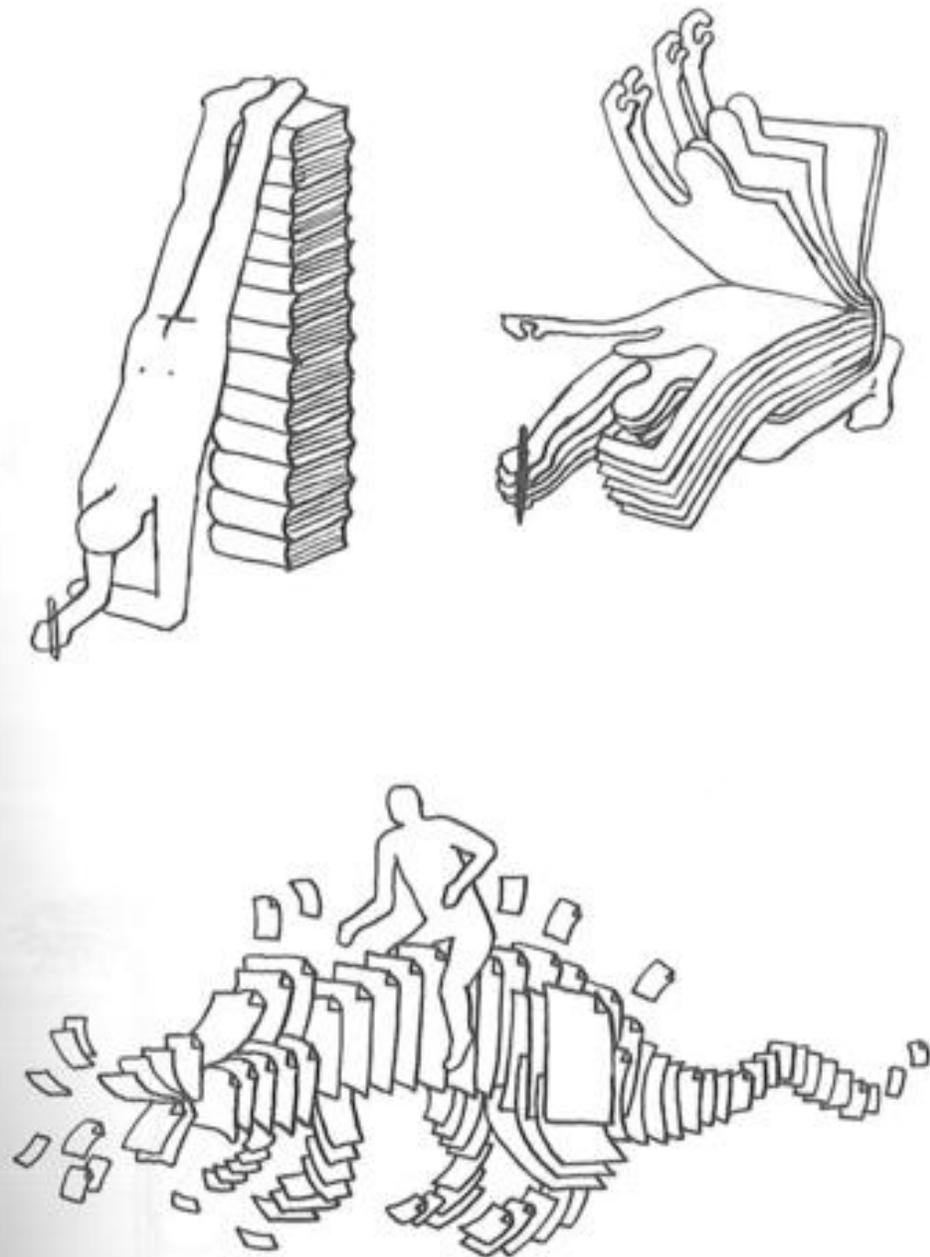
that gets off on the eternal tension between text and image or heroically demands the aesthetic-critical subversion of its hierarchies. We found it much more exciting to follow the translations into a different vocabulary: from language into drawing into language and so on ...

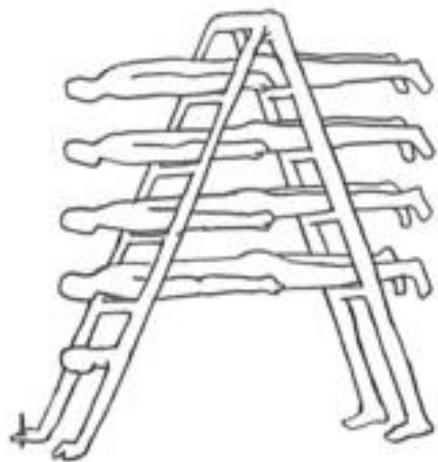




instrumentalization

I know, I see

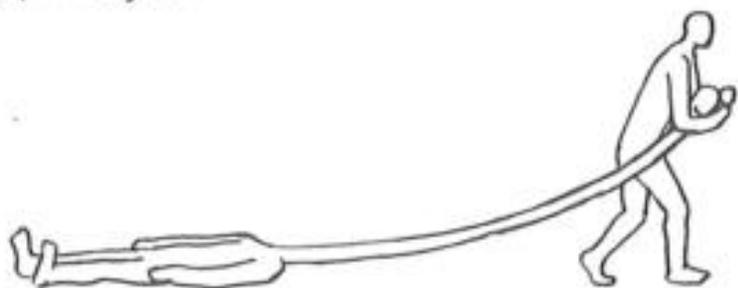




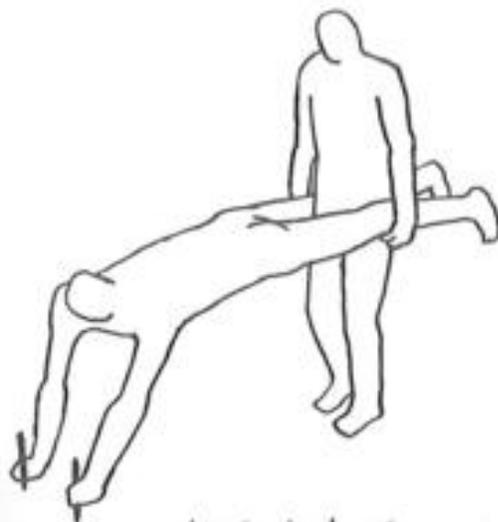
the planking of the theorists



on cooperation



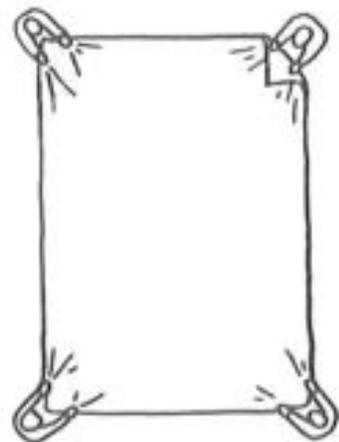
the invisibility of gestures in writing

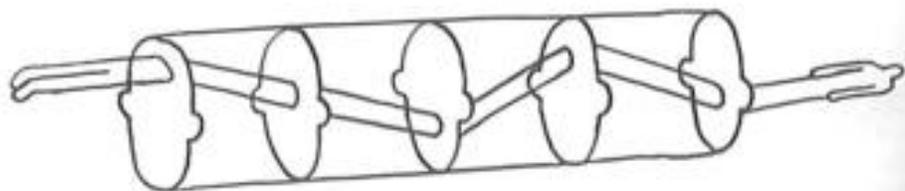
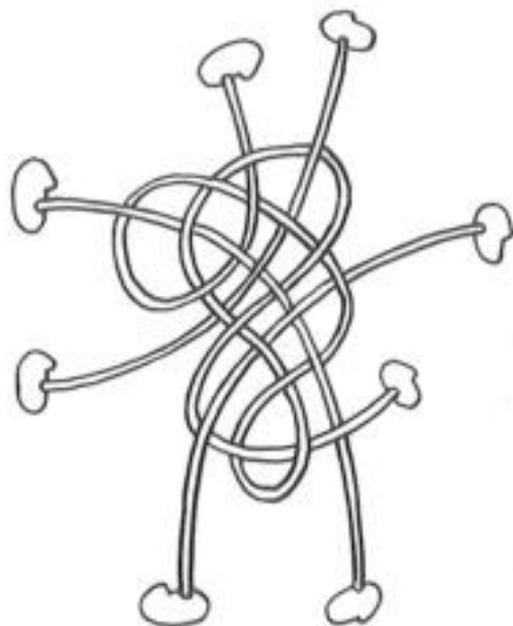


drawing is always an anticipation

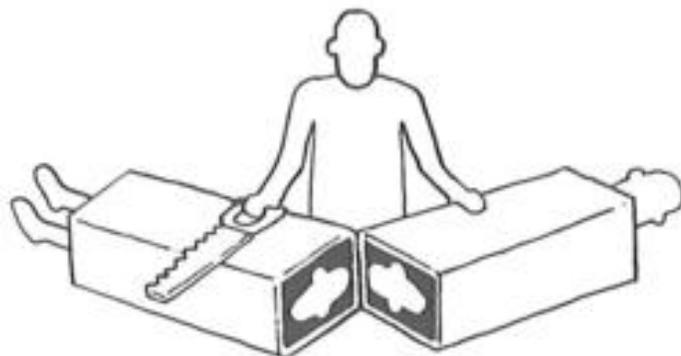


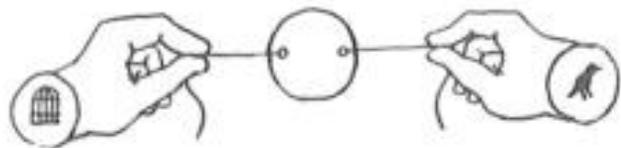
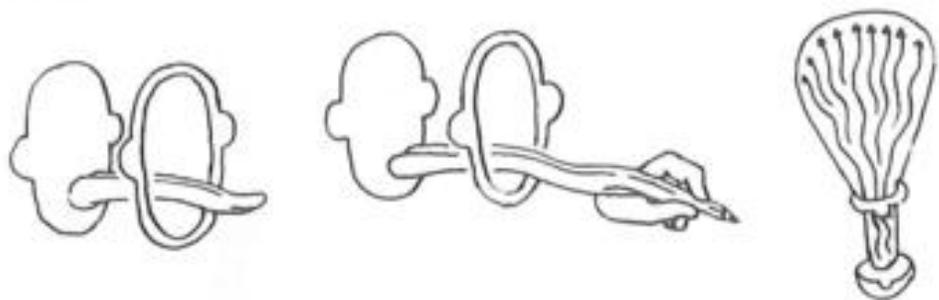
ivory nest



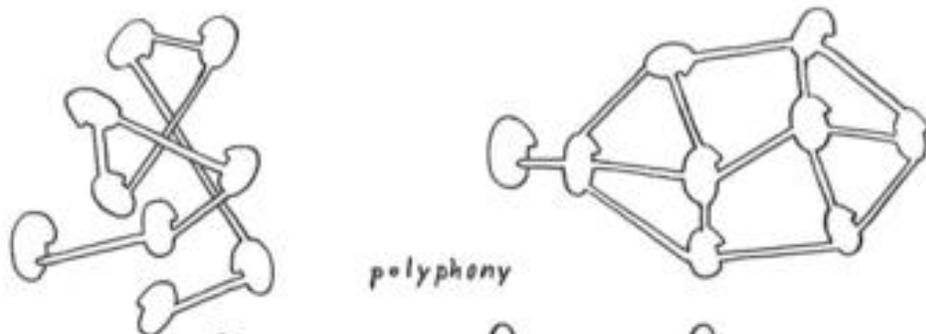


process, designation, reference, product

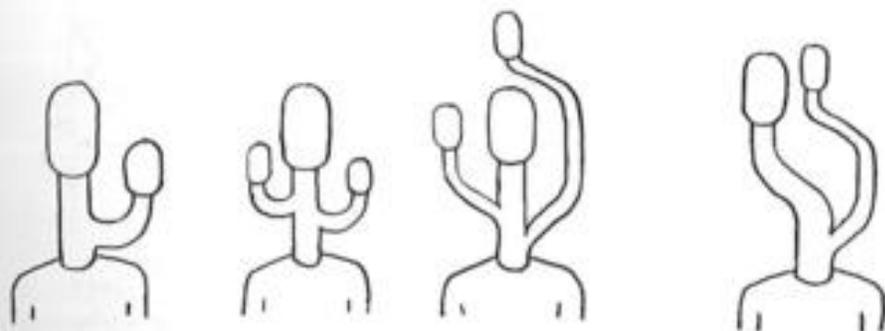
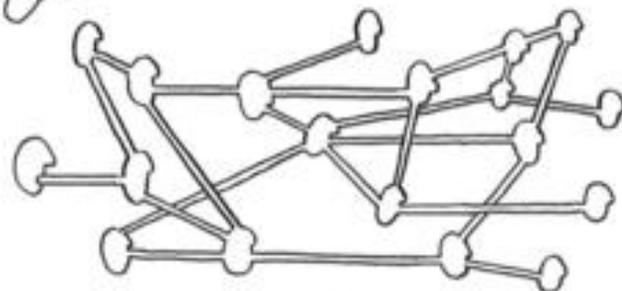




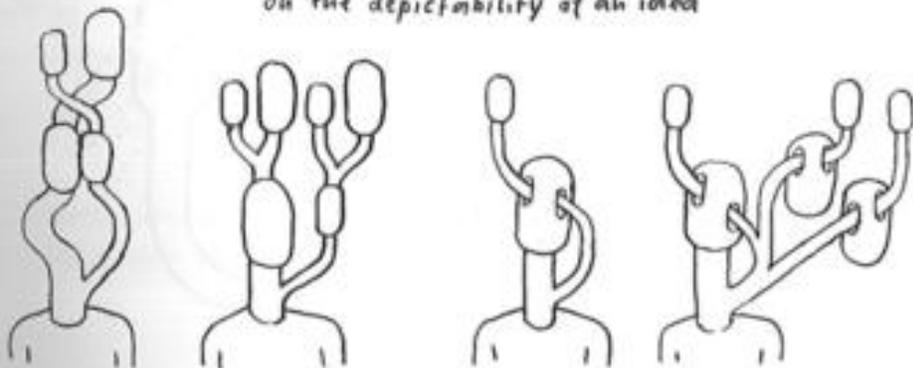
visual thinking hanging in conceptual thinking

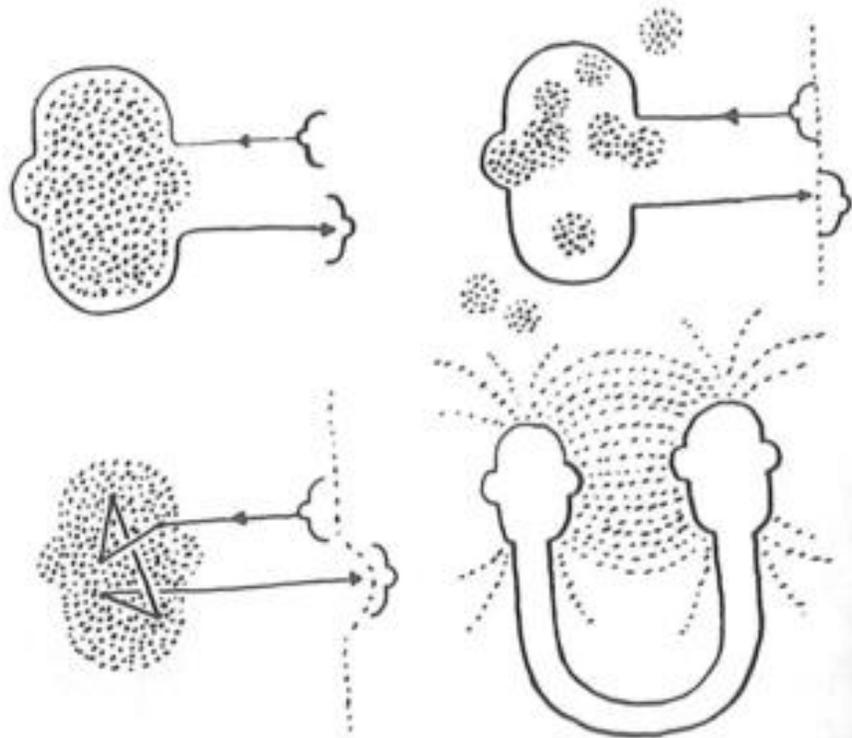
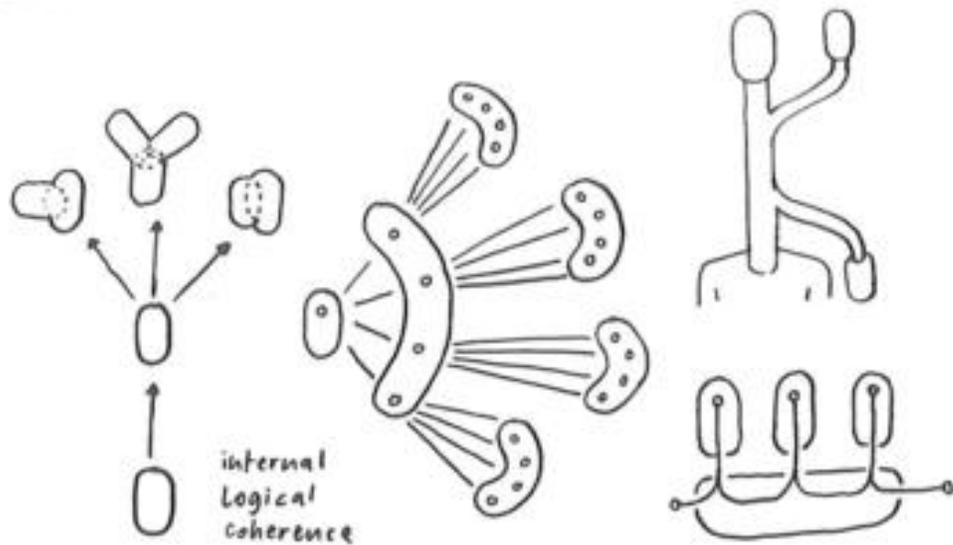


polyphony

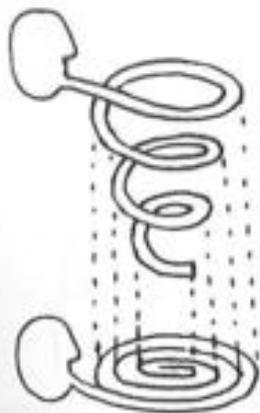


on the depictability of an idea

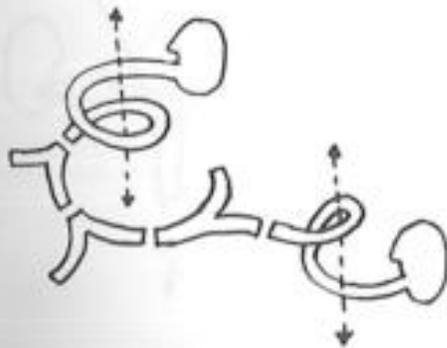




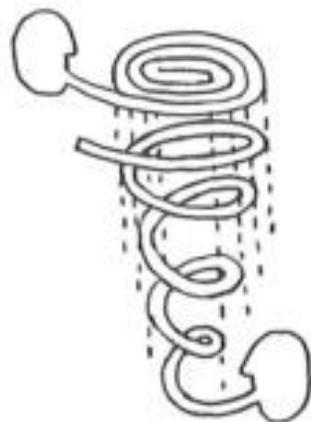
on the exploitation
(extractability)
of visual thought



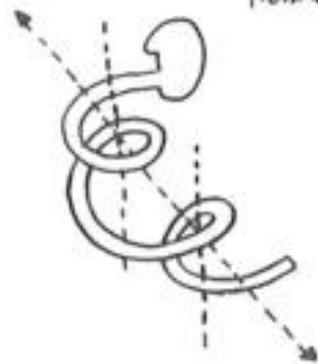
communicator
↓
compression



percipients (multiple axes)
tie sections into new contexts



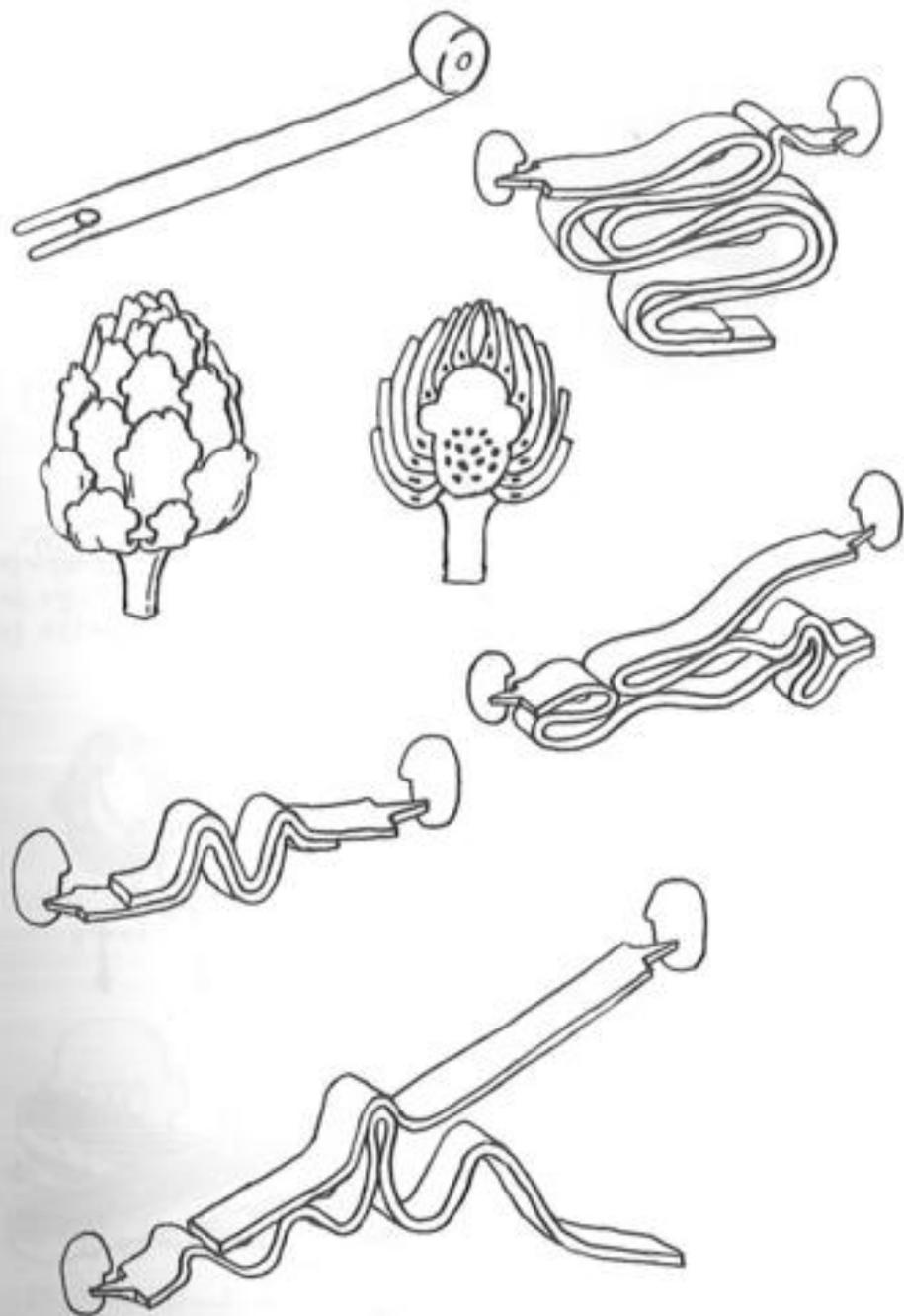
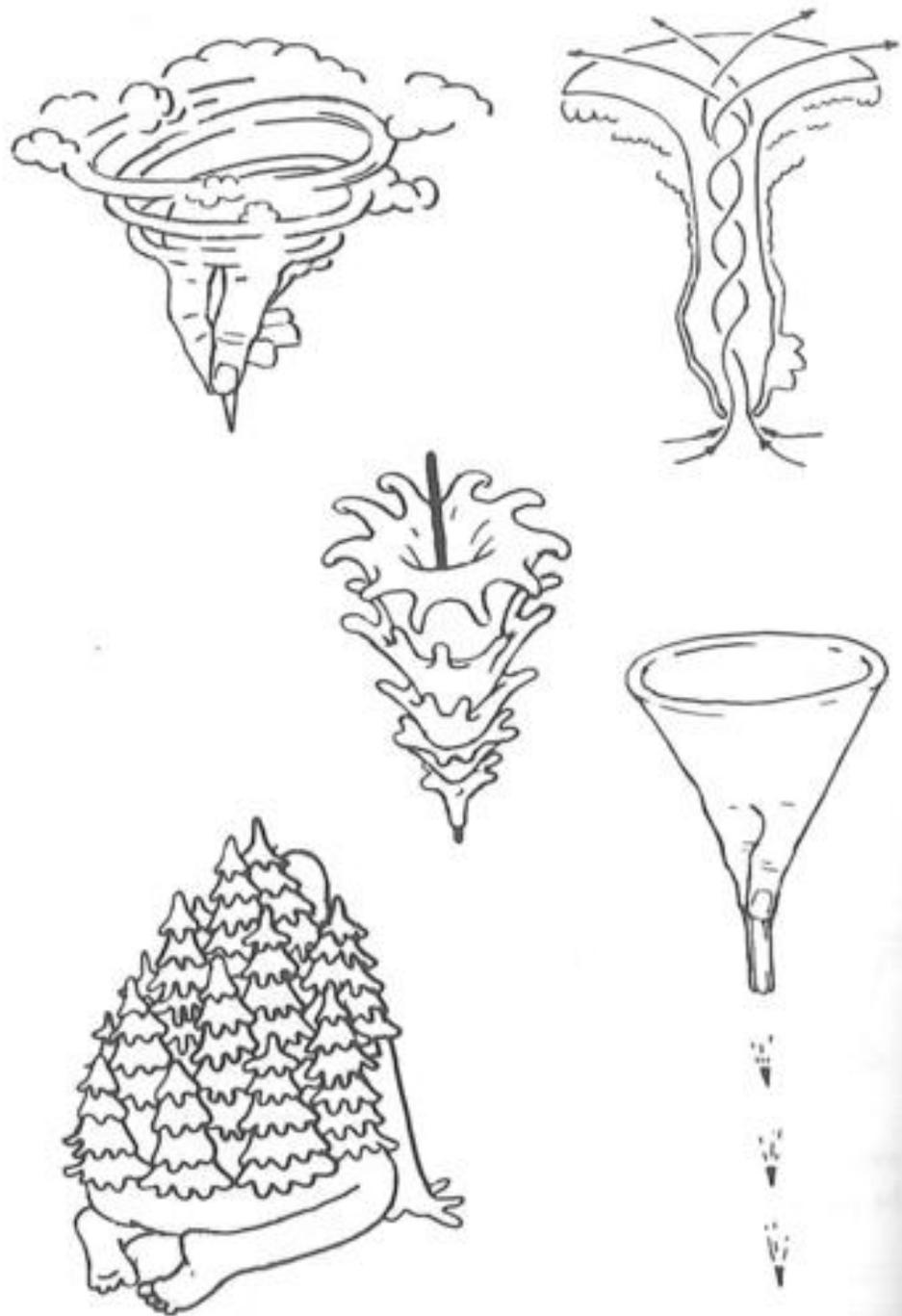
the compressed
↓
recipient
(feedback)

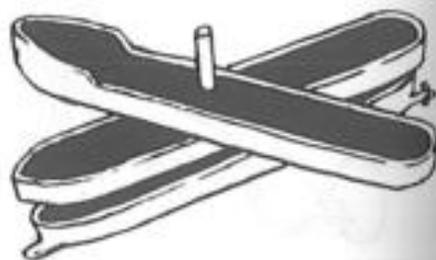
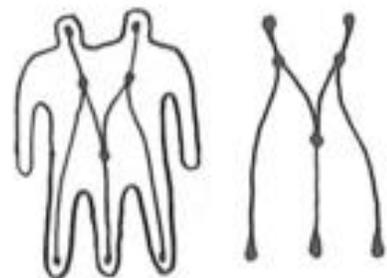
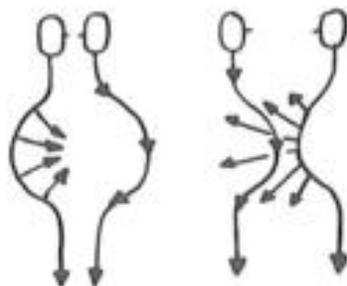


percipients become
communicators by
leaving out references
to sources



additional
percipients
use the
same axis
(choice made
from a spectrum)





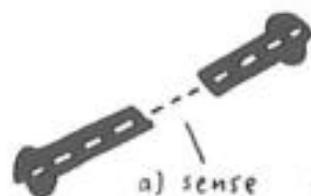
linear translation



non-linear translation



- a) sense
- b) obstacle
- c) occasion



- a) sense
- b) gap
- c) nonsense



place



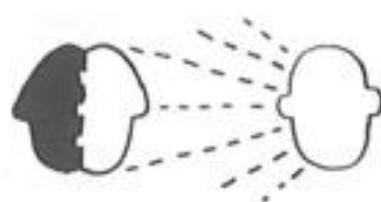
time



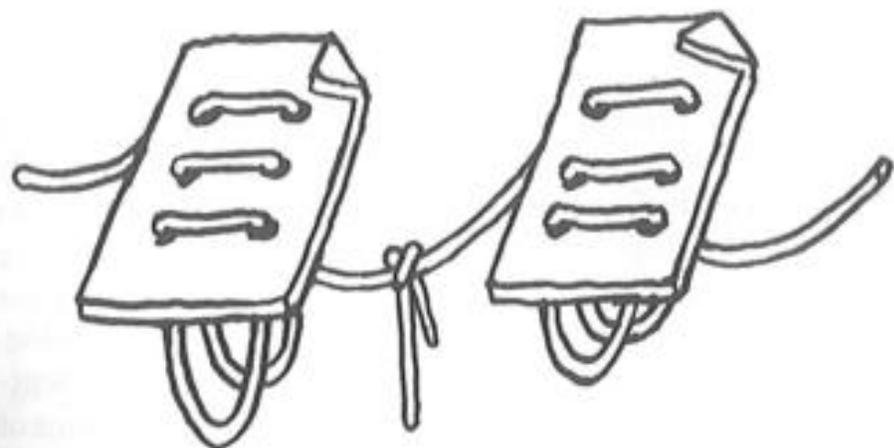
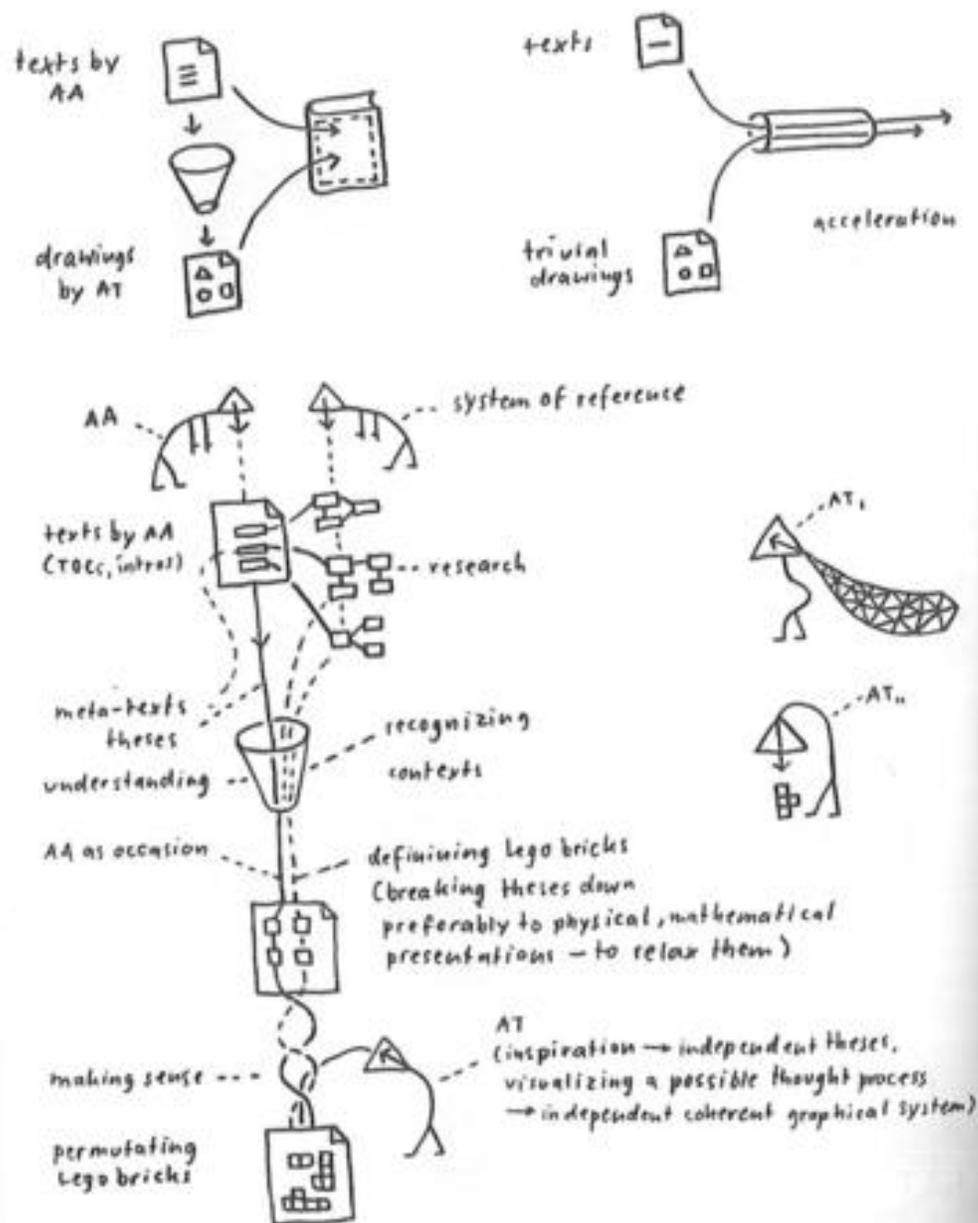
capacity



yes, I understand - but what?



speculation - knowledge



1 The Present-Tense Novel Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig, eds.

Over the course of an eventful history spanning more than a hundred years, present-tense narration has developed its own literary universe. Literary prose written entirely in the present tense existed long before the avant-garde factographies in the interior monologues of Édouard Dujardin or Arthur Schnitzler. In the tradition of German New Objectivity and the nouveau roman movement, present-tense novels continue the nihilistic gestures of the avant-garde (gestures we find, for example, in the first-person narratives of Samuel Beckett and Peter Weiss). Finally, toward the end of the twentieth century, fictions narrated in the third person began to be written in the present tense, but these texts have a distinct tendency to create a noncontemporary or asynchronous experience of the present.

The present tense, used for example in Claude Simon's and Thomas Pynchon's history novels, is a present tense of the past.

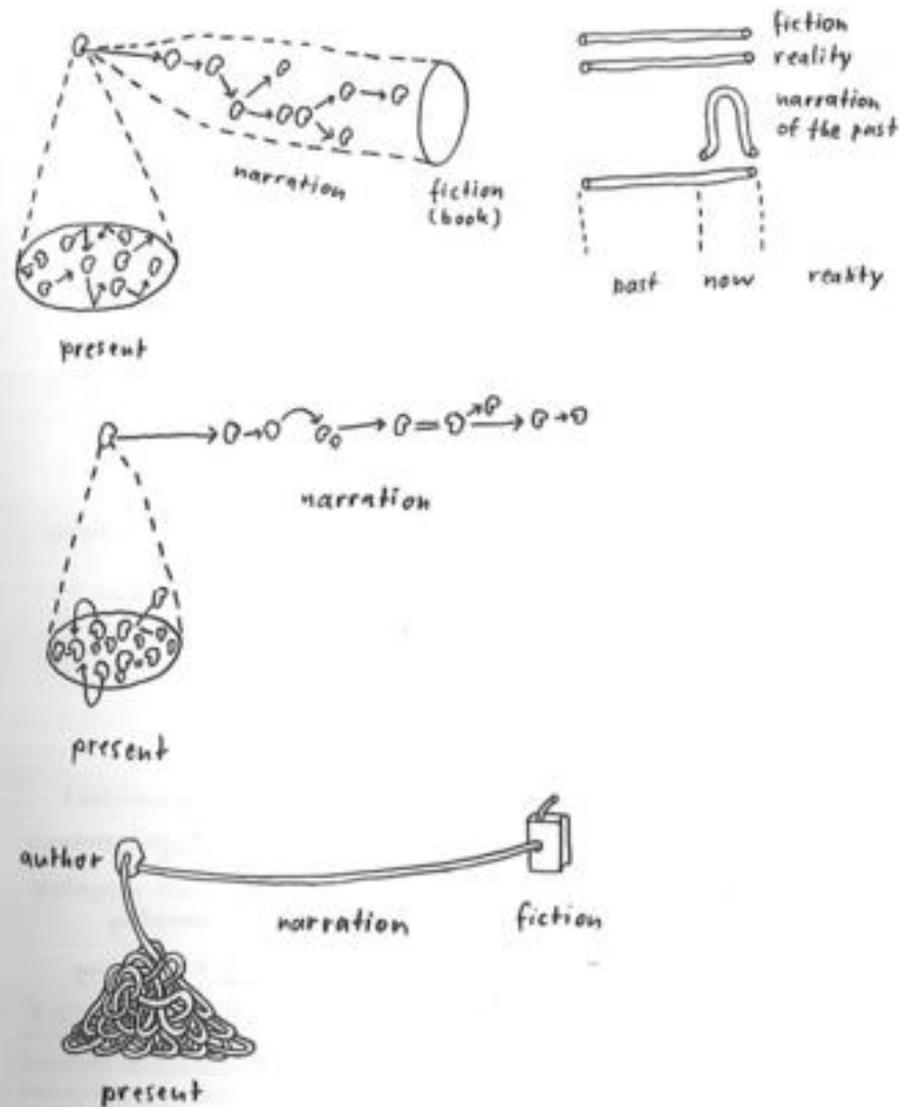
Looking back at the history of the present tense as a narrative tense, we see that in the twentieth century, literature has developed techniques that allow the present tense to create fiction and to narratively unfold a past without pretending to make it present. Such an asynchrony is not only the object of a poetics of the present tense, but also defines its method. The phenomenon of the present-tense novel has to be speculatively constructed in the first place. Its history cannot be described as evolving chronologically in the field of literature. The literary present tense redefines fiction and narration, thus calling for both a new understanding of time and a new way of reading.

A new way of narrating can emerge by means of a present-tense third-person narration (as in J. M. Coetzee), by means of second-person narration (as in Georges Perec), by means of a first-person plural narration (as in Kevin Vennemann's *Near Jedenew*), or by means of splitting, repeating, and differentiating one or more first-person singular perspectives (as in Marcel Beyer's novels *The Karnau Tapes* and *Kaltenburg*). These novels can be described as *altermodern* because they alter the modernist usage and understanding of how the present tense functions, and because they neutralize the objections raised against the present tense as being intrinsically nonnarrative.¹

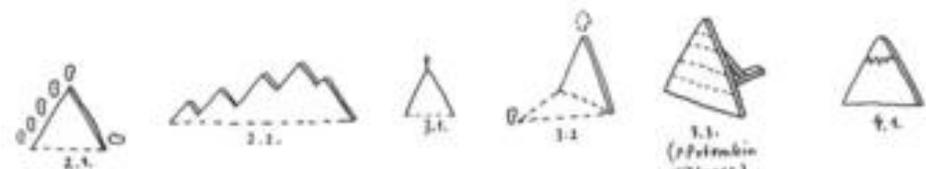
The essays by Ann Banfield, J. M. Coetzee, Suzanne Fleischman, and Dorrit Cohn about the theoretical approaches to present-tense narration, translated for *Der Präsensroman* (The Present-Tense Novel), formed the basis of discussions in a series of workshops at the Free University Berlin. The second part of the book consists of close readings

¹ The concept of "altermodernity" is adopted from Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of art. For a first application of the concept in literary theory, see Armen Avanesian, "Poetologie des Übergangs und orphische Geschichtsschreibung. Claude Simons altermoderner Präsensroman *Les Géorgiques*" [The Poetics of Transition and Orphic Historiography: Claude Simon's Altermodern Present-Tense Novel *Les Géorgiques*], in *Die Erfahrung des Orpheus*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter and Franck Hofmann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010), 237–60, 243.

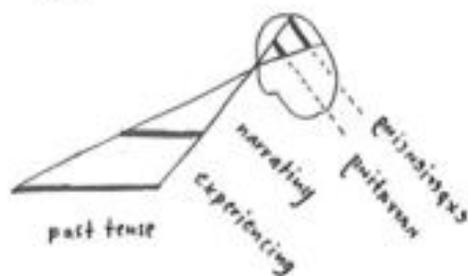
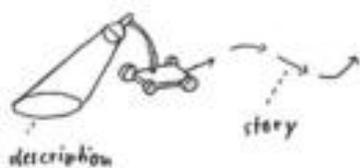
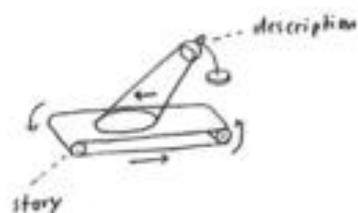
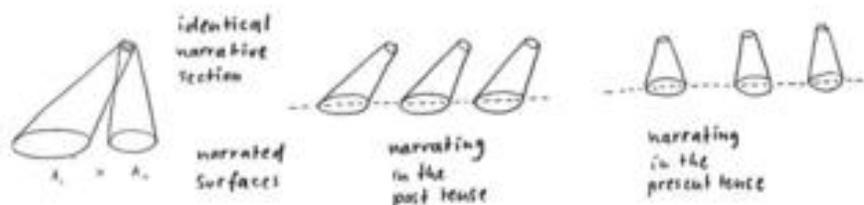
based on lectures and talks given by colleagues from the Peter Szondi Institute for Comparative Literature and by visiting narratologists. Their different theoretical approaches, suggestions, and criticism were an important part of the workshop's experimental setup.



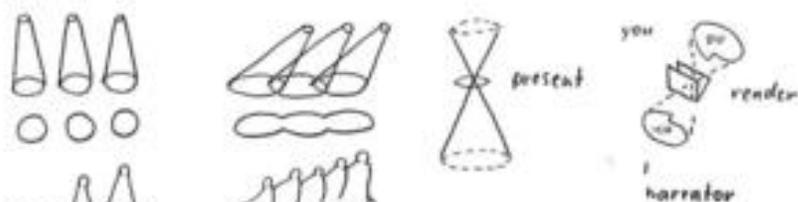
- (5) narration
- (3) story
- (2) fiction
- (4) reference
- (1) present



(Polemio villages)



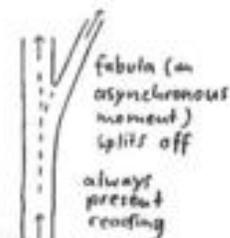
Simultaneification of experiencing and narrating in the present tense



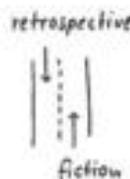
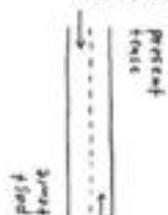
present tense allegedly anti-narrative

fusion in retrospect

sequence



retrospective narrative fiction



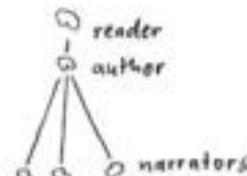
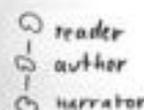
Michael Fishl
Marcel Eyer
Kevin Yeatman

fictional dimension of narration

narrative fiction → fictional narrating

people involved

hierarchies



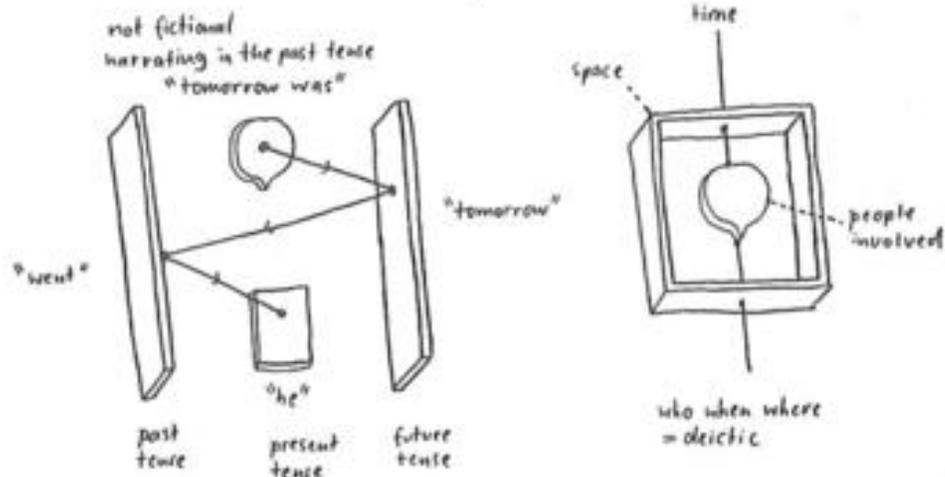
asynchronous present (Thomas Pynchon)

synchronous succession (Claude Simon)

the form of time of the fiction and the cooperation with narration determine temporality in fiction

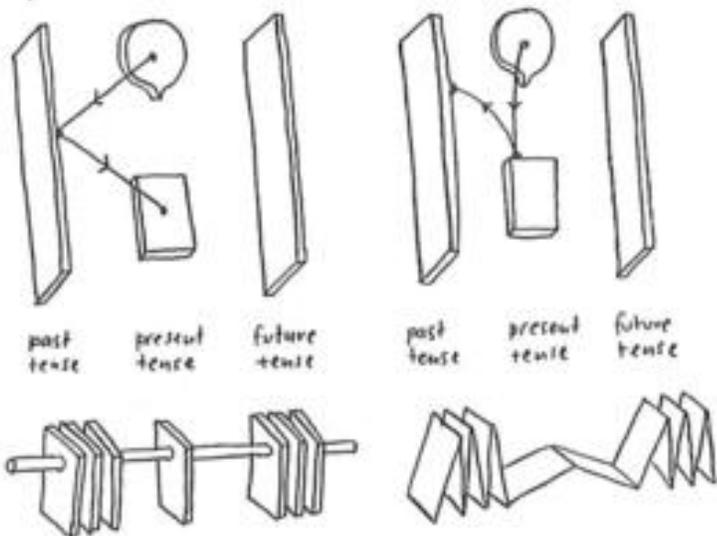
The present tense novel also calls for supplementing the minimum requirement of narrativity, i.e. sequential concatenation. Unlike chronological narration in the past tense, where the definition of 'narrativity' can be reduced to events succeeding each other, present tense narration is characterized by events taking each other's relay or replacing one another. The form of time of a narration thus reveals 'events' as a form of replacement in which the replaced becomes an antecedent, a replacement that continually produces anteriority. (Conclusion)

the old paradigm

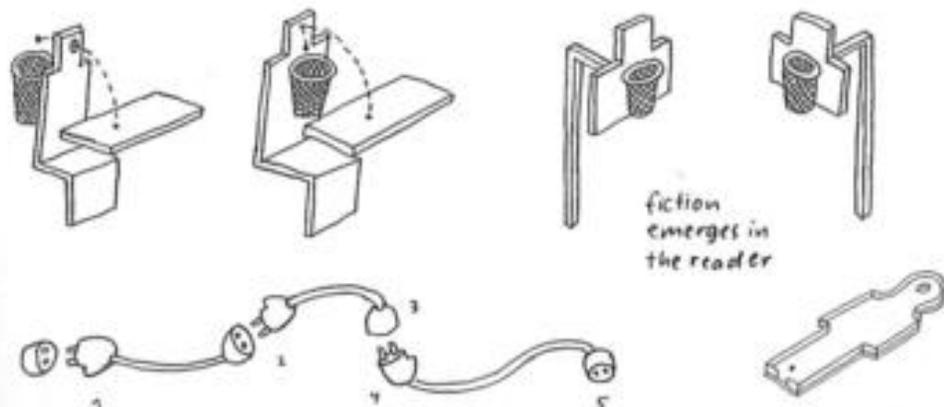


Käte Hamburger:

"only the past tense presentifies"
= fiction

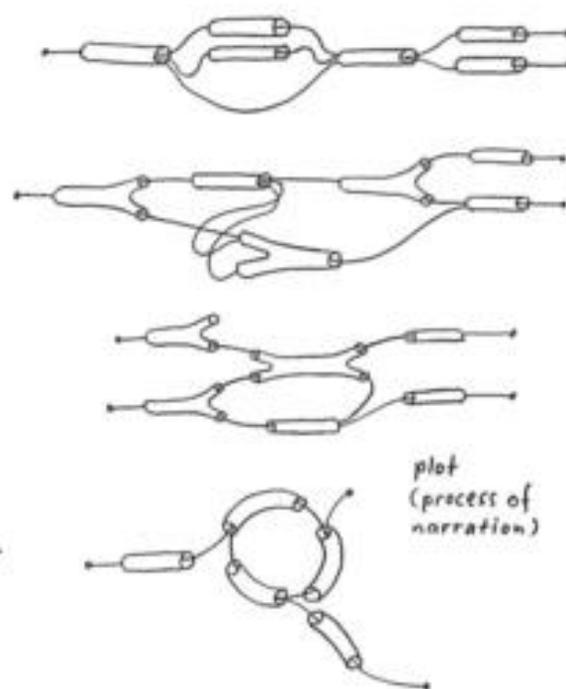
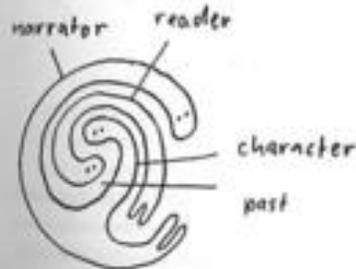
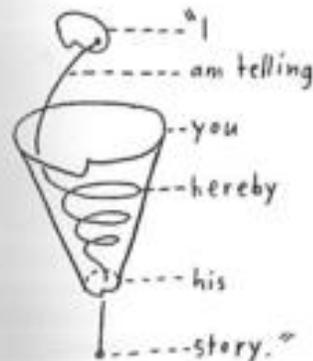
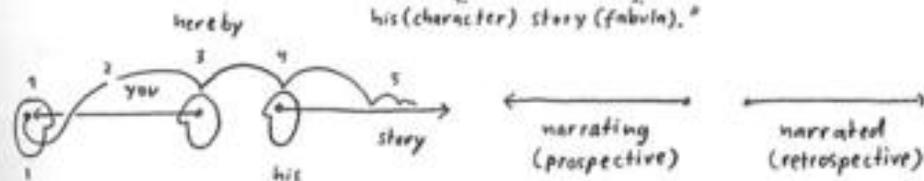


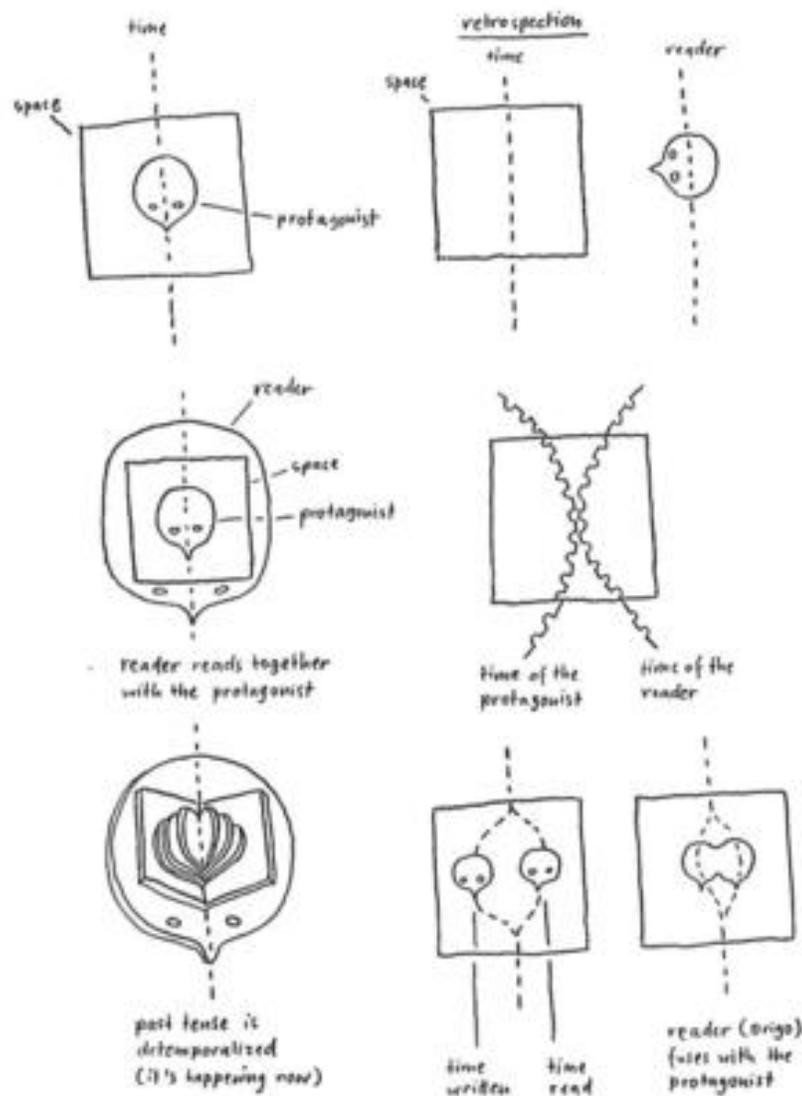
First, the status of the fabula becomes doubtful; an entire series of documentary aesthetics strips it of its fictional character. A further consequence of the use of the present tense, which manifests itself later under the heading of fictional presentification (Hamburger), is an instability in how the two narrative categories relate to each other. In fictional narration in the present tense, fabula and *sjuzet* instead become equi-present. (Conclusion)



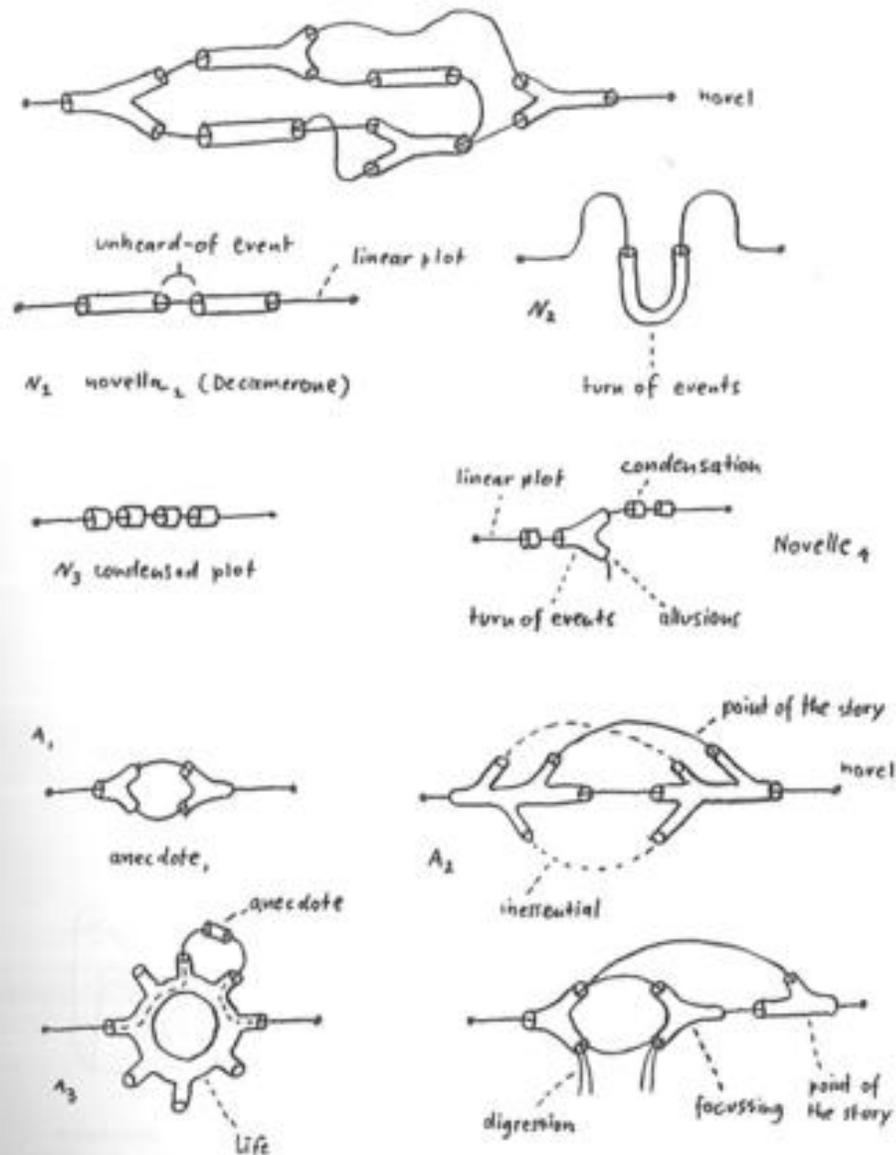
the old paradigm

"I (narrator) am telling you (clear reader) hereby (Sujet) his (character) story (fabula)."





The present tense, employed ever more skillfully and magisterially, begins to interact with other narrative elements. As soon as this is the case, theories that regard the present tense as a negligible marginal phenomenon also run into trouble when it comes to the organizing levels of narration. On the one hand the narrator, by addressing the protagonist, is never completely absent the way he is in classical third-person narration; on the other hand, he can never become fully present for in that case he would have to turn into an I. Simultaneous narration expresses this narrative-fictional twin figure in the present tense and thereby makes the paradoxical simultaneity of absence and presence plausible. (Conclusion)

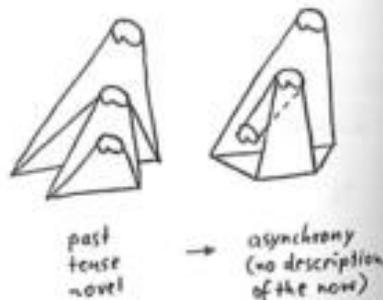
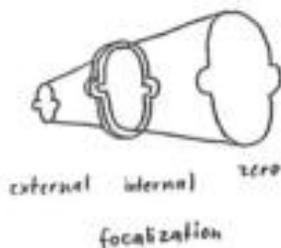
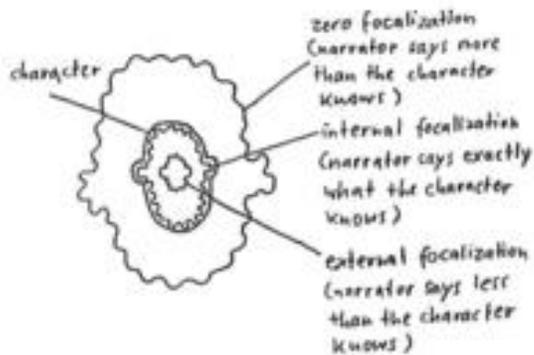
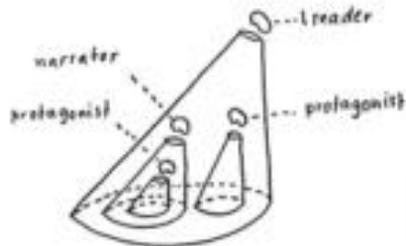
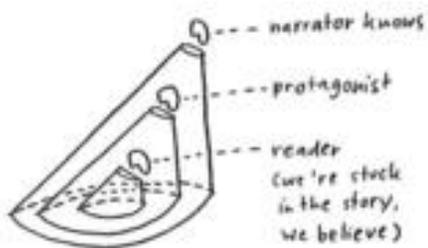


As long as a chronological, not an asynchronous narrative criterion dominated, that is, as long as the past tense dominated narration, the present tense had to be seen as anti-narrative. A supplementation of the definition of narrativity also allows us to mark the threshold at which the present-tense novel acquires its ability to narrate. (Conclusion)

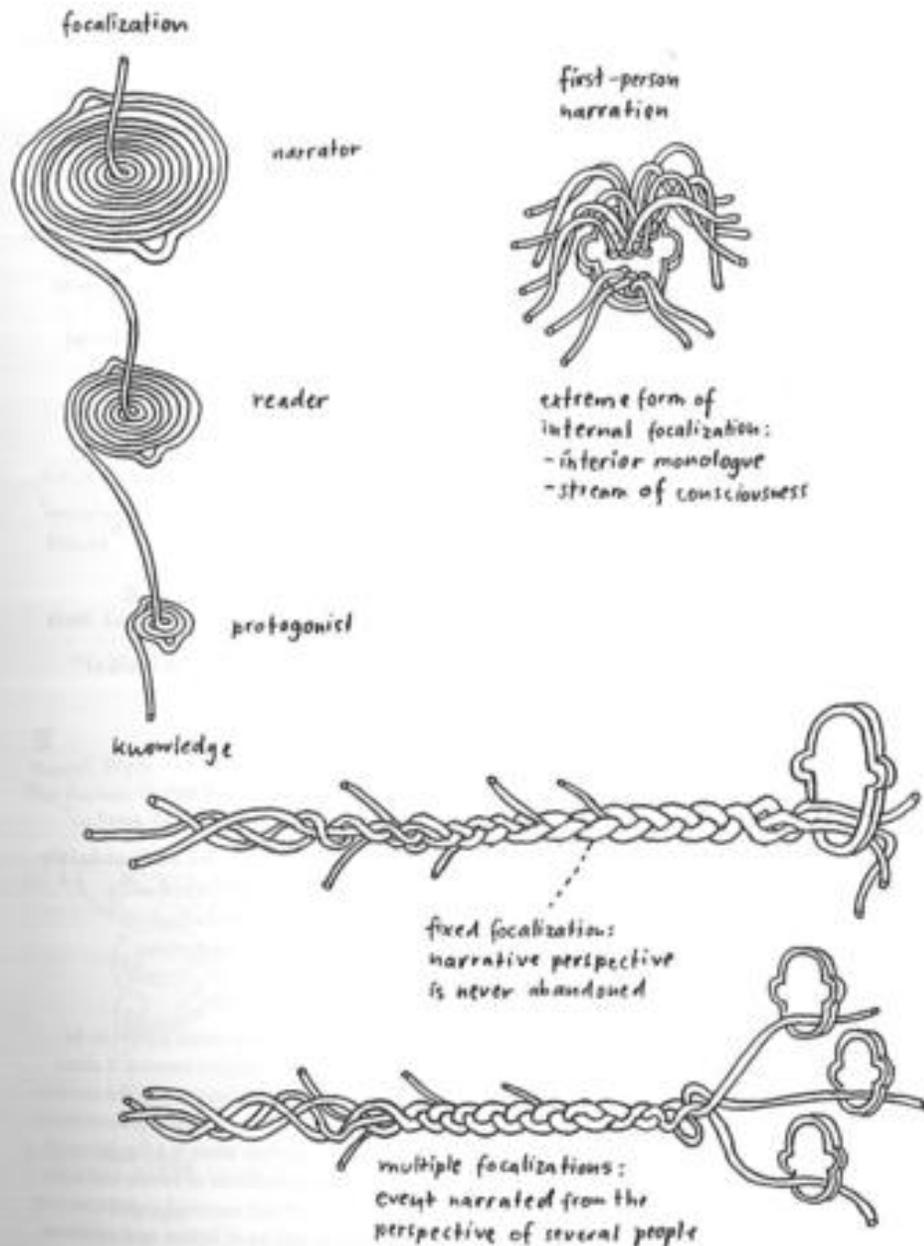
The historicity of the principle or procedure of 'focalization' is a procedure that narratology conceptualized as differentiating the idea of 'perspectivization' to distinguish between 'knowing' and 'seeing' events. (Armen Avanesian)

focalization (à Gérard Genette)

(independent of the narrator's perspective)

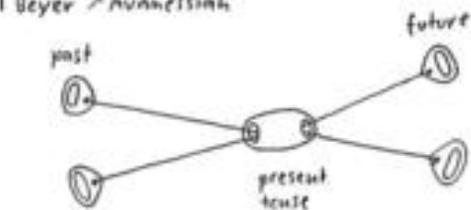


In motivating a multiple internal focalization simultaneously as spatial perspectivization, Beyer pushes the concept of focalization to the limits traced by literary history and theory. He stages the limitations of zero-focus or omniscient-authorial narration. (Armen Avanesian)

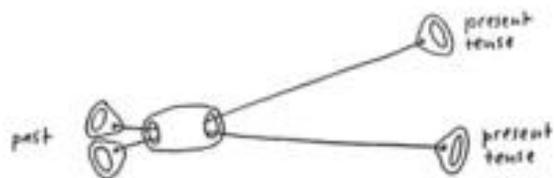


"Is that you, Herr Karnau? / Those are the last words I can make out. ... Now an adult's voice breaks the silence. Man or woman? I can't decide which, the sound is too fragmentary. All I can make out, very faintly is: Yes, yes, oh yes ... Nothing more from this point on, just a liquid gurggle repeated six times over. Was that a muffled cry? A little sob? Nothing now but breathing, the superimposed breathing of six young children with different respiratory rhythms. The sound decreases in volume and intensity until, in the end, nothing more can be heard. Although the disc continues to revolve with the needle in the groove, absolute silence reigns." (Marcel Beyer, *The Karnau Tapes*)

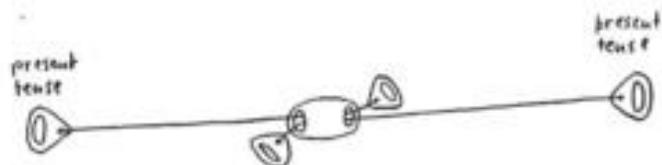
Marcel Beyer → Avnessian



I
"past + future
= present tense"

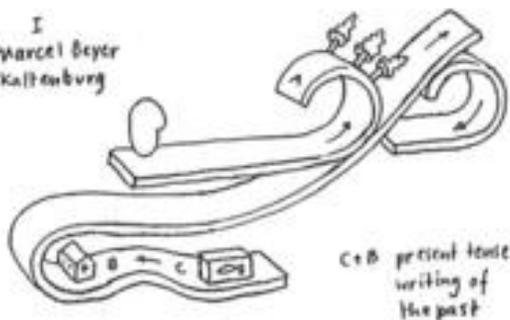


II
"present tense
+ present tense
= past"



III
"present tense
live
= 'lethal'"

I
Marcel Beyer
Kaltenburg



C+B present tense
writing of
the past

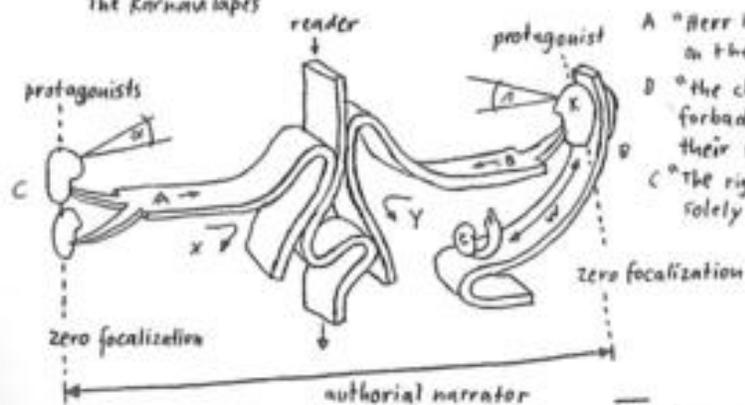
C → B
fiction
dominates
narration

C → B + A
fiction + narration
A + B + C
altered present tense
= altermodern
present tense novel

- A "Soon we will see ... a little stand of pines ..."
- B "... before the medical facility was transferred ..."
- C "... has installed a huge aquarium."

Beyer's present-tense novel can be called altermodern because it alters the reach and function of the modern present tense. A general precondition of the present tense is a fundamental shift on the levels of fabula and sujet, that is, of the narrated and the narrating as well as of fiction and narration. (Armen Avnessian)

II
Marcel Beyer
The Karnau Tapes



- A "Beer Karnau up there on the terrace ..."
- D "the children's father ... forbade me ... to record their voices ..."
- C "The right ... is vested solely in ... me."

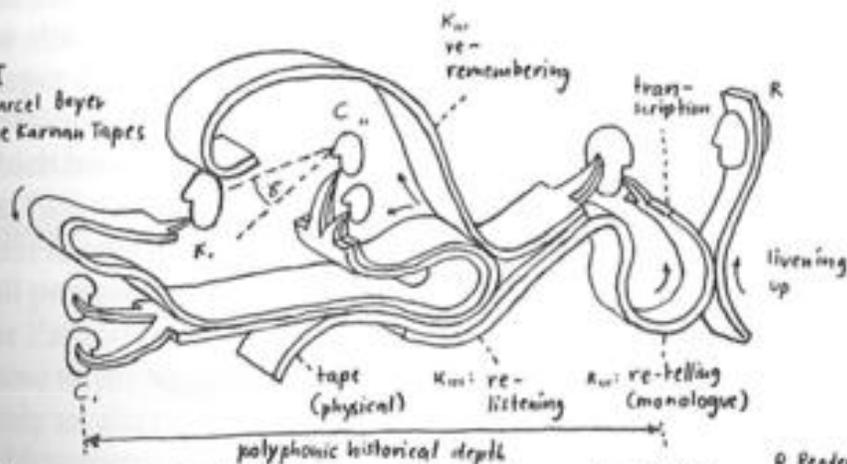
XY
same event presented
in a double frequency

distinction between
'knowing' and 'seeing'
events

spatial
perspectivation

α/β
'seeing' protagonists'
perceptions/
thoughts
w
'knowing' them
(internal
focalization)

III
Marcel Beyer
The Karnau Tapes



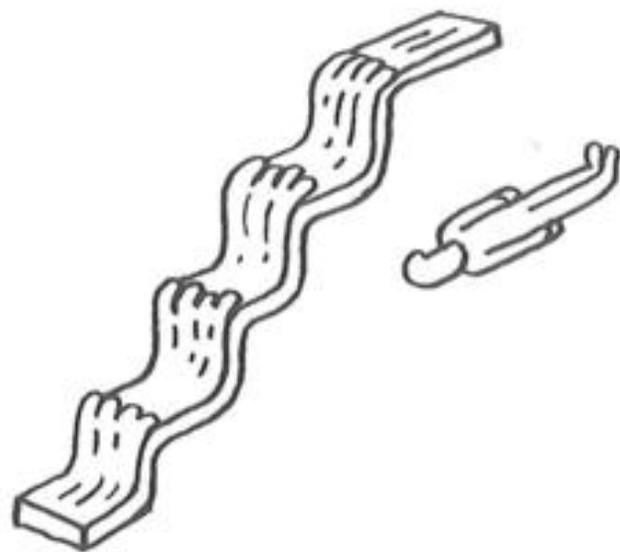
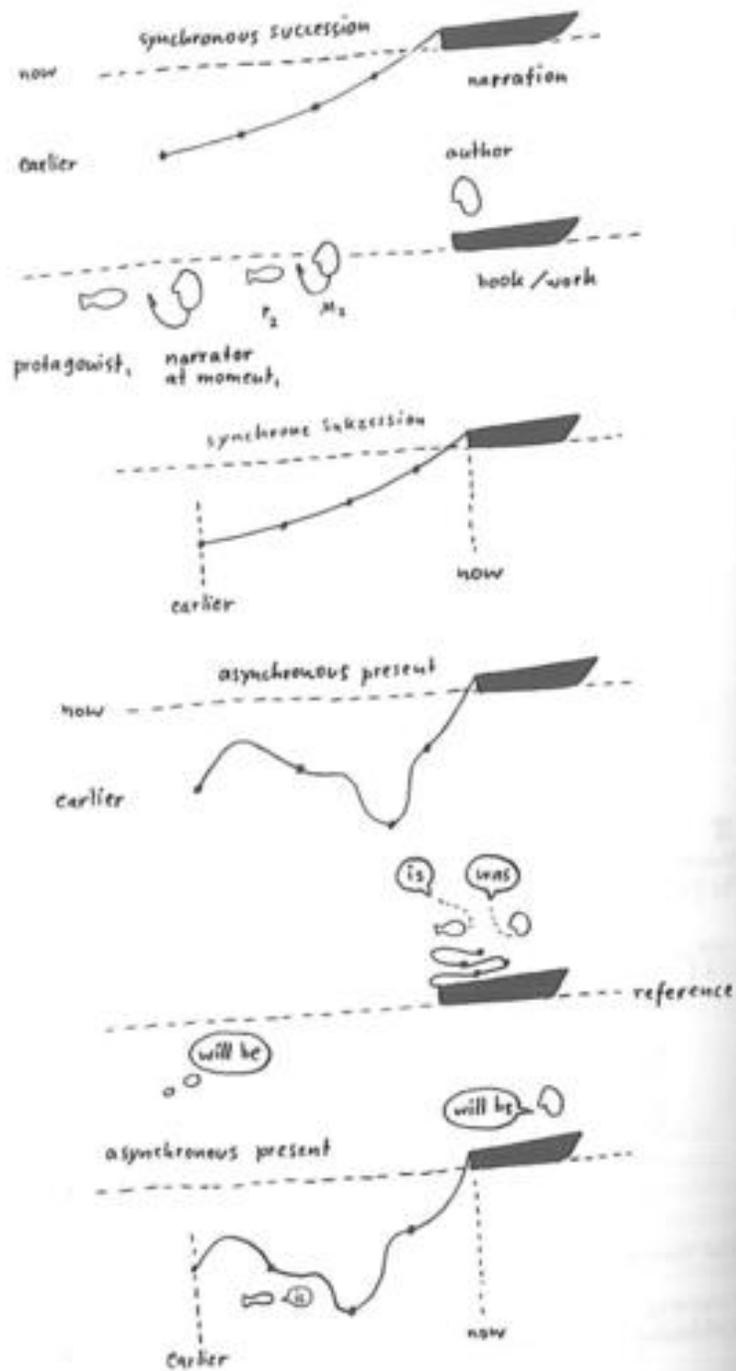
- K: bed time story
- C: children are listening

C: children are
"imitating my voice,
my fairy tale voice ...
recalling ... voice"

γ repetition
T audio document

K₀₀: "I (K) as
their (C)
only
audience."

R Reader:
what is
narrated
in the present
tense is
placed in
the past

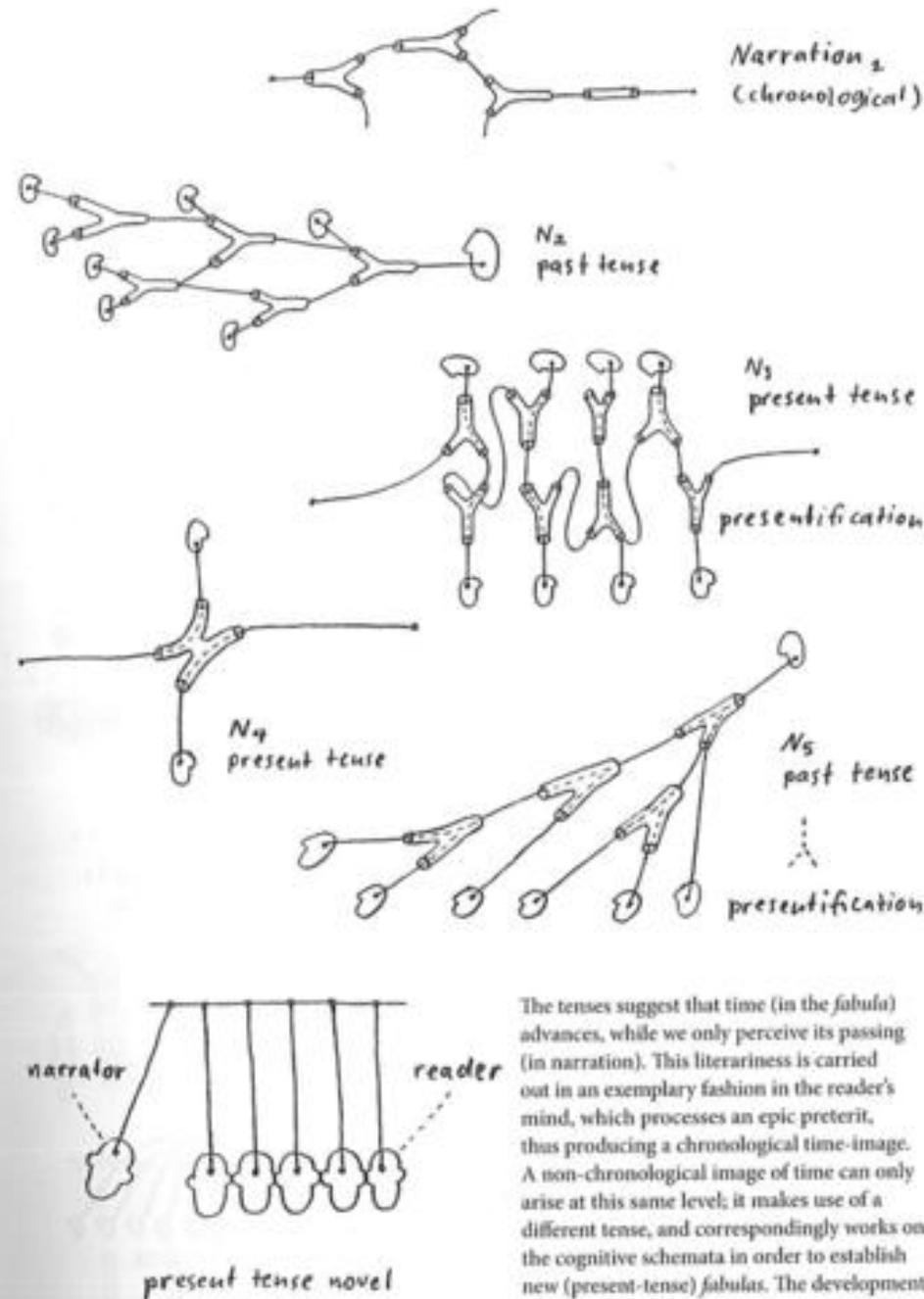


2 Present Tense: A Poetics Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig

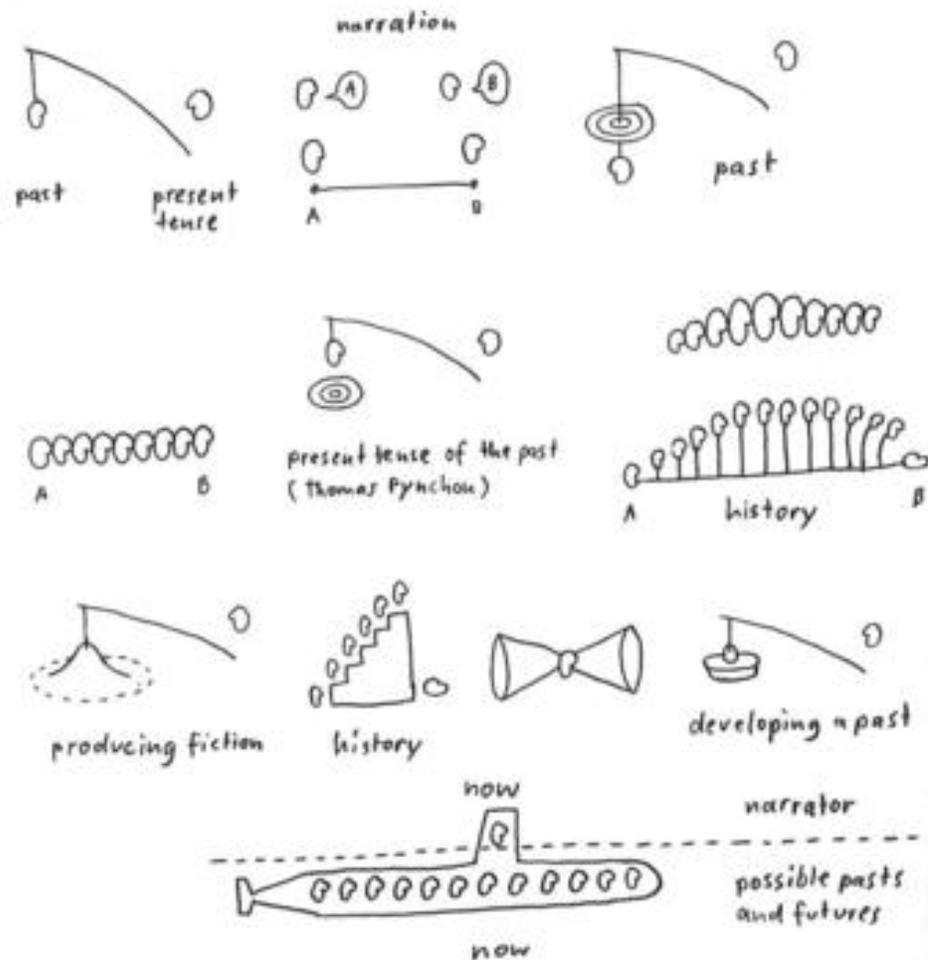
The altermodern narration of the past does not merely exceed the ability of the traditional past tense. A process Käte Hamburger called *Vergegenwärtigung* ("presentification") served to transform every past into mere presence, a traditional approach which became ideologically suspect for avant-garde writers. But late twentieth-century present-tense novels also go beyond what their modernist predecessors were trying to achieve: to evoke a full presence. Thus "history novels" set themselves apart from the *Zeitromane* or "time novels" of classical modernity (such as those written by James Joyce, Thomas Mann, or Marcel Proust). Only an altermodern present tense that takes up and alters the achievements of modernism is capable of narrating the traumatic pasts of the twentieth century (trauma being understood as an event that has never been present or experienced); only such a present tense can narrate our history that is *out of joint*.

Präsens. Poetik eines Tempus (Present Tense: A Poetics), co-written with Anke Hennig, took a whole new impetus from the translation and edition of texts for the collection on the present-tense novels (see chapter 1). The phenomenon of the present-tense novel, which emerged in this research for the first time ever even though the material had been available for more than a hundred years, called for a fundamental rethinking of our own methodology. From a given material (spoken and written present tense), how does a phenomenon in literary theory (the present-tense novel) and, perhaps, an autonomous object (asynchrony as a split or ambiguous present tense that no longer refers to the present) emerge?

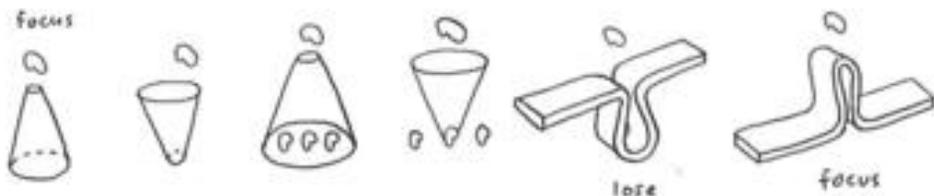
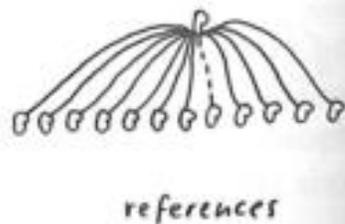
It became clear to us that in order to be able to develop an autonomous poetic approach we had to draw on linguistic analyses (Gustave Guillaume, Roman Jakobson, Harald Weinrich) and rethink the relationship between literature and (analytical) philosophy (Sebastian Rödl, Bertrand Russell, John MacTaggart). The publication of the book coincided with the development of a platform—Speculative Poetics—for research and publication that would provide contemporary authors and (speculative) theorists with a forum to think literature as an experimental laboratory of language. A poetics in this sense is less interested in individual great works or great authors than it is in the productive power of language itself. There is no *aisthesis* or *noiesis* of time without *poiesis* to precede them: before we can think about time and even before we experience time, the grammatical interplay of language tenses produces (through *poiesis*) our chronological understanding of time. This is why the roles have to be swapped. Instead of philosophy reflecting on literature, we need to draw on literature's knowledge of time, a knowledge that is inaccessible to philosophy. In turn, the philosophy of time can tell us something about literary writing and reading.



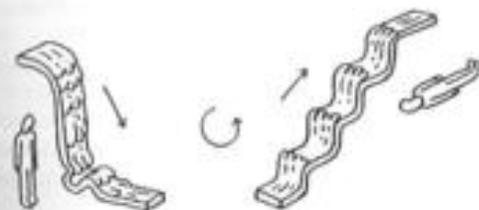
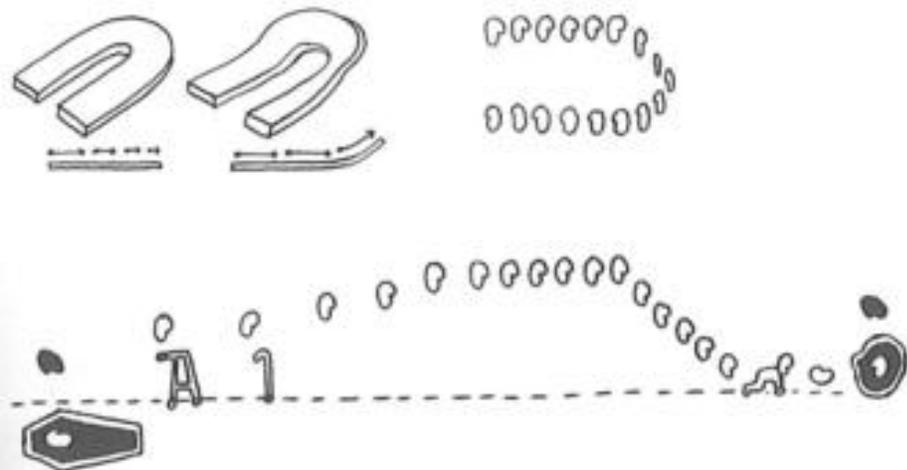
The tenses suggest that time (in the *fabula*) advances, while we only perceive its passing (in *narration*). This literariness is carried out in an exemplary fashion in the reader's mind, which processes an epic preterit, thus producing a chronological time-image. A non-chronological image of time can only arise at this same level; it makes use of a different tense, and correspondingly works on the cognitive schemata in order to establish new (present-tense) *fabulas*. The development of an asynchronous present tense requires learning a new way of reading.



Already the first sentences of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* create the central motif of a present that is non-concurrent (with itself). *A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now. It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre. In its temporal meaning, the "It is too late" traverses the present, but it does not designate itself as present tense. Rather, the present is an a-synchronous one, corresponding to a peculiar figure, according to which the present precedes itself or comes into relation to itself too late.*



reversal of the flow of time

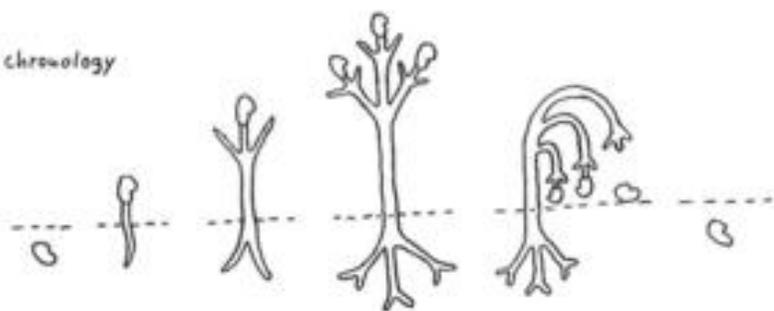


apparent reversal of the flow of time

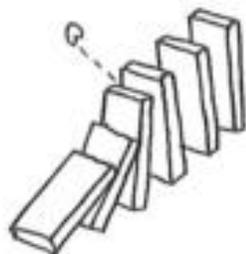


Walter Benjamin speaks of the movement "by which my hand slid the letters into the groove, where they would be arranged to form words. My hand can still dream of this movement, but it can no longer awaken so as actually to perform it. By the same token, I can dream of the way I once learned to walk. But that doesn't help. I now know how to walk. There is no more learning to walk." Our poetics of the literary present will have to depart somewhat from Benjamin with reference to the regained appeal of storytelling. In the fictional constitution of time, this appeal does allow us to have the sensation of acquiring language, and reading fiction does so over and over again. We will see how such a learning-over-and-over-again of reading in the preterit corresponds to learning a new kind of reading in the present tense.

chronology



chronology (without time)

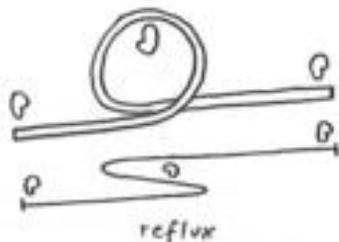


chronology (with time and movement)

loop



Past, or more precisely, previousness or anteriority arises only when and only through the fact that the present becomes differentiated. Whenever a further moment enters in between two other moments, a relation of previousness arises.



reflux

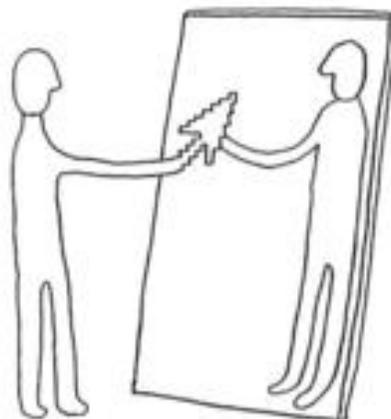
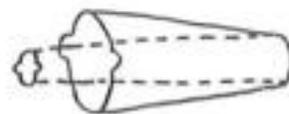
(? Mars)



Lacan mirror stage



months
6-18



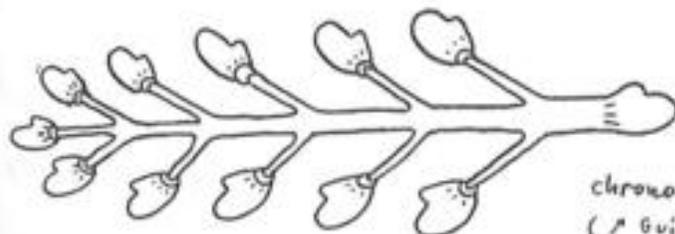
ego - googling



novel narrates forward
reader reads backward



The altermodern novel produces nonconcurrentness not only in texts, but equally, in its literary historical self-positioning—one might call this the existentialization of its method. The agenda of altermodern narration, in its asynchronous relation to the literary event, is as little postmodern as it is premodern. The insight into asynchrony—that every present moment is concurrent with a previous one—causes the altermodern novel to position writing ahead of the present moment. Our methodological guideline has been exactly the asynchronous poetics of the present tense, which the altermodern novel sets out and extends in its three dimensions: literary history, historical poetics, and time-poetics. This is the perspective from which we view the present tense and its achievements in creating fiction and narration. Only this enables us to show how the present tense opens up a new approach to language and reading.



chronogenesis
(? Guillaume)

deixis

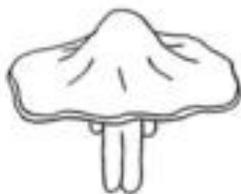
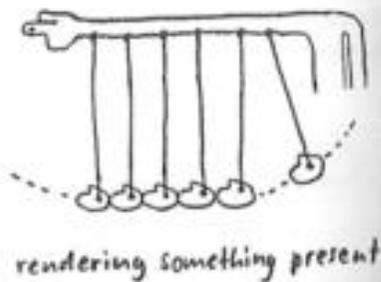
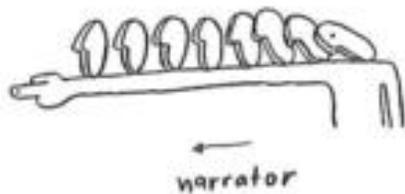
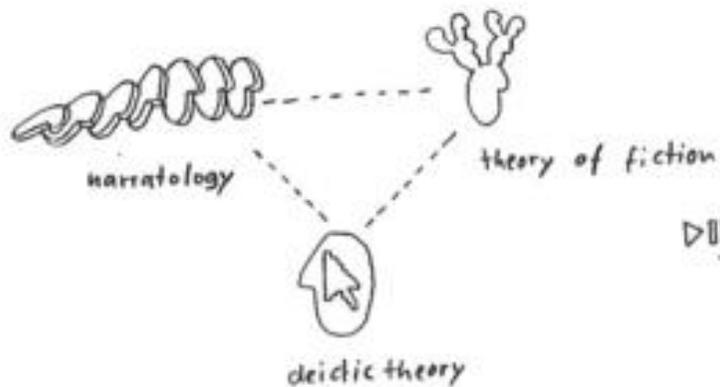
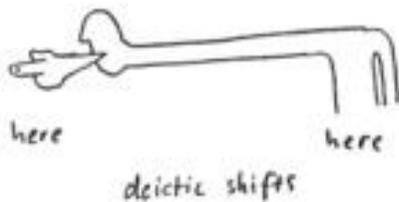
there

here

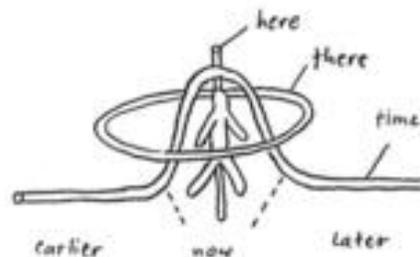
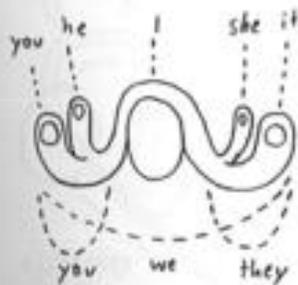
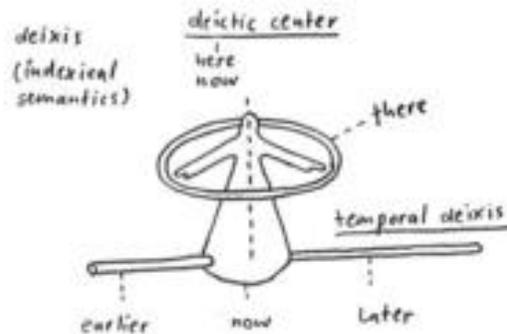
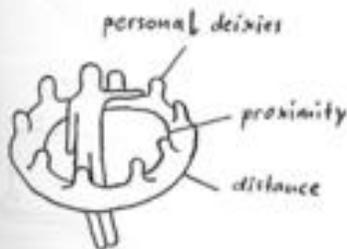
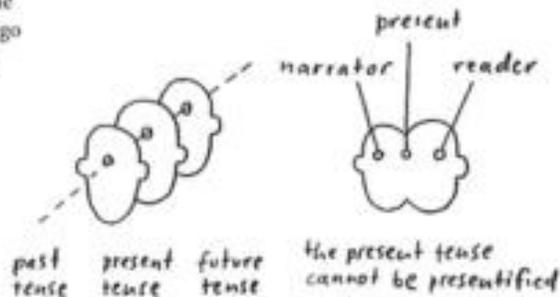
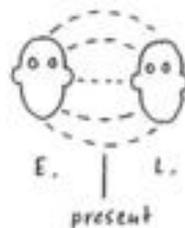
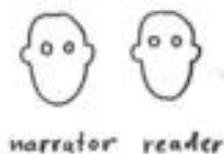


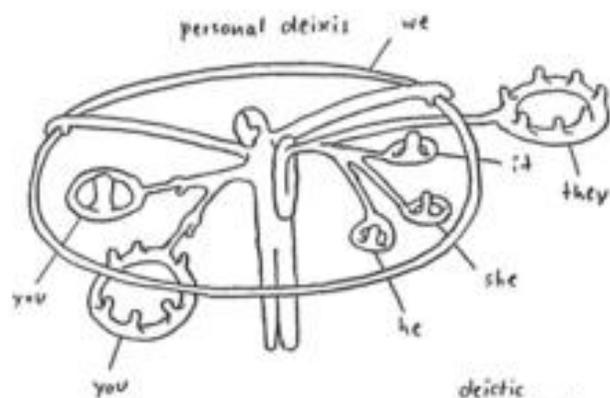
here

here

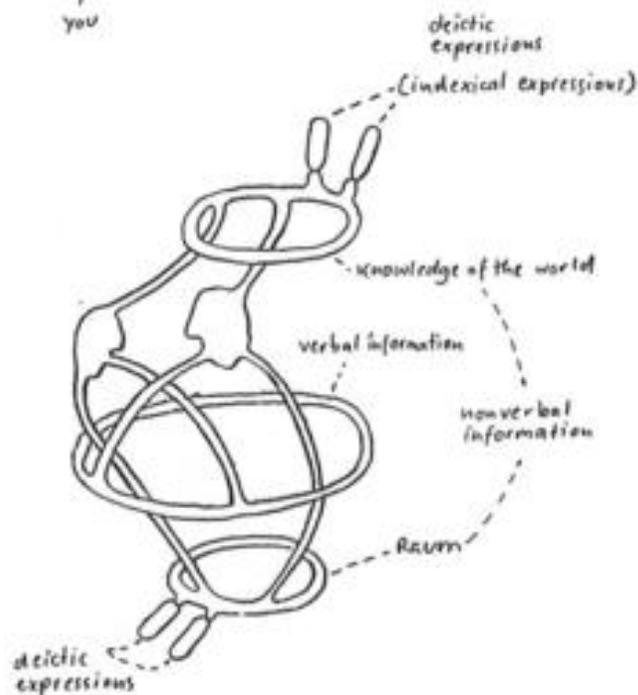


Deixis is the practice of everyday linguistic indication, in which any reference depends on the coordinates of space, time, and person. In the classical theory of deixis, the three parameters form an I-here-now origo and thereby constitute a system of reality.





Reference generally can only be determined depending on the original coordinates of such a system of reality. Only by resorting to my I-here-now origo can I establish when "yesterday" is, where "there" is, and who "he" is. Fiction emerges when the spatial or temporal deictics are artistically forged in such a way that a deictic shift and a shift of references occur.



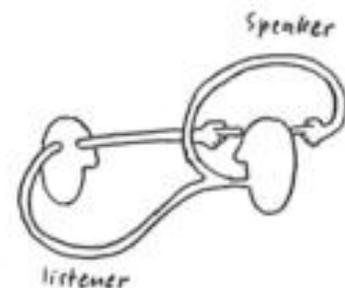
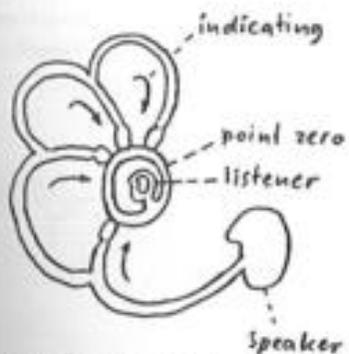
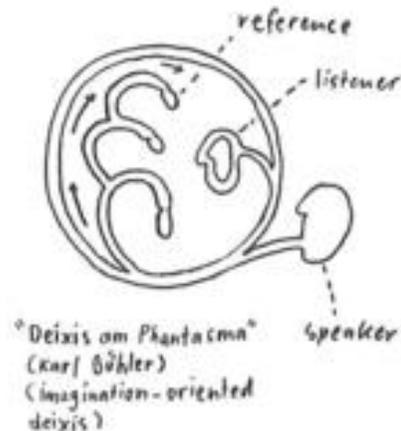
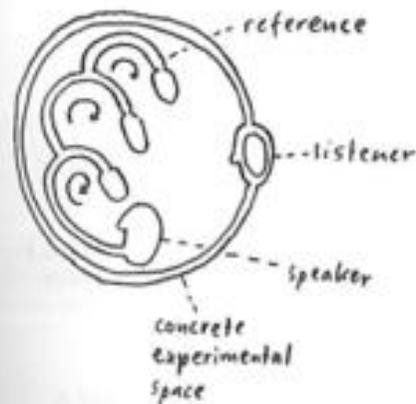
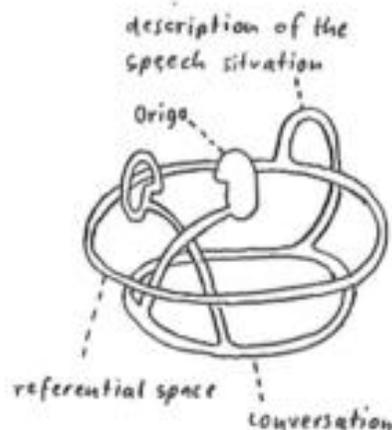
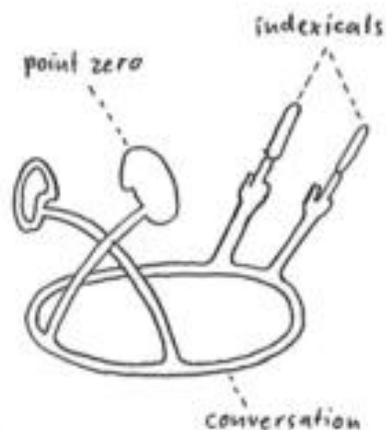
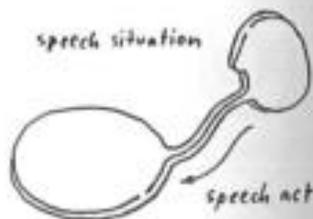
local deixis



temporal deixis



speech situation



imagination-oriented deixis

The method of reflecting on characteristics of literature is a time-based art within literary studies. We not only understand the introduction of time-poetics in opposition to the question of a historical poetics on the one hand and the goals of literary history on the other. We also see it as a reflection of the consequences that arise from literature as a time-based art. Literary history merely positions novels within a chronology. In contrast historical poetics anchors literary works in two ways—in a history of events and in a history of structure. Literary artworks are thus as much singular events as they are agents of a history of the genre that reaches far beyond the work. In contrast to this, time-poetics reminds us that literature neither merges completely and cleanly into a chronological history of literature nor into a progression of the genre. Time-poetics thus examines the potential of literary language (tense) to form time. From this perspective, the past novel of the altermodern can continue on from traditional narration without falling back behind the achievements of the modern present tense.

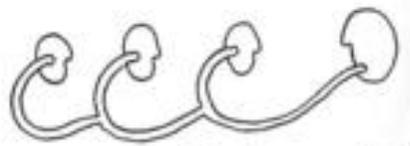
asynchrony v. presentation
(not a history of progress)



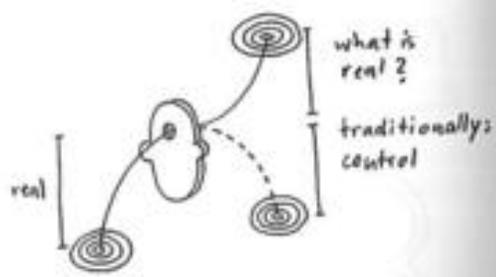
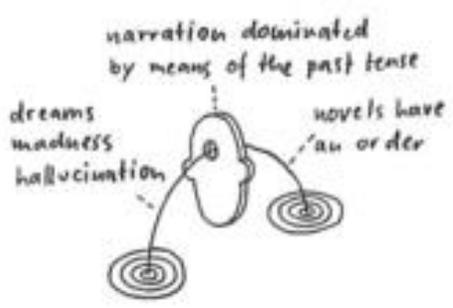
≠ asynchronous poetics of time



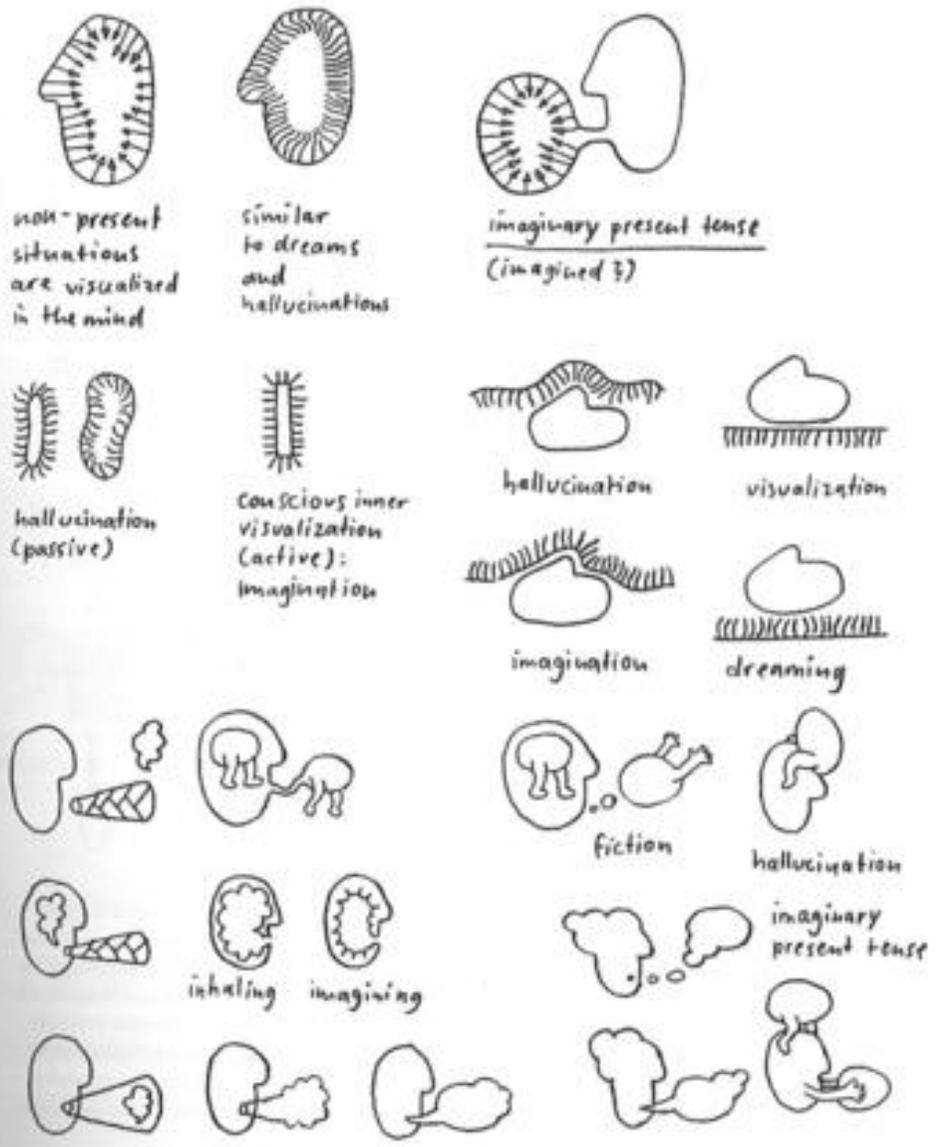
synchronicity (?)

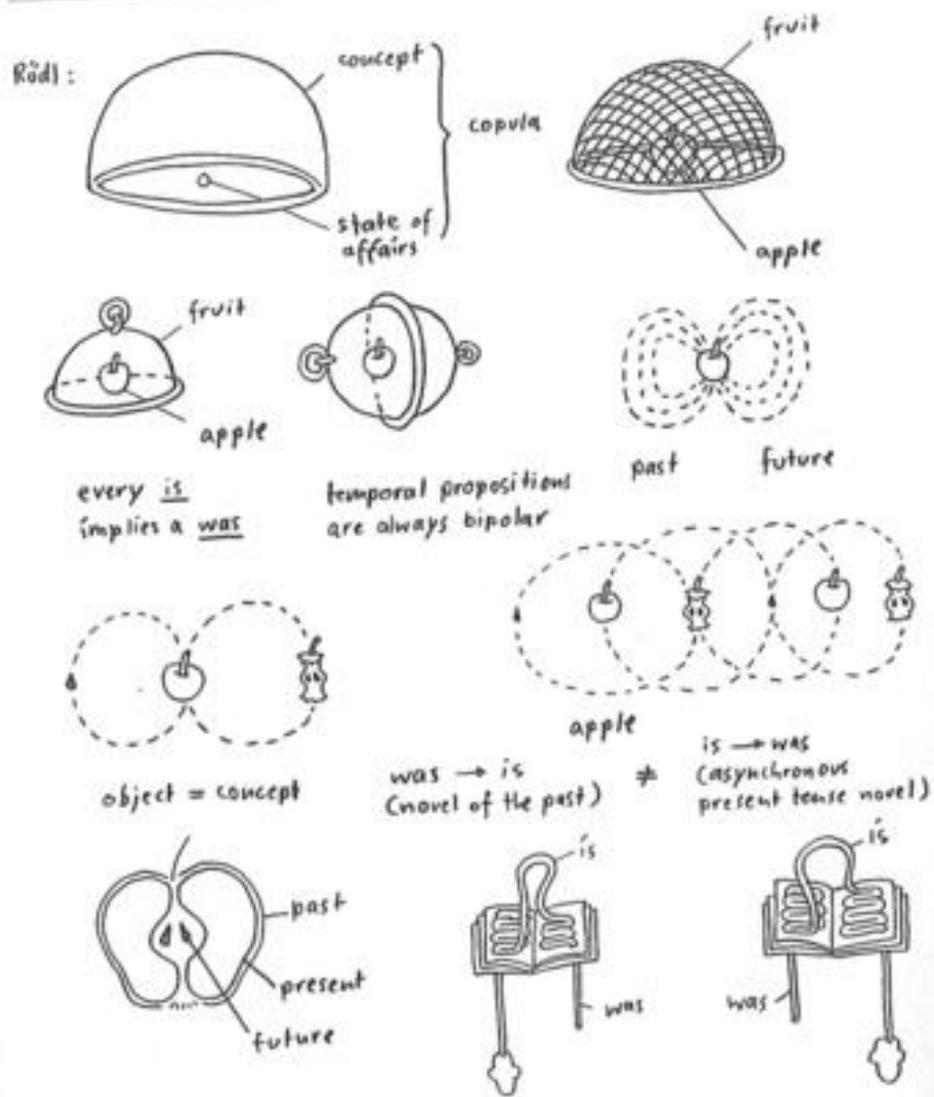


past tense → crisis of the novel → present tense



The imaginary is the substance of fiction, which, as Wolfgang Iser writes, most often likely comes to a pure present in delusion. Under the dominance of narration in the nineteenth century, the imaginary does not gain the stable form of fiction, and only appears in three precarious forms situated between delusion and fiction. It can first be seen when the difference between delusion and fiction (of the protagonist) remains undetectable; second, when the difference is undecidable (for the reader); and third, when delusion and fiction are indistinguishable (also for the author). The development of a textual imaginary in the twentieth century is central for the dominant shift in the novel from narration to fiction.

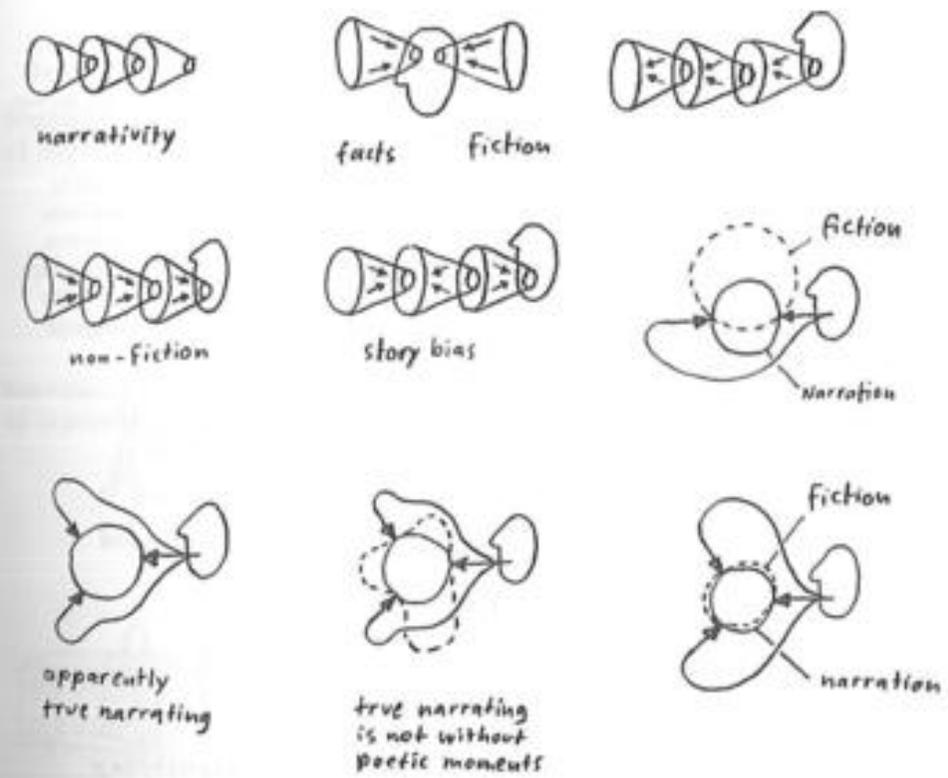


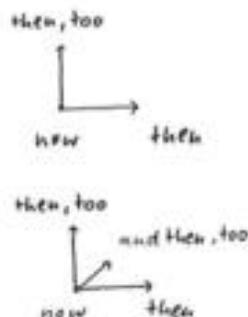
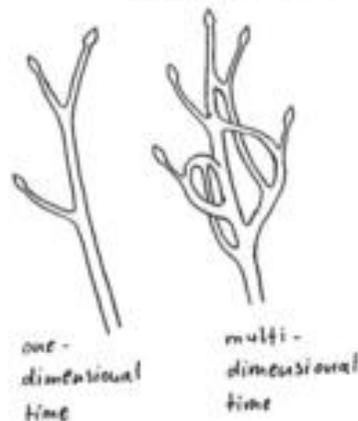
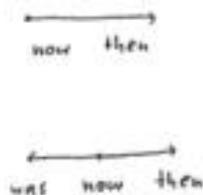
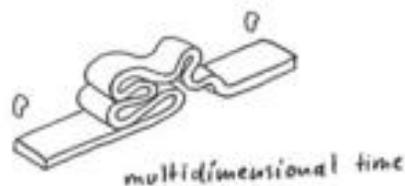


Temporal statements assemble two time-poles (was/is) into a predicative unity that does not correspond to the form in which the objects fall under concepts. Rather, a statement in the form of "S was/is A" considers various conditions as the temporal unity of a substance for which the difference of the conditions is as characteristic as this unity is. "A fruit is/was a blossom" means: Fruit and blossom are not considered as different objects that come under different terms, but should be thought precisely as a unity of two time-poles. The temporal knowledge of novels, their individual poetics, can be defined by the way in which the time-figurations of the novel are cloaked in the form of temporal statements: the was/is in narrational fiction (in the time-figuration of presentification) and the is/was of the asynchronous past novel.

"He is fifty. He is the general in overall command of the artillery with the French army in Italy. His residence is at Milan. He wears a high-collared tunic with a front embroidered in gold. He is sixty. He oversees the completion of the terrace of his chateau. He is shivering, wrapped in an old military cloak. He sees black spots. By evening he will be dead. He is thirty. He is a captain. He goes to the opera. He wears a three-cornered hat, a blue tunic gathered in at the waist, and a dress sword." (Claude Simon, *The Georgics*)

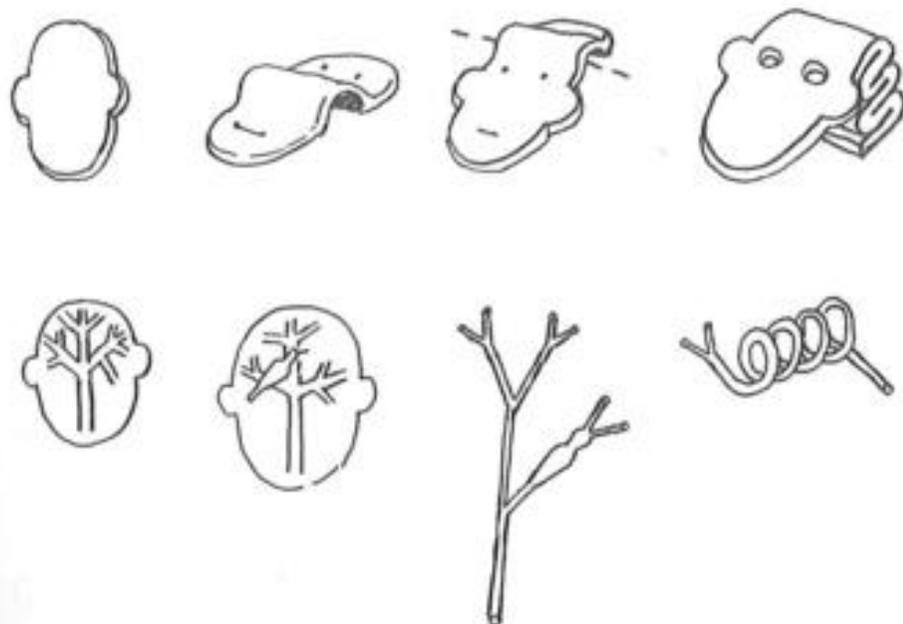
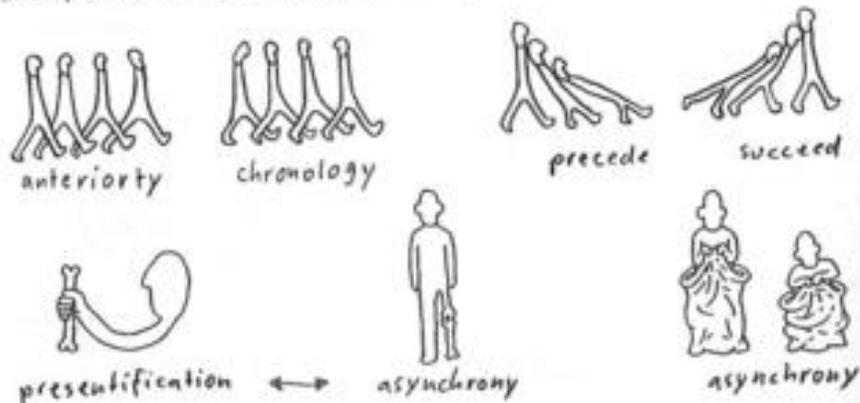
bipolarity



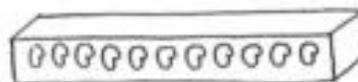


In this third temporal polarity, we find ourselves confronted with the oxymoron [...] of sense dating and sense data, which functions as the catalyst for a new understanding of time. The oxymoron of synchronous succession can be explicitly reformulated into a temporal bipolarity, thus clearing the way to understanding the asynchronous concept of the present, which we have seen in the present-tense novel, within the terms of a philosophy of tense.

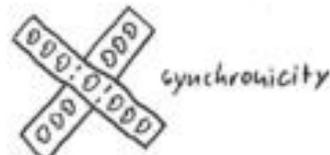
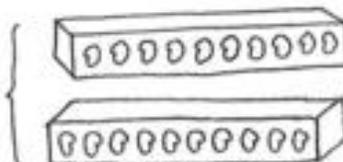
It is enough to read the language (of the *subject*) for the temporal succession in each moment to turn around into illusionary consecutiveness (of the *fabula*). In order to do so, no instruction from narrational fiction is necessary; alphabetization is all it takes. The literature of narrational fiction always knew about this genuinely linguistic moment of illusion. Every narrational fiction thus realizes an event that can be found in the grammar of language, and by causing the actual anteriority of the *subject* to turn around into the fictional consecutiveness of the *fabula*, it makes the event of language (in the present of reading) something that can be experienced as such.



simultaneity of experience



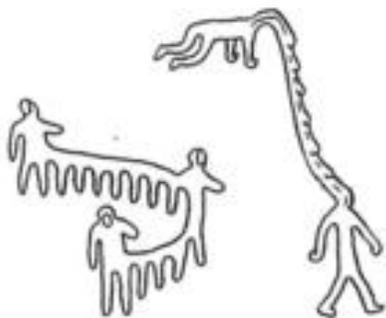
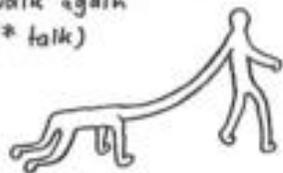
non-simultaneity of experience



In a nonsimultaneous present, every present moment is concurrent to a preceding moment. This preceding moment (anteriority) splits any presence presumably present to itself (self-present present), and because this moment always remains non-present, it is introduced as a division in the present itself. Asynchrony is a time-figuration of the altermodern present-tense novel. It links the currentness of fiction with the retrospectivity of narration under the dominance of fiction. The asynchronous present tense makes it possible to see an anterior moment in the currentness of fiction and a non-current moment of narrative retrospection. Furthermore, the time-figuration of asynchrony provides an answer to the question of the possibility of narrating the past. Narration is—over.

Benjamin:

Once we've learned
how to walk[?], we
cannot learn how to
walk again
(* talk)



This is also the way in which the present-tense novel provides a poetics of tense for reading. In particular, when we take its two-dimensional image of time seriously, we can also arrive at a new poetics of history: at the discovery of an unpredictable past. A new history, called for by asynchronous present tense, is as unpredictable as is the future, and entails a poetological quest for literature's infinite past. The experimental task of this quest is to temporally dissociate the horizons of theory—of present, history, and time.

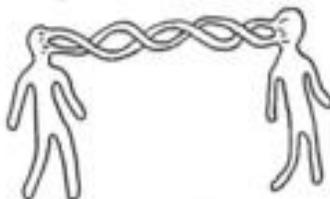
time is chronology



time emerges through language



synthesis of tense



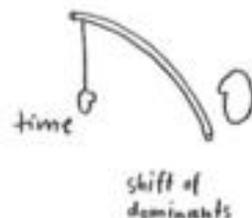
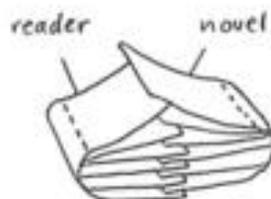
tense-philosophy



language

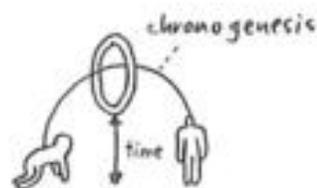


learning to walk



spatial deixis

shift of
dominants

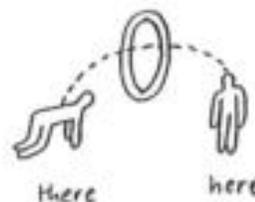


chronogenesis



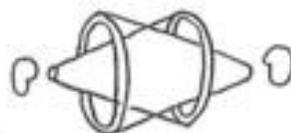
here

here

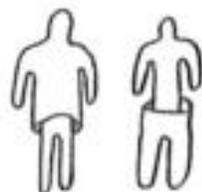


there

here



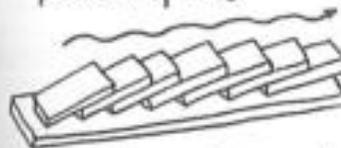
present tense novel
finds a solution for the
bipolar problem of time



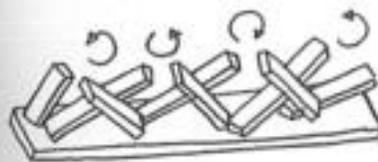
pajama solution
for a bipolar
sleeping problem



problem of time

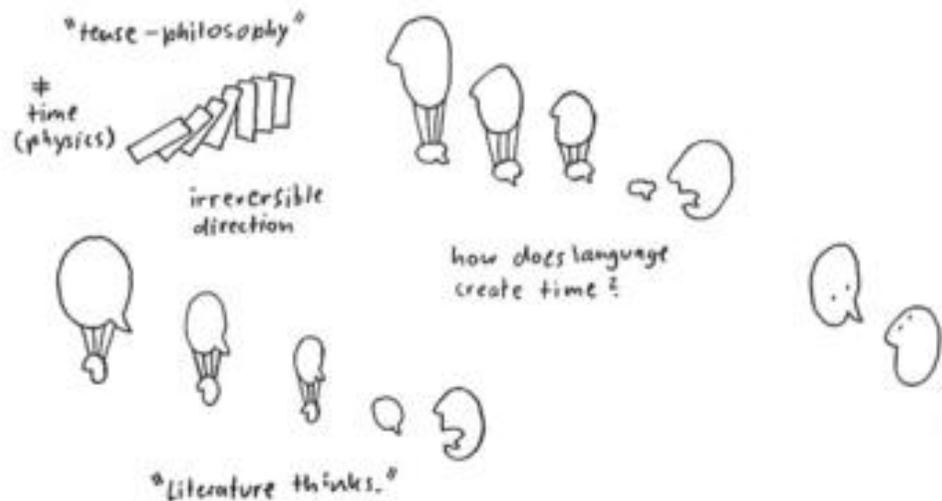


surface of the novel

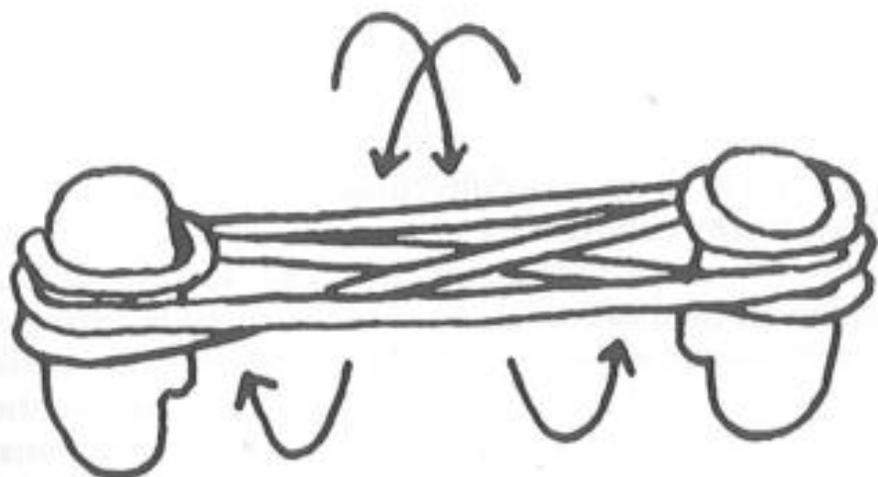
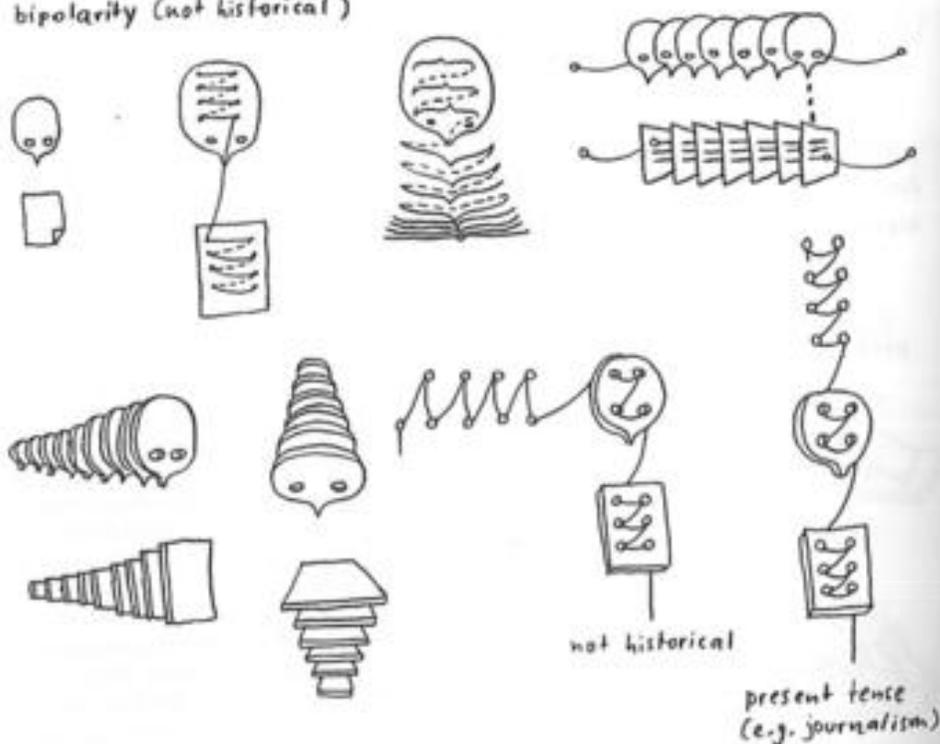


asynchrony

In the twentieth century, we observe a shift of dominants from narrated fiction to fictional narration. We transfer the concept, coined originally within the formalist framework of analyses of individual works, to questions of literary history and questions of historical poetics. If we understand literary artworks as products of language in which the poetic function is dominant, this also implies that the historical shift of dominants can entail entire genres falling out of or being newly included in the concept of literature. Artworks are not static objects but are to be understood as events of contradiction. The literary text thus understood retains its aesthetic value so long as new dominants manage to emerge in the struggle of contradictions within the work and as long as new relations of contrast can be discerned thanks to which the relations within the work can be deformed.



bipolarity (not historical)



3 Time and Verb *Gustave Guillaume* The work of linguist Gustave Guillaume (1883–1960) has been largely forgotten. The translation of his *Temps et verbe* into German (*Zeit und Verb*) aims to introduce Guillaume's work as a resource for a post-structuralist theory of language that no longer relies on (binary) oppositions (of phonemes) and an alleged arbitrariness of the signifier. The idea for this publication, coedited with my colleague Anke Hennig, goes back to a workshop with the Munich-based linguist Elisabeth Leiss who also wrote the introduction to the volume, while I added an epilogue.

Grammar is the science of the forms of language. For Guillaume, this also means that these forms always have to be speculatively (re)mobilized and that they have to be observed in movement. Problems of morphology, for example, are to be approached from within. In one of his seminars in 1956, Guillaume remarked: "Like everyone else, I once spoke of

the *morphology* and *ontology* of language. Now I prefer to say *morphogeny* and *ontogeny*.”

There are many reasons to introduce Guillaume as a privileged interlocutor for a theory of language aware of its necessary linguistic basis. Besides his method of comparing different languages, there is, above all, a pronounced sensitivity for the diachronic and synchronic shifts that lead to transformations of language (and of reality). Guillaume's multidimensional linguistic model, without which *Präsens. Poetik eines Tempus* (see chapter 2) would not have been possible, runs counter to the linear and chronological model of time in traditional grammar that thinks the present only as a limit or a border between past and future. Second, Guillaume allows us to see, without desisting from ontology, that there is no such thing as a prelinguistic essence of time. Third, on a methodological level, Guillaume supplements his constructive and “schematic figuration” with an approach that remedies the insufficiencies of purely deductive or inductive arguments. His demand for a particular “tactfulness in hypothesizing” intimates an awareness of the abductive character of his far-reaching linguistic hypotheses. His observations and the fundamental distinction he makes between a potential and an actual principle of language are abductive and therefore speculative in nature.

Guillaume's insights are of crucial importance for my thinking about literature. His thoughts (which were taken up, for example, by Giorio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze, and Roland Barthes) allow us to redefine poetics as a poetics of time, to understand language as always changing and renewing itself. This is true above all for his vigorous resystematization of tenses that sheds a whole new light on debates and paradoxes

* Gustave Guillaume, *Foundations for a Science of Language*, ed. and trans. Walter Hirtle and John Hewson (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984), 14.

in analytical and continental philosophies of time. The core principle of such a tense-philosophy, which no longer thinks in the narrow categories of either the philosophy of time or the theory of tenses, might be articulated as: *the present was futural, is present, and will be past*. Or as Guillaume himself put it: “What the attentive observer discovers in language considered in itself, on the level of language proper, are the mechanisms by which thinking captures itself.”

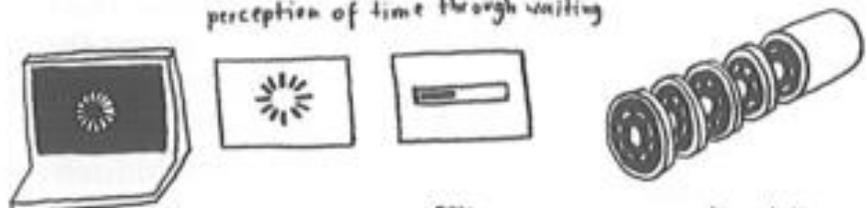
Therefore it is not a coincidence that Barthes, in his discussion of transitive and intransitive verbs and in his reflections on the shared horizon of speculative linguistics and contemporary experimental literature, explicitly refers to Guillaume: “At the other extreme of the experience of discourse, the present-day writer can no longer content himself with expressing his own present, according to a lyrical plan, for example. He must learn to distinguish between the present of the speaker, which is grounded on a psychological fullness, and the present of what is spoken [*la locution*] which is mobile and in which the event and the writing become absolutely coincidental. Thus literature, at least in some of its pursuits, seems to me to be following the same path as linguistics when, along with Gustave Guillaume (a linguist not presently in fashion but who may become so again), it concerns itself with operative time and the time proper to the utterance [*énonciation*] itself.”

The task of Speculative Poetics, in this sense, is to develop the possibilities opened up by the systematic connection Guillaume describes between the recursive autopoiesis of language and its poietic (i.e., chronogenetic and truth-instituting) function: language constitutes (our understanding of) time.

* Gustave Guillaume, *Principes de linguistique théorique* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973), 94.

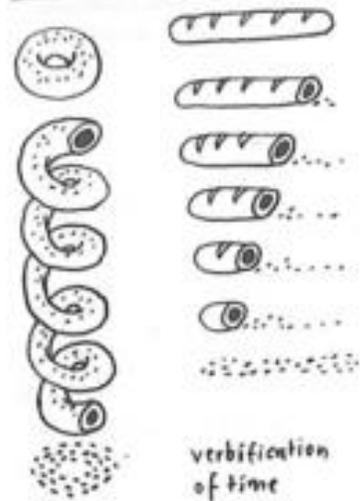
* Roland Barthes, “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?,” in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 138.

perception of time through waiting

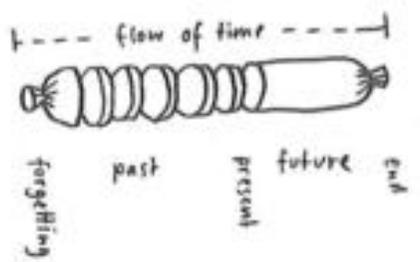


now (moment)

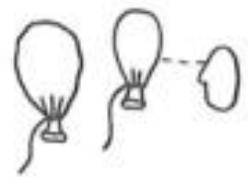
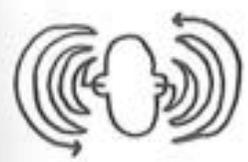
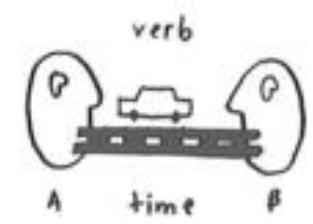
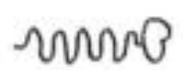
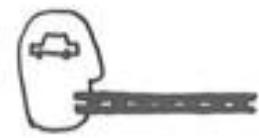
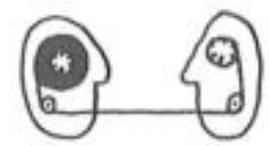
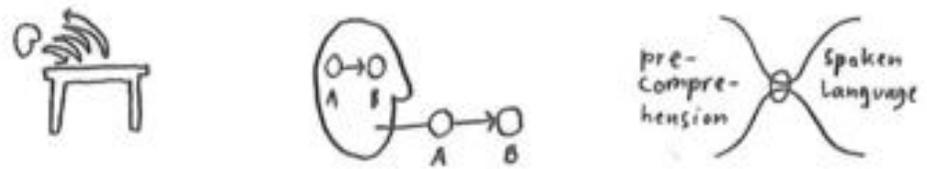
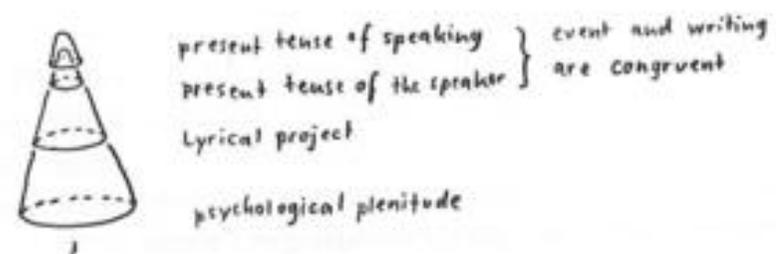
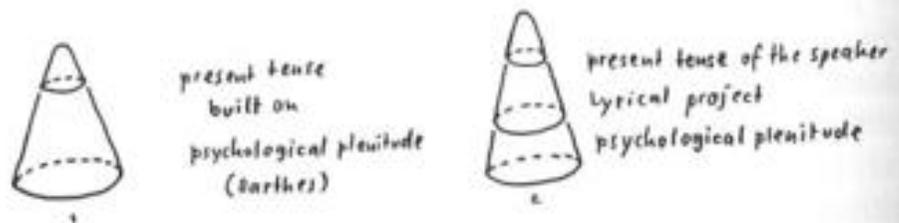
sectional time



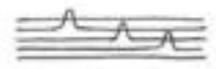
verbification of time



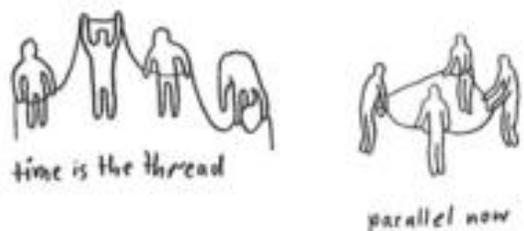
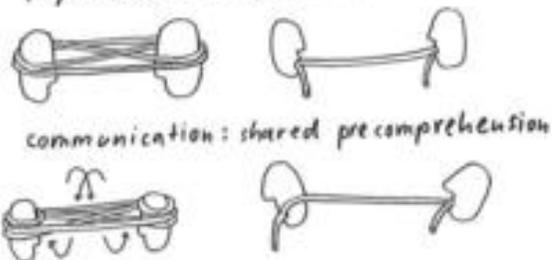
In Guillaume's multidimensional linguistic model, everything is at odds with the linear and chronological model of time in traditional grammar, which thinks the present only as the limit between past and future. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)



fundamental questions in the philosophy of language



psychosemantic reflections



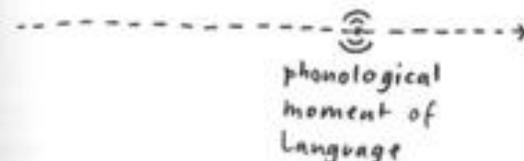
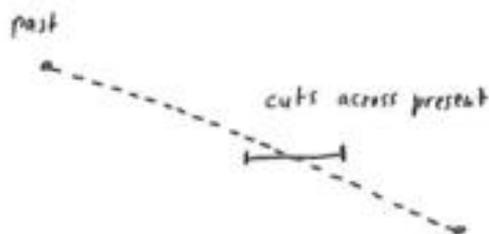
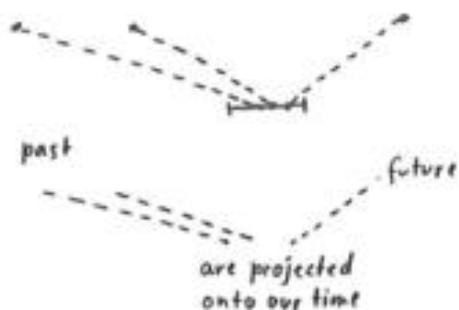
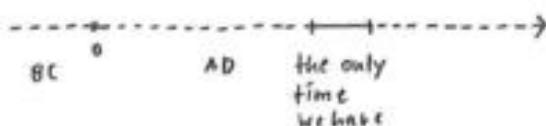
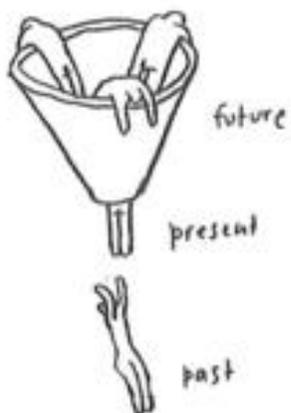
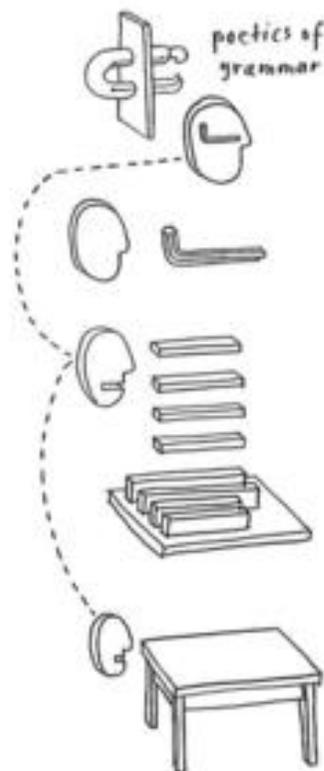
structure as instrument of interpretation



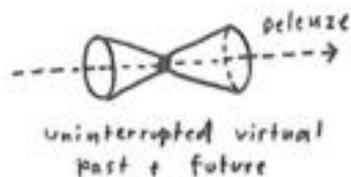
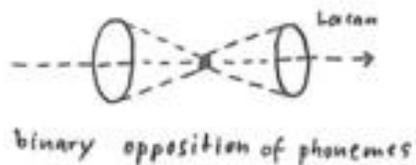
multidimensional time



poetics of grammar

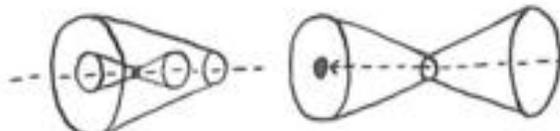


Gilles Deleuze



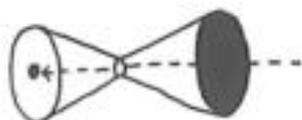
In Giorgio Agamben's *The Time That Remains*, Guillaume's concepts of operative time and chronogenesis are not only connected with other linguistic theories or a temporal poetics of lyrical rhyme. Agamben cites Guillaume as chief witness for his philosophy of time. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)

Guillaume on how individual times are pictured in others



picturing a past present

every present will be a past time



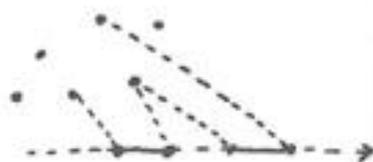
every past once was a future

We may risk the hypothesis that not just Deleuze's theory of time but his entire philosophy of time is based on Guillaume's dynamized linguistics. What we find in Deleuze's paradoxical syntheses of time, in this internal meshing of, above all, past and present, is something Guillaume conceptualized decades earlier from the fact that times/tenses can be figured by other times/tenses: every present will be past, every past once was a future. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)

the poetics of time as poetics



synchronous shift



diachronous shift (different picturing of parts of the past)

event

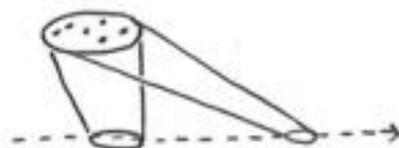


image of the world

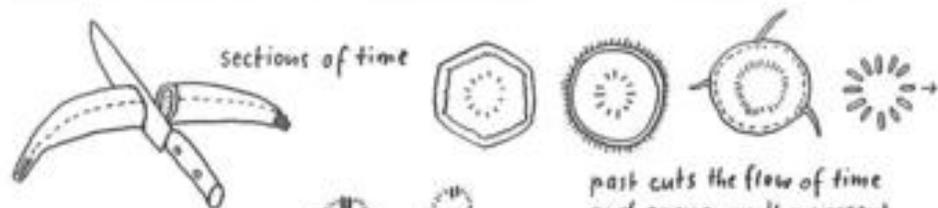
event



shift

image of the world

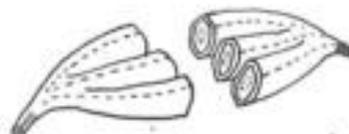
overwriting of the event



sections of time

past cuts the flow of time and opens up the present

multidimensional time

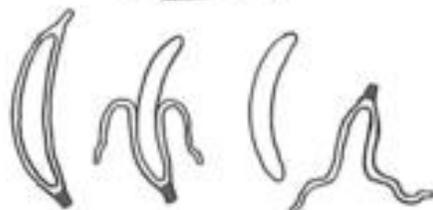


present

emerges in the passing of the future



language



past - passing - present - future

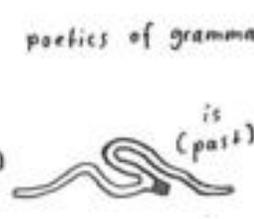
shared pre-comprehension
↓
formation of language



'is (to pass)



'is (passing)



'is (past)

poetics of grammar



reality



verb



signifying side of language



phonetic side of language



interpretation of reality



The present was futural,
is present and will be past



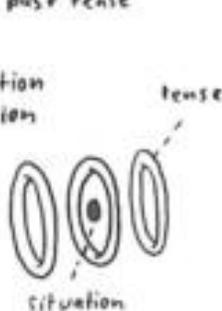
grammatical bi- and
tritemporality



atrophy of the
past tense

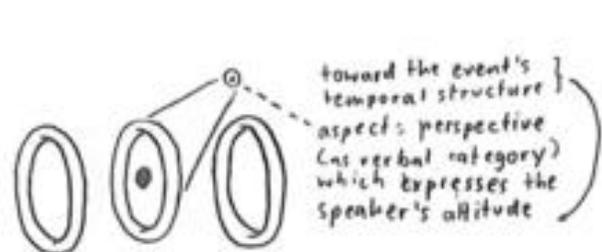
from past-tense
narration to
the narrative
present tense

temporal position
of the situation

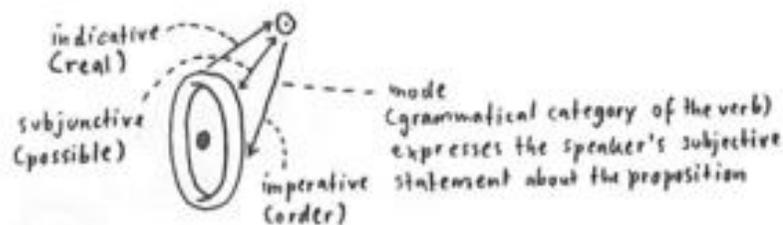


assumed time
of speaking

Picking up on a formula of John McTaggart's, the central tenet of a tense-philosophy reducible neither to a theory of time nor to a philosophy of time might read as follows: *The present was futural, is present, and will be past.* Without this insight, as incisive an event in literary history as the emergence of a present-tense novel would be impossible to conceptualize. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)

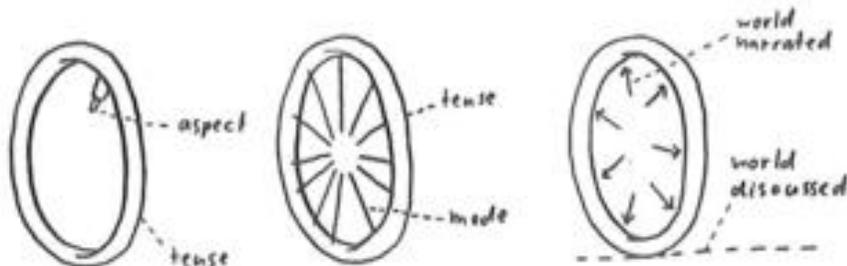


toward the event's
temporal structure }
aspect: perspective
(as verbal category)
which expresses the
speaker's attitude



indicative
(real)
subjunctive
(possible)
imperative
(order)

mode
(grammatical category of the verb)
expresses the speaker's subjective
statement about the proposition

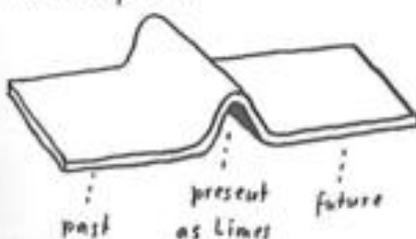


past tense
differentiates
tense & aspect

future
grammatically
ambiguous
between tense
and mode

tenses have
nothing to do
with time
(language rolls
off time)

linear chronological
model of time



dynamic being
of language

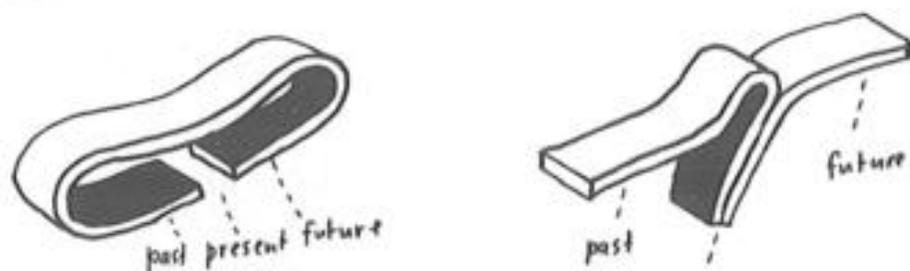


diachronous & synchronous
layers of time



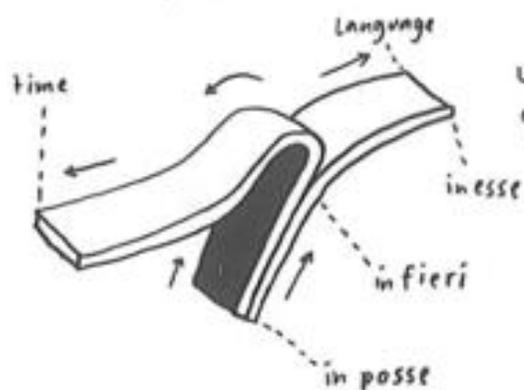
time is situated in
language and
structured temporally

Guillaume's diachronic and synchronic cuts lay open the being of language. The ontological becoming of language conceived of as process is apparent, for example, in how the chronothetic system *in posse* refers point by point to the chronothetic system *in esse* of the past epoch. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)

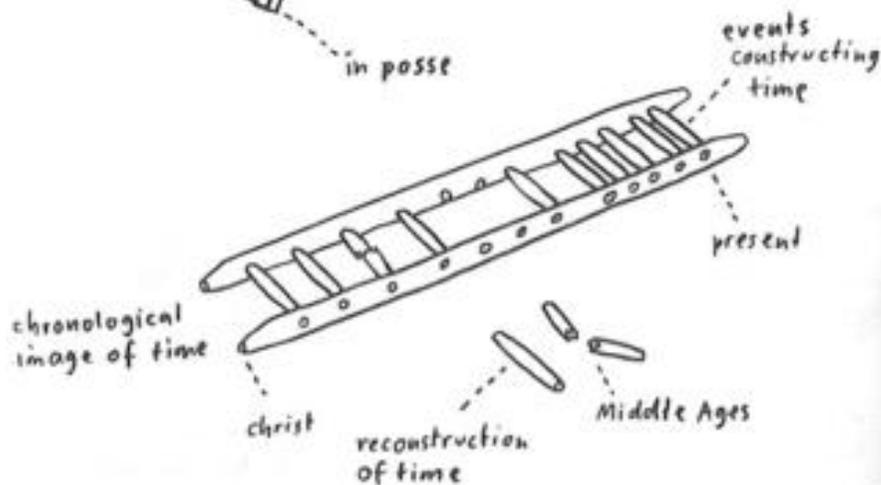


we owe our comprehension of time and our conception of it to language

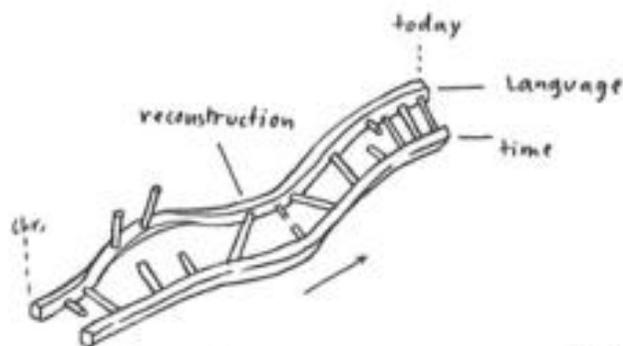
tectonics of time



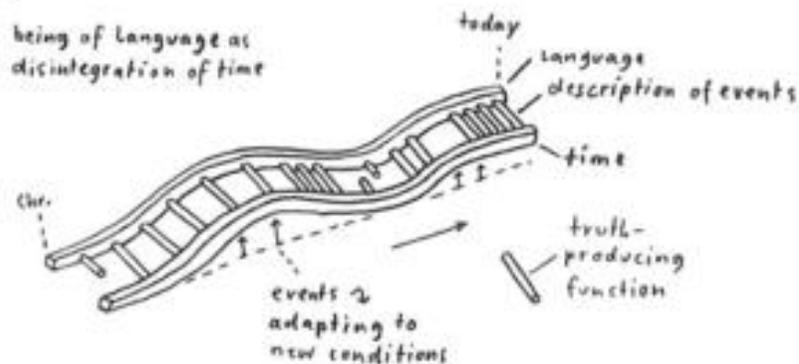
Language as rolling off time



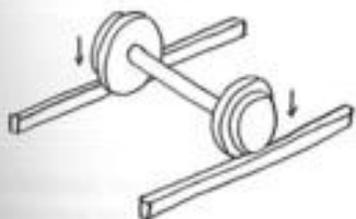
Until now, linguistics has been dealing with time in an excessively generous way. In this respect, the present work is innovative in its economy. It permits itself to partake of the present alone; and with the constitutive elements of the present—nothing more—it reconstructs the genesis of time with three epochs. In the beginning, there was the present alone, and past and future, which are constructs of the mind, can only have been derived from the present.



Guillaume: the being of language is based on its grammar (both develop continually) understand being as becoming

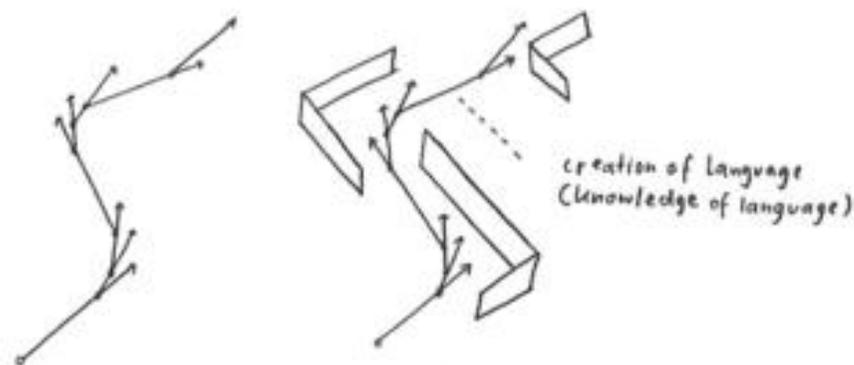


reference to the world and its objects + adaption to the world



recursive self-reference (here: language as movement)

The being of language has its foundation in its grammar, and both develop constantly. To understand the being of language thus means to conceive of it in its becoming and as becoming. According to the already mentioned recursivity of Guillaume's thinking, the task of a speculative poetics would be to make productive the systematic connection between this recursive autopoiesis of language with its poetic (i.e., chronogenetic and truth-revealing) function. (Armen Avenassian, Epilogue)



creation of language
(knowledge of language)

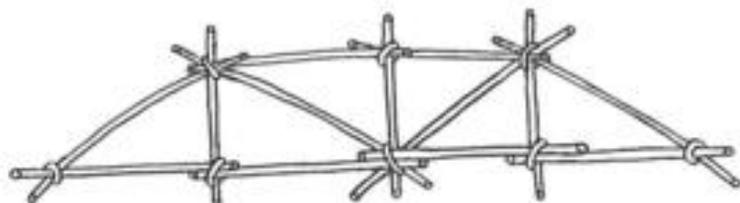
Language on the road,
constructed by means
of experimental correction

what is driving this?
what hinders it?

Guillaume: flexibility of grammar

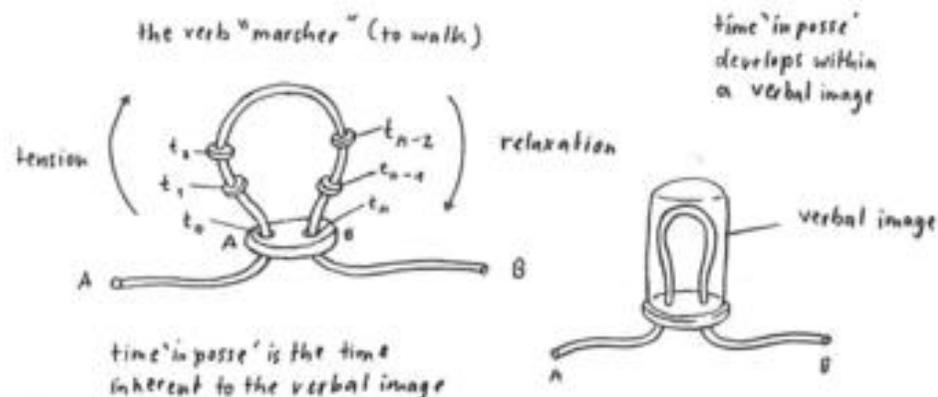


the question of the static (as stability):
Language as architectonic model
(Experimental substitution of successful
solutions by even more successful ones)

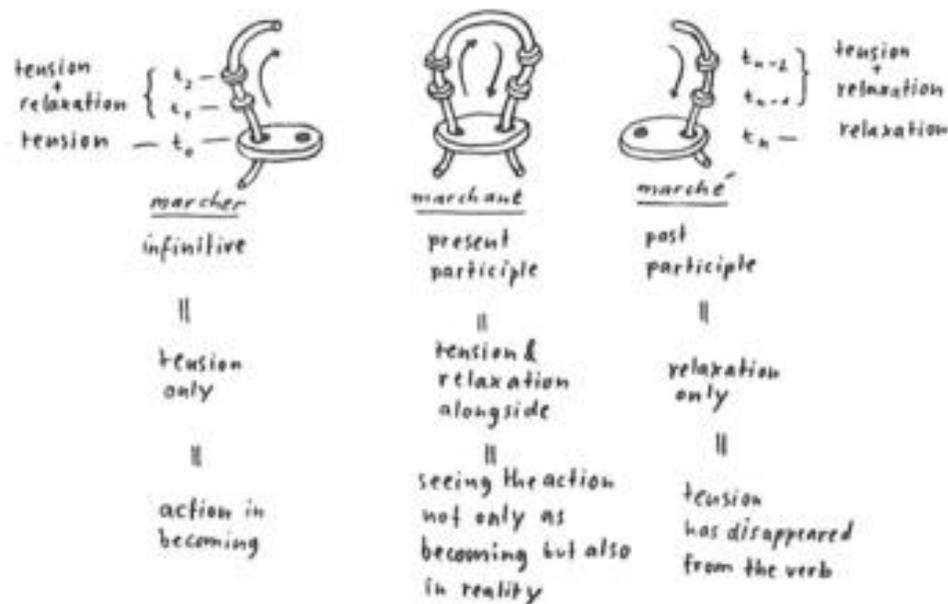


There is no science for constructing language

"Linguist-engineers do not exist, nor does a science for constructing language. Language is constructed by methods of trial-and-error correction: a more successful solution is tried in place of an already successful solution and the solution substituted always presents the problem anew."
(Gustave Guillaume, *Foundations for a Science of Language*)



recomposition of the verbal image in time 'in posse'



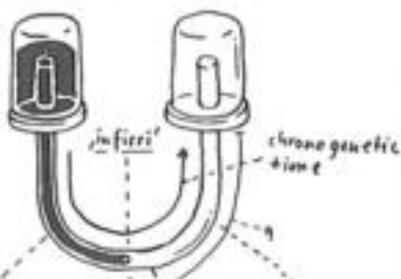
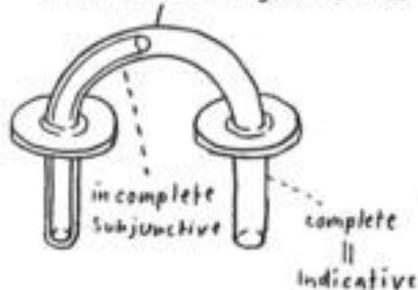
In language, there are words we only need to pronounce, even all by themselves, and the idea of time awakens in our minds. This idea of time that comes with the word and that is inseparable from its meaning is time *in posse*. It can be defined as the time that dwells in the word-image. Time *in esse*, in turn, is a time external to the word-image. It does not develop within the word-image, the word-image develops within it. The presence of time *in posse* can be felt particularly in verbs, which owe it what one could call their tension, i.e., the intrinsic impression of progressive movability.

transition from time 'in posse' to the time 'in esse' (which develops outside of the verbal image)

which intention (visée)

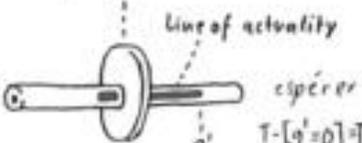
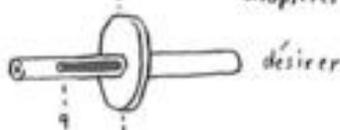
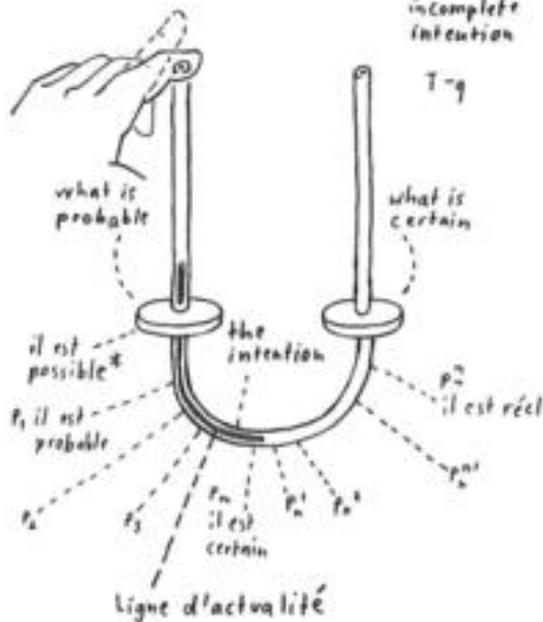
time 'in posse' nominal mode with generalized forms of time

transition = chrono genetic time



incomplete intention, infinitive and participle, indicative, complete intention

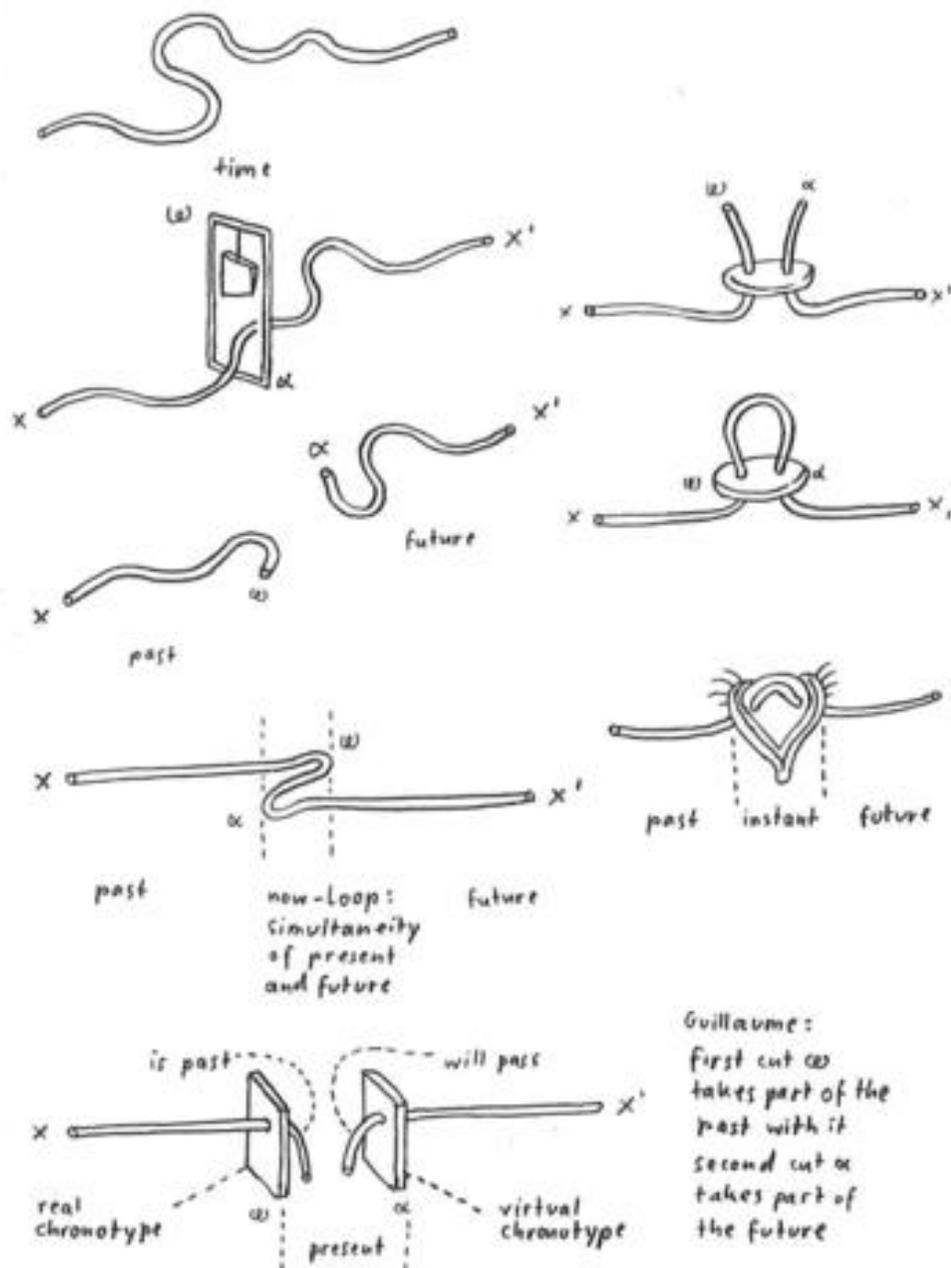
subjective mode, the intention must be transparent for the verbal image to get to time 'in esse' (Guillaume: diaptics)



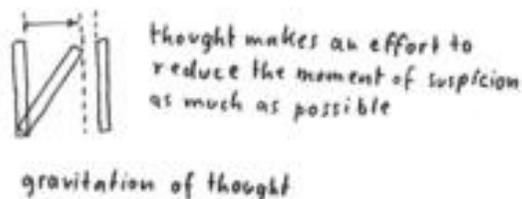
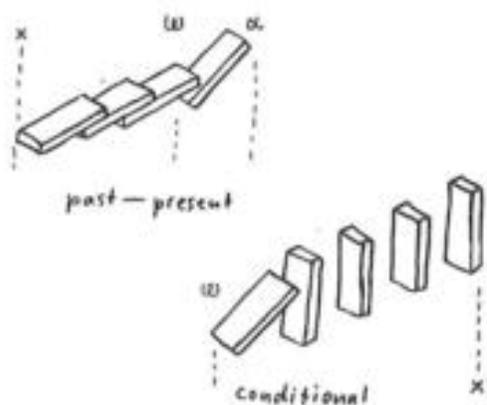
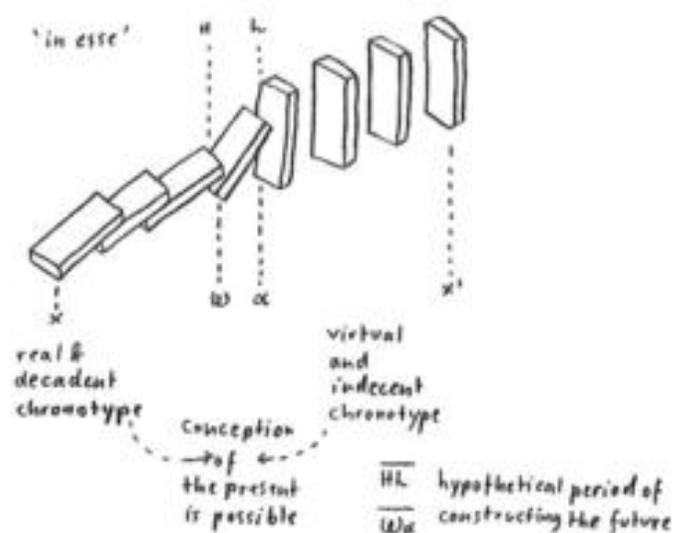
probability, certainty, to hope is to wish, T, T-[q=0]

* the concept of the possible excludes actuality

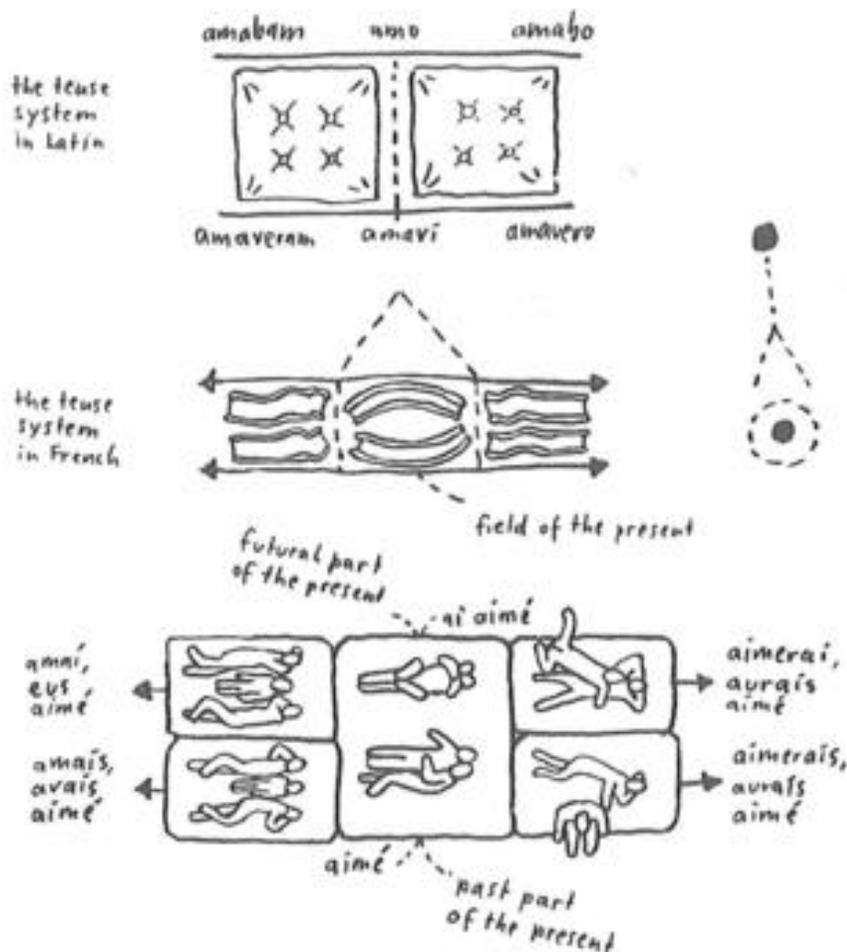
the verbal image becomes real in time 'in esse'



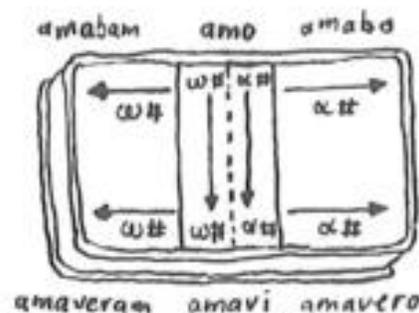
Guillaume: first cut ω takes part of the past with it second cut α takes part of the future



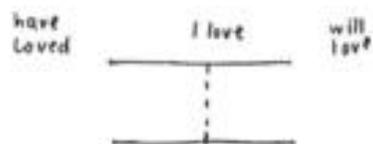
In a theory of the future we have first of all to consider that the future is an epoch made from a time that has not yet really existed and that, therefore, we picture, that we surmise, and in this peculiar way: thinking tries with all its might to reduce the moment of surmise as much as possible, that is, to give it a maximum of reality such that it becomes the symmetrical equivalent of the past.



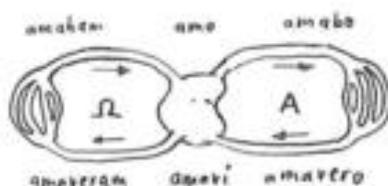
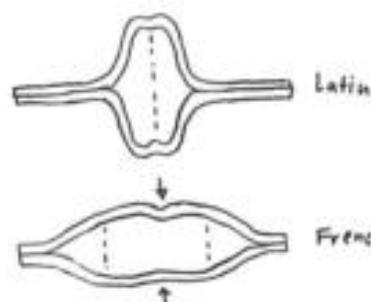
The Latin language refers the system of time to the relationship of the present to the past: amo-amavi. Around this relationship, taken as an axis, it develops the two epochs, past and future. [...] In the French language, the system remains basically the same but its axis—its analytical basis—has changed. It is no longer determined by the opposition of present and past; it is determined within the present itself by the opposition of its constitutive elements: the little bit of past and the little bit of future that dwell in it.



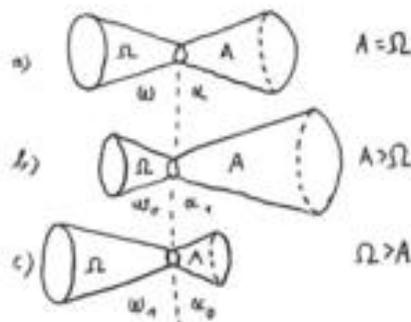
Latin translated into English



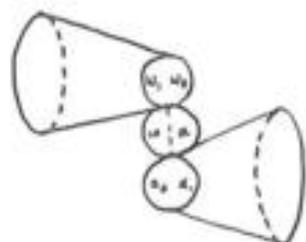
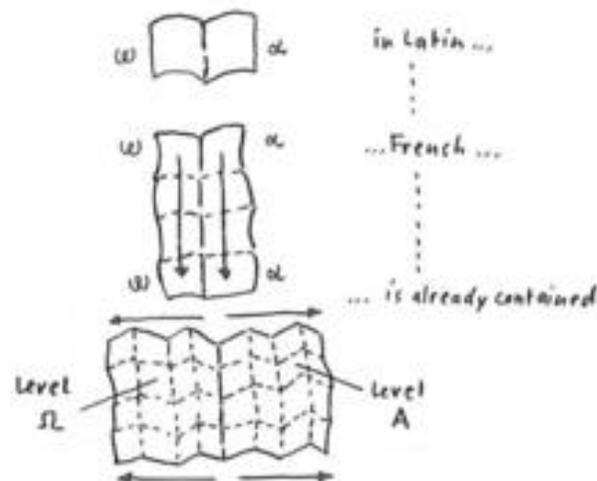
had loved I loved will have loved



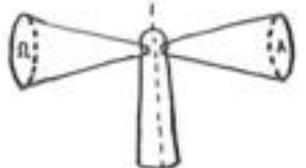
combinations of
chronotypes that can be
realized in the field
of intention



Latin, Ancient Greek, German, and Russian, to take just these four languages, have developed—as has the French language—their entire verbal-temporal system from an analytical perception of the basic nature of the present.



memorial chronogenesis



amemorial chronogenesis



Latin
future is real
effluent (running off)

virtual perspective



French
(Latin system in the
reduction to the
French system)



aorist (becoming, not having become)

Greek

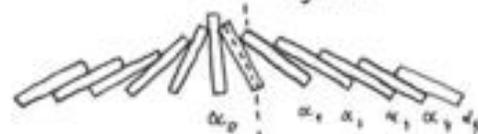
future is virtual
(goes toward the present
'lysein' (having to release)
future afferent



(future becomes past)
memorial chronogenesis



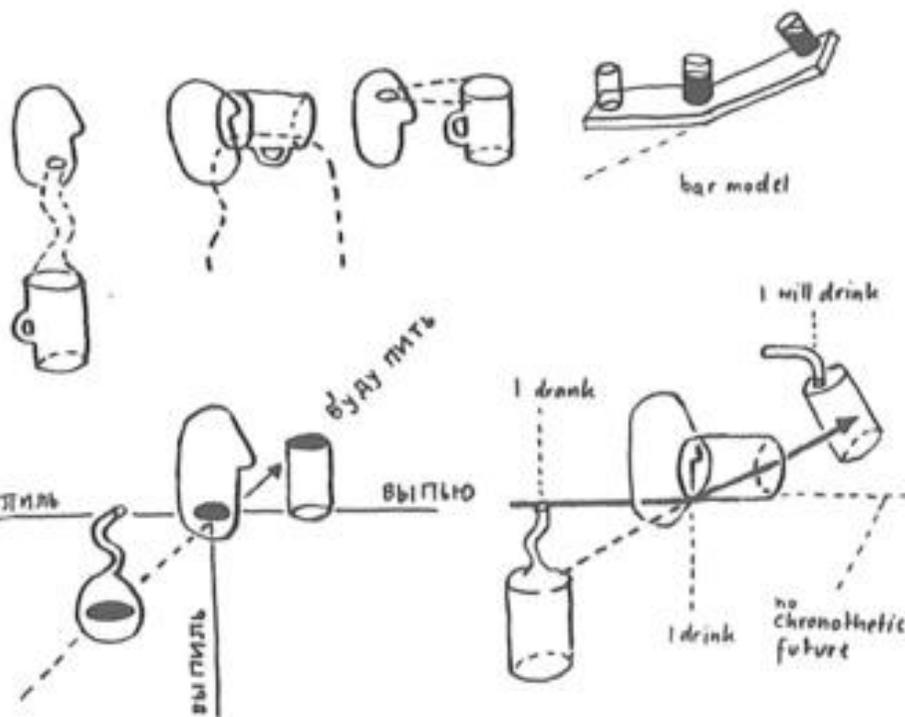
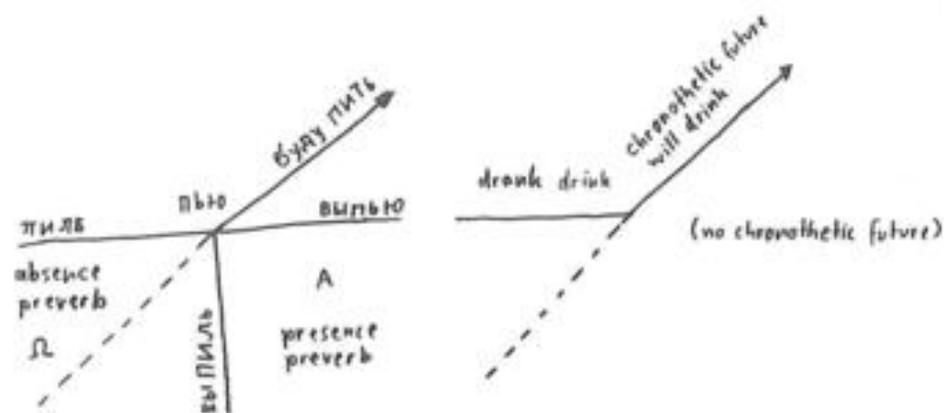
amemorial chronogenesis



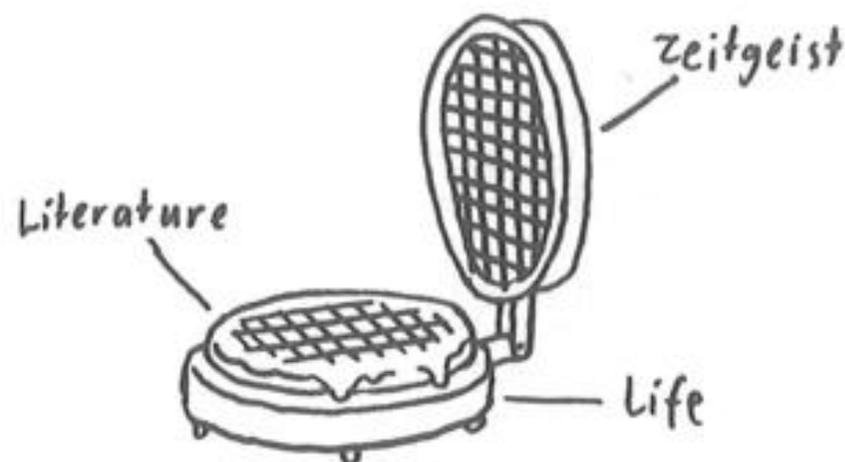
(past is being futurized)



This results in three *chronothemes* (= initial combinations of chronotypes that endow time with its general form in the mind): an actualizable theme whose extension is given in the temporal system in its entirety; two non-actualizable ones, whose extension will be given by the modal system. The latter two chronothemes are not, as one might think, a simple sleight of hand to make a point. Instead, they encompass a mental truth and represent two *antithetical representations* of the concept of the present.



With the particle *бы*, therefore, the Russian language has intercepted the intention of the present, which meant that the characteristic inflection of the present tense was not available. This has led Russian to express the conditional by means of the past (there is no inflection of the future in Russian), which, with the *бы*, has become the form that represents time *in fieri*.



4 Poetics: Past Narratives, Current Positions

Armen Avanesian and Jan Niklas Howe, eds. The organization of several series of events with authors, international philosophers, and academic colleagues is a central element of Speculative Poetics. *Poetik. Historische Narrative und aktuelle Positionen* stemmed from discussions with my colleague Jan Niklas Howe in the comparative literature department at the Free University Berlin about the state and purpose of literary theory today. (Passionate as these discussions were, we agreed that comparative literature is a discipline in crisis.)

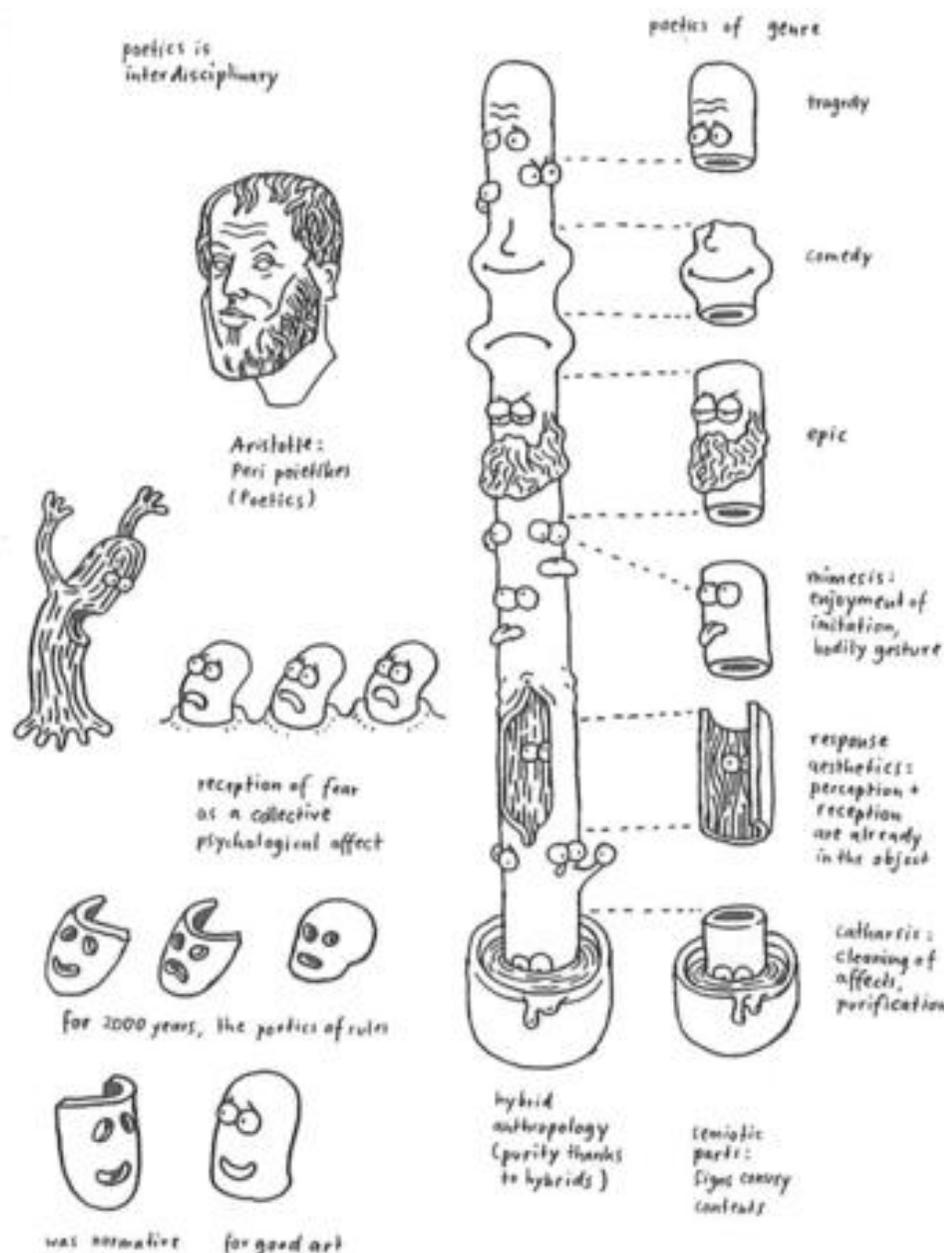
In the summer of 2012, we organized a series of lectures entitled "Was ist Poetik?" (What Is Poetics?) that sought to present to our students the great heterogeneity of contemporary theoretical approaches, and to confront the literary scholars we invited with the question of how they conceived of their own work theoretically and methodologically.

It is not an accident that the different approaches of my co-editor and myself are also apparent in the fundamental observations to which the various essays of the volume react. On the one hand, the term "poetics" currently enjoys great popularity in a heterogeneous set of domains: there are poetics of knowledge, of space, of dance, of power, of disobedience, of suspicion. ... On the other hand, it is not at all clear what significance poetics has in literary theory, which, for decades, has borrowed extensively from models developed in sociology and psychology as well as cultural and media studies. What, then, is poetics? And what is its relation to poetic texts? What is its methodological basis? What are its philosophical preconditions? What is the relationship between poetics and aesthetics, hermeneutics, philology?

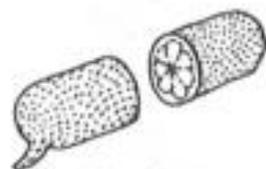
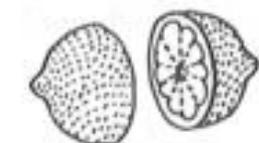
Obviously the authors of the volume cannot answer all of these questions, but they open up new possibilities to define poetics as an autonomous methodological layer of literary studies. And they lead back, in particular, to three historical narratives in poetics. Besides Aristotle's *Poetics*, there are the poetics of the early Romantics and Roman Jakobson's structuralist poetics, both of which are important points of reference for a speculative poetics: The early Romantics didn't bring out a different aesthetic tradition, but a different poetic tradition in post-Kantian philosophy and literary theory; and linguist and one-time Futurist poet Jakobson not only analyzed a genuinely poetic function of language (the superimposition of phonetic and semantic similarities onto metonymic, syntagmatic similarities), he also allows to question the (post)modern figment of a purely arbitrary language (see chapter 12).

Speculative Poetics is interested in what language knows and in literature as the laboratory of language. Linguistic signs are not arbitrary but contingent. Language refers back to itself—but not in the way aesthetic modernity does in its

maniacal attempt to cleanse language of its meaning. Language, which recursively refers back to itself, is referential. It develops in a similar way as the world in which we live.

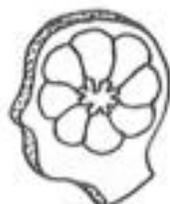


philology — national literatures



Looking for
universal application

philological research



establishing
poetics in
the curriculum

poetics as
mind set



poetics always
already
in interdisciplinary

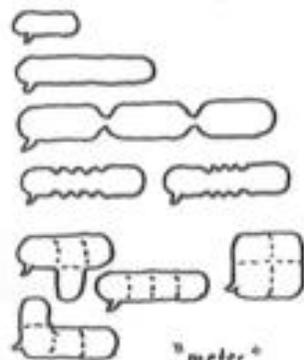


Three characteristics of ancient poetics make it difficult for the modern humanities, which have a preference for historicity, descriptivity, and individual subjectivity, to draw on it: the concerns of ancient poetics are anthropological, psychological, formal-aesthetic, in short, transhistorical in nature; its approach to the theory of genres and the aesthetics of production is highly normative; its contributions to a theory of reception concern collective, not individual experiences. (Introduction)



historical break, ca. 1800

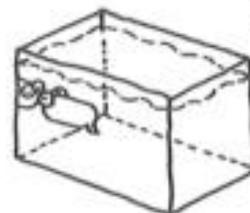
detachment of aesthetics



"meter"



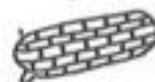
"genre"



everything is
to become
poetical



poetry is
movement



rather
than done

poetry of poetry:
poetry as the site where one
speaks about poetry

ideology:
everything is
to become
poetical

it remains
unclear what
poetry is

Early Romantics

Fichte



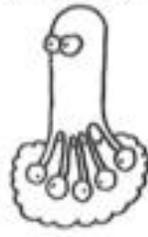
the I creates
the not-I
(through
fantasy)
not-I =
nothing
foreign

Schelling

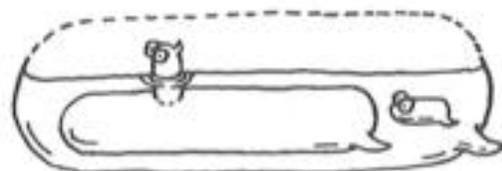


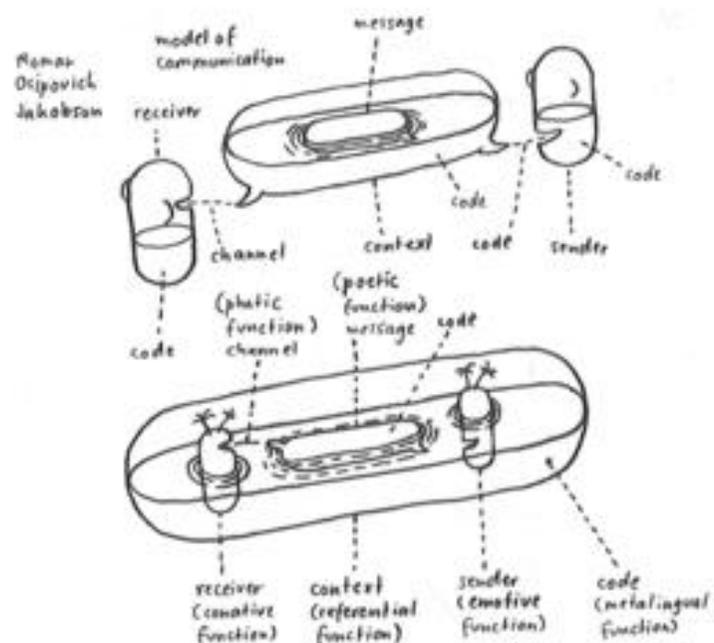
nature &
spirit form
a unit
(world soul)
art highest
quality of
things on
earth

Schleiermacher

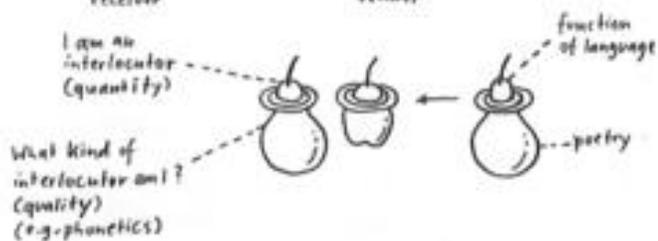
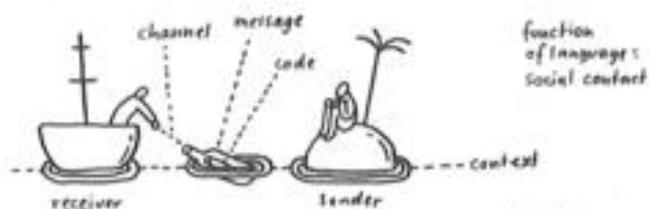


knowledge, faith,
science, art,
philosophy,
religion
are one
(universal
poetry)
religion: the
individual
is one with
the infinite

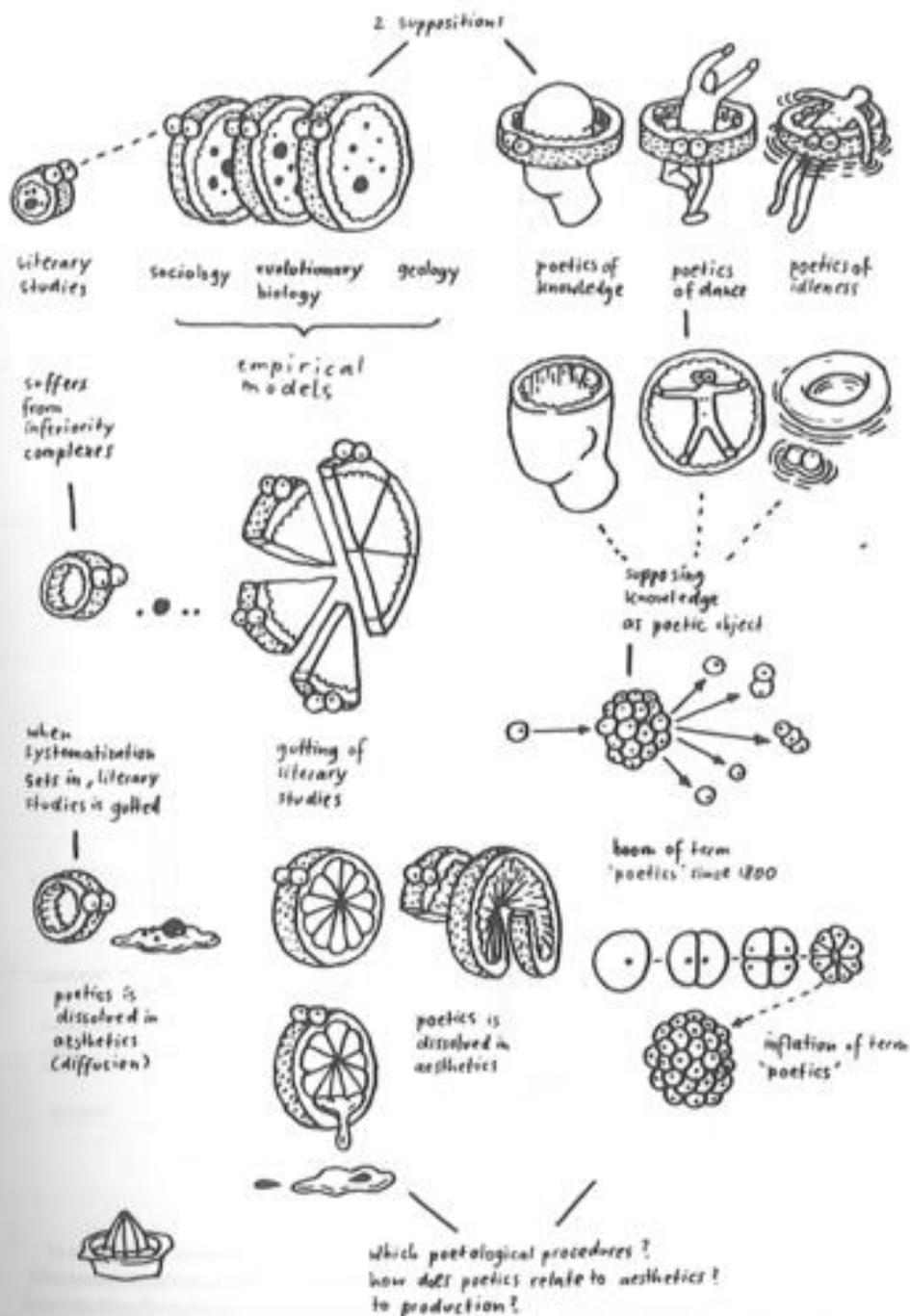




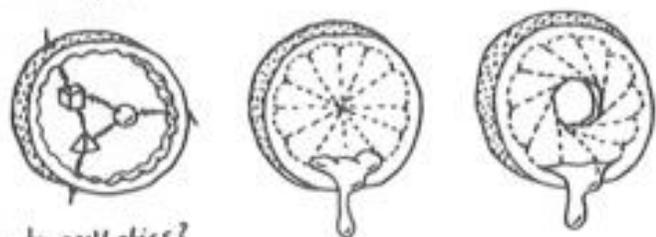
expression:
the meaning
that emerges
from form



The focus of this collection of essays is not on the attempts (dominant well into the eighteenth century) to continue an Aristotelian tradition, but on modern adaptations of the concept of poetics that overcome the difficulties associated with its employment. This development begins with Romantic conceptions of a "poetry of poetry," which systematically erase the lines that separate poetic and poetological production. It then takes the form of the foundation of the humanities and its self-confident rejection of Aristotelian poetics around 1900 (in Dilthey, for example). Jakobson's famous reflections on linguistics and poetics, finally, are less a conclusion to this development than they are a still very influential starting point for contemporary poetics. (Introduction)

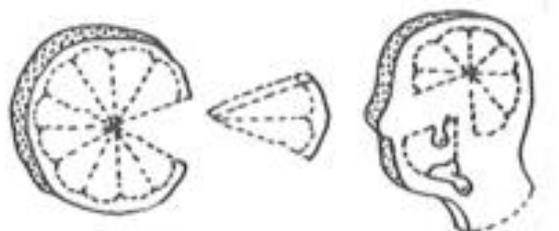


how does poetics relate ...



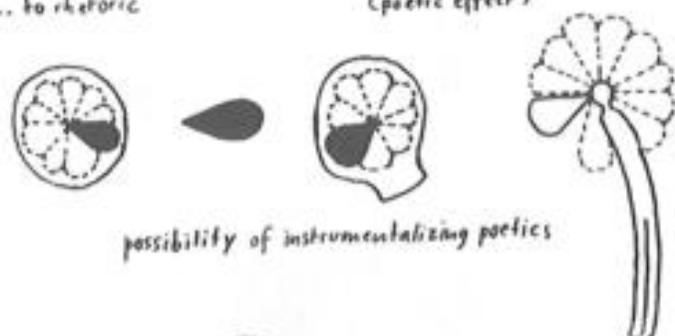
... to aesthetics?

... to production ... to visual media

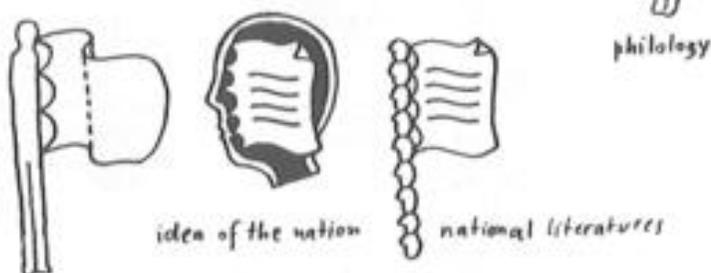


... to rhetoric

(poetic effect)



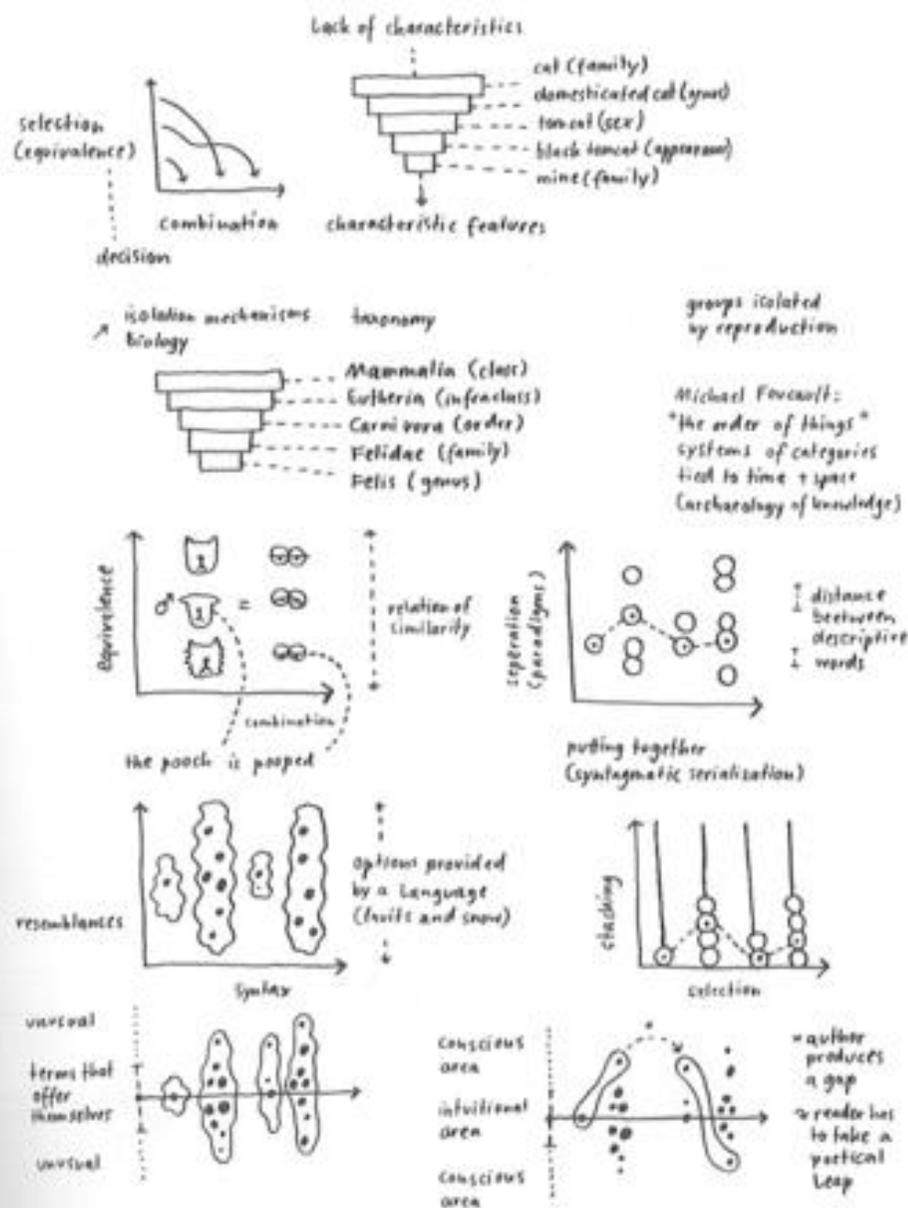
possibility of instrumentalizing poetics



idea of the nation

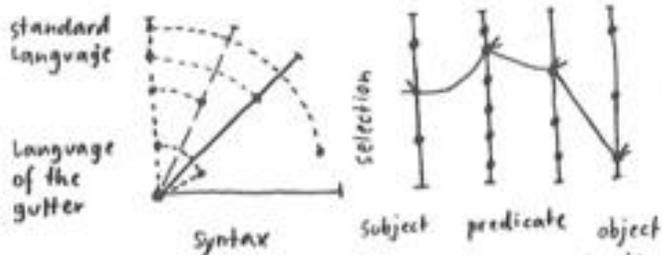
national literatures

philology



Are there methodological demands specific to literary studies that can be understood as elements of a poetics? What is its explanatory surplus value in other domains, such as science, politics, economics? What is the relationship between poetics and the (explicitly interdisciplinary) concept of aesthetics and the (more strongly disciplinary) concept of philology? (Introduction)

"The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence." (Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics")



The fact that the question of this sensibility has evolved (especially in French philosophy) into the question of modern subjectivity as such, is an ironic cashing-out of the Romantics' universality postulate: The aesthetic is both the particular (art) and the general. This tension corresponds to an inner logic of aesthetic thought. An anti-constructivist dualism dominates all of its levels. This dualism differs from classical poetics in one crucial respect: it is no longer possible to establish any kind of connection between procedures of production and a truth of the work. (Introduction)

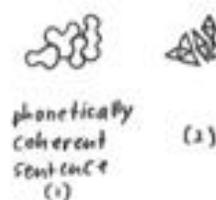
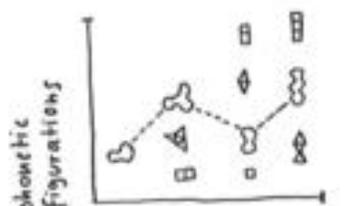
- continual combination
- similarities are being serialized



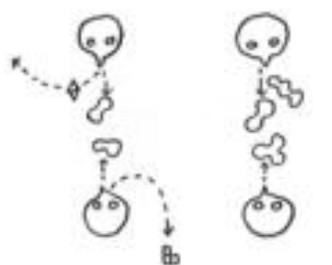
classical poetics
"becoming one"
with the description
of a situation



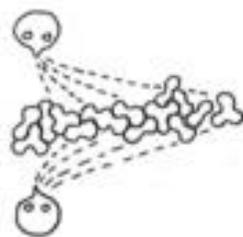
modern poetics:
emotional detachment
from a situation



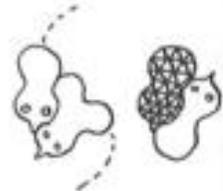
language selects similarities



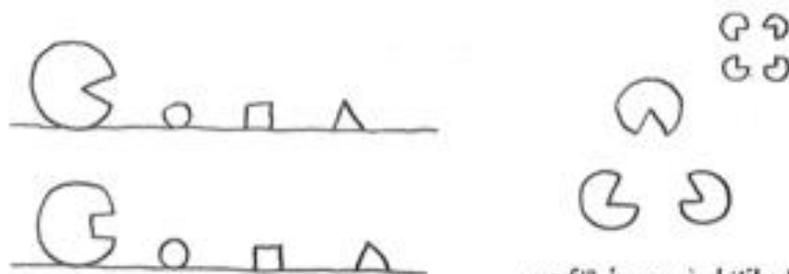
at the beginning of a conversation, interlocutors are getting attuned



functioning communication is symphonic

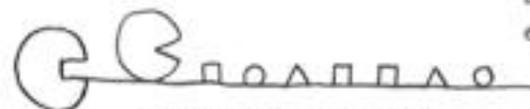


interlocutors make themselves fit: congenial, obliging

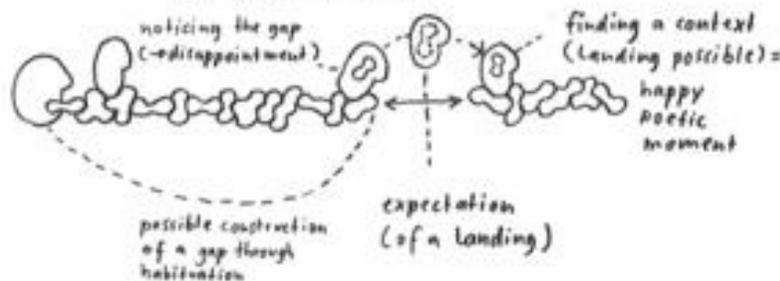


understanding depends on the receiver

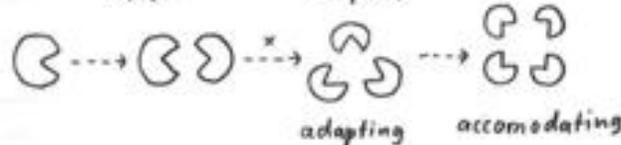
we fill in our inability to understand one another with basic forms (models) and look for confirmation of our assumptions



"but that's what I said"



copying → trust
trust → surprise
surprise → confirmation (success)

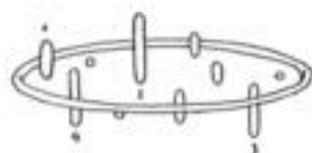


"we duplicate our assumptions and are happy because our assumptions are confirmed, but we forget that it is ourselves who 'understand' us."



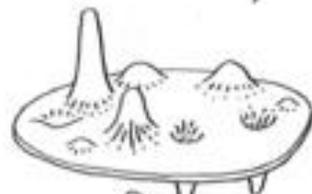
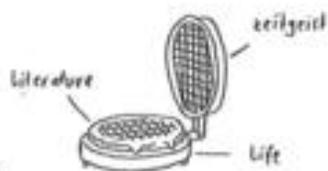
success depends on the joy (patronomy)

(1) adapting to a different situation (2) making something fit



Postmodernity

- (1) death of the author (Foucault, Barthes)
- (2) Language of power (Derrida)
- (3) end of the grand narratives (Lyotard)
- (4) neostructuralism (Habermas)

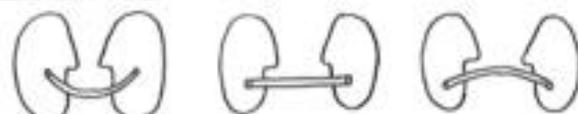


genre structures



Social Structures

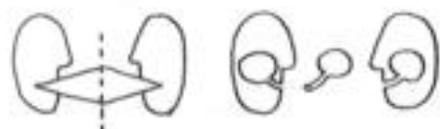
means of imitation



harmony



rhythm



logos (word)



harmony

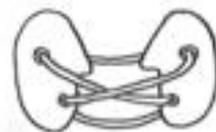
Language constructs access to reality, literary speech performs the detailing of the world in respect to possible realities. The structural analogy between these two "poetic" processes allows us to posit both as objects of poetics. (Introduction)



rhythm



means of imitation



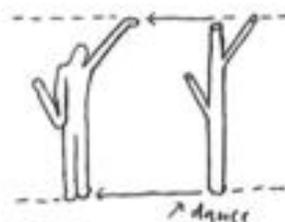
logos



harmony



rhythm



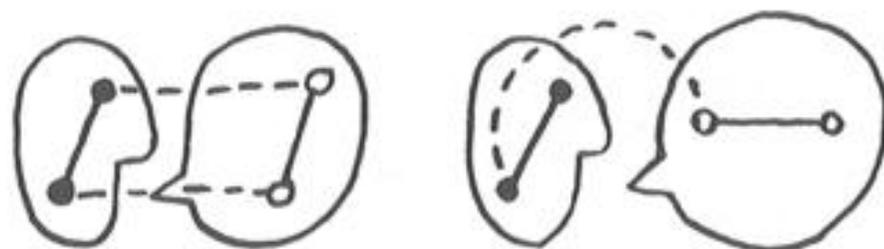
logos



logos



Unlike aesthetic theory, which picked up on the Enlightenment and German Idealism, modern poetics aims at decisions about the form of the linguistic message, i.e., at an action that goes far beyond imitation. (Introduction)



5 Poetry and Concept Armen Avanesian, Anke Hennig, and Steffen Popp, eds. Ever since Speculative Poetics began, several series of events have run parallel to the literary-theoretical events at the Free University Berlin—for example, talks and seminars with proponents and critics of the new speculative philosophy at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and the Collaborative Research Center 626 at the Free University. Speculative Poetics seeks to engage with contemporary literary authors to develop new methodologies in literary theory. Among those invited were members of a group of poets who recently published the book *Helm aus Phlox*. It contains the following definition: “For us, poetics is more an expanded reflection than it is a schematic theory of poetry.”

The aim in our series of conversations with the young Berlin-based authors was to replace the usual academic inter-

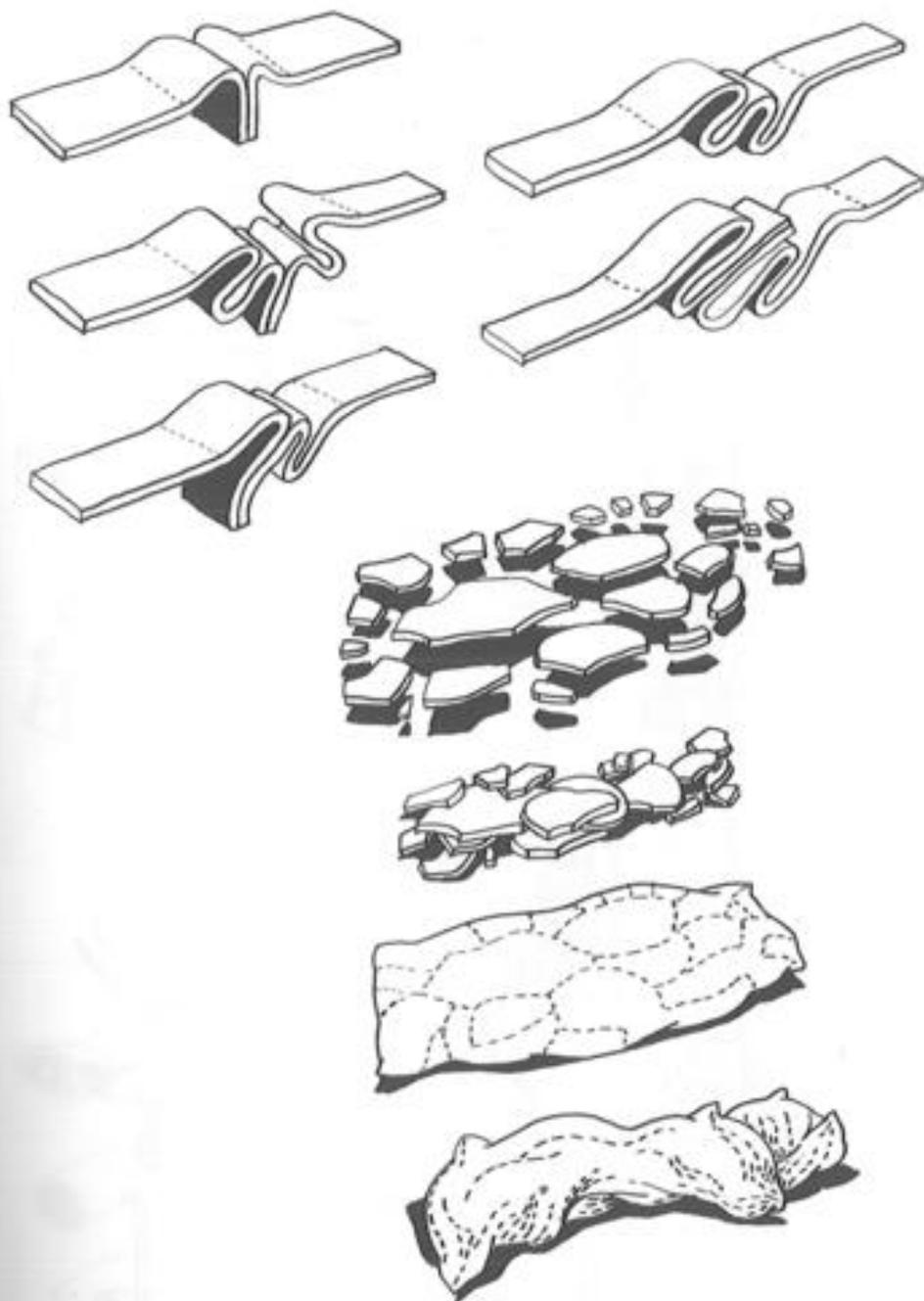
* Ann Cotten, Daniel Falb, Hendrik Jackson, Steffen Popp, and Monika Rink, *Helm aus Phlox* (Berlin: Merve, 2011), 199.

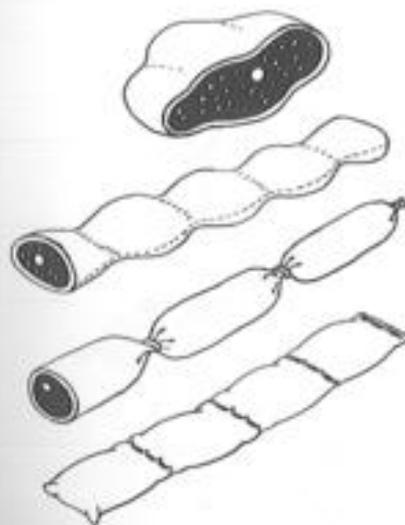
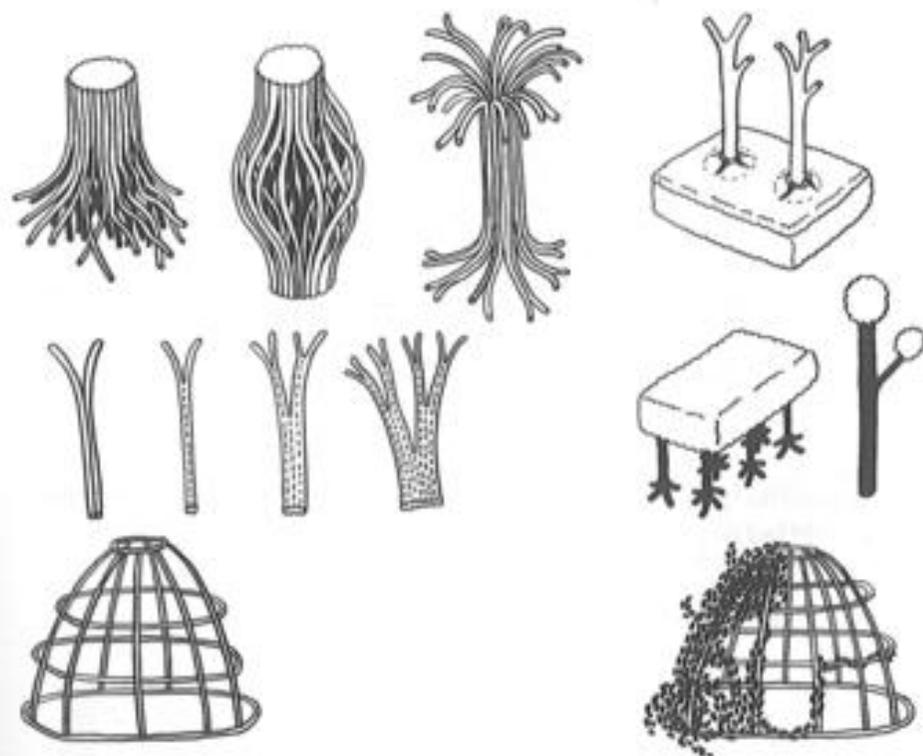
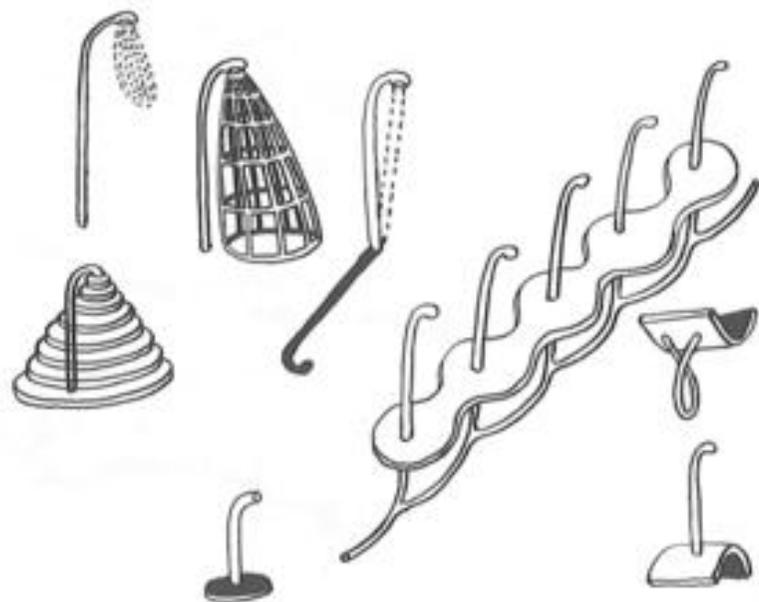
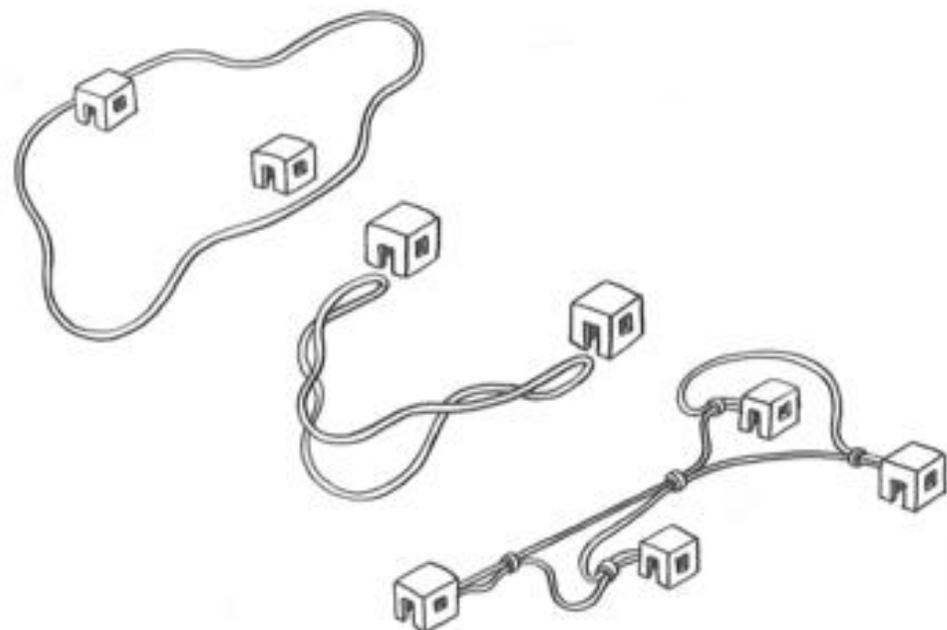
pretation of literary works and their author's intentions with experiments that followed the principle of swapping or at least opposing the roles academics and writers impose on themselves. The series of events titled "Poesie und Begriff" (Poetry and Concept), hosted by Merve publishers, and the book that emerged from it are concerned above all with the proximity and the tension between how concepts are formed in philosophy (or theory generally) and in poetry (or literature generally).

Instead of inquiring into the ideas of authors or of their texts, the conversations focused on concrete ways of reading and writing, and more importantly, on finding (and inventing) concepts. We tried to not talk *about* literature theoretically, but instead, in keeping with the method of speculative poetics, to look at how literature itself thinks. And we sought to stake out a shared domain, a shared discipline: the creation of concepts.

This is where poetic, philosophical, and scientific practices meet. All formation of concepts takes place in a manipulative circle that is conceived of as *poietic*. What Deleuze and Guattari write about philosophical concepts might hold as well for those concepts invented by some of my favorite contemporary poets assembled in this volume: "You will know nothing through concepts unless you have first created them—that is, constructed them in an intuition specific to them: a field, a plane, and a ground that must not be confused with them."³

³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), 7.





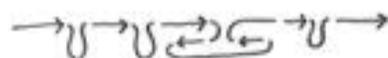
Such a perspective does not start from a conceptual philological objects but starts from the thinking on which these objects are based. It questions the fundamental decision of aesthetic theorizing, namely to oppose the sensitive aspect of its objects to the conceptual aspect of theory. Such a process-oriented perspective confronts literary hermeneutics, which conceive of the relationship between object and concept in terms of the famous hermeneutic circle, with completely new tasks. It also offers an opportunity to rethink the relationship between literary theory, aesthetics, and epistemology and, perhaps, to come up with a better understanding of poetics. (Introduction)



actions



concepts



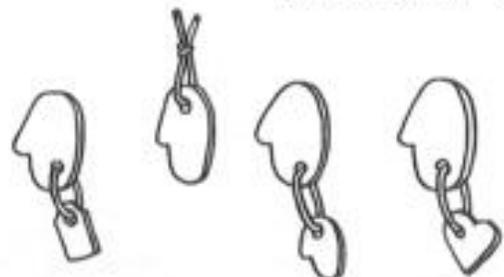
descriptions (bonds)



Synopsis

affinity between artistic & scientific experiments

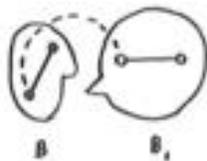
object
 ↓
 description
 ↓
 determining characteristics
 ↓
 thesis
 ↓
 experiment (securing)
 ↓
 generalization



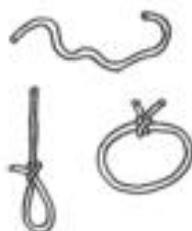
neologism



A, A,



B, B,



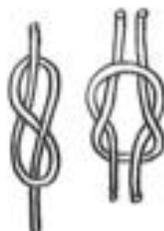
institution of sense



generating knowledge



poetological utterance



practically oriented poetics



everything together = poetological research

heuristics
 (obtain good solutions with limited knowledge, little time)

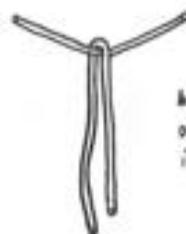
support for taking shape thanks to an interlocutor



creation of an antithesis for the sake of contradiction



propositions about the system



beneficiary or pure imitation



verification by empirical means



poetics

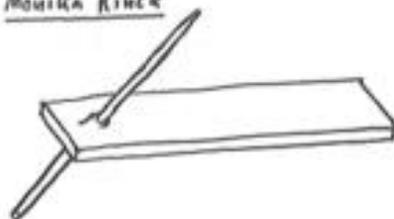
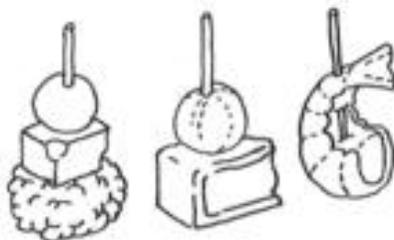
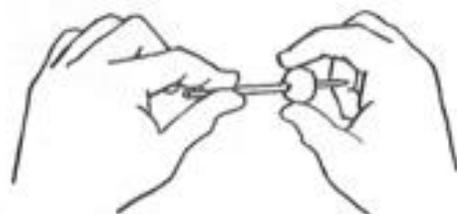
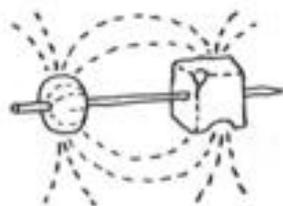
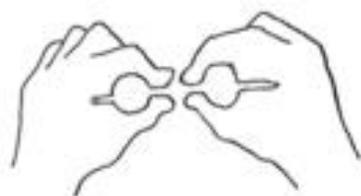


thought balloon in speech → Kleist, the optimist

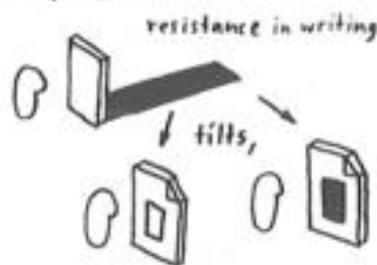


the essence of speech, a fossil deposit, to be exploited later

Monika Rinck

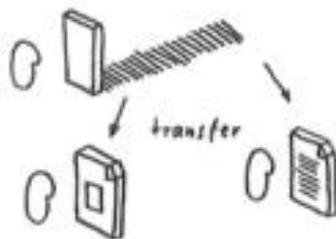
poem as a process
of speculationgreatest possible gain
in the smallest
possible spacebreaking points bring out contrasts
concepts are renewedor: the goal is the
greatest possible losslabor is already the grace
of applying timeinterpretation is interesting and
productive when it indicates
another register of languageabove all, interpretation
is an application of timebreaking points
bring out contrasts

Honey Protocols



resistance becomes the object

psychoanalysis

real disease
is transferred
into an
artificial onedisease
can be
worked on

I give the poem credit even though I don't know what it is and where it leads. I engage in a speculation that bets on the greatest possible winnings in the shortest possible time. Or my goal is the greatest possible loss, that's a possibility, too. Just working is already the grace of applying time. And interpretation, especially, is applying time. Interpretation is interesting and productive when it points to, plays with a different linguistic register than that of the text it interprets. The breaking points bring out contrasts such that concepts are somehow renewed and are perhaps recharged—prepared for being used to think. (Monika Rinck)

Daniel Falb



poem of excess



Google, the data kraken

poems always have
an excessive structure

≠ essence



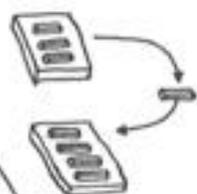
productive / destructive

poem as means
of paymentthe weighting
of language

trading in lives



weighing thoughts

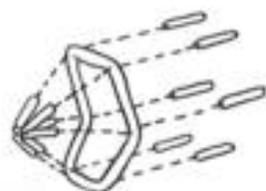
the language of poetry
structurally comes closer to excess
than the language of any other discourseinterest as
original sin(Usura-Cantos,
Ezra Pound)

But precisely given this narrow definition, the following problem remains when we read the *Usura-Cantos* as poems: "Fine songs, fair songs, these golden usuries, / Her beauty earns as but just increment." According to the line written by a young Ezra Pound, the poem itself would be usura, usury, which the beloved, for example, would be right to claim for putting her beauty on the line. Indeed, going beyond this intimation, one could argue that the language of poetry, in its own structure, approximates usury more closely than the language of any other discourse. (Daniel Falb)

Ulf Stolterfoht

speaking with language
about languagesuddenly, with language,
everything seems possible

world speaking language

as if lyrical speech,
yielded structural,
not semantic insightsas if there was a genuinely
lyrical form of knowledgethe existence or nonexistence
of facts or their relations
(not unlike Wittgenstein's model
in the *Tractatus*)

What bothers me most about my comment, today, more than ten years later, is the unspoken basic assumption that there could be something like a genuinely lyrical form of knowledge leading, beyond or beside the problems and impossibilities articulated in the critique of knowledge, to defensible statements about us and the world, as if lyrical language were raised above and blessed among all uses of language—namely by yielding not semantic but structural insights about, for example, the existence or nonexistence of facts or their relations etc.—i.e., something like Wittgenstein's model in the *Tractatus*. (Ulf Stolterfoht)



6 Abyssus Intellectualis: Speculative Horror

Armen Avanessian and Björn Quiring, eds. Since the fall of 2012, the many publications on Speculative Poetics (or at least most of those written in German) have found a permanent home with Merve publishers. In the spring of 2013, *Realismus jetzt!* (Realism Now!), a volume that presented the work of central authors in speculative realism for the first time in German, inaugurated the series "Spekulationen". In a way, *Abyssus Intellectualis* is the continuation of *Realismus jetzt!* and follows the intention of Speculative Poetics to connect literature and the new speculative philosophy.

It is surprising to see how often speculative philosophers go back to literary texts, be it to classics like the works of Stéphane Mallarmé or to lesser-known authors like H. P. Lovecraft or Thomas Ligotti. Sometimes, their own texts are situated beyond any precise separation between theory and fiction.

This is the case, for example, in Reza Negarestani's theory-fiction *Cyclonopedia* (see chapter 7), but also for important texts by Nick Land or Robin Mackay.

The starting point of *Abyssus Intellectualis*, however, is formed by questions that are of concern to both horror stories and to speculative thought: What if, one day, there are no more humans? Doesn't this scenario become more likely with every day that passes? But how would we think something like the irrevocable end of thinking? What access do we have to our own nonbeing? How do we know that our distinction between death and life is relevant to the things of this world? Perhaps the people and things we're dealing with every day are much more dead or much more alive than we suspect? And finally, why are these questions relevant to speculative poetics?

The essays collected in *Abyssus Intellectualis* cannot be reduced to a unified catalogue of themes or even a shared thesis. Instead, these texts challenge the way we think with and about literature. The proximity of realism and horror leads speculative realism to conclude, philosophically, that our reality can best be understood through the fantastic and the weird. But there are also grave consequences for a speculative way of thinking that seeks to live up to the challenge of horror: literary horror is an attempt to make the hypercorrelationalism of aesthetics and its (un)holy trinity of subject, object, and aesthetic experience explode.

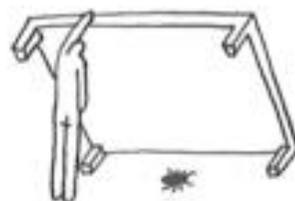
Thought experiments about worlds without human beings or time travel into a future that turns out to be the past are two speculative figures where horror and contemporary metaphysics intersect. The study of horror is particularly apt at showing how contemporary philosophy and poetics share a speculative conception of time. Unlike the emphasis on the present in contemporary mainstream literature and

the obsession of science fiction with the future, cosmic horror is concerned with the poesis of an impossible time. Speculative horror shows us that *the past is unpredictable* (Quentin Meillassoux).

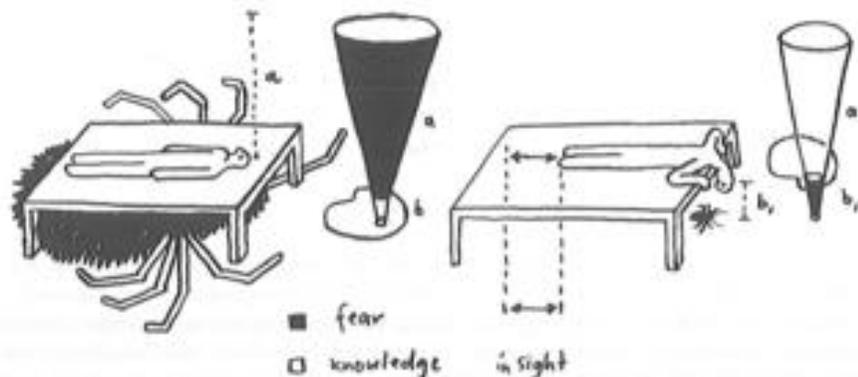
The questions pursued in *Abyssus Intellectualis* thus contribute to our understanding of a peculiar temporality that inverts our habitual chronological temporal perspective, articulated as a variant of the tense-philosophical principle of speculative poetics formulated earlier: *the past was futural, the present will be past, and the future will be present*. This temporal dimension of speculative realism becomes also apparent in Ray Brassier's *Nihil Unbound* (partly translated for this volume): *the sun is extinguished*. This speculative look from the future into our present allows us to think humans as already past.



oldest + strongest emotion: fear
oldest + strongest fear: fear of the unknown
(H.P. Lovecraft)



the unknown
as driving
fantasy





thought



insight



speculation



science fiction



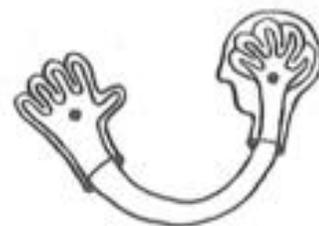
fantasy

materialism /
realismhorror¹(nonhuman
influence on
humanity)horror²(what was presupposed
as certain appears
to be uncertain)

intuition



construction

extra-science fiction / xSF
Meillassouxthe life of writing
(Ann Schwader:
nocturnal glyphs)phenomenology¹phenomenology²phenomenology³
the horror of phenomenologythe fantastic
imaginarycosmic
pessimismreal
horror

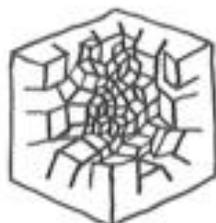
From the obviously weird proximity of realism and horror, "Speculative Realism" concludes that our normality is most likely to be understood properly in terms of the fantastic and the weird. There are grave consequences, too, for a speculative-poetic thinking that tries to answer the challenge of horror: Literary horror is an attempt to explode the hyper-correlationism of aesthetics and it's (un)holy triad of subject, object, and aesthetic experience. (Introduction)

Horror emerges precisely when distinctions indispensable to our relation to the world shift or turn out to be unfounded. And the boundary between life and death certainly belongs to these markers (no matter whether these shifts and abolitions concern other people, objects, or an absolute). (Introduction)

Reza Negarestani Bolus Barathruma



Species = natural being



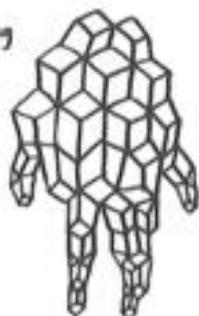
degeneration



metamonster



cube with infinitely many sides



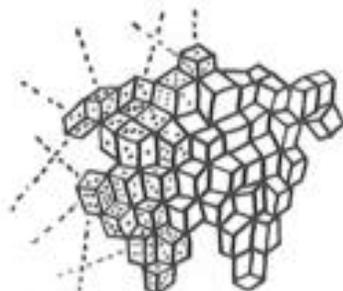
cubes to monsters



observing itself



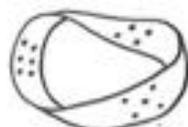
introspection



every individual being has its own perspective onto the world (supermonster)



norm



no classifications (taxonomies)



Möbius cube



(Möbius strip)



infinity in the cube



Bolus barathruma, the chance-hole, or more accurately, the abyss cut into the face of the dice is the one and only thing to which the Tadmurian barbers assign taxonomic distinctions and recognize as a species. To them, bolus barathruma is that cursed thing unfortunate enough to be beasted and categorized out of the immeasurable heap of nature. (Reza Negarestani)

Howard Caygill



Texas hold'em



Texas hold'em: find the donkey among the players; if you can't, you're it



reason becomes auto-immune to itself



infinity v. limits speculation v. reason

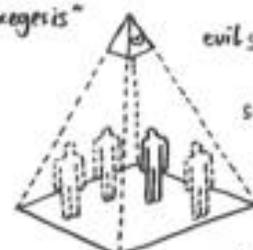
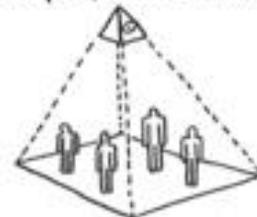
Reason constantly raises the stakes in a self-destructive gamble in which it cannot but lose and which leaves it ravaged and increasingly without resources. The higher the losses, the higher the stake necessary to recuperate them. (Howard Caygill)

Philip K. Dick

Excerpts from the "Great Exegesis"



simulated human beings



evil god

simulates

the world



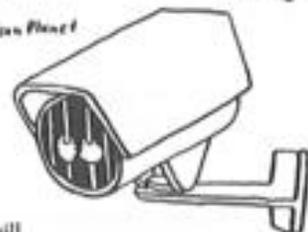
universe

as

prison



Black Iron Prison Planet



In my dream in Canada, Kathy said, "One day the masks will come off, and you will understand all." It came to pass—and I was one of the masks, much to my surprise—and my whole world as well. (Philip K. Dick)

Iain Hamilton Grant

Being and Slime
The Mathematics of Protoplasm
in Lorenz Oken's Philosophy of Nature

Slime

German philosophy of nature
German RomanticismNature is a big living being
that includes the inorganicprimeval soup
mathematics

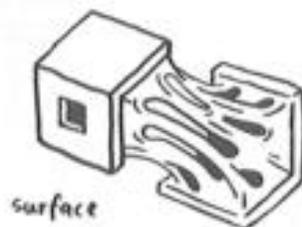
proliferation



points of slime

emergence of
differentiated
forms of life
as drying up
all around
mathematical
givensnature as subject
(> an object)we affix taxonomies
(we categorize/classify)

The culmination of Biology is the destruction of individuals, which is held in check so long as there remains something. Kant tells us, reassuringly enough, that reality can never sink to zero; but Oken's *mehylatheogony* supplants all Being with increase and decrease, each *limitless*. The fragile hold of beings is secured by Slime alone—all that ontology can hope for is Slime potentiated and negated into and out of all things. (Iain Hamilton Grant)

Graham Harman
The Horror of Phenomenology:
Lovecraft and Husserl

surface

peculiarity

visible
(surface)
frontinvisible
(uncanniness)
back

distress

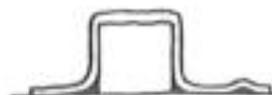


order



disturbance

Objects withdraw



description

familiar secret:
(darkness follows gravitation,
leaves elementary geometry behind)uncanniness
(darkness acts
preferably organically)

concept



concept remains

In Lovecraft as in Poe, the horror of things comes not from some transcendent force lying outside the bounds of human finitude, but in a twisting or torsion of that finitude itself. The immediate fusion between a thing and its tangible signals gives way to the detachment of a tortured underlying unit from its outward qualities. (Graham Harman)

Michael Cisco Non-Language (A Fragment)

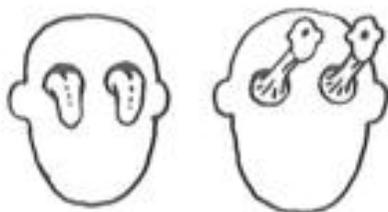
the book that drives you mad

language as virus

non-language



unspeakable truth



This special language slides over everything and grips nothing, not even like water, not even like time or air. It's a dimension. It sleeps. God doesn't use it, and neither does humanity. Unlike other languages, this one does not seem to require a user; unlanguage uses itself. (Michael Cisco)

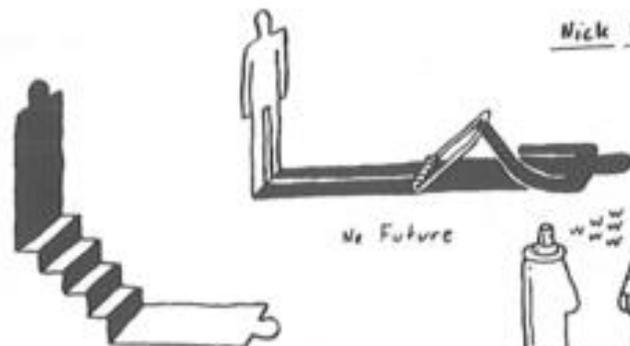
Eugene Thacker Cosmic Pessimism

pessimism

Emile Cioran

pessimism is cosmic
(not moral)

Crying, laughing, sleeping—what other responses are adequate to a world that seems so indifferent? (Eugene Thacker)

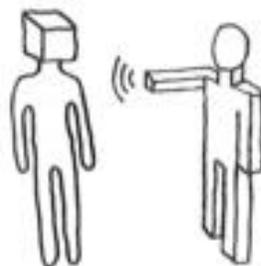
Nick Land No Future

No Future

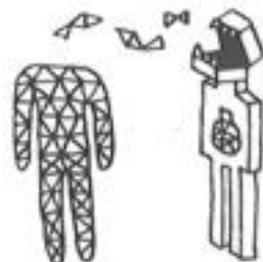


no

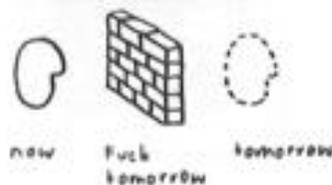
future



human machine



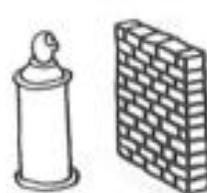
netware is destroyed



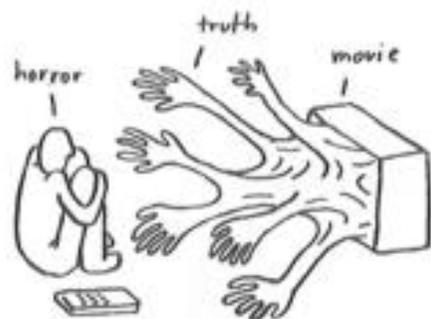
now

fuck
tomorrow

tomorrow

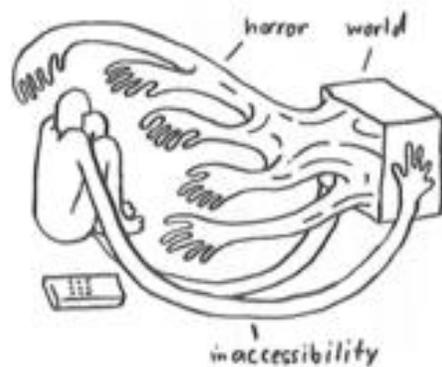


Loa prowls through the attic-spaces of intelligence. Nothing is arriving unless it's already there. Precocious technihilo. Nocturnal ocean. Dark matter. Nightmare. (Nick Land)

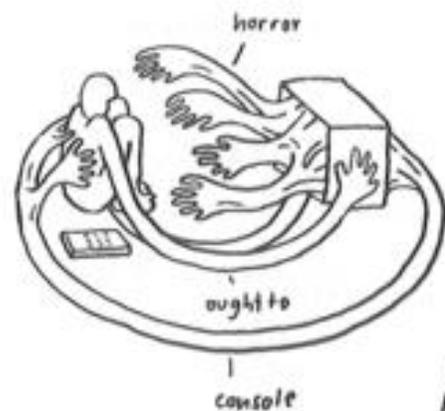


Amanda Beech Real Horror

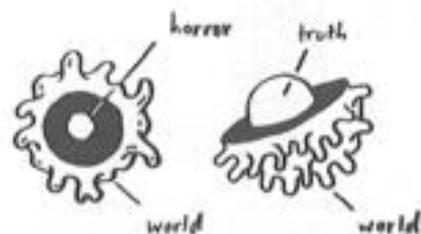
horror is
tasked with
articulating
something real
(e.g. man is a
wolf to his
fellow man)



If horror is determined as the space in which we can explode the myths of our existence, then it must also include exploding the myth of our precarity—the central axis of horror. It must risk losing the make-up that has defined it: Horror must reject horror. (Amanda Beech)



in capitalism,
the task of horror
is to console



Thomas Ligotti Metaphysica Morum



metaphysical mutants
take control of dreams



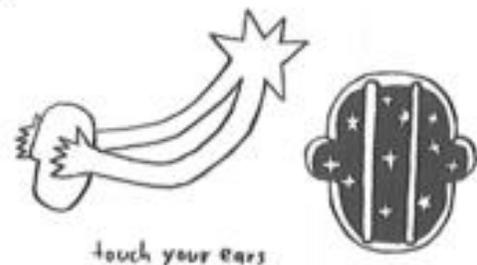
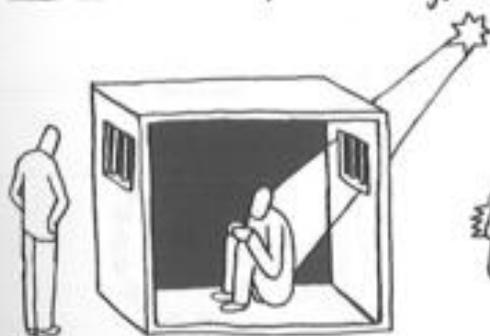
the enmity of
the university



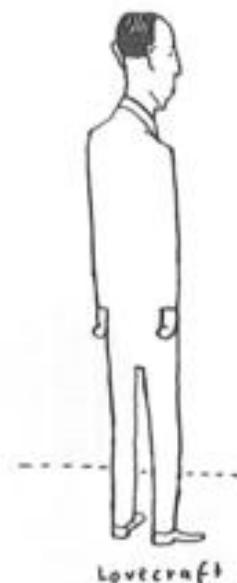
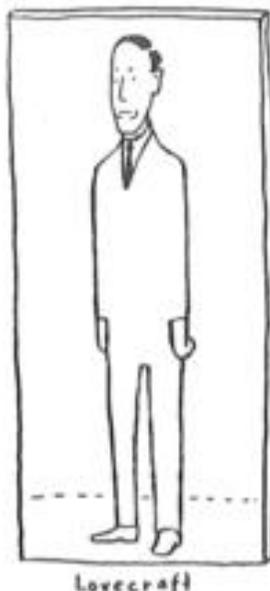
stuffing the universe into our heads
until they burst and life comes
flowing out

"And where is it going?"
"Ask Dr. O. He'll fix you up."
"Where is it going?"
"He'll fix you up."
(Thomas Ligotti)

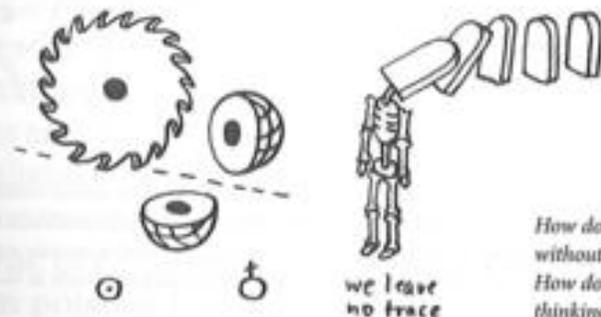
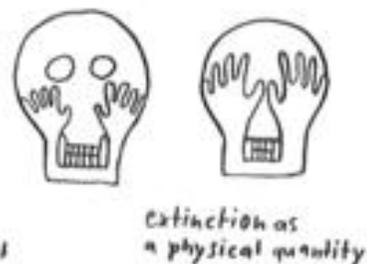
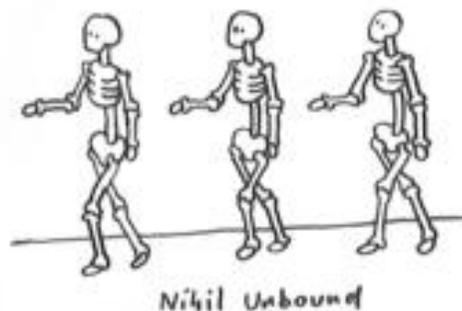
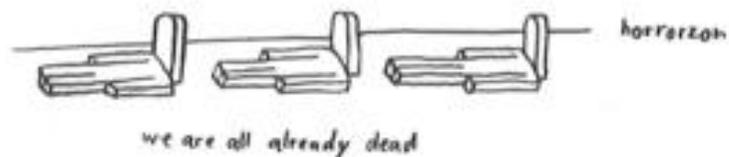
Anna Kavan One of the Lost Things



With my eyes I can see absolutely nothing. Only imagination sees him leaning to speak through the crack of the closing door, as three words reach me, softly, with a sound of blood-curdling intimacy. "Touch your ears." (Anna Kavan)

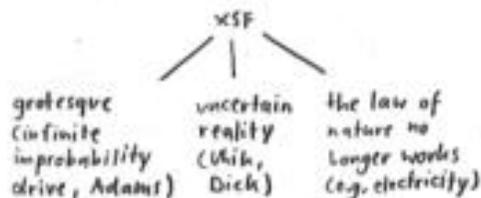
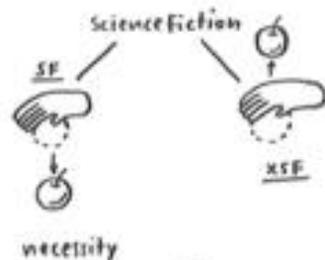
Howard Phillips LovecraftThe Notebook
Letter to Harry Fischer, February 1937

Begin story with presence
of narrator—inexplicable
to himself—in utterly alien
and terrifying scenes.
(H. P. Lovecraft)

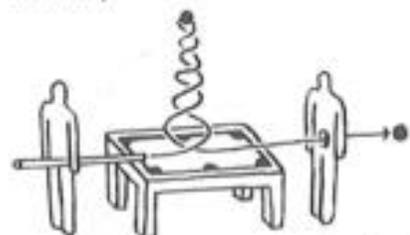
Ray Brassier Solar Catastrophe

How does thought think a world
without thought? Or more urgently:
How does thought think the death of
thinking? (Ray Brassier)

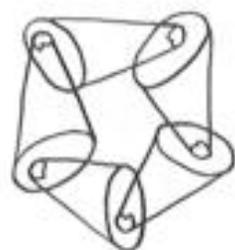
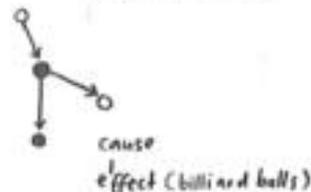
Quentin Meillassoux



contingency
Meillassoux:
this is the kind of
universe we live in



(= Asimov)

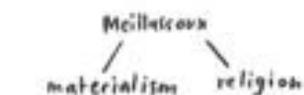


explanatory models
don't work

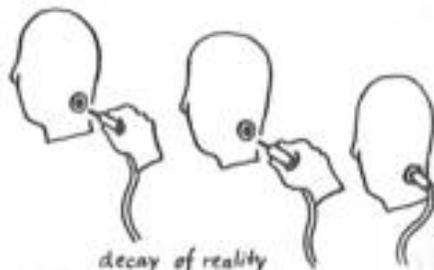


contingency:
there is no
certainty

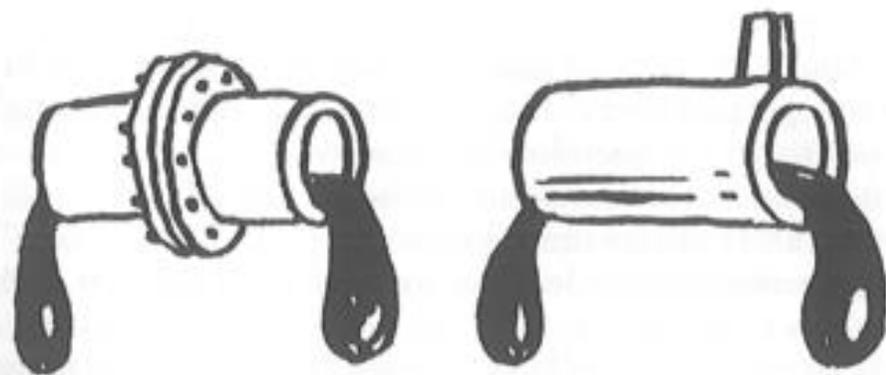
only change
is certain



rational philosophers:
we are no longer
concerned with god



By the term "world outside science" we do not mean worlds where science is simply absent—that is, worlds where, as a matter of fact, the experimental sciences do not exist: For example, worlds in which people have not, or have not yet, developed a scientific relation to the real. By "worlds outside science," we mean worlds where experimental science is impossible in principle, rather than unknown in fact. (Quentin Meillassoux)



7 Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials

Reza Negarestani As a text on the boundaries of (fantastic) narrative and (philosophical) theory, *Cyclonopedia* is, to begin with, proof of the intensive engagement with literature that characterizes recent speculative philosophy. This theory-fiction opens with what at first seems like a classical fictional narrator and with a name: Reza Negarestani. The name is handwritten on "a thick piece of writing" that is excavated, as if exhumed, by a woman from underneath a hotel bed in Istanbul. Some of the pages are "nearly hidden under small yellow post-it notes or with margins saturated by handwritten notes and drawings in black pen and pink highlighter, making it nearly impossible," the narrator notes, "to read."

* Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: Re.press, 2008), xii.

One of central suspicions in *Cyclonopedia* is that "Petroleum poisons Capital," and that it does so "with absolute

madness.” Furthermore, the team of researchers whose work is documented in the papers also seems to have concluded that capitalism is not a human symptom but rather a planetary inevitability. The reason for this is oil. Not only does it have a geological and military dimension and function as a fundamental “tellurian lubricant,” but above all it is a “vehicle for epic narratives” in general and for “hidden writing” in particular—a poetological allegory⁵ *ibid.*, 27. that connects the text’s philosophical,⁶ *ibid.*, 69. ethical, and military dimensions.

Since classical modernism we have been familiar with attempts to deconstruct the role of the narrator, and since post-structuralism, authors too have been pushed off many a cliff. Yet rarely has the narratorial authority been driven so far into the earth as in *Cyclonopedia*, where, for example, the Middle East begins to write or where the earth’s magnetic field tells forbidden tales of its exterior. The aim is less to tell new stories of the earth, but to let the earth itself narrate. And the earth narrates in oil. Oil is not simply the *story*—it is the *plot*. It is not simply what is narrated, but it defines the act of narration.

Cyclonopedia is not a *fabula* of oil (to pick up on the narratological dichotomy) but the *sujet* of oil: it lubricates all narrative parts, it connects them via osmoses, and only by a mimesis to oil can this attempt at a geological or geomorphological prose succeed, an attempt that combines the tectonic peristalsis of various theaters of war.

As a theory-fiction, *Cyclonopedia* is, first of all, a narrative in a very basic or fundamental way. Negarestani conceives of narrative as the organization of information that subsumes fictional, (counter-)factual, and hypothetical modes of thinking and narrating. Its salient characteristic is its speculative or experimental setup. As Negarestani explains, “You can

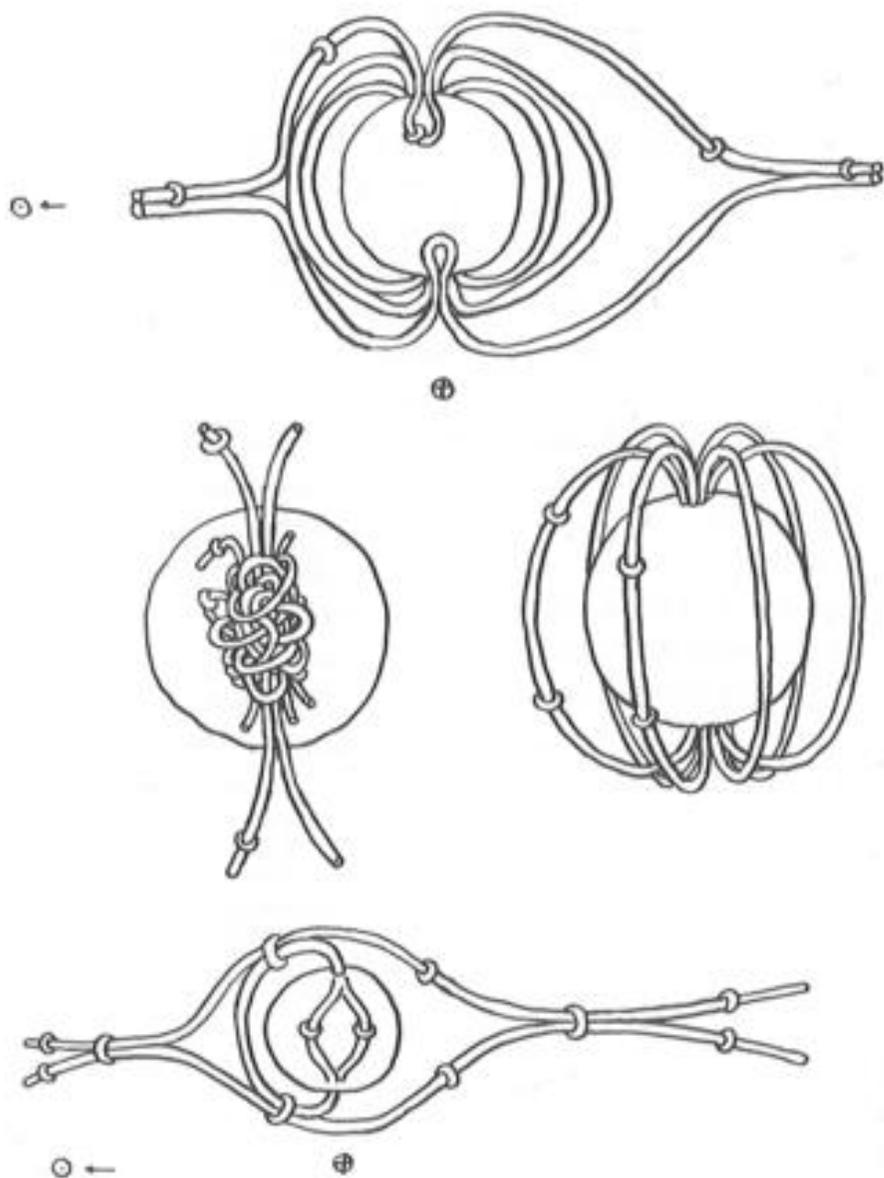
manipulate it, just the way you can manipulate a working hypothesis.”

If narrative development includes the unfolding of events, the progress of chronological time in a narrative, then the *story* unfolding in *Cyclonopedia*, the history to which the book (counter-)factually refers, and their progress are defined by the in- and outflow of oil. In this sense, oil could also be the trigger of a tellurian revolt against capitalist heliocentrism: “A patch of oil is enough to stir the apocalypse out of Time.” And, accordingly, what is needed are “plots capable of seizing the surface story or the textual structure from the dominant authorial space.”⁷ *Negarestani, Cyclonopedia*, 58. ⁸ *ibid.*, 61.

A central component of Negarestani’s poetics and an element of significance for a speculative poetics is what I would like to call his experimenting with concepts and neologisms: *petropunkism*, *petropolitics*, *xeno-chemical insider*, *leprous creativity*, *bobjectivity*, *polytics*, *poromechanics*, or *poromechanic cosmology*, to name but a few. Another aspect is the call for what Gabriel Catren has conceptualized as the “transcendental dehumanization of aesthetics.”⁷

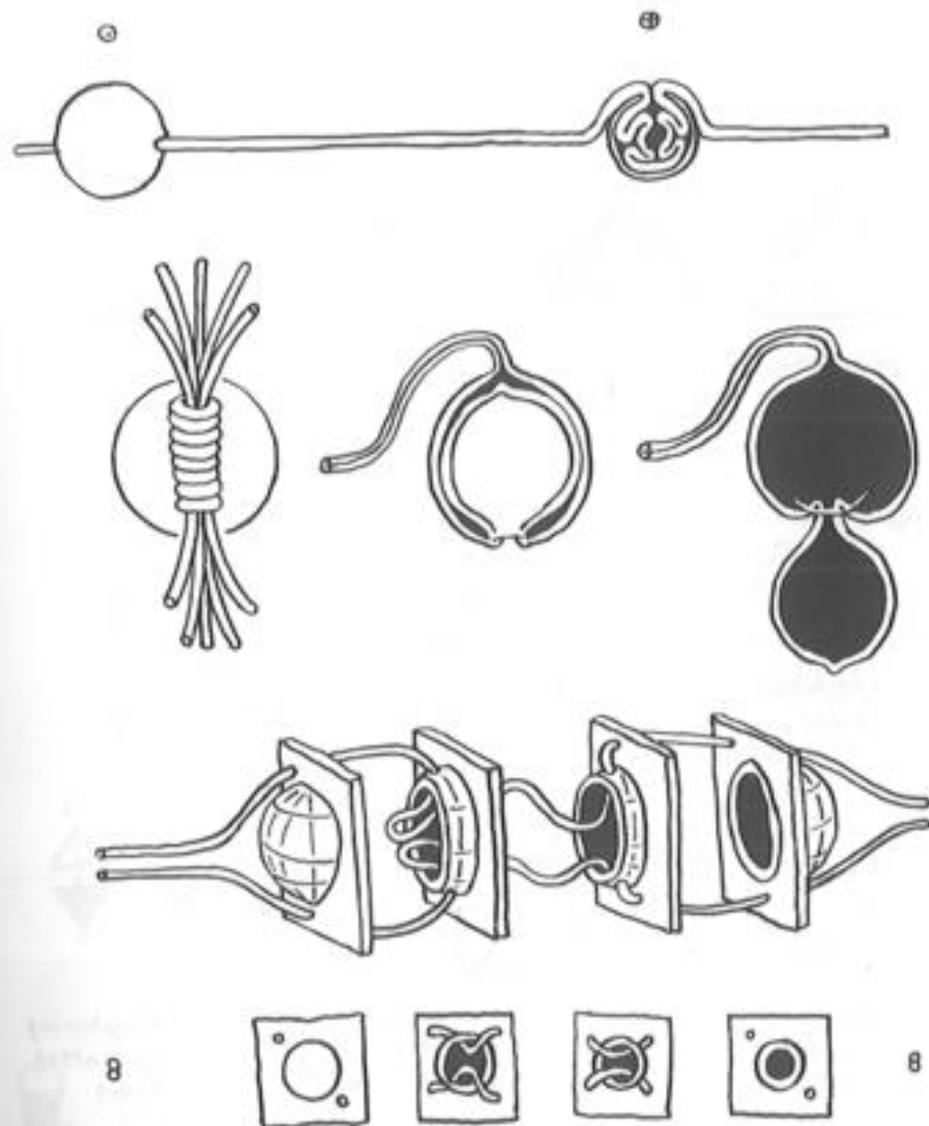
⁷ See Reza Negarestani, “Synchistic Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,” in *Realism Materialism Art*, ed. Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey, and Suhail Malik (forthcoming).

Cyclonopedia - magnetosphere, cocoon, magneto-tellurics

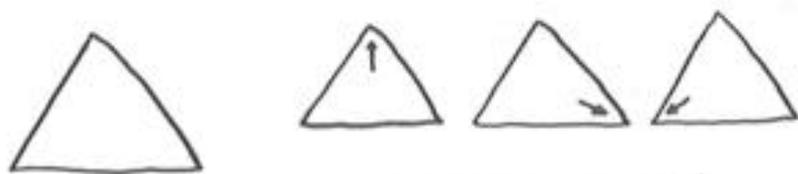


For a long time now the magnetosphere, this ultra-ancient cocoon around the planetary body, has enriched the earth's tellurian insurgency, telling the earth forbidden stories from the Outside ...

the earth writes/narrates: immanence with the sun



... teaching it how to reach immanence with the Sun, and ultimately completing the hatching process of its inner black Egg, or the treacherous Insider.



triangle
(terror fractal)

the command can rotate



pragmatic
efficacious
order

less
pyramidal
order

than as

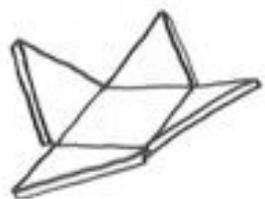
levelled
horizontally



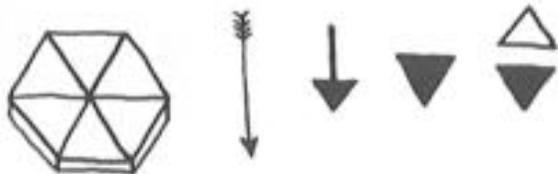
command
vector

order as
vector of the plane
(0₁)

(0₂)



potential
pyramid



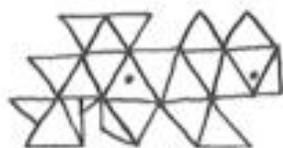
abstraction
as compression

deciphering
by context
alone

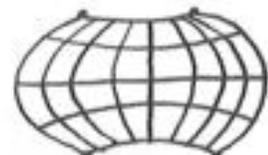
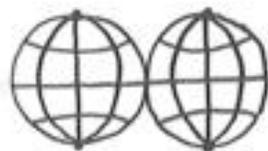
Known as a "Terror Fractal," the structure of units in ancient secret societies and classic terrorist groups is a triangle. The triangular structure coordinates a highly customizable and operational linkage between three soldiers. This structure can be easily refilled after loss of one of even two members of the triangle.



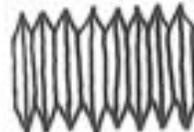
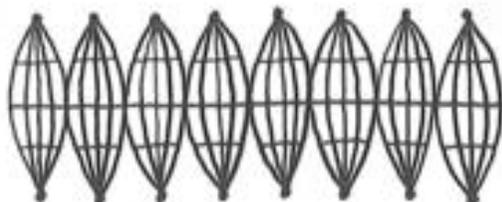
suspension of the
hegemonic totality
of the earth



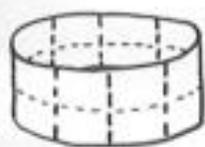
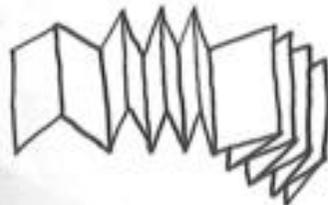
icosahedron (Falter)
mapping a "New Earth"



can the earth's
non-ground
still be named?



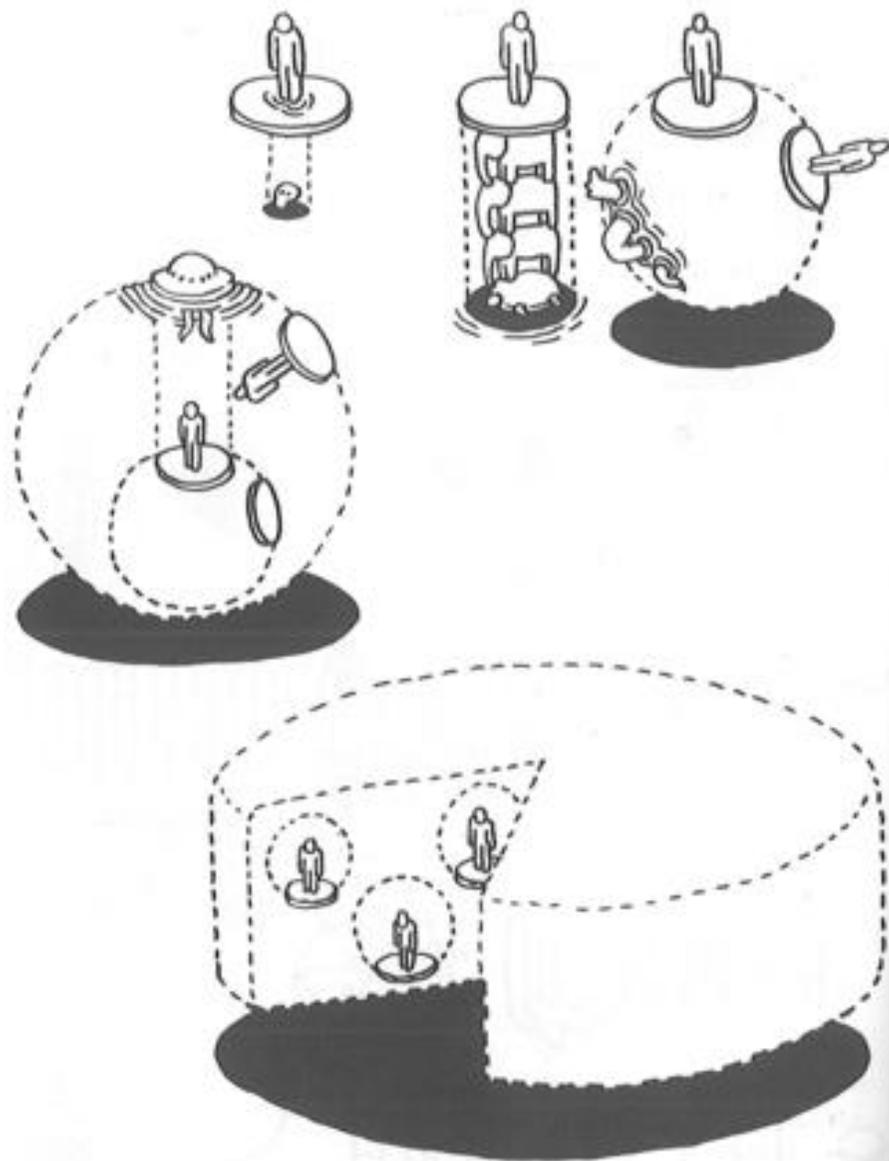
Search for
new gradients
and points of
reference



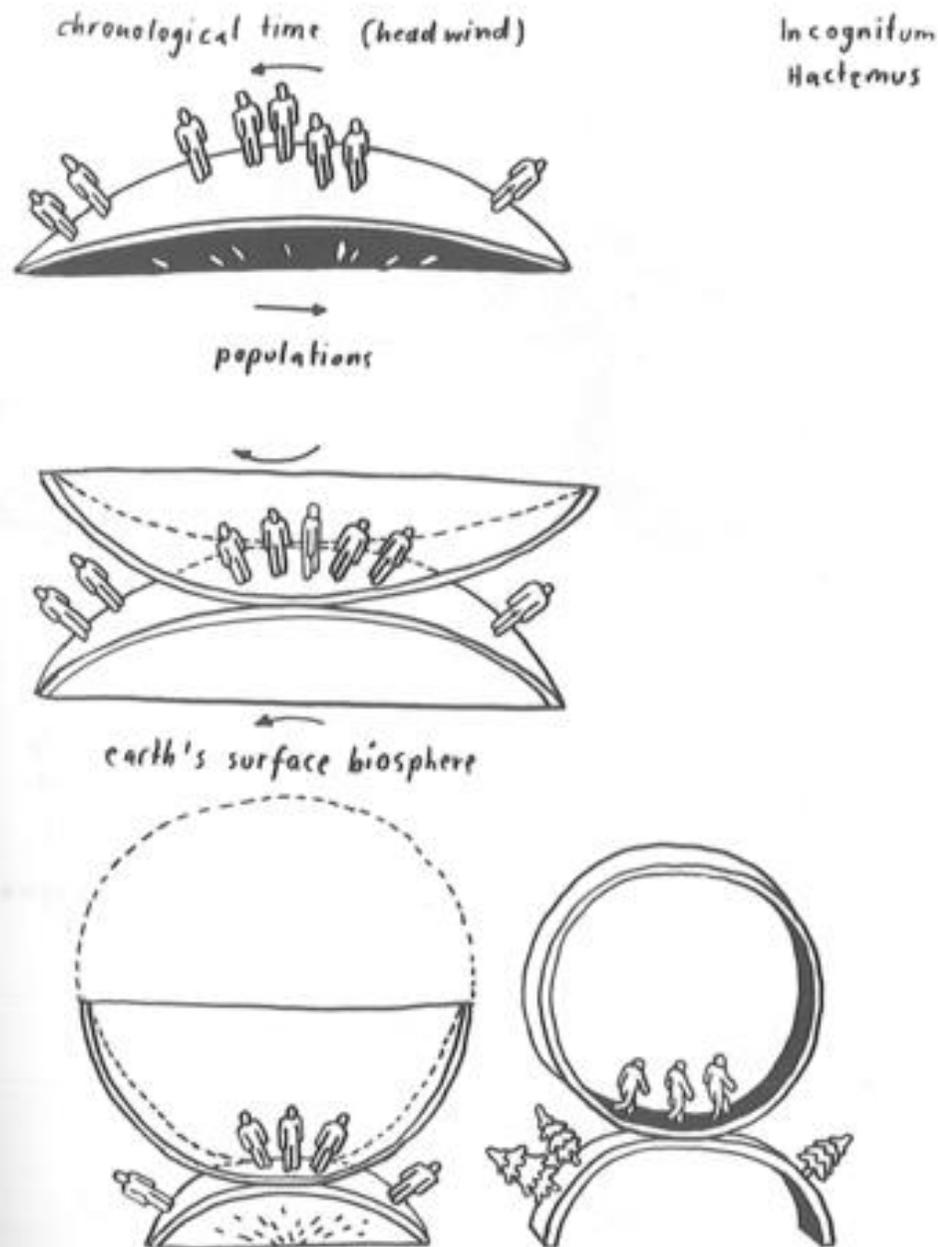
unground



Unground is a shadow beyond time and space



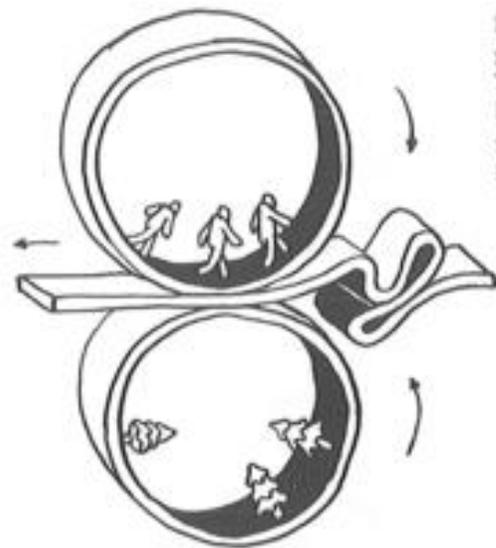
Can the Unground—where the hegemonic wholeness of the Earth is incapacitated—still be called Earth? And then, according to what chronological current, based on what calendar, according to what gradient of becoming, which point of reference addressed by space-time coordinates, can it be mapped as the New Earth? For the Unground is a shadow outside of time and space.



*In cognitum
Hactemus*

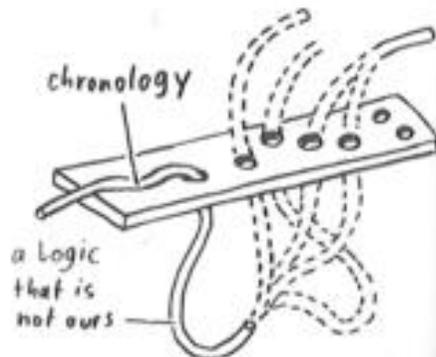
*unfathomable units of time are combined
with our chronological time (horror of
times beyond becomes visible)*

*chronological time
belongs
to the biosphere*

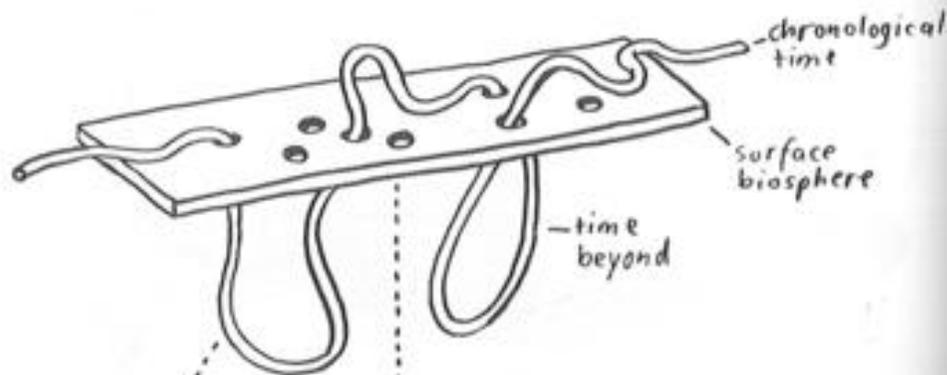


In *Incognitum Hactenus*, you never know the pattern of emergence. Anything can happen. Things leak into each other according to a logic that does not belong to us and cannot be correlated to our chronological time. Intrinsic permeability is a function of the nemat-space.

Smoothing out time: Chronologizing events as a proportion of population and biosphere (this smoothing out is called 'history')



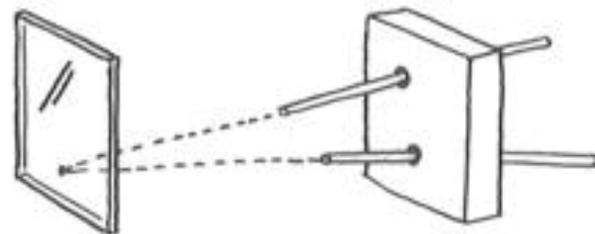
intrinsic permeability is a feature of Nemat-space (contingency)



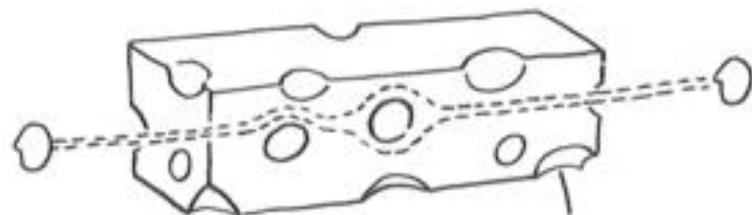
we don't know the pattern of emanation

intrinsic permeability

chronological sphere of memory

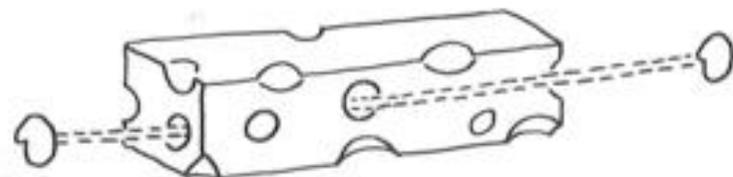


memory lapses bridged through reconstruction

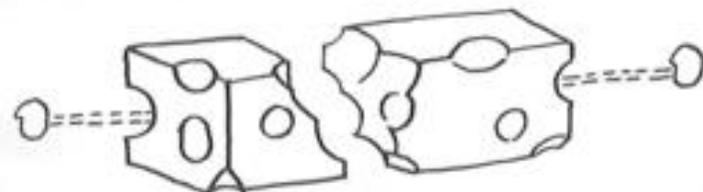


unnoticed missing memories

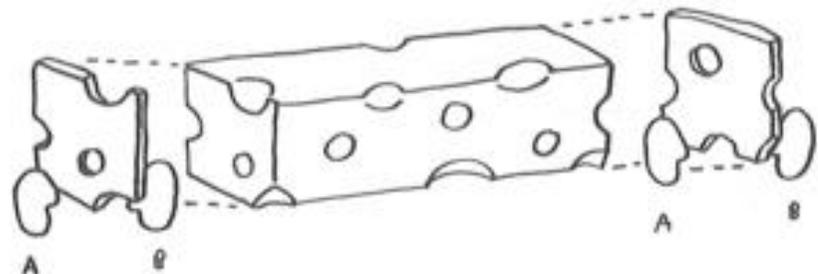
the porous space of memory



noticed missing memories

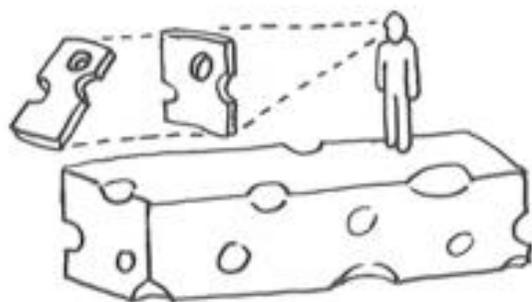


loss of the wholeness of the memory



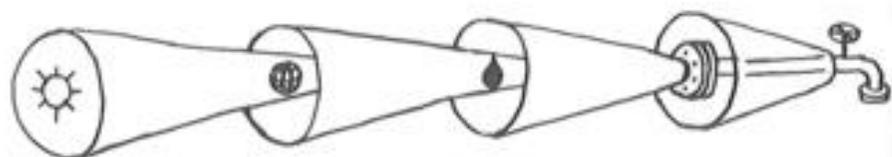
the synthesis of a memory is always time-based

A part of the now
B futural part of the now

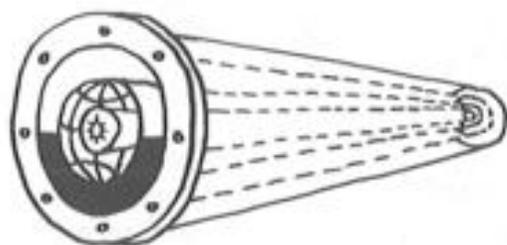


memory (distortions of memory) lie beyond the chronological course of time

hegemony of the solid and empty



solar thread → planetary hegemony of techno-capitalism



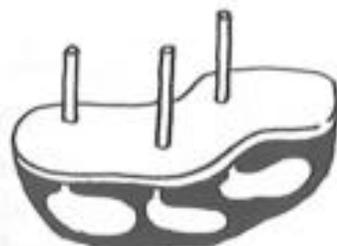
Islam (saturated by timeless desert) — in chronological discussion
capitalism (petro-politically contaminated)



poromechanics of Petrol



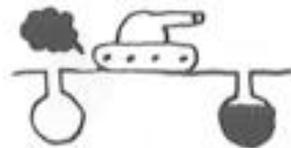
the holey space created by the logic of oil production in the desert



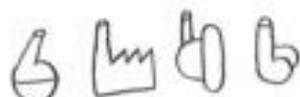
the progress of Chronological time



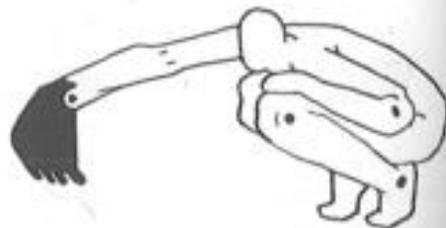
history is determined by oil flowing in and out



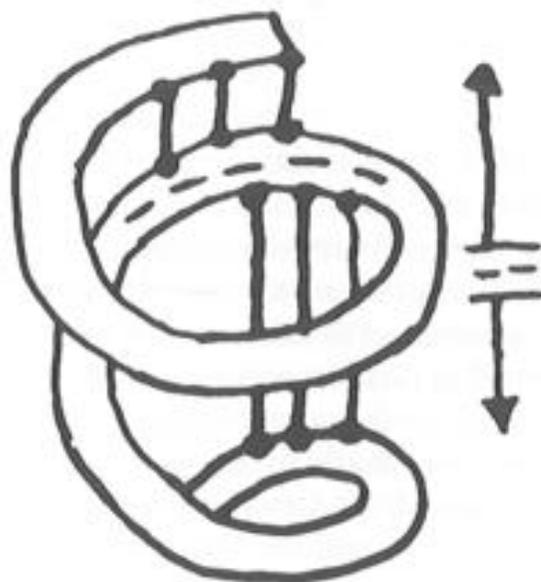
Solar economy:
thermonuclear
masturbation



geotrauma



If basking in solar economy overlaps with the annihilationist and nihilistic capitalism of the Sun, then how is it possible to dismantle this infernal hegemony without eradicating it? Because an instance of eradication or heat-death is again a homage paid to the solar economy and its thermonuclear self-indulgence. Petroleum definitely plays the role of the alpha-mutineer in Tellurian insurgency against capitalism and its neo-Ptolemaic heliocentrism.



8 Genealogies of Speculation: Materialism and Subjectivity since Structuralism

Armen Avanesian and Suhail Malik, eds.

This book is different from those presented so far. It is a first reflection on the work of Speculative Poetics and a response to the initial reactions the project provoked. Its engagement with predecessors and with philosophies close to the new speculative thought reinforces the basic impulse of the project, namely, to surpass the simplistic and simplifying opposition between recent speculative thought and twentieth-century anti-foundationalist philosophy.

One of the initial goals of Speculative Poetics has been to connect the contemporary interest in ontology with the language-based post-structuralist philosophy of the past few decades. In its practice of language, speculative thought (be it in Hegel, in Benjamin, or in Meillassoux today) calls for a self-determination. In this sense, linguistic and philosophical

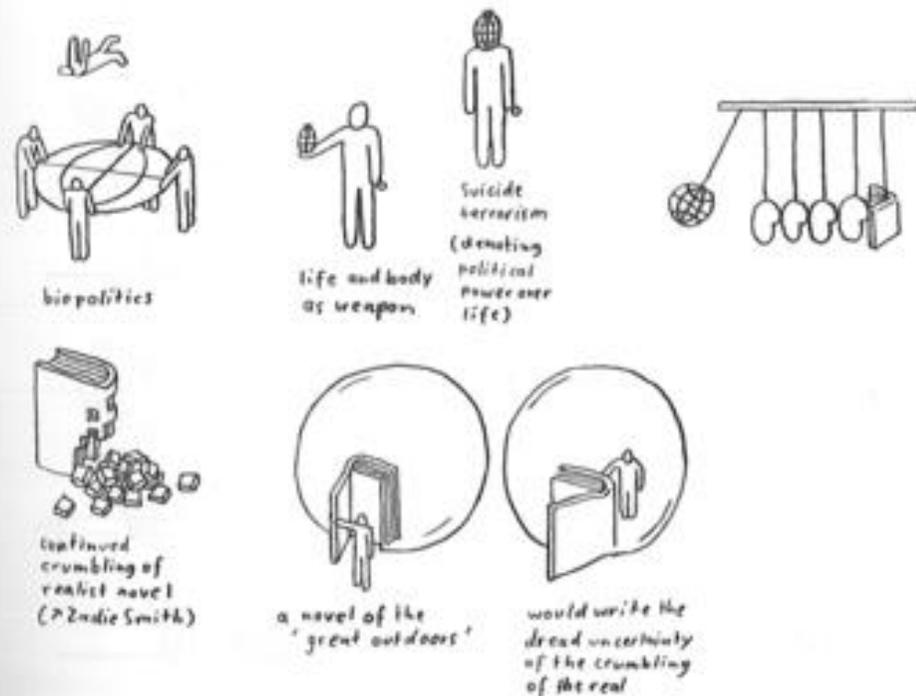
approaches to language ontology are interested in poiesis, which provides an ontological reinterpretation of the correlationist myth that the world is created through language: language changes the world.

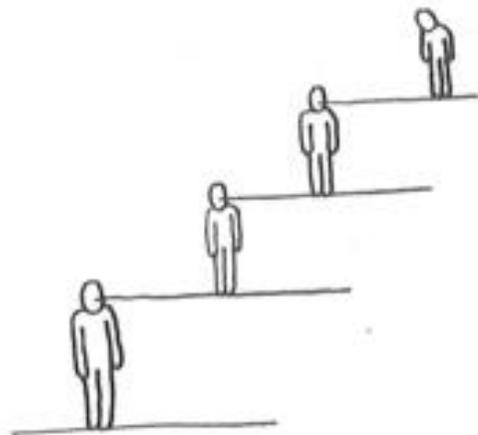
Genealogies of Speculation attempts to get out of an unproductive gridlock that abstractly opposes advocates of the "speculative turn" and their belief in a mind-independent or absolute reality to proponents of language-orientated philosophies since the "linguistic turn." Speculative realism is often understood as an attempt to once and for all surpass the correlationism found in post-structuralism and analytical philosophy, and is criticized as a regression from the theoretical and political advances made in the past forty years.

Along with Suhail Malik, to whose open and independent approach to speculative realism I owe (and have owed for a long time) more than he can imagine, we wanted to draw attention to methodological or conceptual precursors of speculative philosophy in the very field of thought and conceptual development it loudly claims to leave behind. The collection of essays pursues one of the key goals of *Speculative Poetics*, namely to reevaluate different theoretical and political traditions (literary theory, Marxism, art history, film studies, feminism, or in the analysis of biotic systems, as in the contribution by Myra Hird) in the wake of the speculative turn. It also seeks to make recent philosophical currents like phenomenology, structuralism, and analytical philosophy productive for contemporary realist and materialist approaches.

The structure of *Genealogies of Speculation*, due to be published early in 2015, will be modeled on Derrida's seminal text "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences," which is a severe criticism of structuralism. The essays in the section called "Structure" examine how realist and materialist approaches revise philosophical and theoretical systems

and anti-systems. The section titled "Sign" features essays about how contemporary literature takes up realist themes; how literature, as a privileged venue for philosophical speculation, generates ontological transformations; and how the "unmotivated sign" central to structuralist semiotics provides the basis for mathematics as the grasping of the real. The concluding section "Science" reevaluates the relation of specific methodological and political materialisms to science as a leading model for speculative realism's claim to apprehending a non-anthropogenetic real. The focus here is on the impact and the possibilities of new speculative approaches continuing the agenda of earlier methodologies. As Malik puts it: "Looking past both formalizations, the task here is to establish how thought in its rational finitude determines its own absolute contingency not just in regard of its finitude (as Meillassoux does) but also in regard of its reason (as Derrida does)."

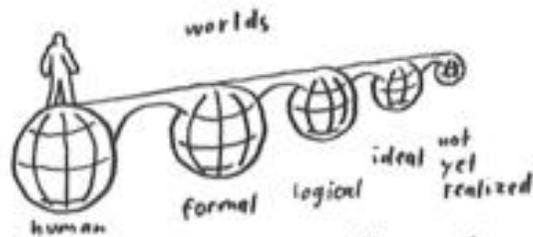




1 by not delimiting knowledge or the world from human experience,



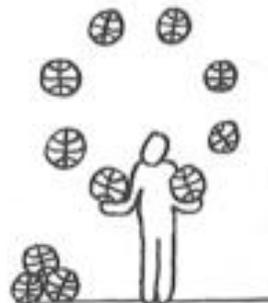
but instead severing knowledge from human experience



2 speculative realism opens the way for a different relation between art and knowledge, in which art does not create a bridge



Leibniz's rationalism: He doesn't write about art, aesthetics, and aesthetic judgement

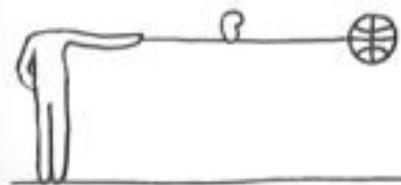


known world

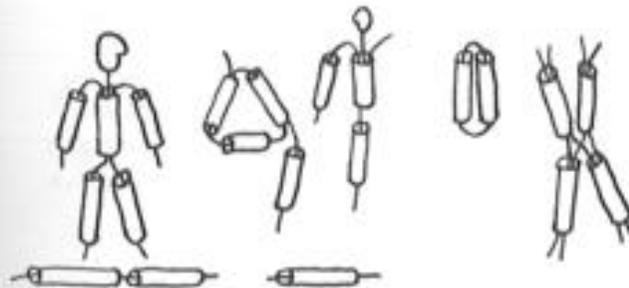
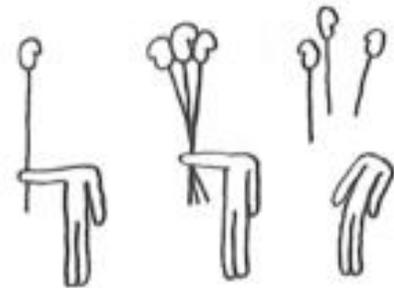
other possible world



science art



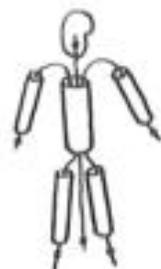
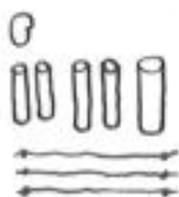
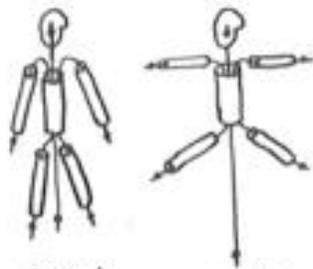
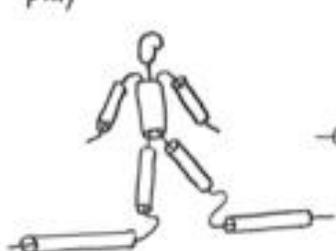
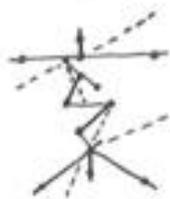
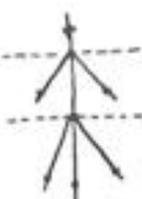
severing knowledge from human experience



Suhail Malik

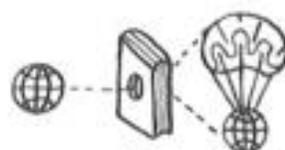
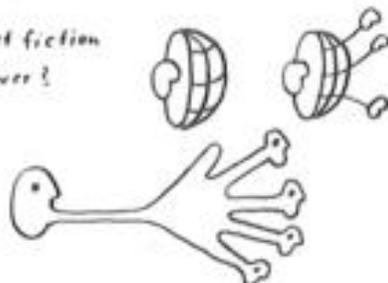
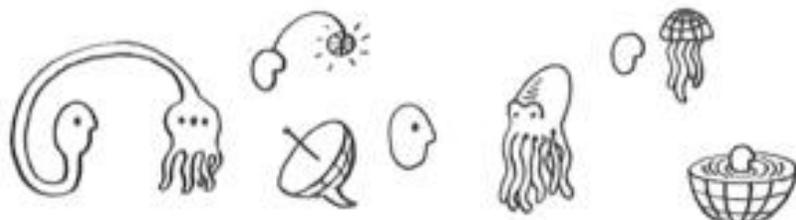
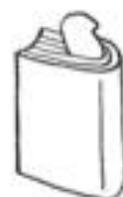
Absolute Reason

Absolute Deconstruction

classic
deconstructionstructure,
sign, and
playfinitude
(Meillassoux) reason
(Derrida)structurality
of structure
as empty centerabstraction
of the real
contingency
is the only
necessitythe real as
absolutely
contingentstructurality
determined as
empty without
de jure dismissing
the absolute fact
of contingencyprinciple of
insufficient
reasonprinciple of
sufficient
reason

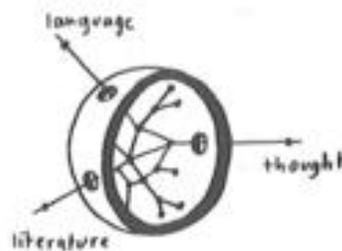
Highlighting the structurality of the structure as empty and therefore contingent through a logic of the supplement, Derridean deconstruction draws back from prosecuting its rational conclusion: that the structurality of the structure is only contingent, and this condition is the only necessity. (Suhail Malik)

SIGN Arne De Boever: The Realist Novel and the Great outdoors

poststructuralism → postmodernist fiction
speculative realism → fiction's answer?fiction
as
'correlationalist
amplifier'
(Law Bogaert)traditional
narrative → correlationMeillassoux ♥
"Extra-Science Fiction"Harman ♥ H.P. Lovecraft's
"weird fiction"Derrida ♥ Daniel Defoe's
Robinson CrusoeDe Boever:
Care and
Caring for
Others
narrative carenovels govern
our lives

I begin from an interest in realist fiction that Derrida began to develop at the very end of his life—his last seminar revolved largely around Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Heidegger's work on things, crucial to Harman's thought—to argue that realist fiction, and the quandaries in which it has landed, is in fact the best place to assess the possibilities for fiction after deconstruction and (today) after speculative realism. (Arne De Boever)

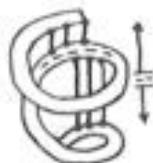
Armen Avanesian Linguistic Ontology



thinking literature:



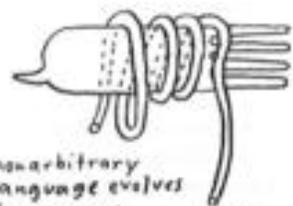
situating natural language literary artifacts poetic thinking



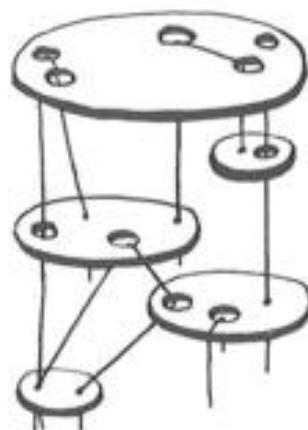
speculative philosophy demands experimentation with language



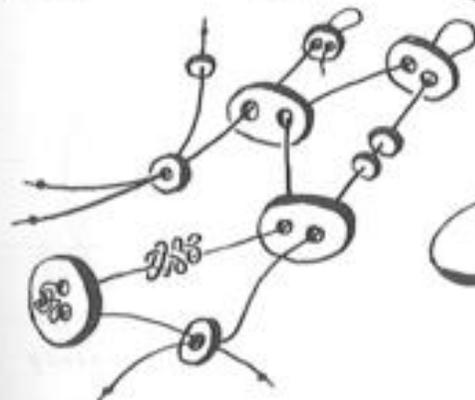
breaking with the assumption that language is nonreferential or arbitrary



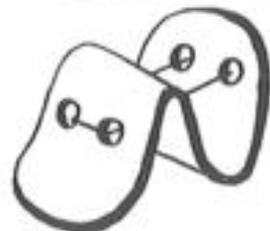
nonarbitrary language evolves in ever new referrals back to itself



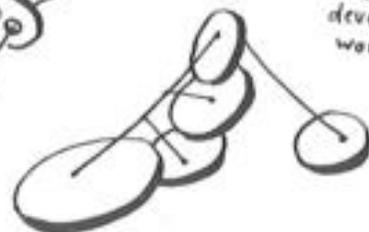
language and its referrals to itself



language further develops the world



language develops worlds

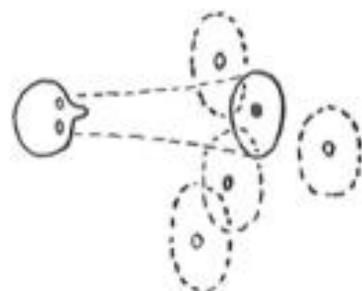
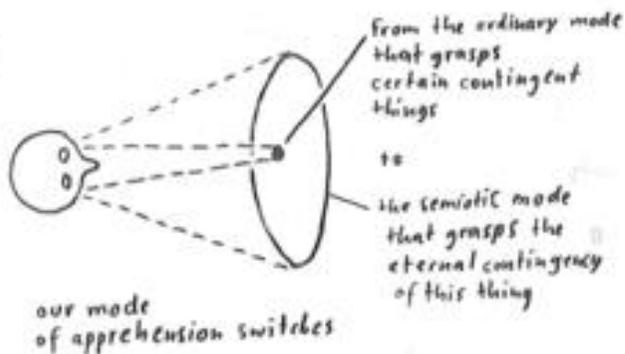


Language, literature, and thought are part of the world. Thinking literature thus consists in situating natural language, literary artifacts, and poetic thinking on a single plane. (Armen Avanesian)

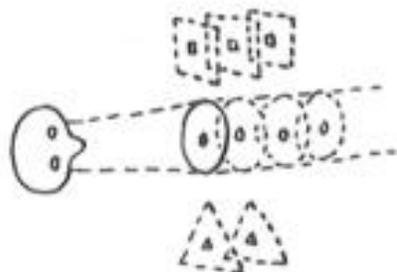
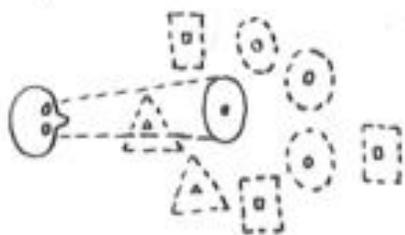
Quentin Meillassoux



sign



grasping a facticity makes it possible for me to iterate identical marks (replicas of type-signs)



eternal contingency

The meaningless sign has an ontological import: Grasping the meaningless sign has as its condition the ontological truth of the necessary contingency of all things. (Quentin Meillassoux)



iterating identical marks



replicas of distinct type-signs



a fact independent of us



mathematics as regulated manipulation of meaningless signs

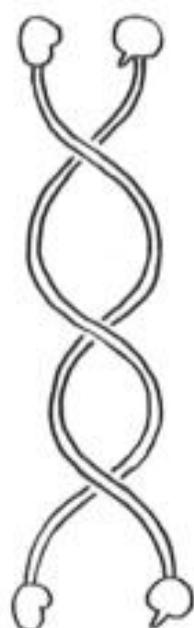


mathematics is the privileged discourse of speculative materialism



The grasping of the sign proceeds from a switching of our mode of apprehension—switching from the ordinary mode of apprehension that grasps certain contingent things to the semiotic mode of apprehension that grasps the eternal contingency of this or that thing. (Quentin Meillassoux)

SCIENCE: Amanda Beech, Robin Mackay:
Althusser's Scientific Method



the correspondence of science's statements with a real that is held to be independent of those statements

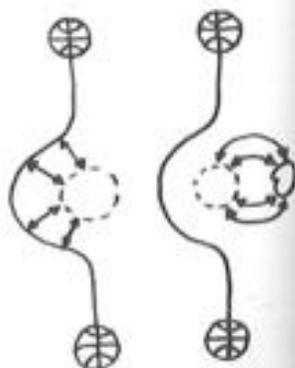
art produces propositions



both agents have apparatuses of conception



global situation without access to its coordinates

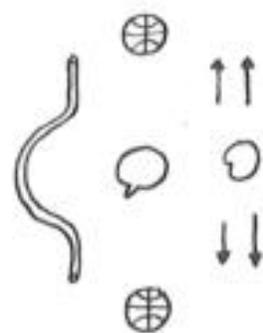


both determine stability in global environment

both link to local conditions of conception

The primary precept of a scientific method is that the unknown global conditions are somehow reflected or refracted in the local, but plotting this path may involve following a "twist" (nontrivial projection of the local into the global). But can we use this as a framework within which to understand how science and art respectively have attempted to cut themselves out from a local and constrained situation? Furthermore, the question then is of how to reconstitute the concepts of science and art in materialist terms? (Amanda Beech and Robin Mackay)

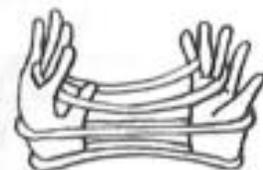
it depends on the experimental setup whether an idea can be communicated



global



local



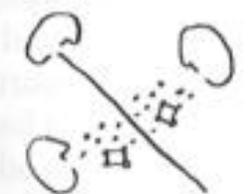
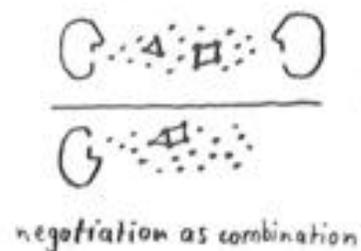
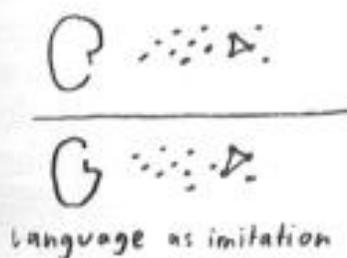
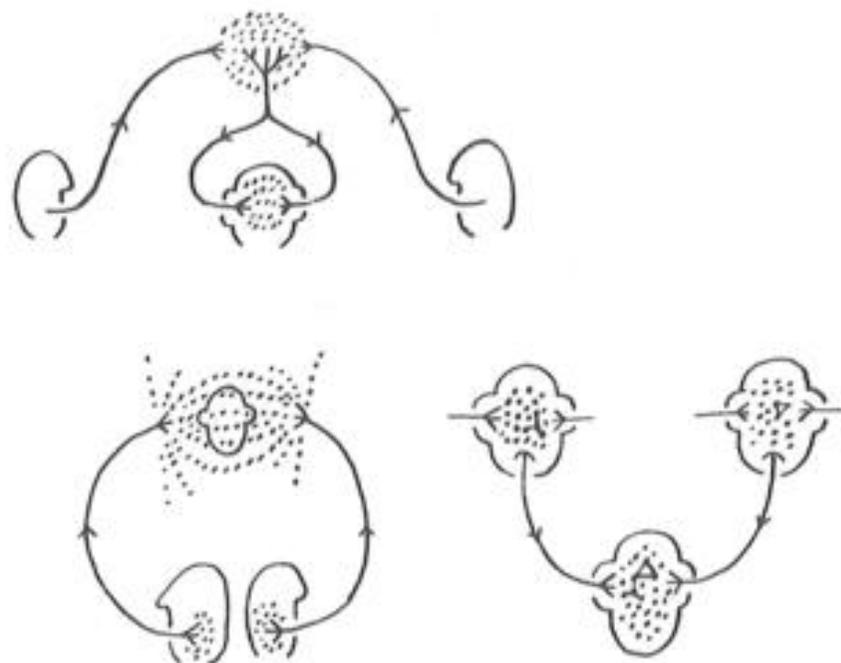
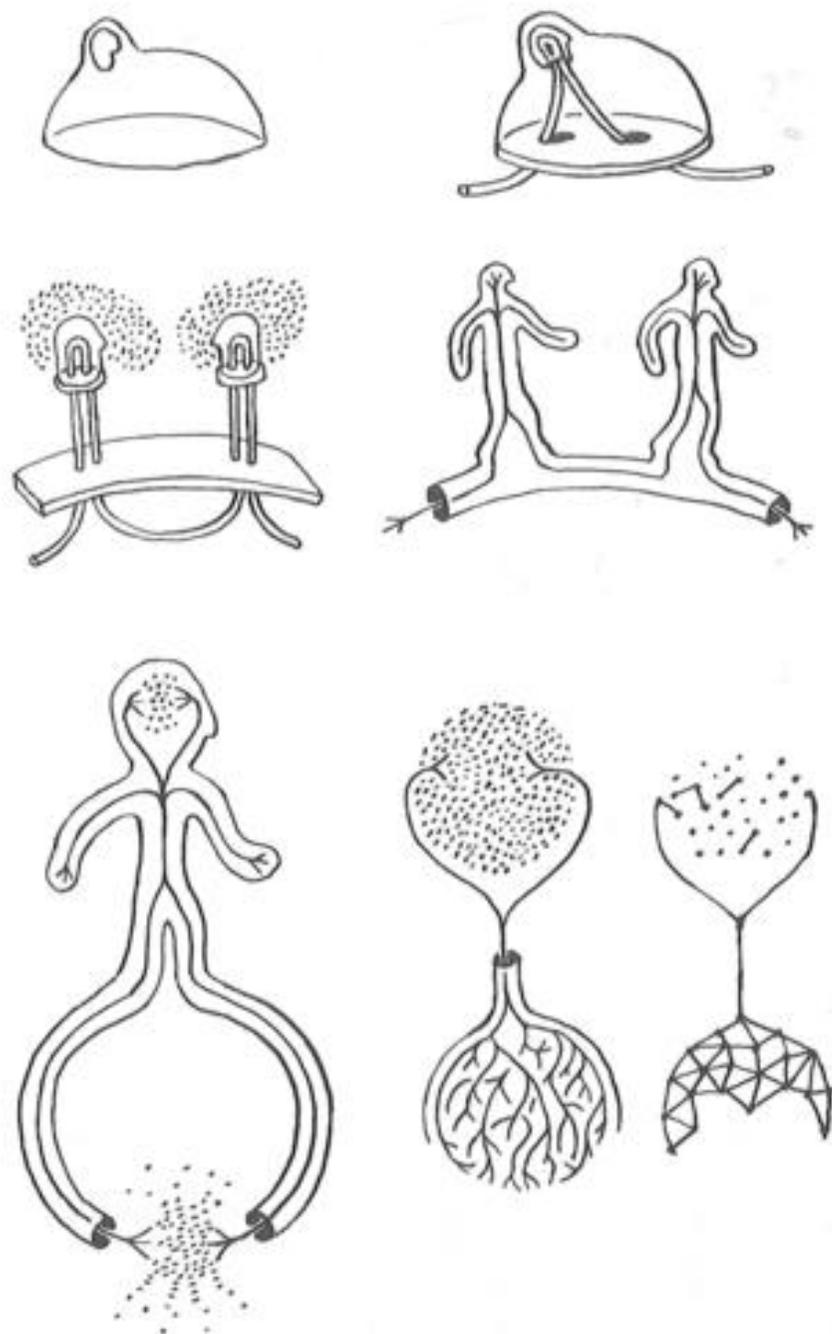
local



global

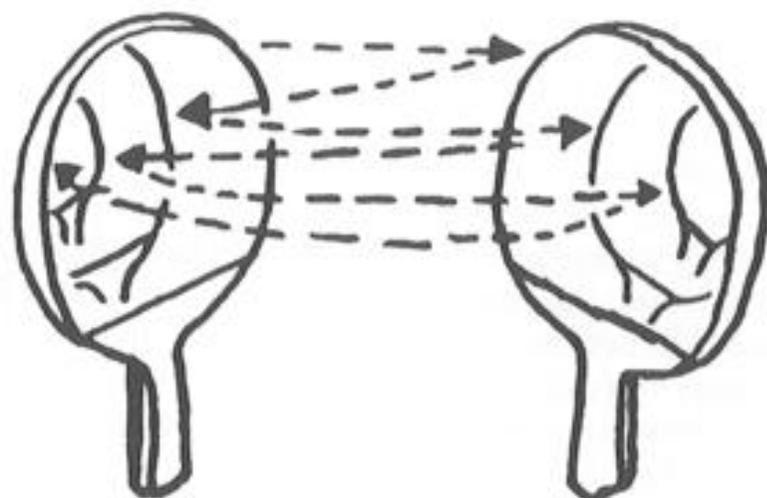
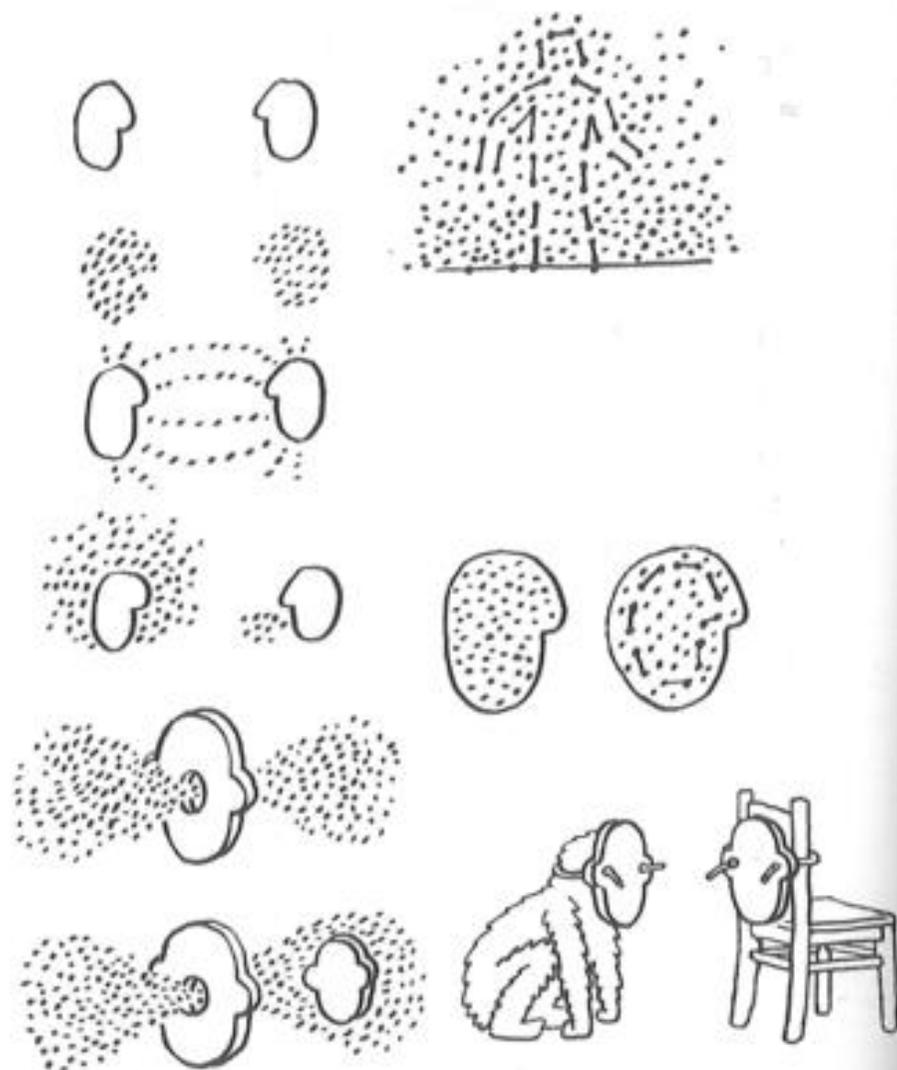


how have science and art cut themselves out of the local situation?



opining as fixing

In sharp contrast to approaches emphasizing subjectivity as a condition for all experience and knowledge, recent innovations in philosophy propose a breakthrough in comprehending the encounter with the real or reality. The true picture is however more complex, with many debts accrued on both sides of this artificial division. *Genealogies of Speculation* investigates the common interest in establishing a materialism that at once exceeds rational thought and yet can only be discovered by it. (Introduction)



9 The Concept of Non-Photography François Laruelle

Always searching for the interconnections between images, text, and meaning, I was immediately attracted to this title, so we decided that I should introduce the book. Reading Laruelle's reflections on the "continent of flat thoughts" triggered an undrawable number of ideas, and as I'm not a writer, Bernd translated them into a text. (AT)

Photography is a transcendental automaton forcing us to produce. We've set up the world accordingly, have made it our biosphere, anthroposphere, a matter of its own, providing rules that tell us how to move.

Bad resolution and insufficient size promote a liquefaction on the part of the spectator, he interpolates, recognizes gaps. Conceptual qualities increase, images turn into visions. Absolute perfection and high resolution make thinking unavailable. That's how photographs replace the world.

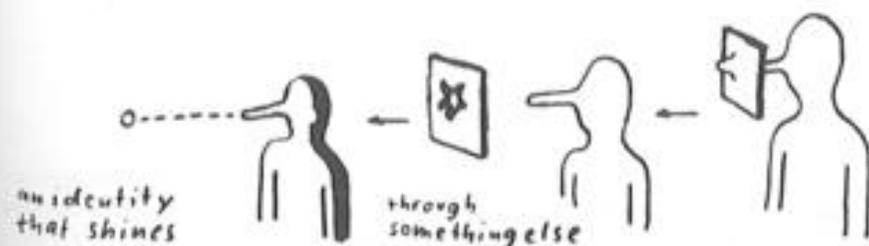
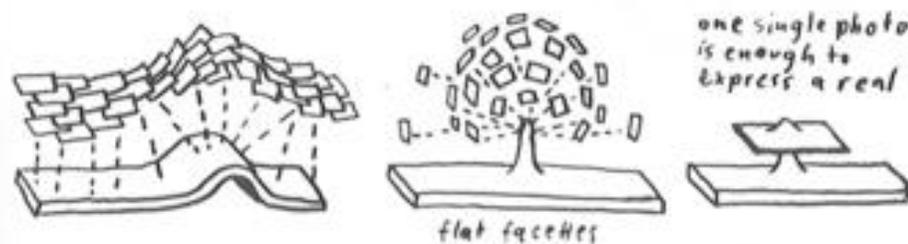
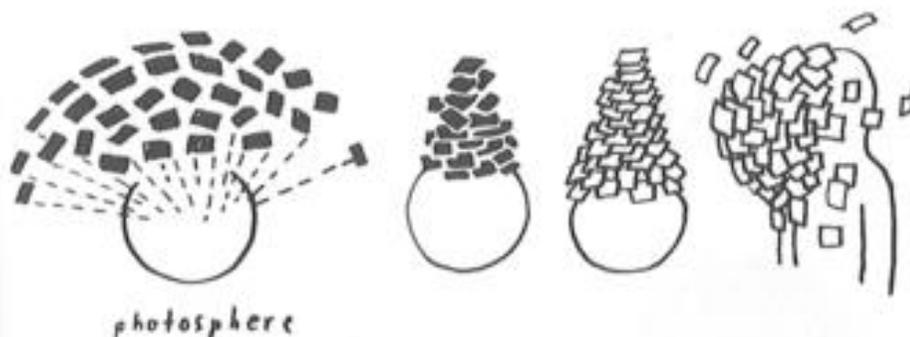
Night, the inside of our own bodies. Eyes directed at the light, images appear inside the shadows. A flash. Seeing forms thinking, a derivation from perception: metaphors surface from within our belly, our first brain. Use of fire: pre-digestion, hence less energy, hence energy for a second brain, both in transmission by *nervus vagus*. The human being: animal of light.

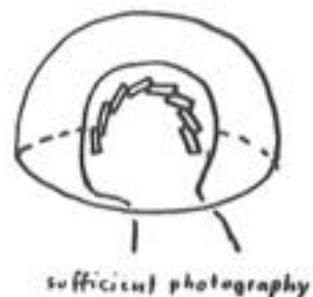
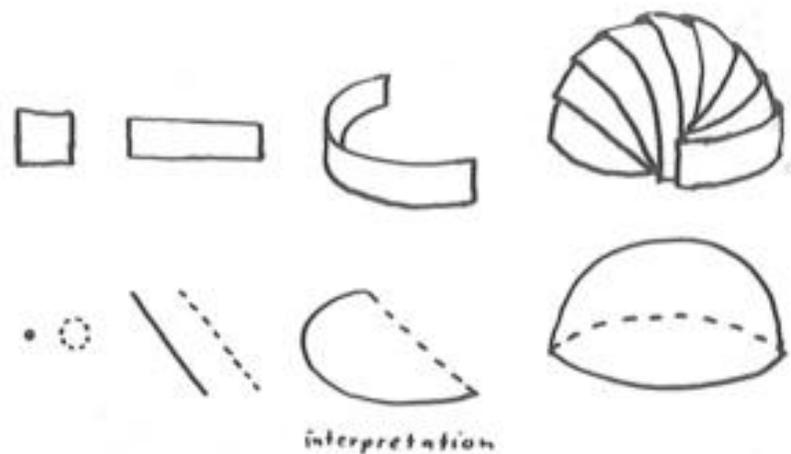
A non-photo develops when we move an image, casting an immaterial stereotype the way cave paintings imprint the shape of hunted animals into our heads. To paint is but to carry pictures into caves, blowing colors onto walls while the hand rests between mouth and stone. Are there bad cave paintings? I don't know any.

This process is reproduced by technology. Defective pixels do not reveal an inability on our part but our way of thinking. Photographs can scan the surface of the earth just like the magnetic cartridges of record players sample waves scratched into vinyl. To concentrate means reducing the resolution, recomposing the elements of what is commonly known as sense. We cannot not understand.

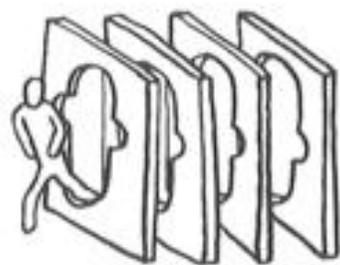
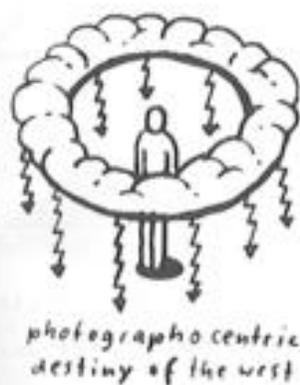
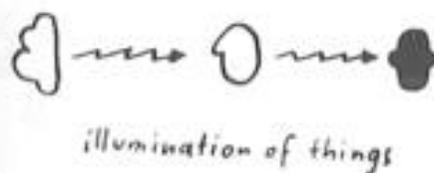
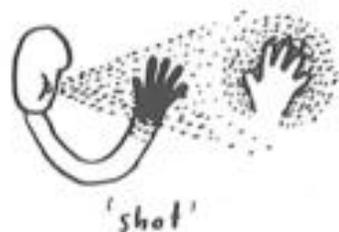
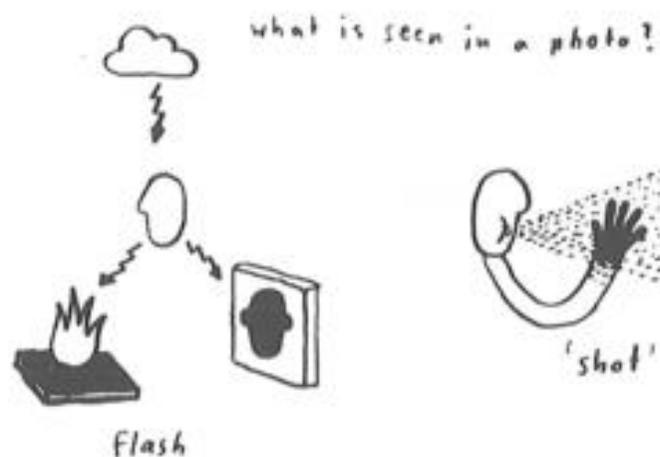
Creating pictures is an automatism of thought, we think in pictures, expressions of the real, and when we expose negatives in our head, irregularities on the film become part of the picture. That's why imaginations are images of our personality. A continent of flat thoughts emerges, an unlimited surface inside the head, unlimited storage space inside the cloud, or rather an ocean, a place that, because we cannot read it, lacks geography. And yet this surface is the largest negative on earth, its waves and ripples define its resolution (rough to fine), exposing clouds to the materiality of water.

After having placed an image, the photographer can retreat, he has replaced himself with surface. Looking for its beauty is like playing chess. Without rules, the board becomes an image, 8x8 resolution, 50 percent on the gray scale.

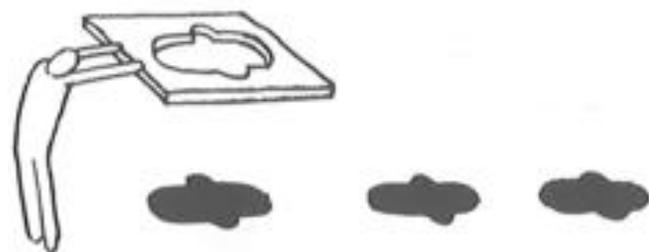




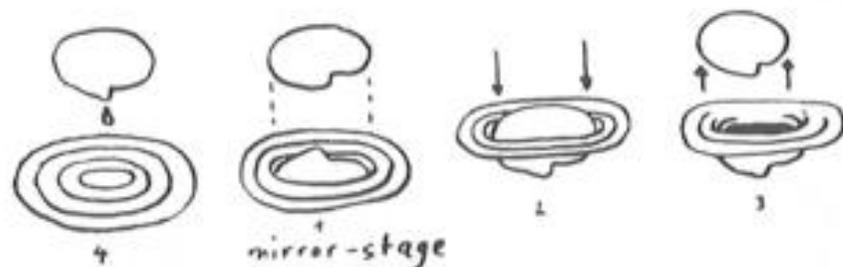
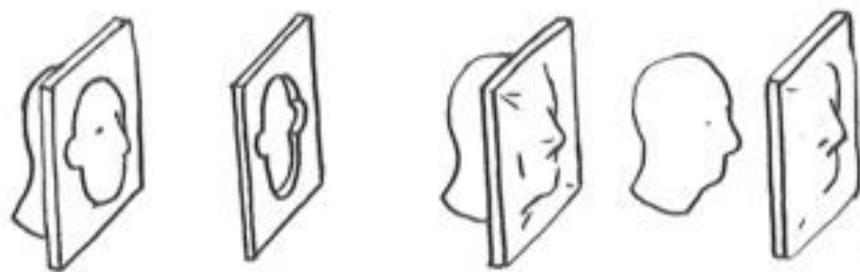
These essays aim to disencumber the theory of photography of a whole set of ontological distinctions and aesthetic notions imposed on it by the Humanities with the help of philosophy, and which celebrate photography as a double of the world, forming thus a 'Principle of Sufficient Photography'—so as to reveal both its modest nature and its abyssal character as 'identity-photo'.



photographic repetition
traverses western thought



generalization of illuminated forms
produced at (as) surface



mirror-stage



flash-stage

Perhaps it is but a premature photographic conception of the World, born of a precipitate, excessive generalization of the phenomena of illuminated forms produced at the surface of things or of language—phenomena which there was, as yet, no technique to recollect, store and exploit.

Seek a non-onto-photo-logical thinking of essence

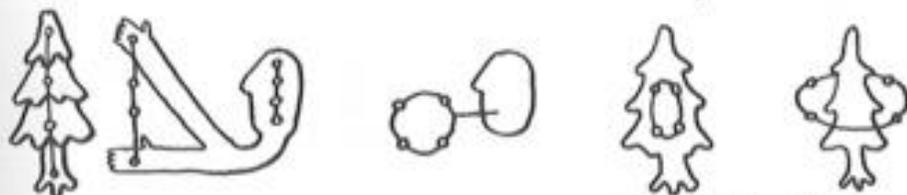


instead of thinking photography through philosophy



a rigorously
nonphotographic thought

can you think
without images/
metaphors?



the true element
of a photo



self-interpretations



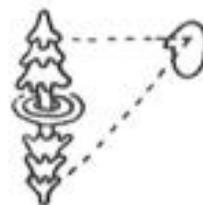
the essence of the shot
is nothing but
photographic



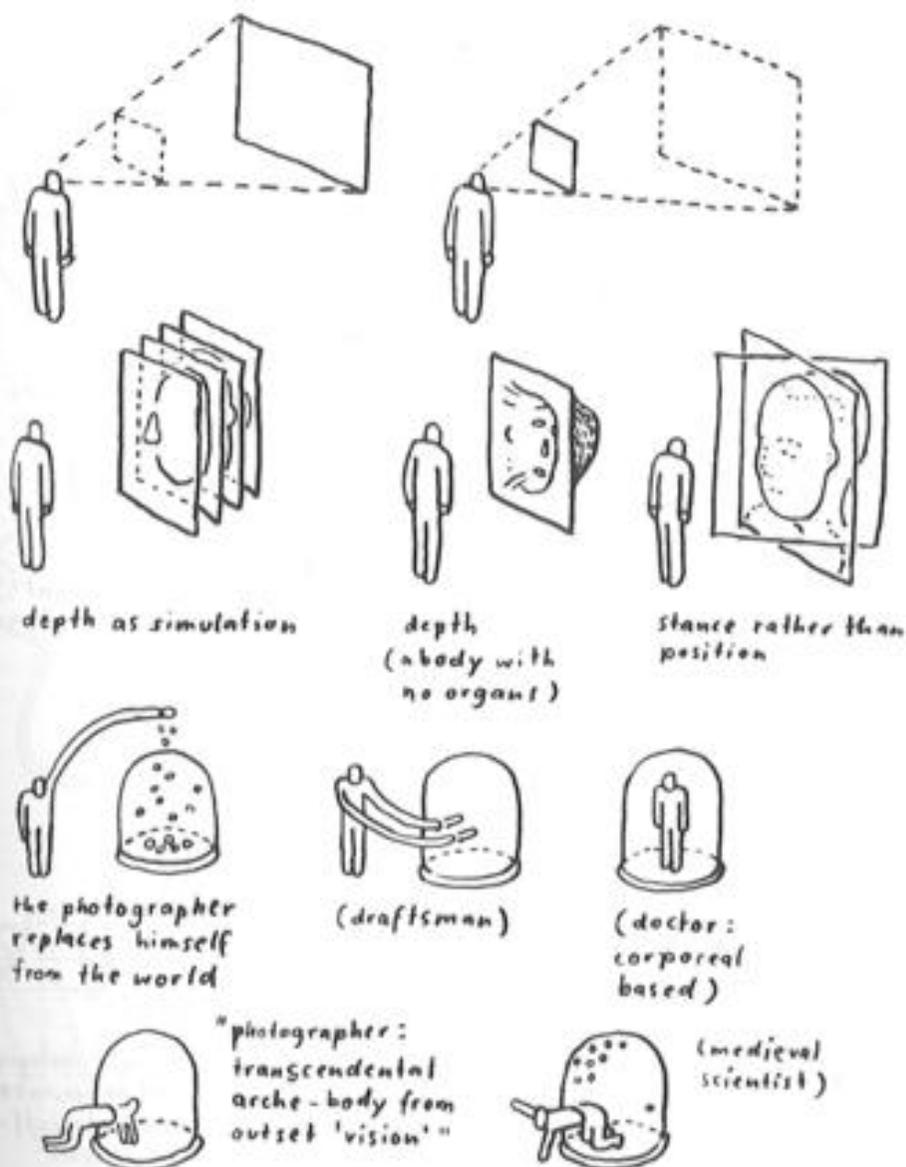
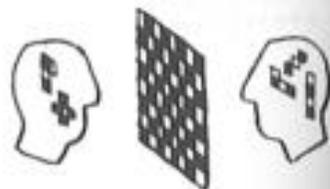
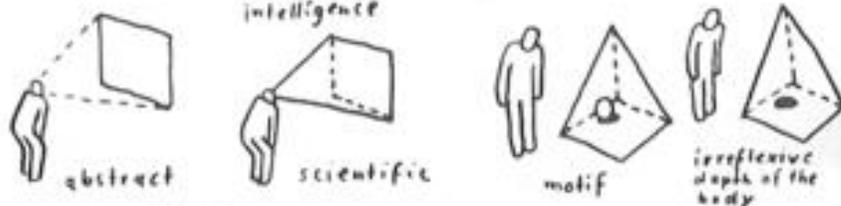
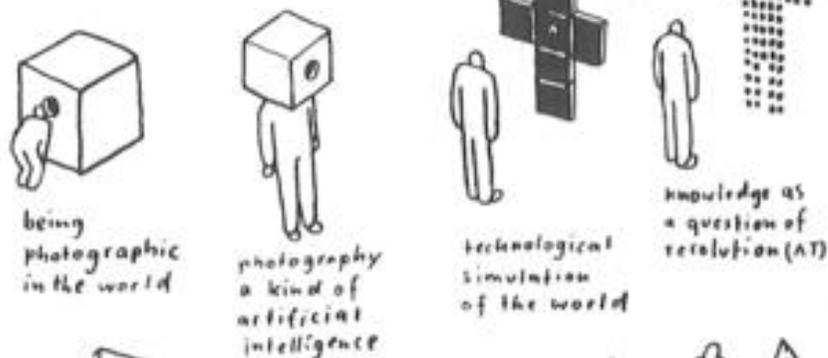
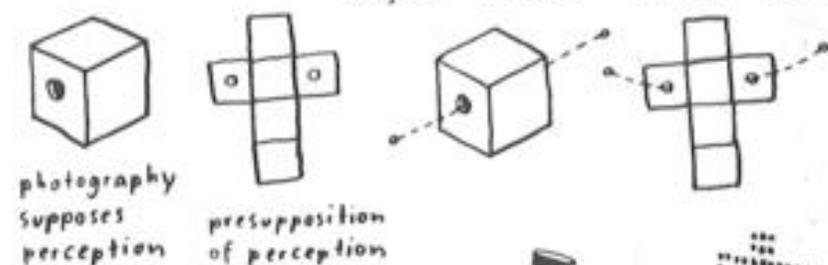
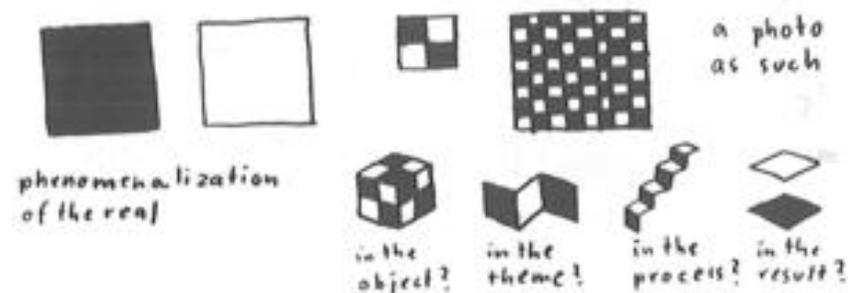
photographic
stance condition
of
existence



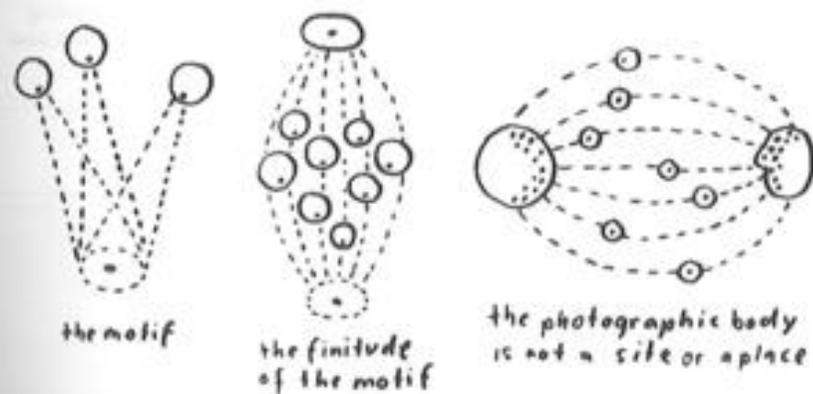
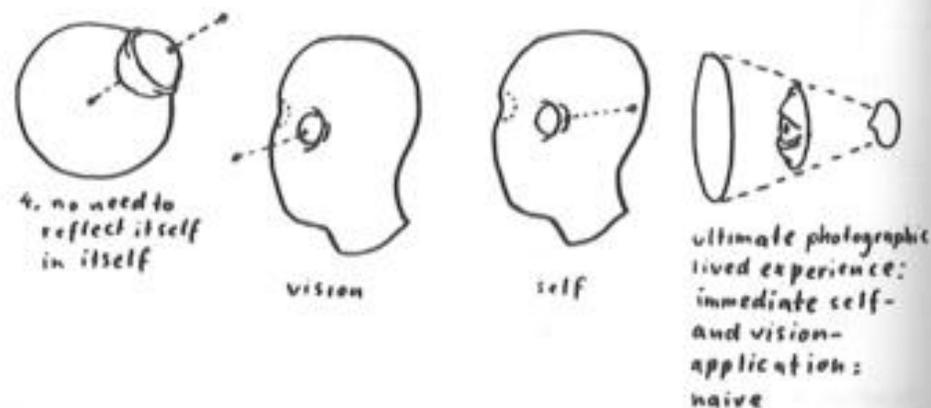
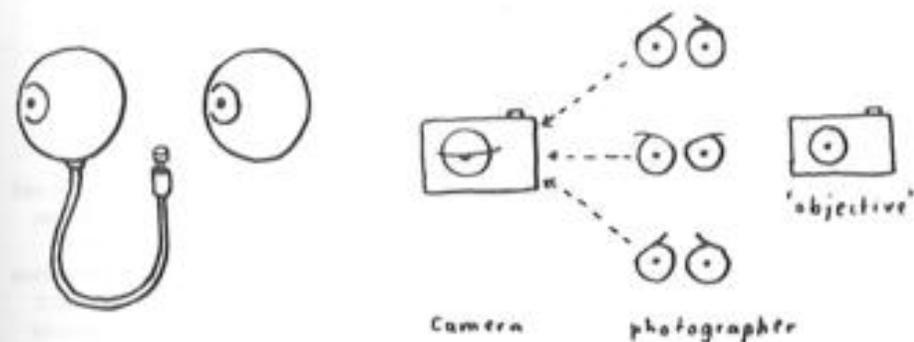
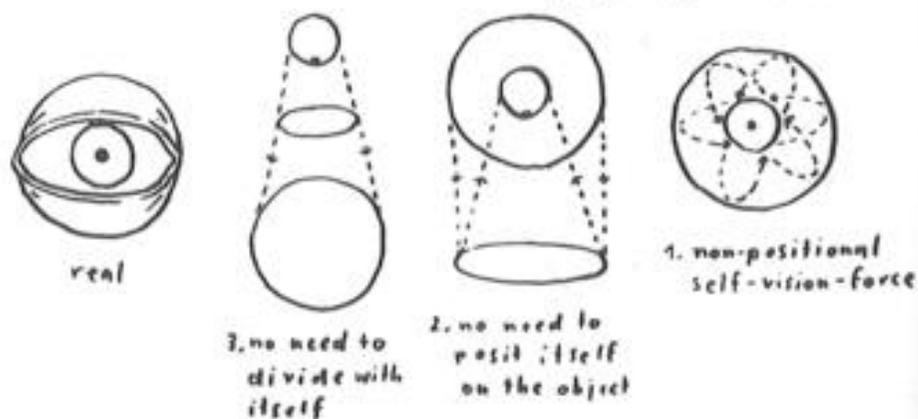
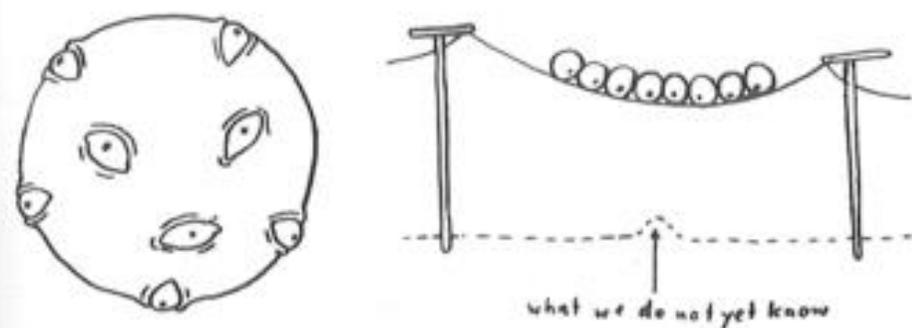
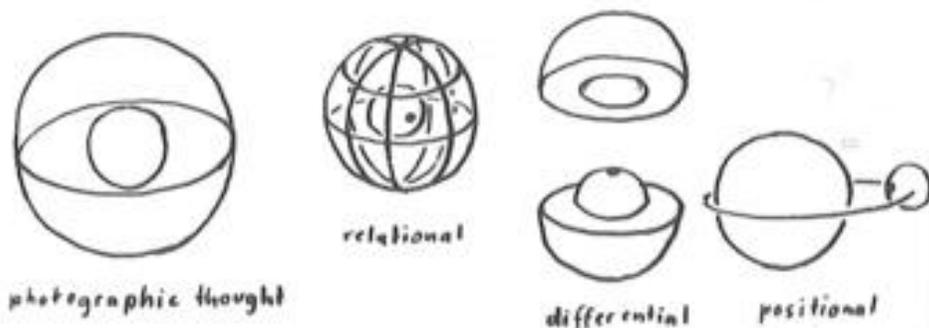
vision-
force



forgetting the
essence of photography
in favour of its
philosophical
appropriation



We will take the photo as the exemplary, paradigmatic realization, in the domain of images and of their production, of that flat and deaf thinking, strictly horizontal and without depth, that is the experience of scientific knowledge, and on the basis of which we must, for reasons of rigour and reality which cannot be philosophically debated, also describe painting and the other arts. But more than other arts, perhaps, photography introduces, not in the World, but to the World, to its artistic and technological reproduction, a new relation.



The intimate work of the photo is a de-functionalization of thought and a parousia of Being, but one freed from limits, folds, from the horizons that it owes to its hybridization with the entity. The dissolution of ontological Difference is the great work of photographic thought—for photography, when we think it, also thinks; and this is why it does not think like philosophy.

photographer needs
stance within naivety

camera renders
objectivation



invisible

objectivity



a photo of an object
represents a photo



not the object



sphere of objects



sphere of photographs

→ Husserl

Of photography as science, and perhaps for the same reason, philosophers say that it is 'objectivating', that it prioritises the object or the sign, that it supposes an ultra-objectivist 'flattening' of the World. We might ask ourselves if there is not a great misunderstanding here, a very self-interested error of perspective.



object



photograph of object



are equally objective



partialized and
coded by the world
(→ material)



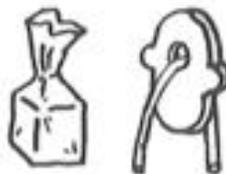
resolution and size
as code barriers(AT)



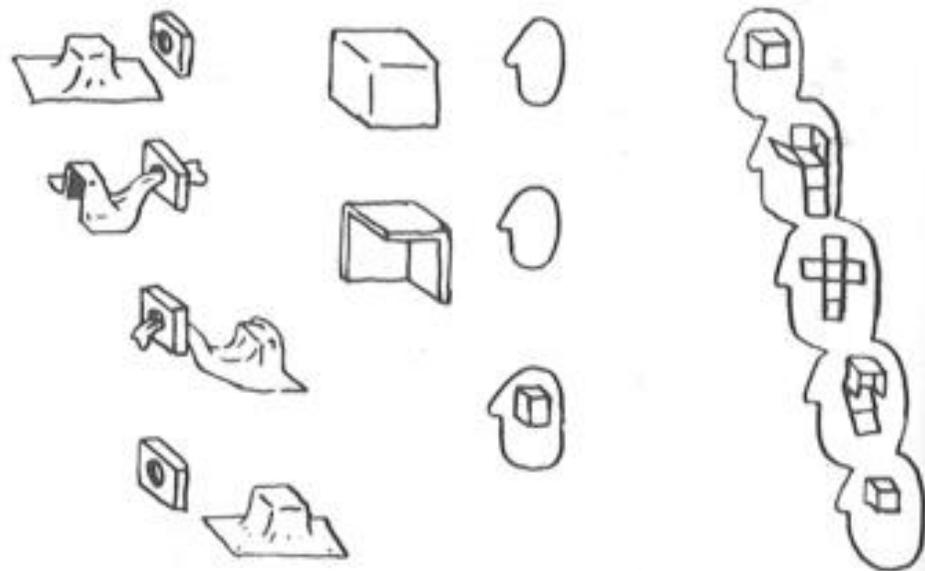
the 'in-itself' of
the object



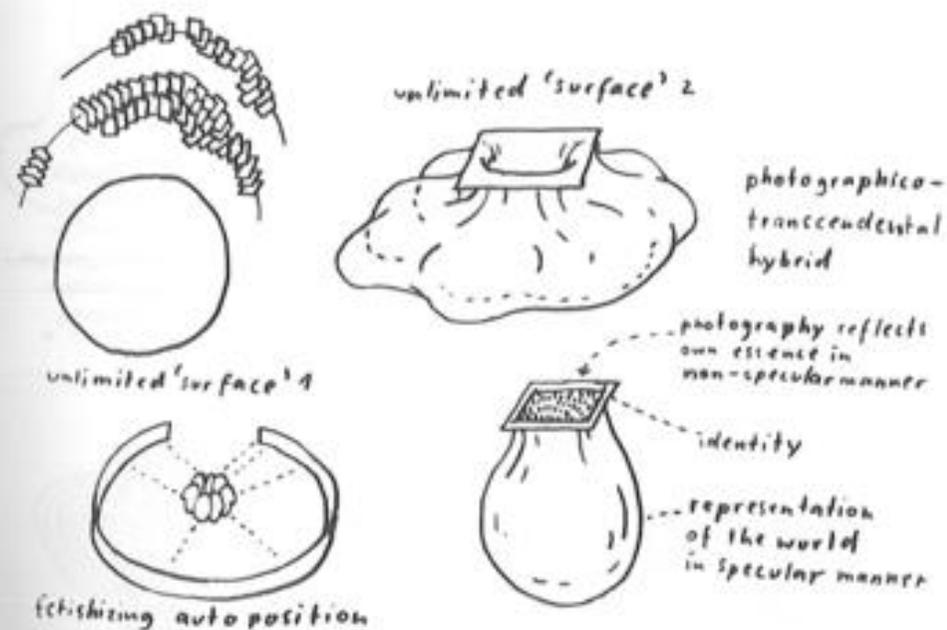
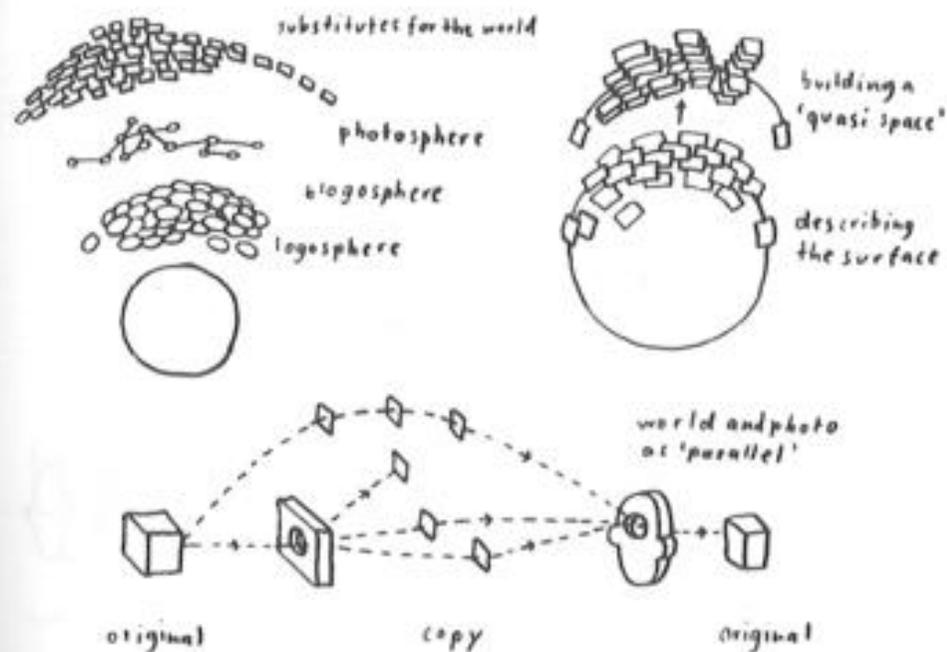
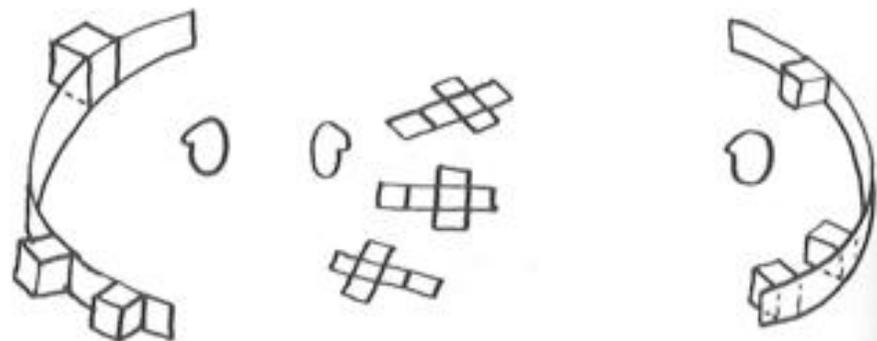
objects that live
by their vision alone



common sense: the perceived object exists in itself



Vision does not 'shoot' a pure image; more exactly, a pure image is given to it, in an immanent mode, an image which does not visualize the operation of shooting, but is what is shot, the transcendent object; and which, without touching it refers to it as mere 'signal' or 'occasion'.



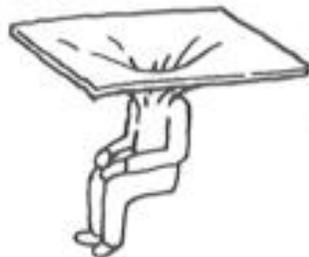
the continent of flat thoughts



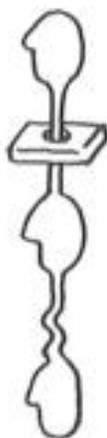
'levelled' or 'flat thoughts'



science



'thinking' of the unconscious



photography as transcendental automat

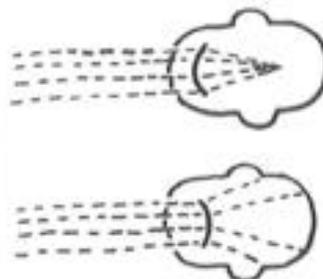
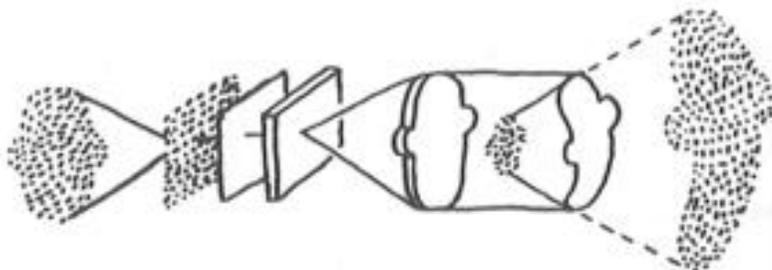


reflection - without - mirror - of an identity - without - world

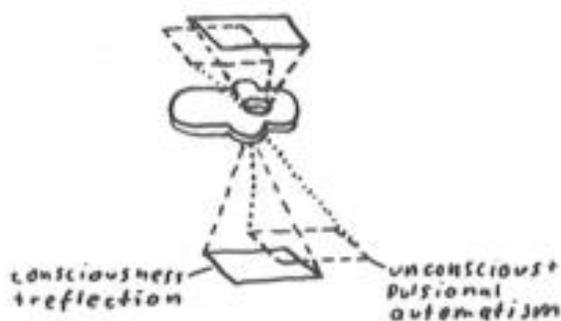


the continent of flat thoughts

Of photography, we shall say that it is a thought that relates itself to the World in an automatic and irreflexive, but real, way; that it is therefore a *transcendental automat*, far more and far less than a mirror at the edge of the World: the reflection-without-mirror of an Identity-without-World, anterior to any 'principle' and any 'form'.



pictorial order



consciousness + reflection

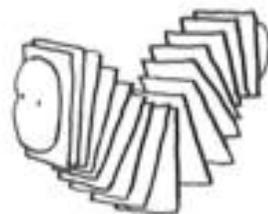
unconscious + pulsional automatism



sub-painting



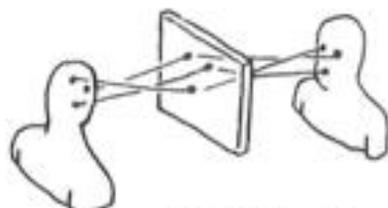
pre-cinema



immateriality in movement

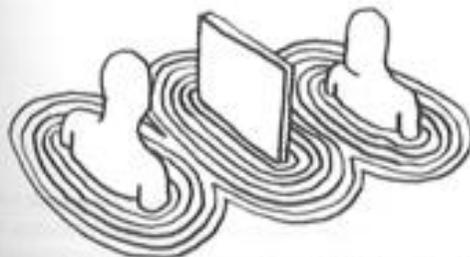


photography ideography



idea in image

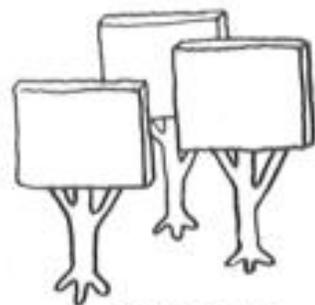
a science of photography



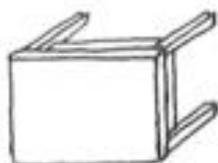
photography - a 'qualitative' science



'imaginary'



material cause
of a photo



formal cause
of a photo (>desktop)



agent cause
of a photo



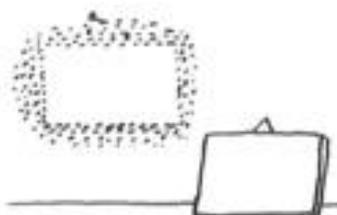
final cause
of a photo



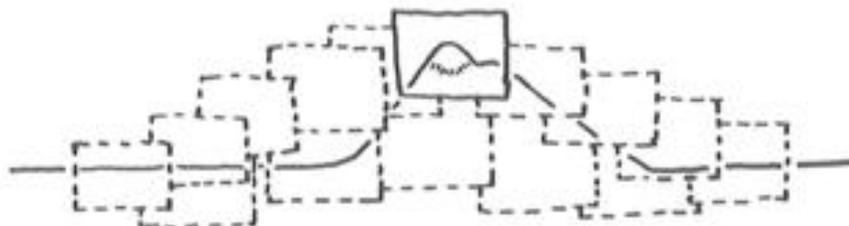
photo



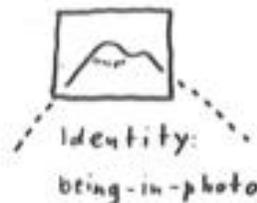
identity photo



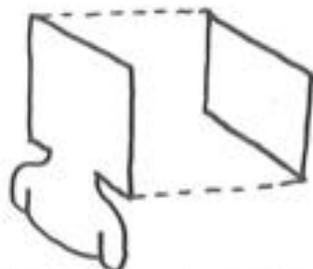
the unconsciousness
of the photo



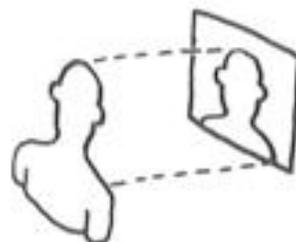
possible photographs



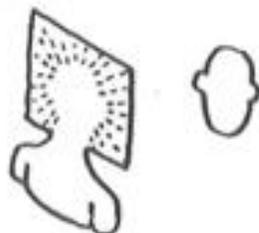
Identity:
bring-in-photo



ideal image and real object



a photo as a photo-of...
an image as an image-of...



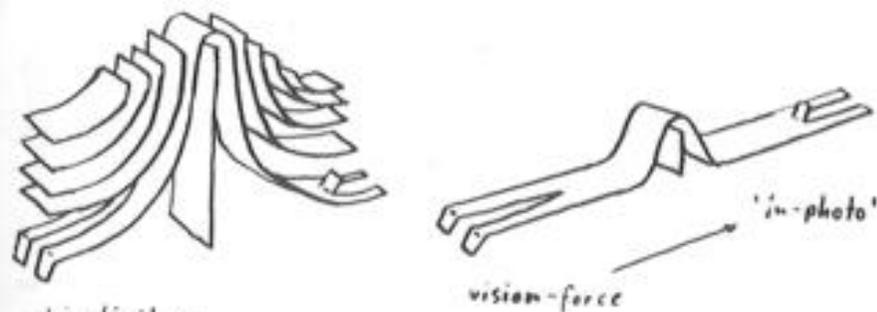
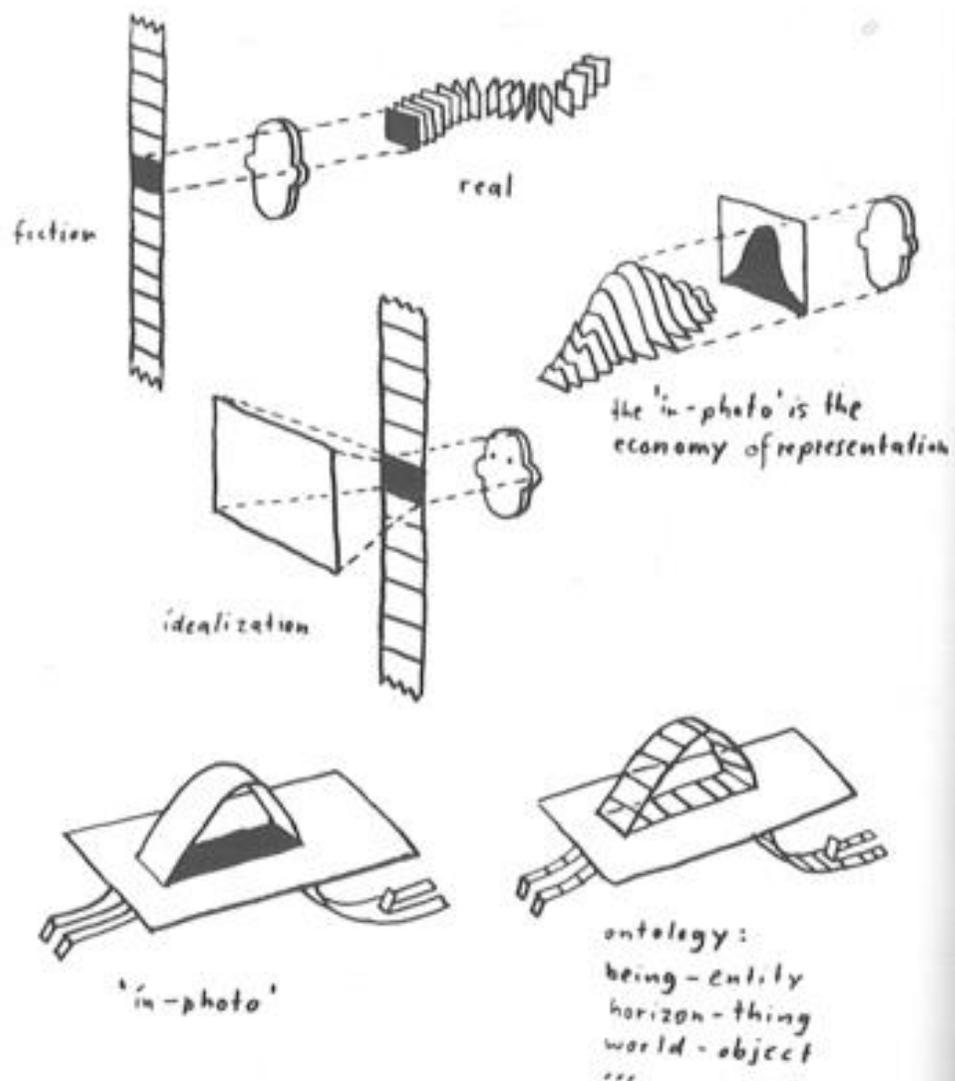
an amphibology
of philosophy



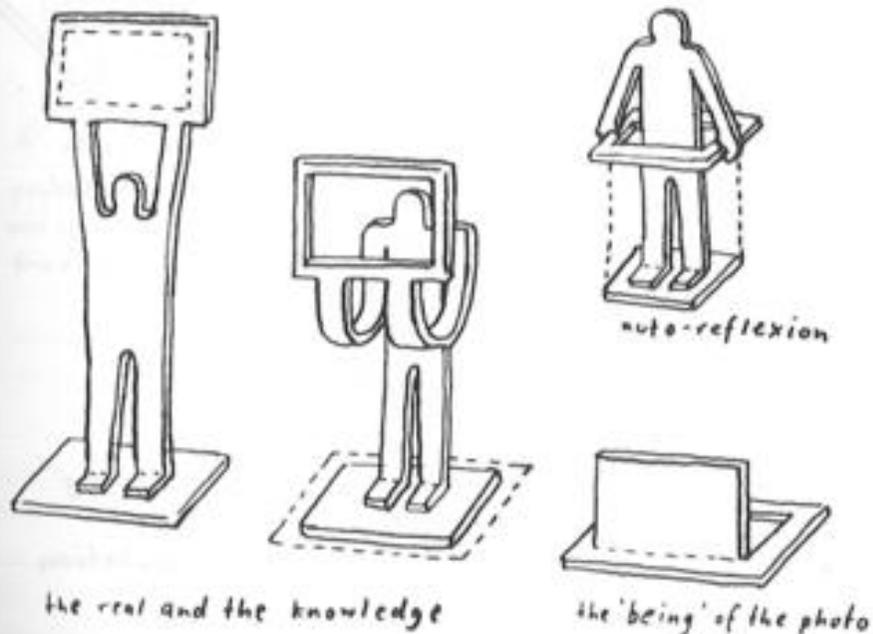
image and content
(as object-form)

Thus the photographic process remains immanent by virtue of its 'first' cause. [...] But it becomes effective or realizes itself with the aid of its conditions of existence, which function, in the overall economy, as mere occasional cause: the technology of the medium, the norms of pictorial tradition, aesthetic codes, all of this, as considerable as it may be [...] remains of the order of an 'occasion'.

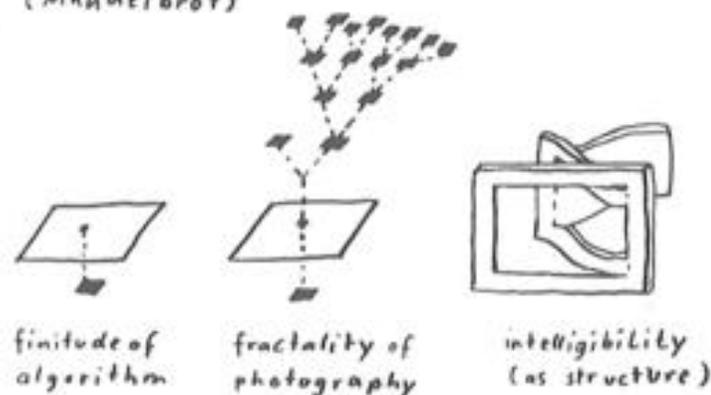
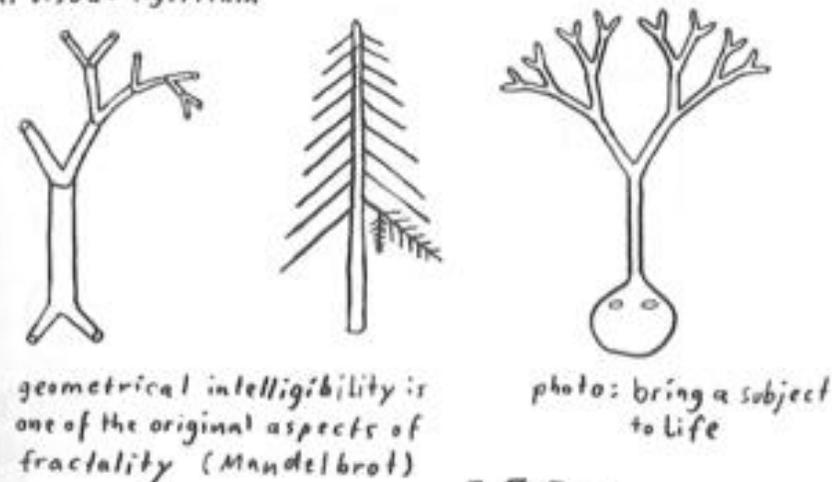
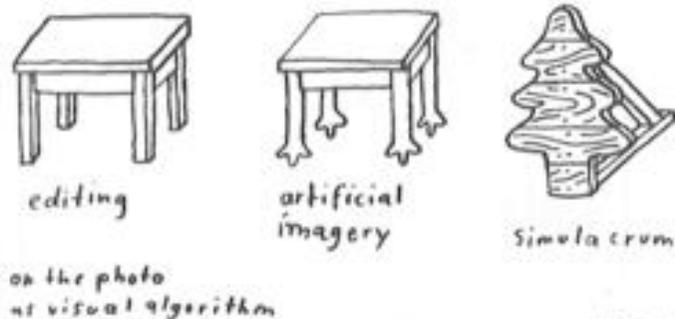
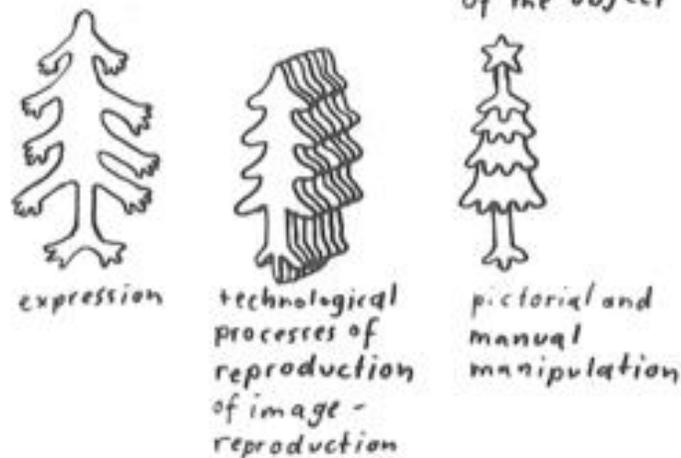
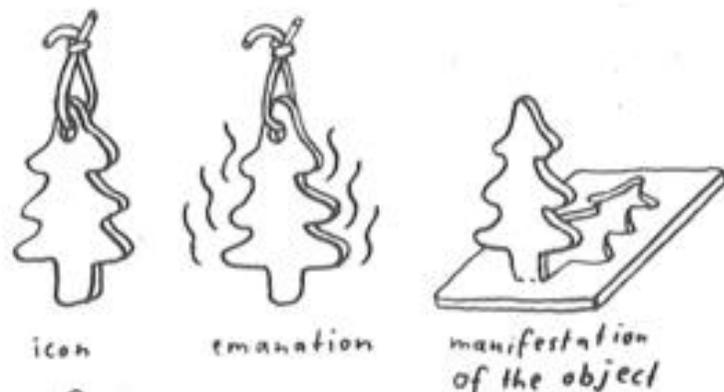
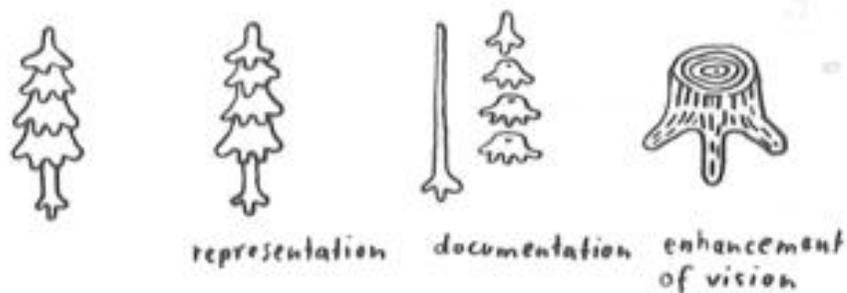
One single photo contains all possible (re)semblance, 'resembles' in principle all other photos; an apparition is unique but nevertheless infinite, it is a phenomenon that contains all possible phenomenality. The ground of 'resemblance' is a semblance that is inexplicable by the appearing object, but which is confused with the appearing or, more exactly, with the appearance.



objectivity:
exteriority, unity, stability

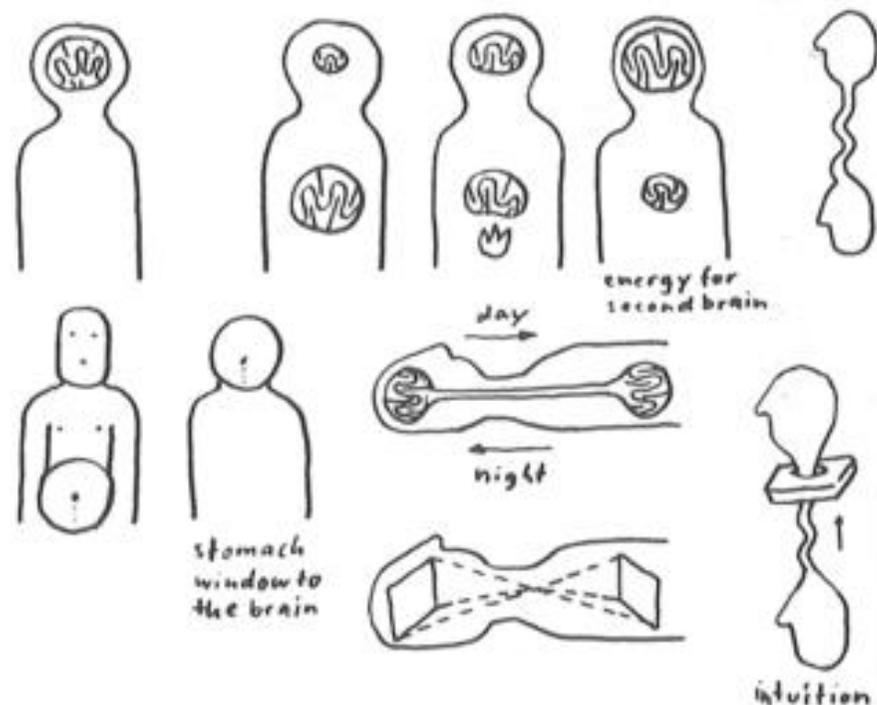


Compared to the reality of vision-force, the photographic apparition is doubtless 'irreal'. But compared to the transcendence of the World, it must be said to be 'real' in so far as a field of fiction can be. 'Fiction' is wholly real but in its own mode, without having anything to envy perception.



What is generally understood by 'photographic realism' is only the transcendent form of this realism, its philosophical form and its innumerable avatars. This is why it is preferable to speak of transcendent or philosophical interpretations, including in this idealist interpretations, technologist interpretations, etc. alongside 'realist' interpretations. [...] Realisms more or less supported or moderated, nuanced, differenced—but realisms in the first instance and founded on the philosophical—not at all scientific—presupposition that the transcendence of the World is co-constitutive for thought and for knowledge.

The photo, also, as representation or knowledge which relates to its objects, possesses a fractal dimension, that is to say a fractional aspect, irreducible to wholes, to 'whole' dimensions or to the classical dimensions of perception and perhaps of philosophical objects.



10 The Quadruple Object Graham Harman

Like few others, Graham Harman thinks and writes both with and against other thinkers. In all of his books he tries to develop a new (and speculative) metaphysics centered on objects. But these aren't objects in the everyday sense. In *The Quadruple Object* he says: "Instead, objects as presented in this book are as strange as ghosts in a Japanese temple, or signals flashing inscrutably from the moon."¹ These individual or weird objects are not only the central concern of his metaphysics, but Harman also finds them to be at the root of all philosophy. He accordingly situates himself in the tradition of Aristotle and Leibniz, without, however, simply adopting the latter's monadology or the former's theory of substance.

¹ Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011), 6.

In contrast to other speculative materialists or realists, Harman's thought relates to widely acknowledged

twentieth-century speculative philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead or Isabelle Stengers, for example, but above all to Bruno Latour, whom he has written several books about. Harman's aesthetic and ethical principle might be articulated as follows: subjects do not have (correlationist) primacy over things; the relation of the human being to the world has no cognitive primacy over relations between objects—our knowledge of the melon we like is no greater than the knife that cuts it, to use a phrase dear to Harman.

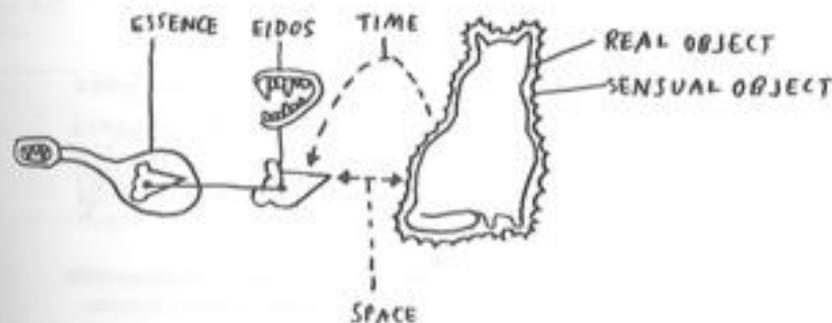
The philosophical stakes of his object-oriented ontology are most apparent in his dialogue with phenomenology, which is, and for good reason, his privileged interlocutor. For Harman, of course, neither the founding father of phenomenology Edmund Husserl, nor Martin Heidegger, his dissident successor, count as coherent realists, and “in our time, the bar for ‘realism’ has been set so low that fans of almost any author can claim realism on behalf of their heroes. Even the minutest trace of something coming from outside and rupturing the presence of knowledge to the human subject is flattered as a bold gesture toward the beyond.”³ *Ibid.*, 139.

Nonetheless, it is in engaging with Husserl and Heidegger that Harman develops his notion of the “quadruple object.” His universalized conception of phenomenological theories (as, for example, in his extension of Heidegger's analysis of “equipment” into a theory of “tool being”) is directed primarily against two forms of ontology that have dominated the history of philosophy, two strategies that prevent an adequate philosophical encounter with (or orientation toward) objects: the reduction of a thing to its parts (what he calls “undermining”) and the reduction to seemingly more significant qualities of relation (“overmining”).

According to Harman, the infinite number of objects, including the weirdest things and by no means only the

smallest physical entities, can be described ontologically, not least because these always appear either as sensual objects that exist *only* in experience or as real objects that withdraw from any experience (of living or nonliving entities) at all. Harman explains that even something unreal like a unicorn, something prosaic like an oil rig, or something complex like the European Union count as objects, and says that although human beings have special abilities, they do not have a special ontological status. He goes on to investigate the tensions between every objects' four “poles” (real object, sensual object, real qualities, sensual qualities), tensions that traverse the universe.

To quote the title of his book on H. P. Lovecraft, Harman's realism is a “weird realism” through and through. And of course it is not a coincidence that, despite his repeated pleas for a revision of the linguistic turn, he returns to literary texts time and again to explain his weird realism. Literature, philosophy, and thinking may be much closer than they seem. Harman explicitly points to how, for example, rhetoric and philosophy mesh: “Rhetoric is the art of the background, and if philosophy is not the science of the background, then I do not know what it is.”³ *Graham Harman, Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012), 18.

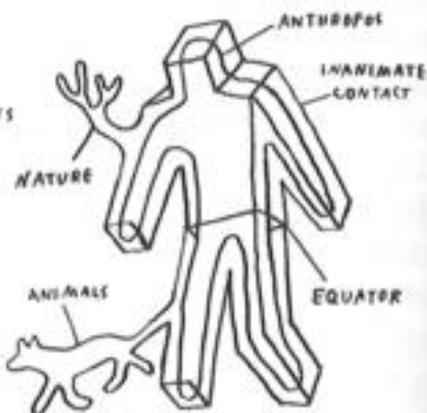




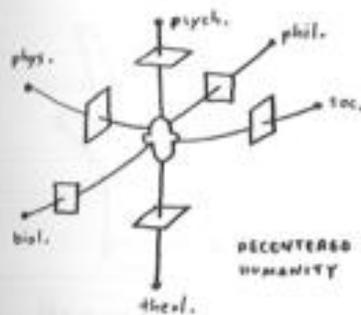
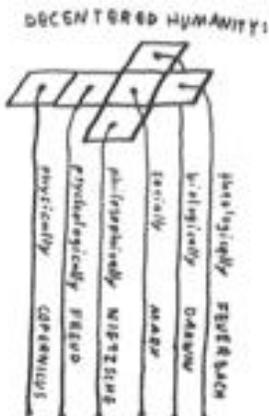
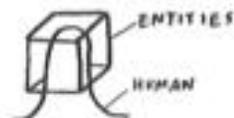
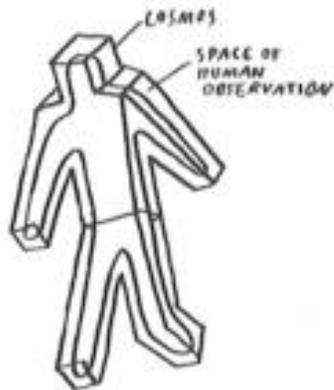
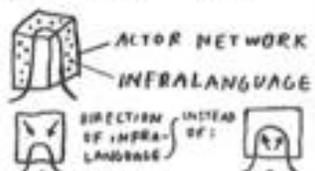
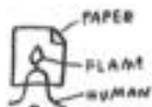
rejecting objects as primary reality

- visualizing both the human and the cosmos

- concept of sensual and real objects
- Harman constructs a literary diorama of aesthetically pleasing objects (diamonds, rope, and neutrons; or rum, parrots, and volcanoes)
- (Litdegger: broken being - ready to-hand - being-present-to-hand)
- Harman: everything becomes a tool



(knowledge as skin) = Anthropo-centrism



A sensual object is encrusted at every moment with purely accidental sensual qualities, while beneath it are submerged the more crucial real features that belong to the eidos. The same two polarities are found in the case of real objects. For on the one hand the real hammer emits sensual qualities into the sphere of presence, despite being withdrawn in its own right.

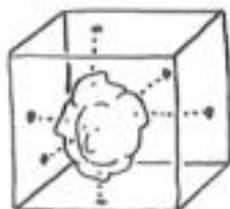
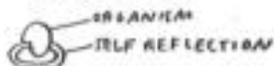
If a house is encountered by three women, a child, a dog, and a crow in the same moment, each of these perceptions will have a very different character. And given a purely relational definition of what objects are, it would seem impossible to call all of them relations to the "same" house. The house itself vanishes into a mob of house-perceptions.



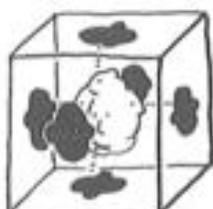
WORLD
(HUMAN
PERSPECTIVE)



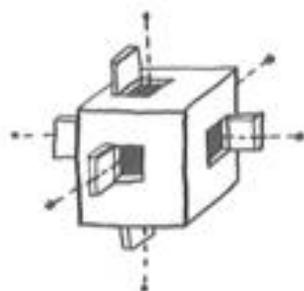
WORLD
(COSMIC
PERSPECTIVE)
COVERAGING)



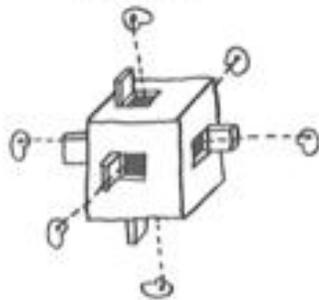
HUMAN ACCEPT



CORRELATIONISM



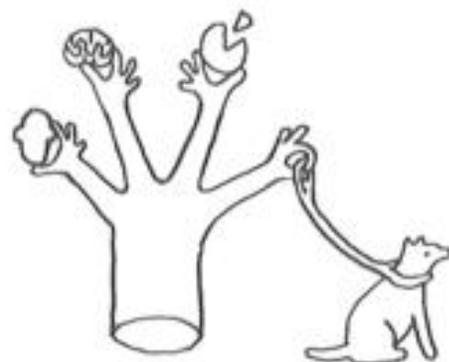
KANTIAN BOX



INVERTED OCCASIONALISM
(GOD REPLACED WITH
OMNIPOTENT HUMAN)
(OUTSIDE KANTIAN BOX)

- Harman clocked every minute of writing : 86'39"
- > Prince of Networks, Tool-being (G. Harman) (mapping networks)

The metaphysics presented in this book lays great stress on several key tensions between objects and their qualities. There turn out to be four such tensions. [...] The phenomenal realm is not only an idealist prison cut off from access to the outer world. Rather, it displays a tension between intentional objects and their ever-shifting qualities.



instead with radical doubt
start from naïveté

what philosophers share
with scientists, bankers, animals:
all are concerned with objects

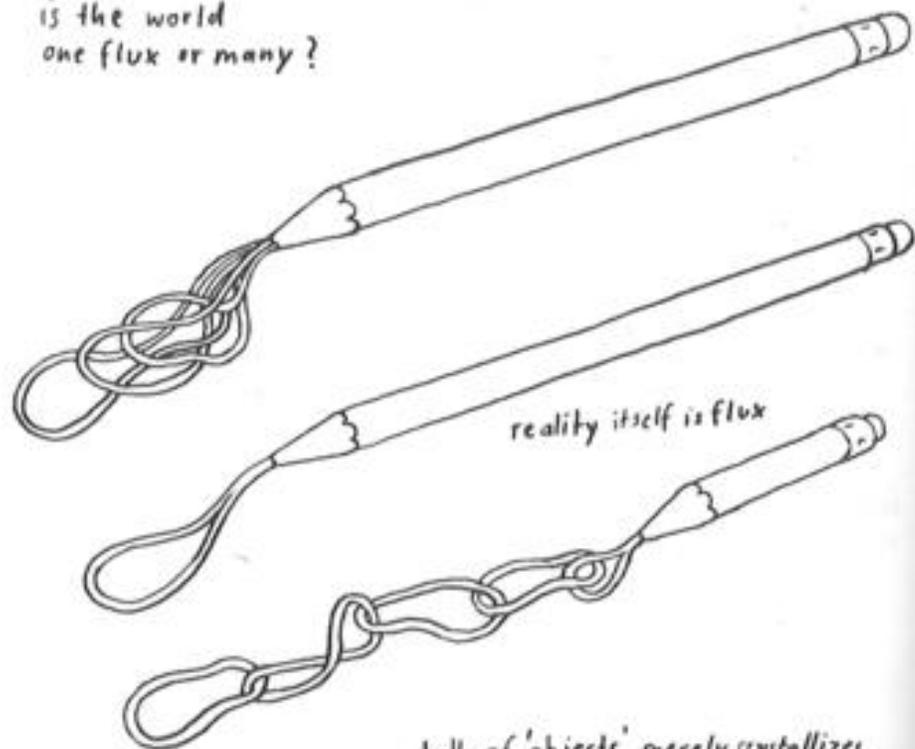


the meaning of "object"
must include entities
that are neither physical
nor real



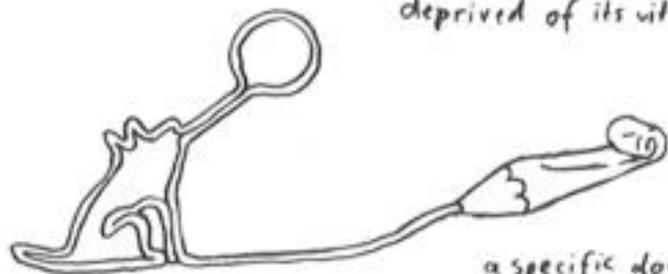
diamonds, rope, neutrons,
armies, monsters, square circles,
nations

is the world
one flux or many?



reality itself is flux

talk of 'objects' merely crystallizes
becoming in an abstract state,
deprived of its vital inner dynamism



a specific dog or moon is
merely an abstraction
from a deeper flux



a thing has no identity
(→ philosopher of difference)

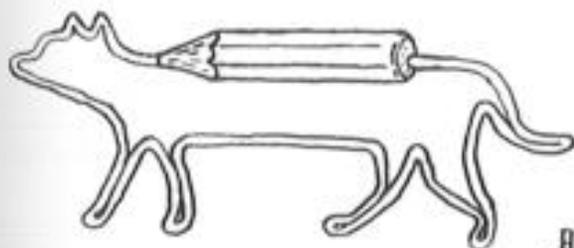


a thing always differs
from itself

= strategies that 'undermine'
objects as the root of philosophy



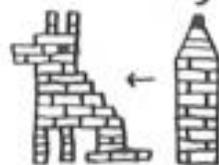
dream up some deeper indeterminate
basis from which specific things arise



undermining strategies:
dogs: no basic elements



active "dogging" rather
than the stasis of a
solid dog-thing

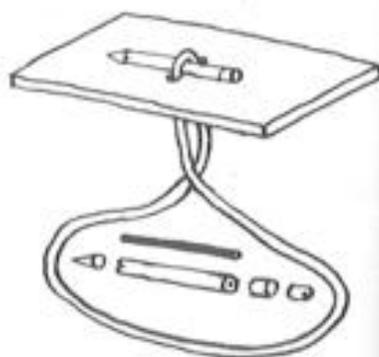


all such strategies assume
that a dog is built of
some basic physical or
historical element
whose permutations
give rise to their objects

Undermining and Overmining



each object on the desktop
is a unified thing despite
its multitude of features
(pencil)



equally true of
non-physical entities
(Cairo)

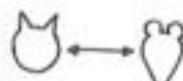
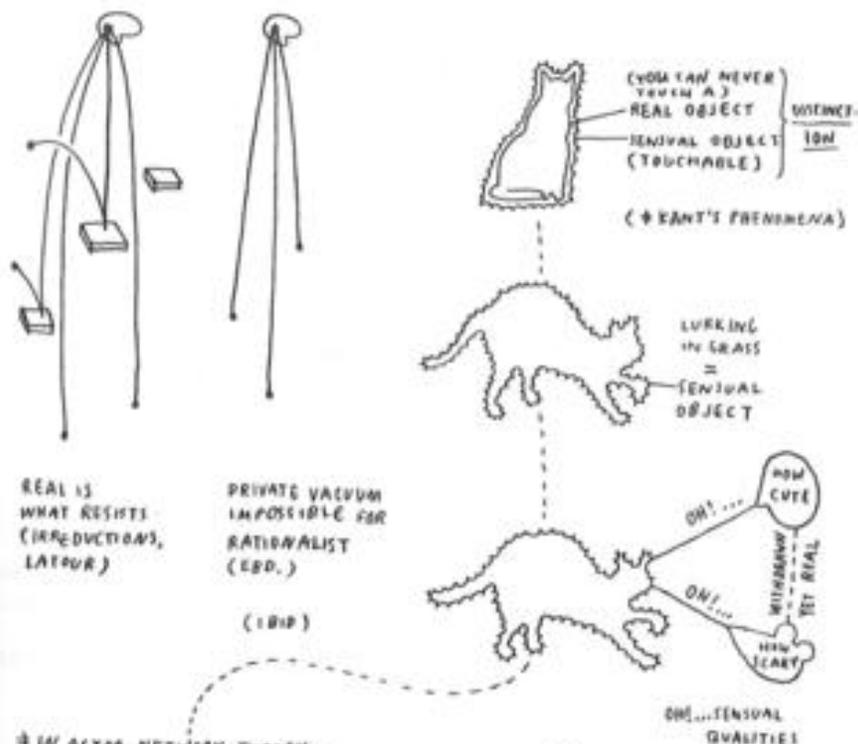
numerous
qualities



mathematicians
in their ideal sphere
still confront objects



historical objects
no longer in our midst
(biocletian)



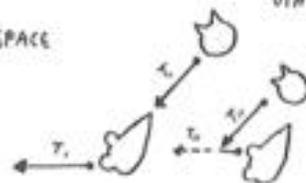
NO ESSENCE



ONLY TRANSLATIONS & INTERDEFINITIONS OF
OTHER ACTANTS

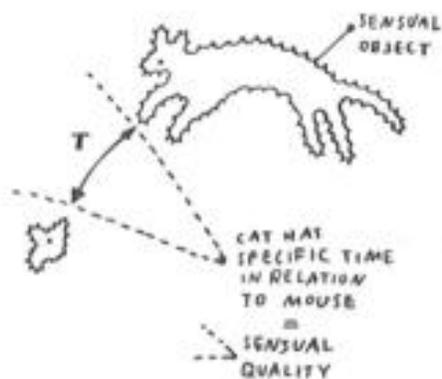


S=SPACE

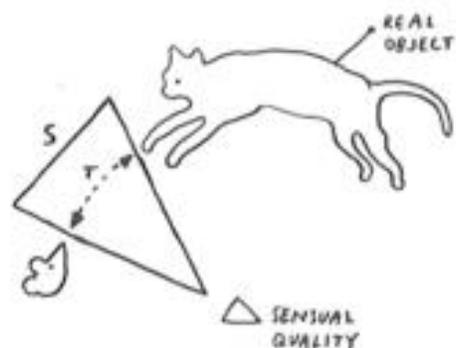


T=TIME

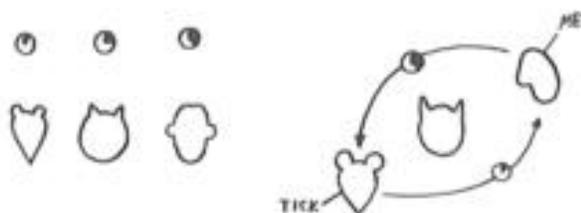
Yet for Plato this rift between unknowable virtue and its visible crowd of features plays out not within the object itself, but between the object and a world lying beyond it. Only with Aristotle do individual objects first become the central player in philosophy. For him the important gulf no longer lies between perfect forms and their flawed manifestations in matter. Instead, there are duels underway in the heart of objects themselves: between an individual cat and its fleeting accidental features, or even between that cat and its essential qualities.



T = TIME
IS THE NAME
FOR THE TENSION BETWEEN
SENSUAL OBJECT AND
THEIR SENSUAL QUALITIES



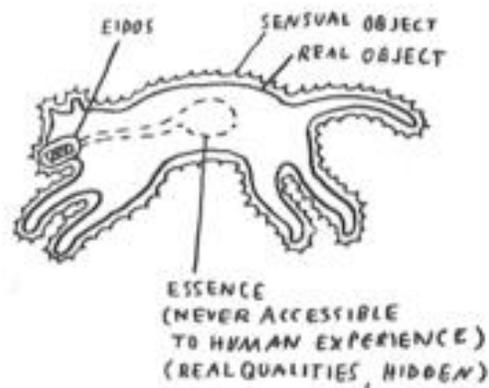
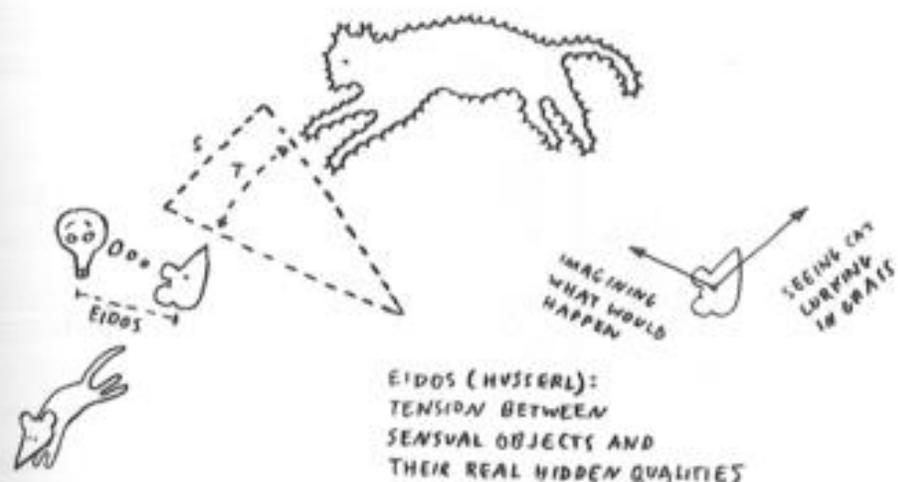
S = SPACE
IS THE TENSION BETWEEN
CONCEALED REAL OBJECTS
AND THE SENSUAL
QUALITIES ASSOCIATED
WITH THEM



≠ EVERY ACTANT INVENTS
ITS OWN TIME (LATOUR)

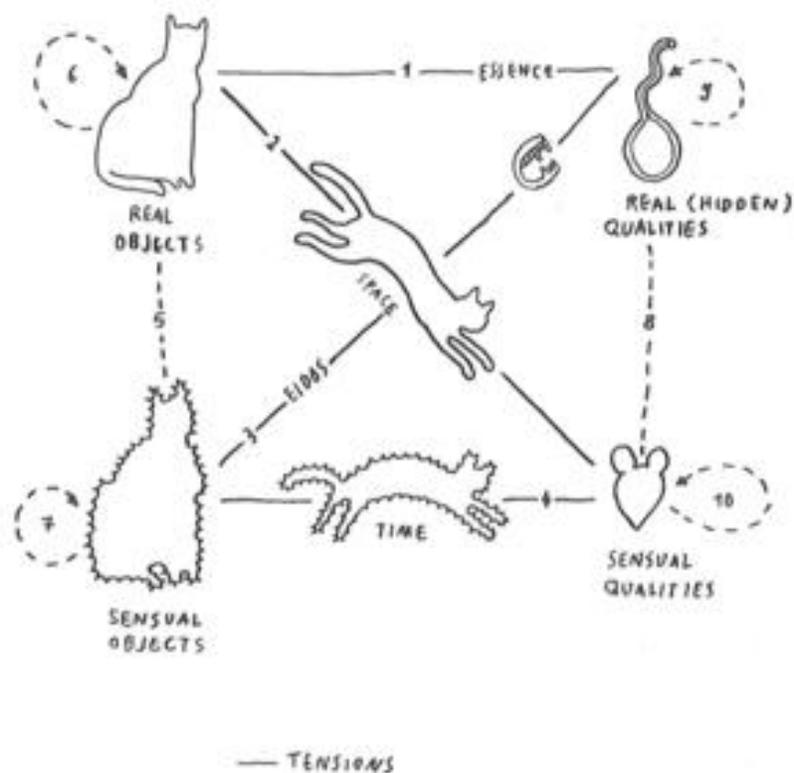
TO ME AND MY NETWORK,
THE TICK-SENSE
DOES NOT EXIST

What we really need is a term applicable to the primitive psyches of rocks and electrons as well as to humans. I propose the term *confrontation* as sufficiently broad for the task. Wakeful humans confront strawberries and commando raids, a sleeper confronts the bed, and a pebble confronts the asphalt that it strikes as opposed to all the accidental details of that asphalt.

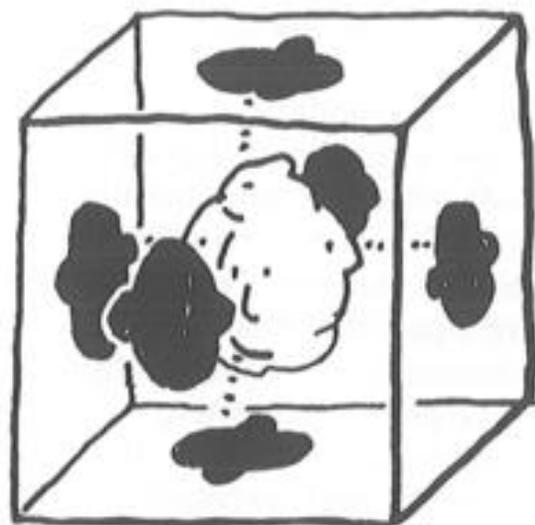


If we weigh and measure a thing, describe its physical properties, or note its objective position in space-time, these qualities hold good for the thing only insofar as it relates to us or to something else. In short, the thing as portrayed by the natural sciences is the thing made dependent of our knowledge, and not in its untamed, subterranean reality.

THE 10 POSSIBLE LINKS
(INTERPRETING GRAHAM HARMAN)



Four is a powerful number in philosophy. While fully maintaining the dualist insight into the struggle of opposites, it avoids the intrinsic monotony of this struggle by spreading it onto a second axis, creating a rich tension between four poles of the world.



11 Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign

Quentin Meillassoux

Following the work on the present tense and in the attempt to develop a speculative poetics, the writings of Quentin Meillassoux became more and more important. Not only did he participate in the initial series of talks and workshops with speculative philosophers in 2012, which looked at the implications of speculative realism on the philosophy of language and the theory of literature for the first time, his thought also made it possible to develop a more profound understanding of asynchrony, of an unpredictable past that was never present to itself.

Meillassoux's speculative philosophy of time starts from his concept of "ancestrality": there was a present that was never present to itself—no one was present to testify or experience. This ancestral past—unlike the subjectivized past (my

own or that of past human beings)—is a past *that has never had a present*. It is an *originary* past. In a transcendental interpretation, the ancestral has not been a present before it was a past for a subject.

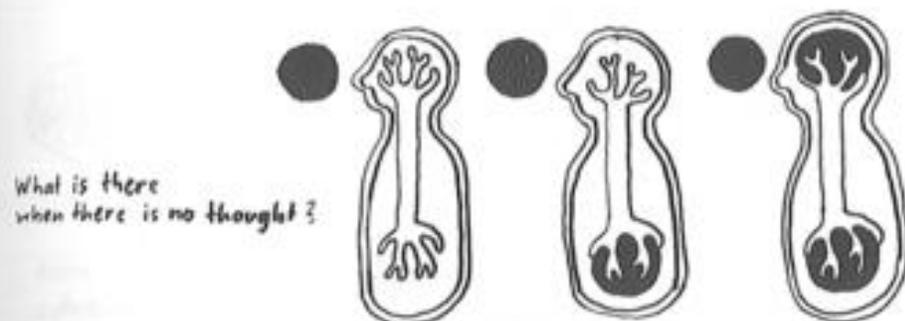
The direction of time and the question of its subjectivity are inseparable from the chronology of time generated by language. Yet both subjective time and nonlingual time are not chronologically linear. It is important to understand that this retrojection of the past out of our present is not identical with our view of a past that exists (only) as ancestral past. Crucially, this nonsubjective, ancestral past has no other sense than that of regressing toward it: the reversal of today's time toward a time without humanity. In this way (and only in this way), it is even possible to coherently think what there is when there is no thought, to think a certain kind of absolute that is not derived from our mental categories because it exists in itself regardless of whether we exist to perceive it or not.

What made Meillassoux's 2012 lecture and seminar at the Free University Berlin so fascinating was observing him take a further step in his thought, which is concerned with the ontological import of what he calls *signe dépourvu du sens* or "meaningless sign." In *Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition*, he takes a semiotic approach. The ontological insight into the necessary contingency of all things articulated in his earlier works here seems to be the precondition of the meaninglessness of signs.

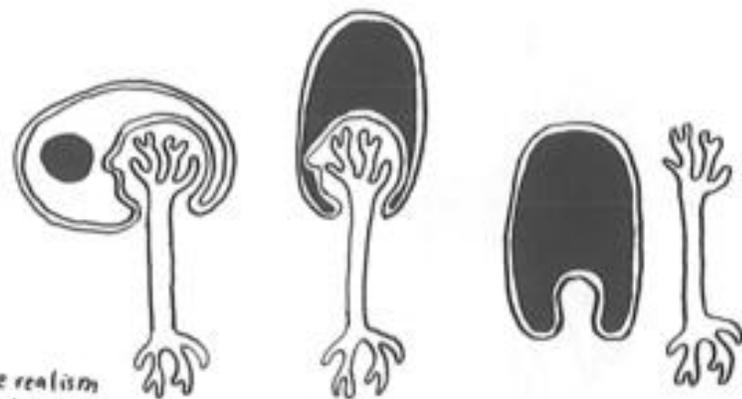
Two arguments bear emphasizing. First, we apprehend signs in a switch from the ordinary mode of apprehension, which grasps certain contingent things, to the semiotic mode of apprehension, which grasps the eternal contingency of this or that thing. Second, this makes it possible to iterate identical marks, conventional replicas of distinct type signs. That

is why it can be claimed that mathematics, as the regulated manipulation of meaningless signs, describes facts independent of us. In this sense, mathematics is the privileged discourse of Meillassoux's speculative materialism.

Meillassoux's reflections were particularly relevant in the book *Metanoia*, where Anke Hennig and I attempted to develop a speculative ontology of language (see chapter 12). What is of special importance is Meillassoux's idea that the signifier, the empty sign, does not derive its semiotic character from an (inner) meaning or from a reference to a referent. Instead, the principle of the signifier is contingent iterability or undifferentiated repeatability (seriality, concatenation).



What is there
when there is no thought?



→ avoid naive realism
attain an absolute
detach from Hegel's
reflective dialectic



ancestrality:
there was a present
that was never present
to itself



neither we nor another subject
was present to testify



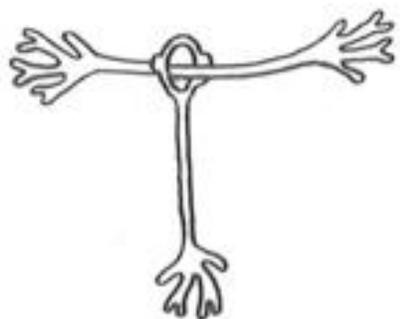
ancestrality serves to
assign an objective existence
(beyond the present) to the past



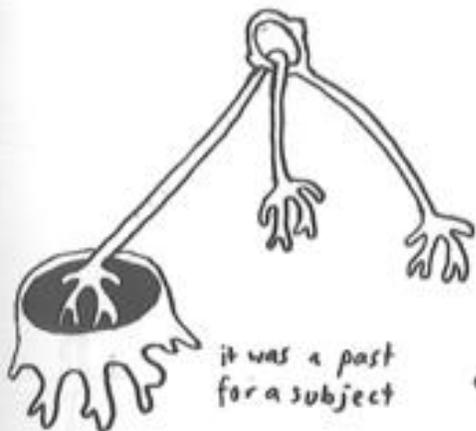
ancestral past (unlike
subjectified past) is
a past that never had a present



a past reconstituted
by us, a past for us



the ancestral has not been
a present before



it was a past
for a subject

or



it has been
its own future

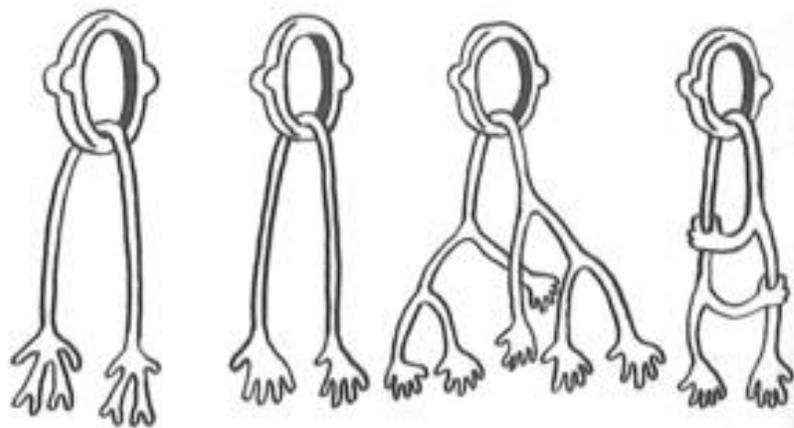


turn the radical
contingency of things
into an absolute



the direction of time
and the question of
its subjectivity

are inseparable from
the chronology of time
generated by language



both subjective time
and non-lingual time
are not chronologically linear

this retrojection
of the past out
of our present
is not identical
with our view
of the past
that exists (only)
as ancestral past



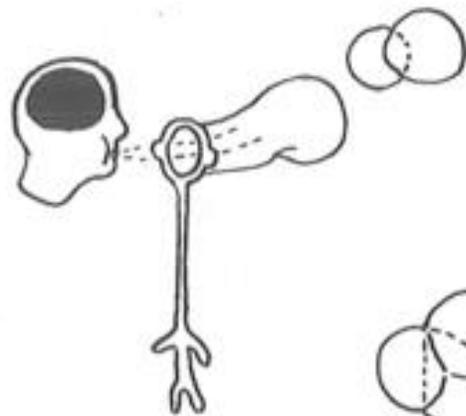
this non-subjective, ancestral past
has no other sense than that of
regressing toward it



reversal of today's time
toward a time without
humanity



thinking a certain
kind of absolute



that is not derived
from our mental
categories

it exists
in itself
(AT: math)



the ancestral past
becomes a past
that never happened



that has never
been present



that returns
from the future
to itself

The challenge now is to establish the existence of a factual derivation of the kenotype—and thus of the meaningless sign. Where could it come from, this capacity of thought to iterate a sign independently of the ideality of meaning? Is this a primary fact that cannot be explained, or can we infer this 'iterative' capacity of thought from a deeper principle? The thesis we intend to demonstrate is as follows: it is because I can intuit in every entity its eternal contingency, that I can intuit a meaningless sign. How do we obtain this result?



instead of going forward
from itself into the future

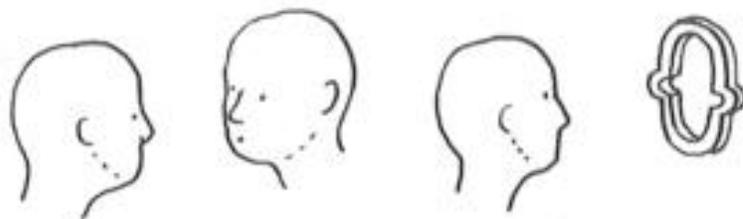


the openness of the future
is directed toward the scission
between the present and the past



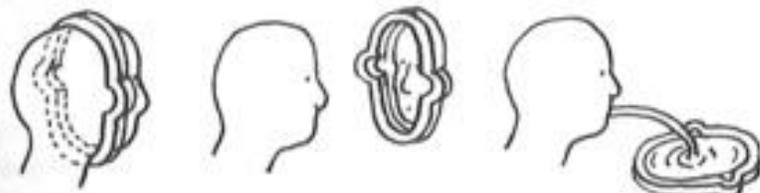
the connection of future
and past is temporal and directed

Meaningless Sign



from ordinary mode
of apprehension

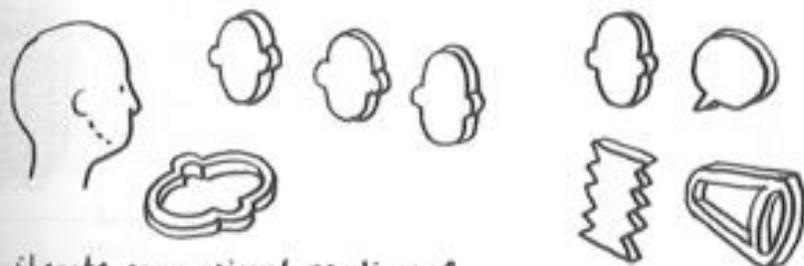
to semiotic mode which grasps the
eternal contingency of the thing



this grasping
of facticity

other than
empirical

makes it possible to
iterate identical marks



iterate conventional replicas of
distinct type signs

The enigma becomes yet more precise: an empty sign possesses an immaterial property of identical reproduction. But since it is arbitrary, no concept can capture its essence—it is infinitely variable in principle with regard to its form, and this form has no necessity in itself. And since I can posit distinct types of empty sign, its iterable identity is no longer that of the general concept of the meaningless sign.



mathematics as regulated manipulation
of meaningless signs

describes facts
independent of us

(version 4)



(Signifier)



(empty sign)

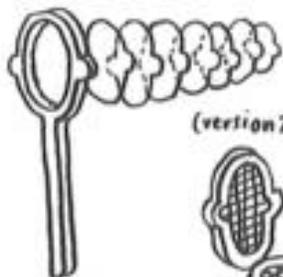


(iterability)

5. undifferentiated
repeatability



3. principle of
signifier is



(repeatability)

(version 2:)



2. empty sign
does not derive
its semiotic
character from an
(inner) meaning

1. signifier



4. contingent
iterability



The relation between contingency and arbitrariness is less immediate than it appears, and by the same token, more interesting. By the notion of arbitrariness, recall that we do not mean the Saussurian immotivation of the signifier in relation to the signified, but the more profound possibility of every sign—and this before even being freighted with any meaning—to be recoded by another sensible mark charged with the same function.

(version 3:)



repeatability



empty sign



empty sign
possesses an
immaterial
property of
identical
reproduction



no concept
can capture
its essence



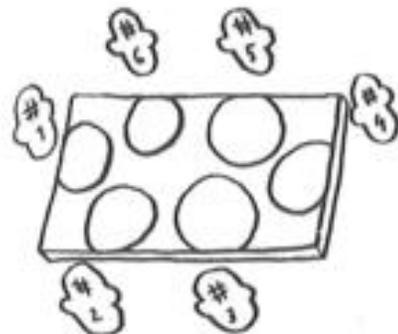
(no signs)



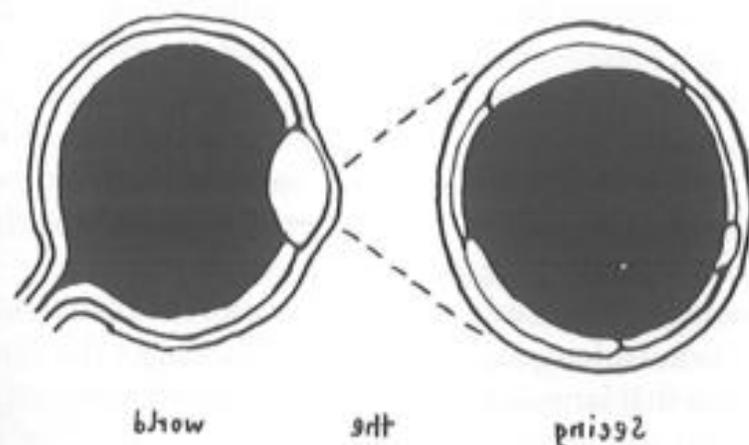
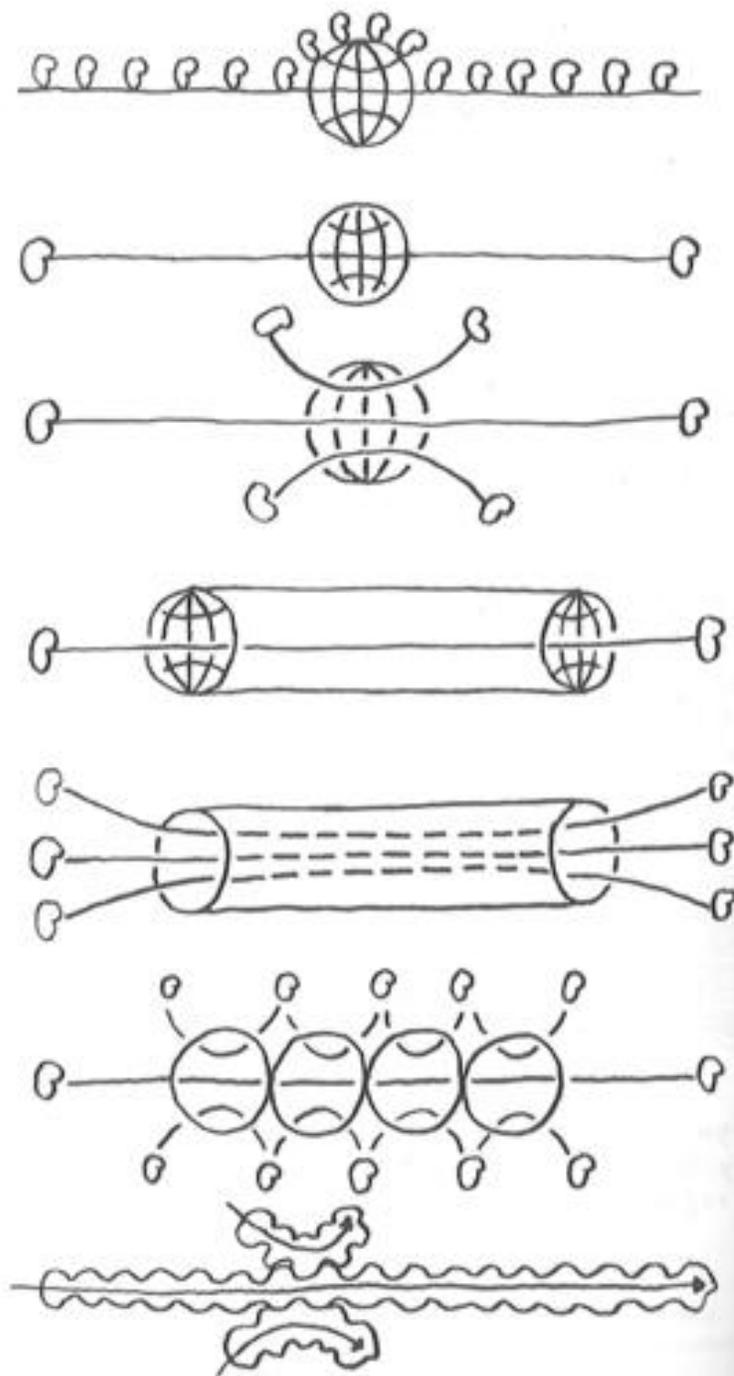
it is infinitely
variable in
principle



a sign becomes a sign
only in the iteration
of referents



a sign can only acquire
a new meaning when it
loses its inherited meaning



12 Metanoia: Speculative Ontology of Language

Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig *Now I see things in a new light.* At some point, we all experience how reading a book changes us in a fundamental way. We know what it means to say, "I was never the same after reading ...," or "It was only then that I realized ..." The term "metanoia" refers to a kind of new "sight" or view. To see the world in a new light means accepting that our thinking has been irrevocably transformed. Metanoia creates the existential foundation of every thought.

To describe this intellectual transformation, my colleague Anke Hennig and I drew on discussions from linguistics, cognitive science, literary theory, and the analytic philosophy of language. Pursuing a speculative philosophy and seeking to overcome the correlationalist image of thinking, world, and language, we aimed to develop a language ontology and a description of linguistic consciousness that underline the

poetic, creative moment of language, its ability to transform our thinking and to shed light on the world.

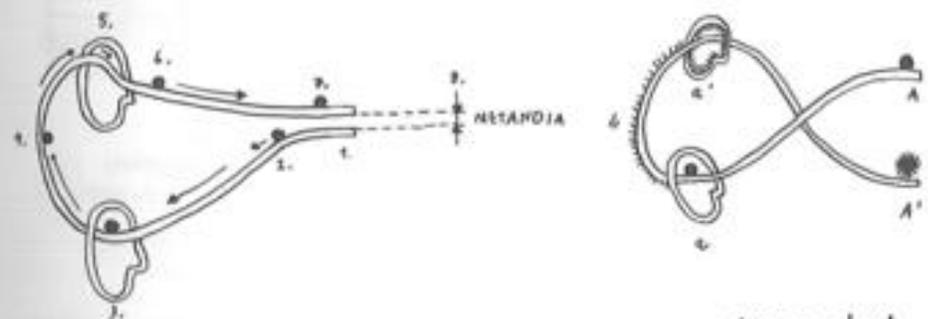
Around the experience of metanoia, the book articulates a language ontology that spells out how the poetic impulses of language create a world. In the wake of the exhaustion of postmodernist discourses, it highlights speculation as a key concept for a revision of literary theory and the theory of art in general. Situated within current speculative philosophy, it also draws on a range of disciplines outside philosophy to develop the concept of speculative poetics.

Beginning with a linguistic examination of the structure and function of language, *Metanoia* challenges the double assumption that language is arbitrary at its core, and that philosophy can only describe the world from the point of view of a privileged subject. These are the targets of our critique of analytic philosophies of language and the speculative reconstruction of the world-creating function of language (and of literature in particular). Insights from cognitive theory underscore the claim that what language allows us to see is the way in which reality is constituted by relations, and that what language makes visible is not so much the existence of things but the existence of relations.

Drawing in particular on the work of linguists Roman Jakobson and Gustave Guillaume (see chapter 3), we initially developed a poetically inspired theory of language. The main claims are: language is structured recursively; it is determined by part-to-whole relations; it cannot but potentialize itself; it is not arbitrary; and, finally, it has a poetic, i.e., (world-) creating function. Language correlates with the world, a world that exists independently of us, and represents the correlation between us and the world. As thinking beings, we cannot step back from language or from our being embedded in the world.

Moving from a discussion of language to a discussion of the sign, *Metanoia* goes on to develop the problem of the poetic function of language in a novel synthesis of the theory of the sign and the theory of signification. It gives alternative readings of the semiotic triangle and the different ontologies they imply. Against theories of correlationism, the example of Gertrude Stein's famous line, "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," serves to concretize the speculative thesis according to which the relation between subject and object is not different from the relation between things. Quentin Meillassoux's concept of "factuality" allows us to make this point even more forcefully and to lay the foundation for a realist ontology of language in which thinking, language, and world are not separate spheres.

Metanoia, as a devaluation, transvaluation, and revaluation of our relation to the world and to ourselves, creates the world anew. Its central effect is that what comes before is different from what comes afterward.



A: e.g. a book
 a: reading
 b: grazing
 a': insight
 A': no longer
 the same book

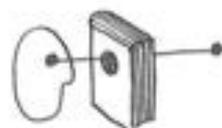
you no longer step into the same book



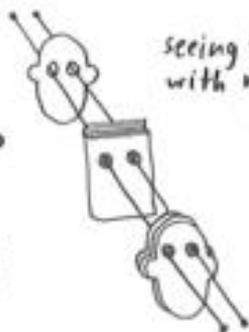
Thought



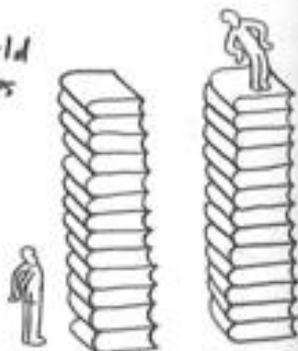
Thought Language world



Seeing the world through the book



seeing the world with new eyes



now I see things completely differently of course



world view



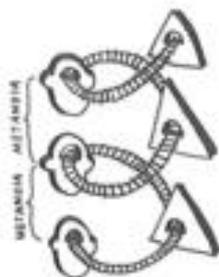
old world



new world



understanding overwrites the previous (not) understanding (philology of the self)



different world

world

can no longer understand the old way of thinking



seeing world



Language world

Afterwards, what comes before is different.



the brain as temporal work of art



world of language

thought



OBJECT



LEAVITY FOR WORK



STORIES HAVE OBJECTS AND EVENTS



thought

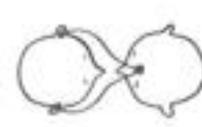
world



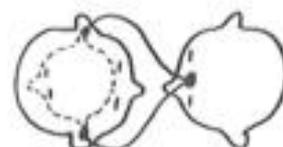
hearing



listening



Language unfolds our understanding of the world to the extent to which it develops itself.

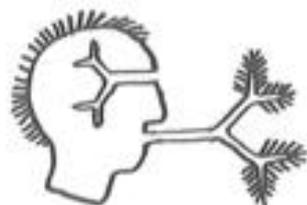


STORIES HAVE A STRUCTURE THAT HUMAN VOCAL SOUND—AS SOUND, NOT LANGUAGE— DOES NOT HAVE.

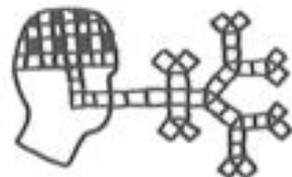
Language performs a differentiation of the relationship between thinking and the world. Language is not arbitrary, however obvious such arbitrariness may seem to contemporary theorists of language. Instead, each and every part of language is tied into an ever-developing system. Language develops our understanding of the world in the same way and to the same extent that it continues to develop itself.



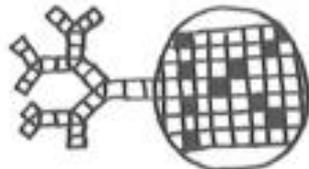
language unfolds
our understanding
of the world to the
extent to which it
develops itself.



possible new
understanding



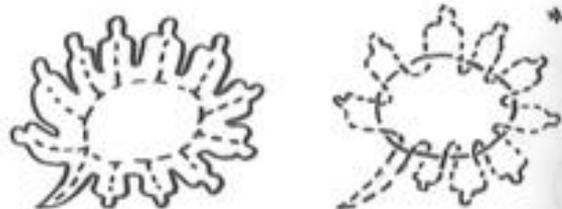
finding and inventing
a new language



through reading, the world has
become a different world

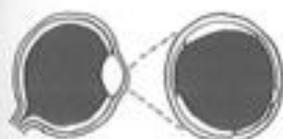


Metanoia is a
fundamental
transformation
of the mind.

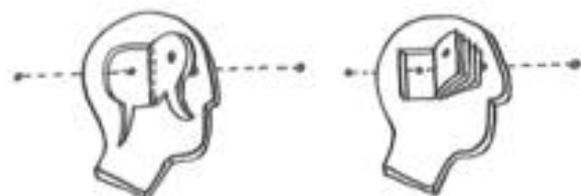


Metanoia concerns and creates
the essential
of all thought

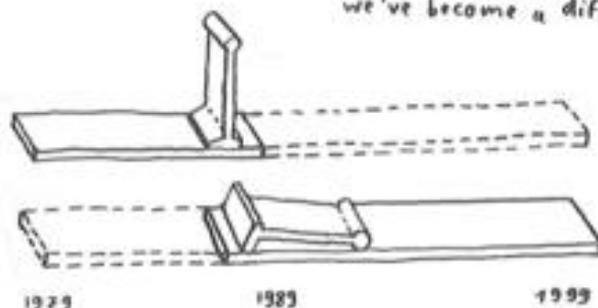
* (without metanoia,
we wouldn't be here)



blow snt pri392



we read a book, and when we're done,
we've become a different person



metanoia rarely happens
more than once a decade

when 'the whole' shifts, the meaning
of all the parts changes



the past no
longer is what
it used to be

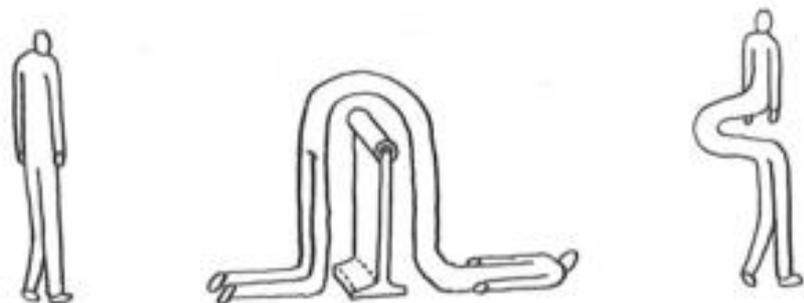
but instead, it is
what returns as
what is not understood



a new world
emerges with
the new subject

what came before is different afterward

When in fact "the whole" shifts, the meaning of each and every part changes. Whenever this happens, the past suddenly is no longer what was, no longer what it was before, but that which returns as something that is not understood. Metanoia does not just (bring about) change—it institutes reality. Put succinctly: Afterwards, what comes before is different.

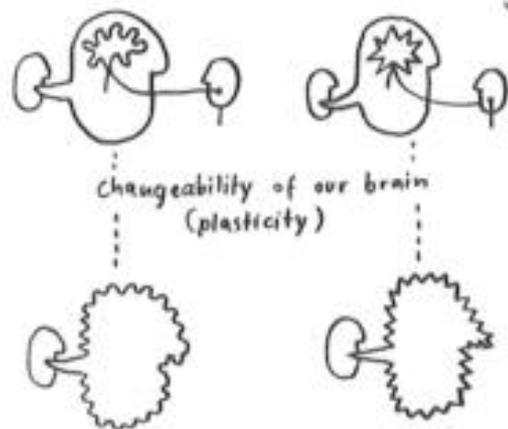


what comes before afterwards is different (dyadic)

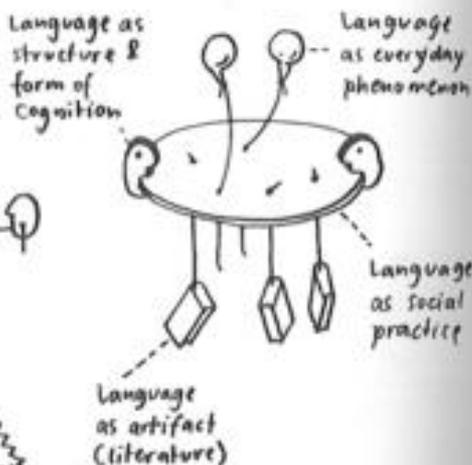


cognitive situation

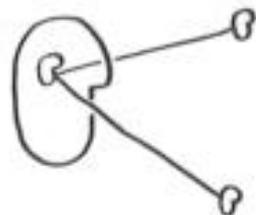
belief in progress



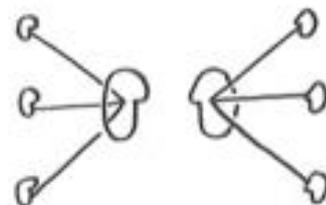
changeability of our brain (plasticity)



in extreme cases, one book is enough to make the world a different world

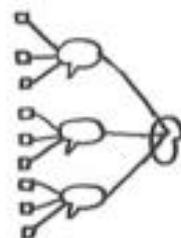


we do not encounter metanoia on the level of knowledge

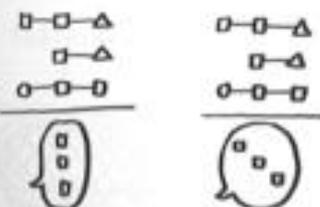


metanoia has a recursive structure

thought that changes thought

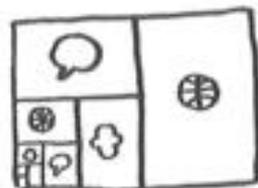
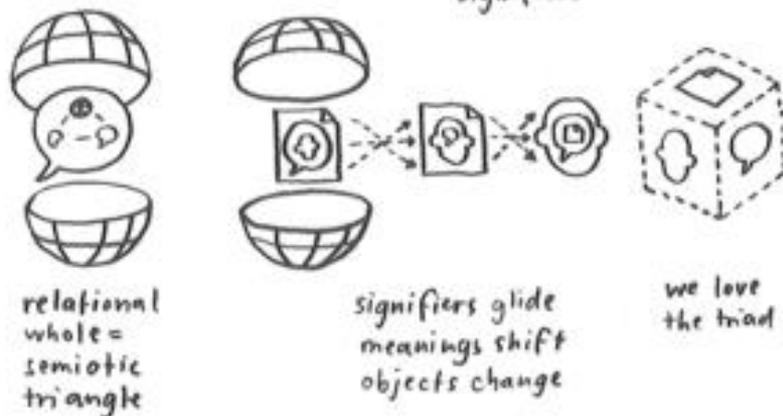
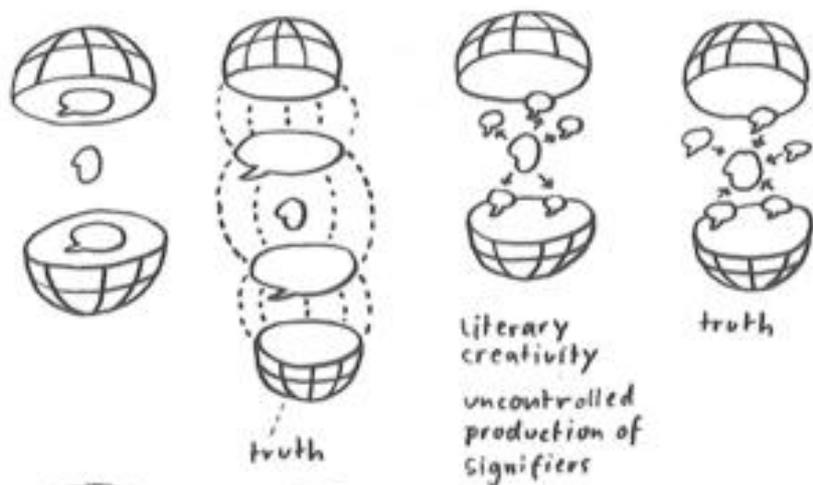


philosophers: the concept's friends



metanoiein thrust reversal

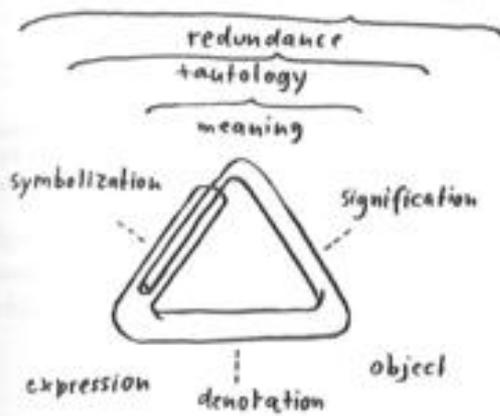
Perhaps it is its recursive structure (there is no other way to become a philosopher than to completely immerse oneself in a text that opens up the world) that makes it so difficult to reflect on metanoia. How else could we explain that a phenomenon all philosophers have been so familiar with has remained invisible for so long?



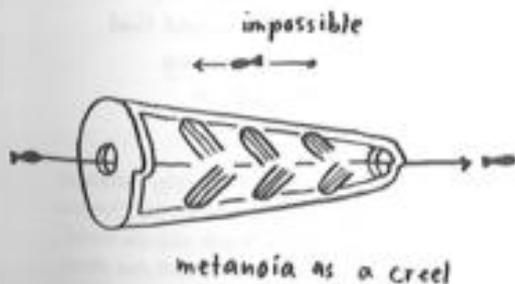
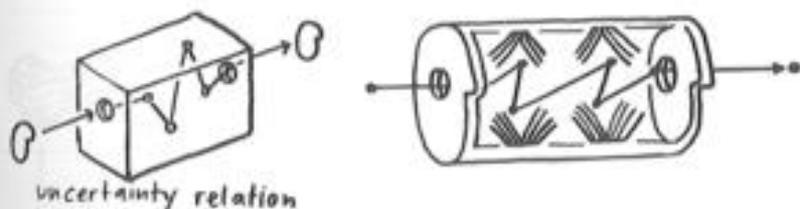
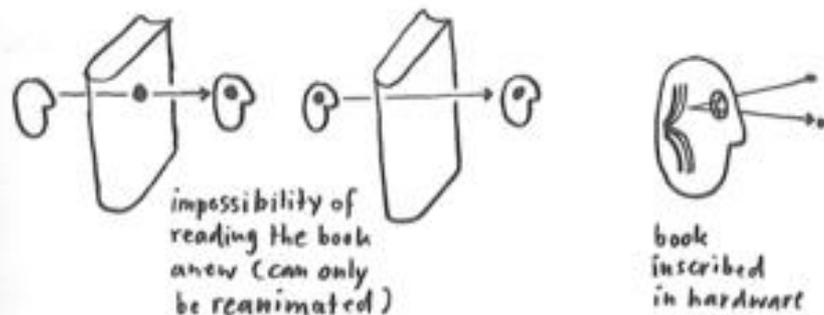
Whenever I act in language (when I speak, when I write), signifiers glide, meanings shift, and the object to which they refer changes. Integrating the parts into a whole changes them, and in the recursive introduction of ever new parts into a whole, its structures become more complex. And this also means that lingual recursion increases language's reality content and enhances its referential possibilities.

Lingual recursion enhances the realism of language

until the rose is really red although red does not occur



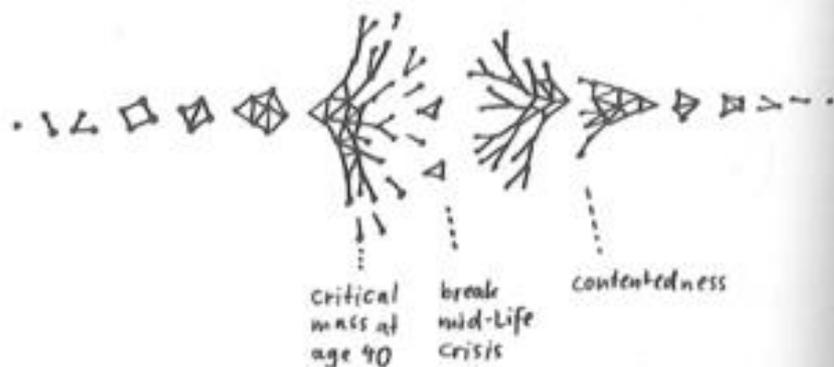
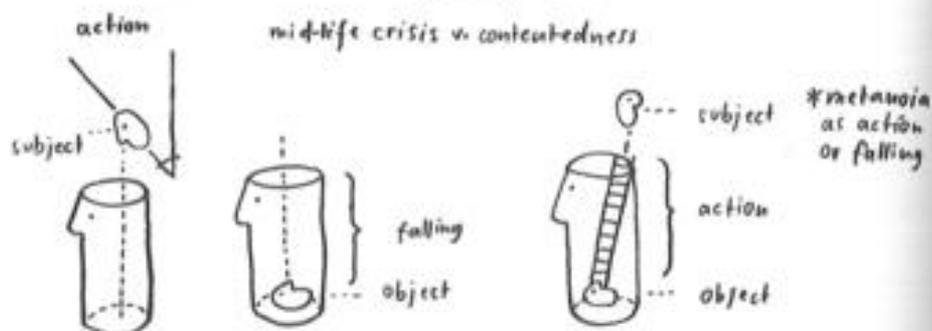
Language changes the world



Semiosis is the movement in which a new whole is produced in that an interpretant relates an element (which emerged from just such a movement) to another element (which owes its existence to just such a movement as well); once such a movement concluded, the answer to the question of how exactly it took place (and especially of which element was given first) entails a new movement, an interpretation.

Kant: only one metaoetic transformation possible, around the age of 40

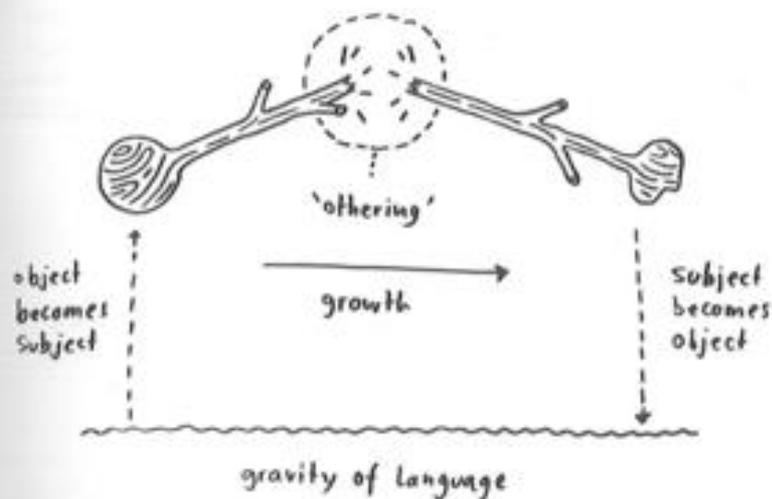
mid-life crisis v. contentedness



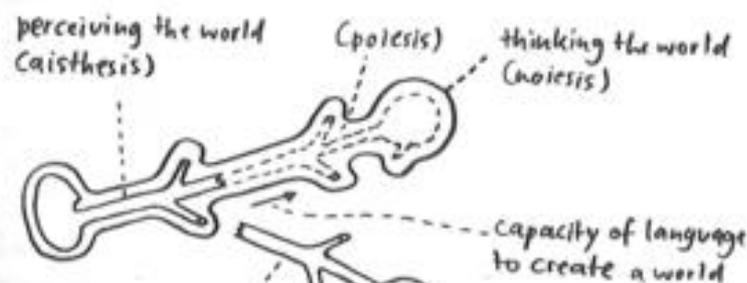
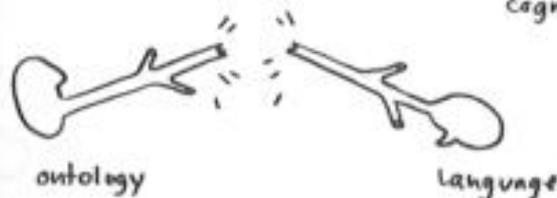
'break within the self' would mean that the future is already present (planned & developed)



'break with the world' 'self' becomes a world of its own (would that not mean becoming an adult?)



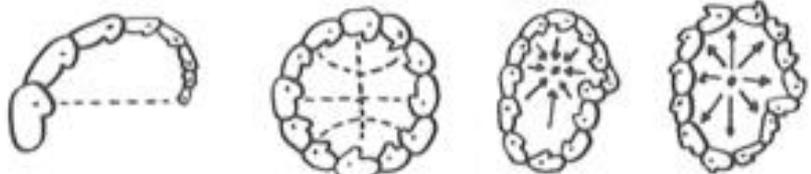
cognitive capacity = weight



in metanoia, thinking the world and the emergence of the world are visible

Metanoia can neither be explained by going back to the forms of subjectivation of antiquity—attempts at self- or trans-subjectivation oriented at another world—nor by distinguishing between the Christian idea of a "break within the self" and a later Hellenistic-Roman preference for a "break with the world." When we say that, thanks to metanoia, our subjectivity becomes an object, we mean a shift that affects both the self and the world. This world, the one and only, is the real world, and we are its true subject.

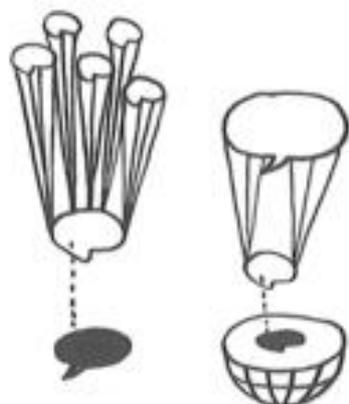
philosophy of mind is based on recursive operations



the brain creates a world

the brain creates the world and ties us in

with the help of the senses the brain brings the world into phenomenality



iconic, indexical, and symbolic relations determine the way in which we think the world

controlled falling onto the world

Othering as method



subject and object interacting ...

... and the changing of both

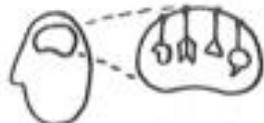


Metanoia

^ spirituality of philosophy



recursivity in thinking metanoia



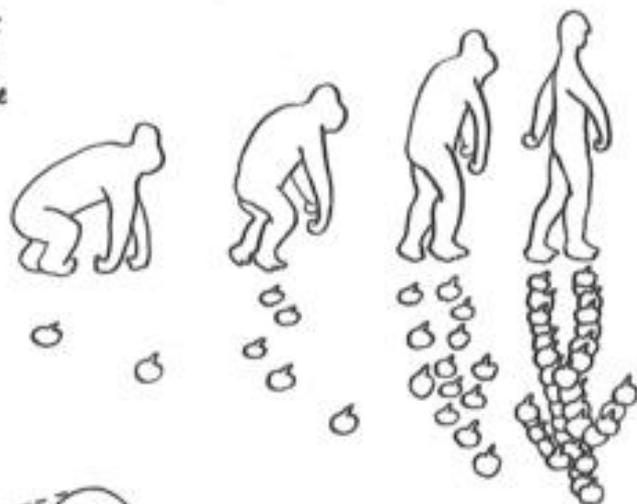
elements of meaning



care of the self (souver de soi)

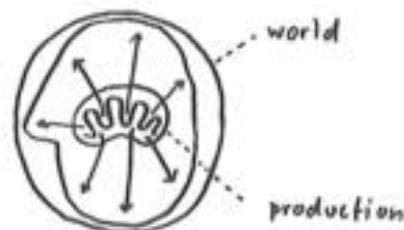
know thyself (gnōthi seauton)

coevolution of human being and language (P Deacon)

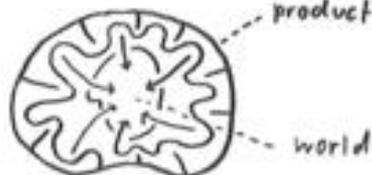


brain produces world

(I situated in the world)



production



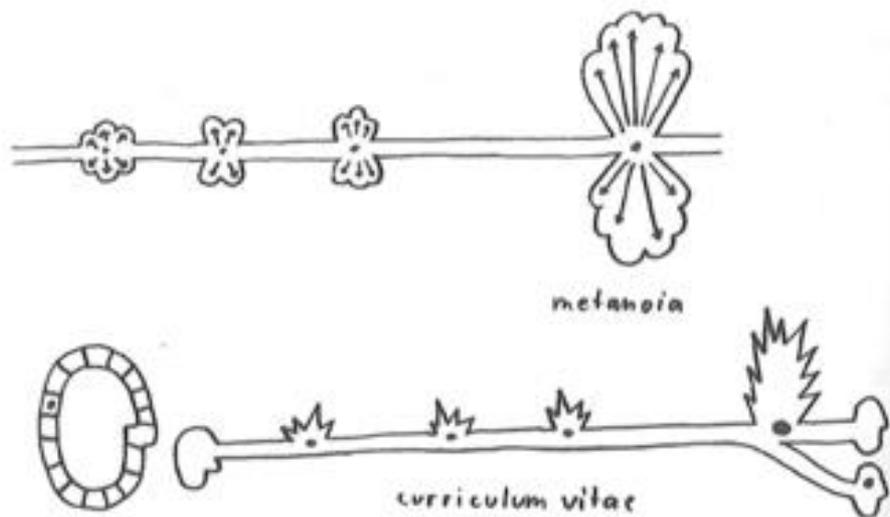
production

the whole is more than the sum of its parts

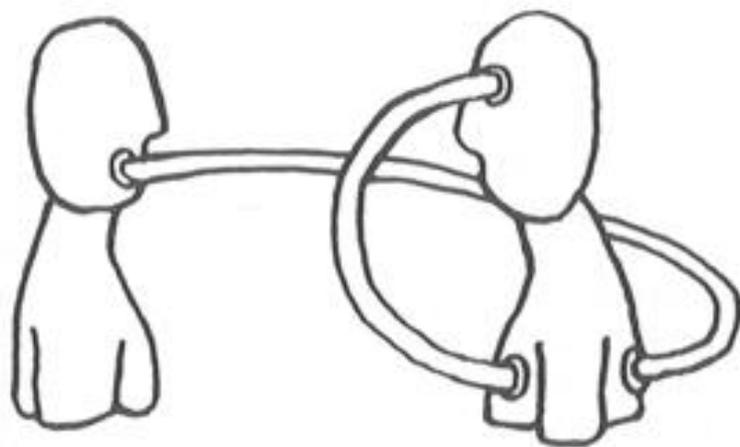
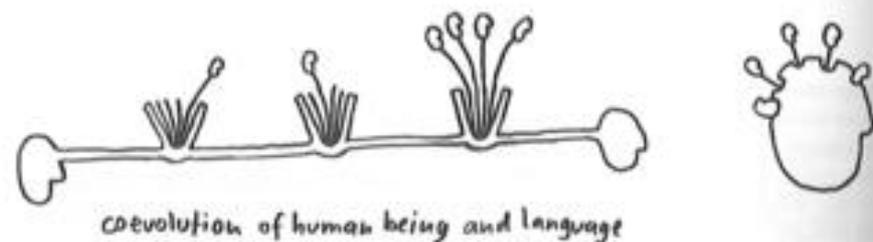
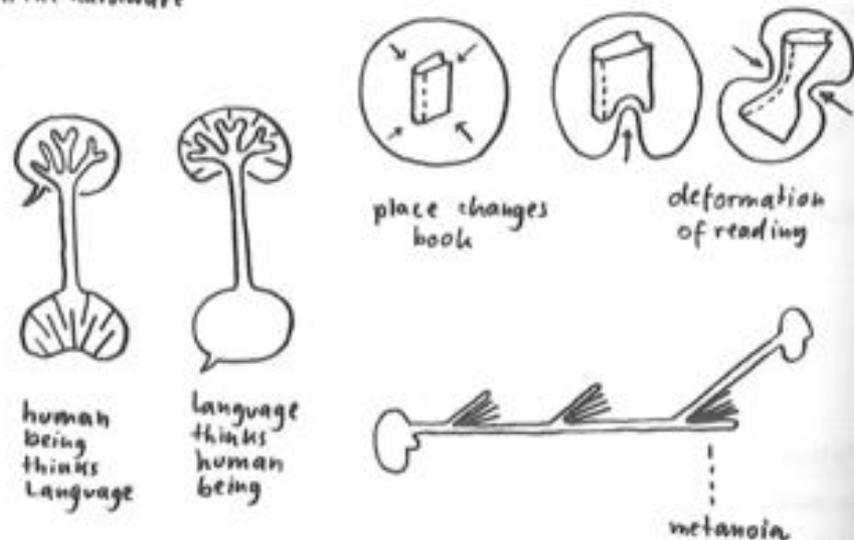
analytically too much spirituality



Language situates us at the site of knowledge, that is, in the world. Change in (and of) the world, of which we become aware as temporality, is also the precondition for our perceiving the world. The deictic capacity of language allows us to situate ourselves (by means of knowledge) in the world spatially and temporally by providing us with a semiotic agent, an interpretant. Only for that reason are we able, thanks to grammar, to deictically shift our point of view, that is, to go beyond the here and now in thought.



anchored
in the hardware



13 Irony and the Logic of Modernity Armen Avanesian

As Speculative Poetics has shown time and again, (speculatively) poetic reflections are never confined to questions in literary theory. They move on, as if by themselves, to ethical and political problems. A poetics that draws on linguistics (or rhetoric) as well as on ontology must, therefore, be able to give an account of such oscillations between different domains for phenomena like irony (which was long thought to be exclusively rhetorical).

When irony is reduced to an arbitrary, easily reversible oratory technique, it loses all meaning or at least it has no significance beyond its restricted context. One cannot help but wonder why anyone would speak indirectly, differently, or in a complicated way rather than to simply speak.

Irony and the Logic of Modernity is concerned with a genuinely modern phenomenon. It may sound paradoxical, but

irony is an invention of modernity just as modernity is an (ironic) invention of irony. Once this irony had emerged around 1800, it became possible to retroactively recognize it in older texts as well. It is not (or no longer simply) a rhetorical tool but an ontologically distinct phenomenon or, more precisely: irony has an ontological dimension. It thus calls for a *rhetorological* approach that combines a rhetorical with an ontological analysis.

There are historical as well as philosophical reasons for the revision of the rhetorical understanding of irony that were first and definitively undertaken by Friedrich Schlegel. If, as Schlegel writes, the "true critique of philosophy" is a "philosophy of rhetoric," then this also means that in modernity every reflection about irony has to go beyond the narrow confines of traditional textbook rhetoric and develop an understanding of the "sem-ontological" dimension of irony and the three different modes of irony: affirmative, neutral, subversive.

These three modes do not allow us to unambiguously assign texts or utterances to one of them. Instead a kind of matrix of modern irony is formed, switching between all three: irony cannot be tied exclusively to an affirmative, neutral, or subversive function.

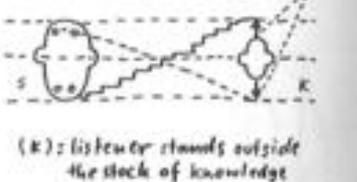
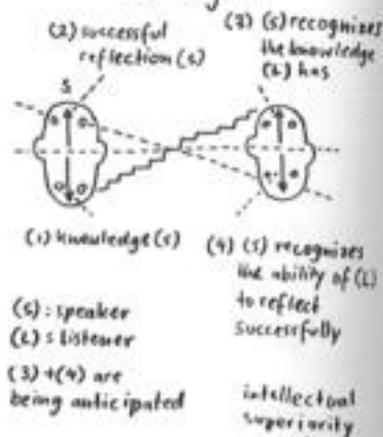
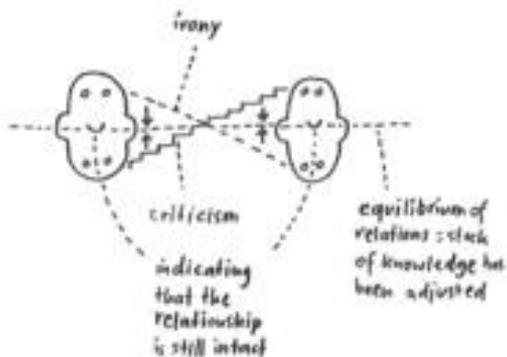
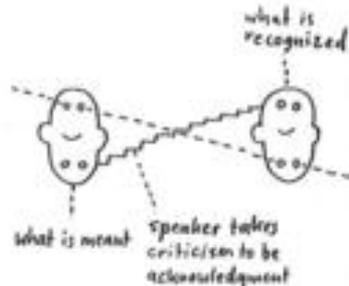
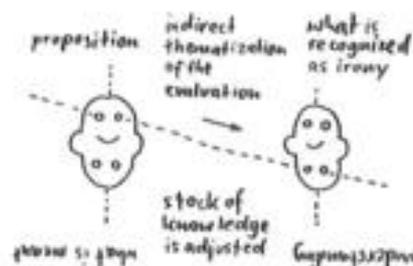
The transformation of (post-rhetorical) irony cannot be understood without insight into the constitutive role that aesthetic processes play for our thinking as a whole. The modern spirit of irony emerges from the narrow confines of rhetoric under the aegis of aesthetization. That is also why irony is incessantly called on whenever a correction or at least attenuation of the paradoxes of modernity is at issue (as in Richard Rorty and Niklas Luhmann).

Irony always acts as what Derrida called a *pharmakon*. This is apparent in Kierkegaard's "aestheticist" or "seducer," Baudelaire's "dandy," and Benjamin's "flaneur"—however

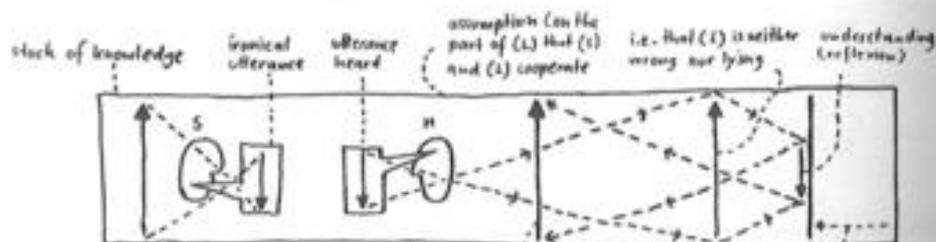
significantly they may differ in other respects. Furthermore, a psychoanalytic discussion of cultural and social phenomena like *Sehnsucht* and melancholia shows that the self (and not just the modern self) arises ironically from the spirit of melancholic imitation and a failure to attain itself.

There are analogous shifts on the poetological level, where epistemologically good (because comprehensible) irony can, as a poetic mode, abet conservative tendencies in writing. And conversely, the most extraordinary novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are often the most difficult to interpret. Without making any value judgment, we may say that—to name but one example familiar in this context—the clearly comprehensible irony of naïve narrator-subjects in Thomas Mann's work (an irony of opposition) has not necessarily produced better novels than Robert Musil's irony (which is sometimes resolved only with great difficulty).

Because modernity has never freed itself from its genuinely ironic disposition in the political domain either, the debates (often confused, sometimes violent) between proponents of various theoretical persuasions rest on a shared (Romantic-modern) reservoir of problems, concepts, but also paradoxes and unanswered questions. A differentiated analysis provides the basis for a conclusive explanation of how and why Romantic irony can be simultaneously criticized (for example by Carl Schmitt) as the first incarnation of the modern democratic spirit; hailed (by Mann) as an elitist apolitical attitude; and emerge as an important tool of subversive cultural practices (as in Mikhail Bakhtin's "hybrid" or in Judith Butler's discussion of queer strategies).



If a "true critique of philosophy," as Schlegel writes, is a "philosophy of rhetoric," then this also means that in modernity every reflection about irony has to go beyond the narrow confines of traditional textbook rhetoric. [...] For understanding the ironical logic of modernity, the attempt frequently made in the rhetorical tradition to give unambiguous interpretations and explanations of ironical propositions (in the sense of translating them into what was 'really', unironically meant) is no longer useful.



rhetorical irony

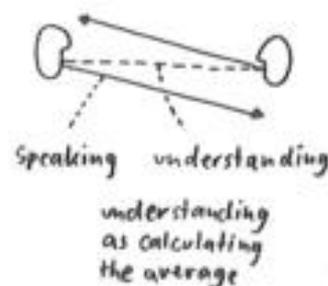
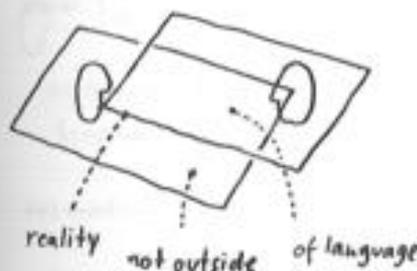
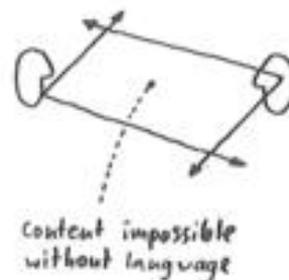
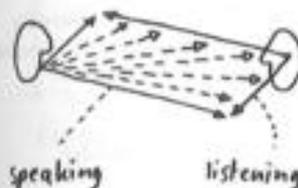
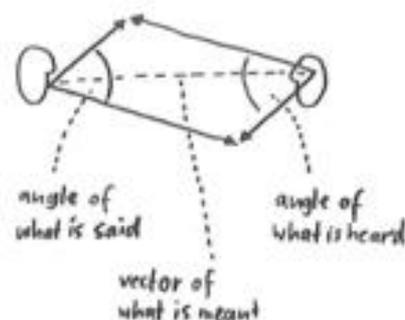
Search for intention = becoming aware of

adjustment of "knowing" and "making sense" (finding a level of reflection) such that a sharp image emerges

lingual constitution of the world

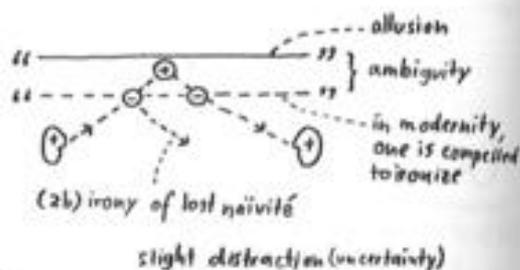
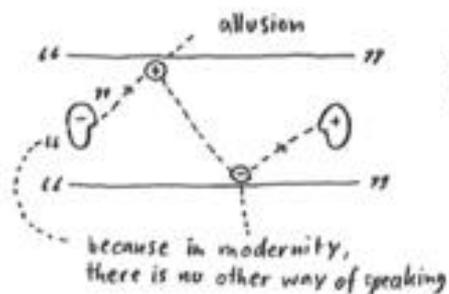
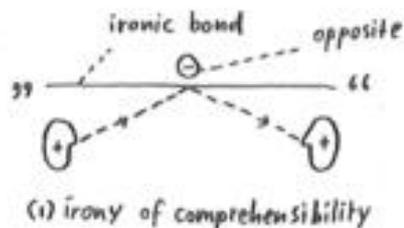
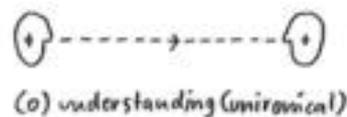


language = medium
it's understood one way or another

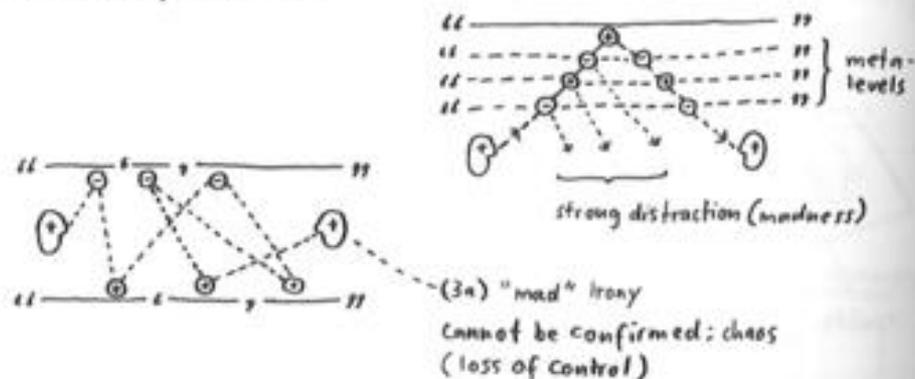


Ironical theory of language is rhetorically oriented and therefore fully aware of its being a theory of language. It dismisses the "dream of the standard theory of meaning" which "depended on the existence of a level of representation by completely present tokens." That early Romanticism rejects this dream in the name of irony has cast moral suspicion on irony. This explains the later debate about irony's immorality. What ultimately turned irony into such a scandal is an understanding that sees language as a fundamentally rhetorical configuration and, in consequence, sees reality as a whole as a linguistic structure.

3 rhetorologies

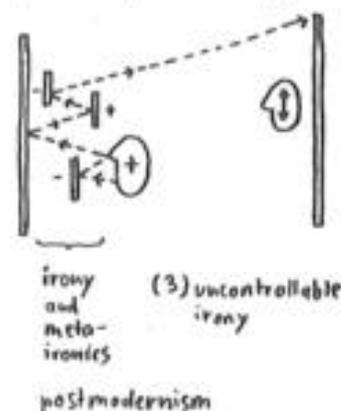
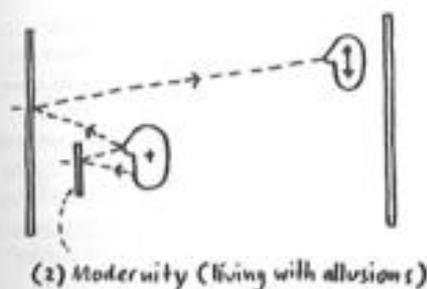
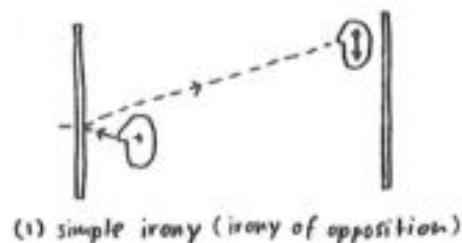
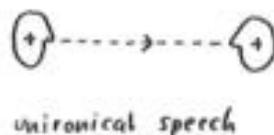


(2a) irony of lost naïveté

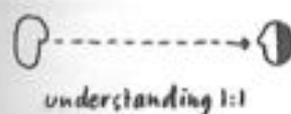


The ironical production of nonsense is, of course, an exemplarily unreasonable undertaking. But it is not pathological madness. It is not a madness the subject is helplessly exposed to but a madness controlled with artistic calculation. Consciously or methodically calculated insanity tries to turn the effect of nonsensical utterances in language into a satisfactory mode of subjective practice: This experimental method aims at an expansion of experience, which (not only in Schlegel) can also be conceptual: to create new concepts, not simply to fashion new experiences, is to highlight how language makes them possible, to make it possible that these experiences be captured in concepts in the first place.

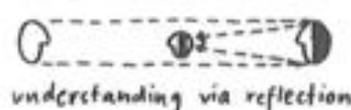
on rhetorologies



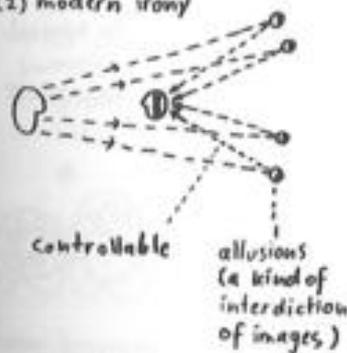
(0) no irony



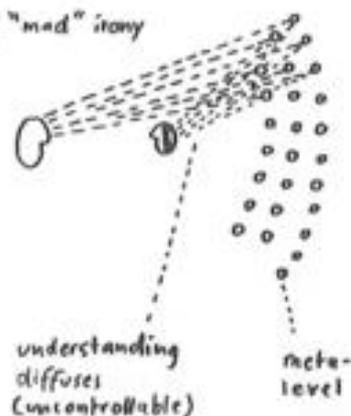
(1) simple irony



(2) modern irony



(3) "mad" irony



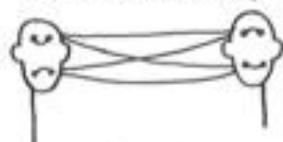
meta-level



(a) without irony



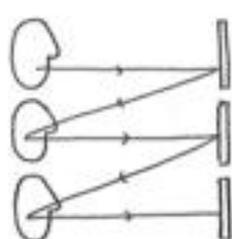
(1) romantic irony



(2) modern irony



(3) postmodern irony



I, oscillating between self and nothing

From the perspective of the second rhetorical dimension of irony, the inauthentic utterance does not (as in rhetorical oppositional irony) transparently open up to the utterance really intended. It is not centrally concerned with the conciliatory 'effect' of irony, not with an appeal to consent and comprehension, which can be evoked albeit not produced by communication(s) in language. Instead, it is concerned with the very structure, the paradox that is already at the basis of 'conciliatory' irony. [...] Irony shifts the focus to the mediality of language, which runs counter to the manifest content of every utterance. [...] On the level of content, its ambivalent movements appear as transitions between apparently distinct registers (between the tragic and the comic, between grief and joy). They are ironical movements. They do not merely give expression to Romantic melancholy. Long before Nietzsche, they give expression to a joyful blending of science and poetry.



incessant switching back-and-forth between I and not-I



the (ironical) I is ahead of its communications



the ironical: difference from itself



complete communication isn't 'really' to be had with words alone



self-identity never to be attained



self-identity

Friedrich Schlegel (1797/198)
K.V.F. Salger
narrator of Wilhelm Meister



Hegel: a signified free of language: Spirit



early Romantics (Schlegel, Novalis): Spirit thinks itself = inner speech



self-identity of the one who thinks: an absolute never attained



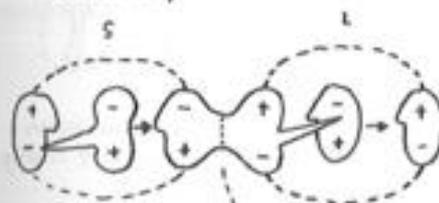
yearning for self-identity = source of Romantic melancholy



"différance" in language and thought



trust in indirect-ironical success



indicating the failure alludes to the seriousness of the claim

Here used to be a claim to absoluteness

S: speaker
L: listener

a kind of philosophical interdiction on images



the early Romantics declare this thinking in paradoxes to be a necessity

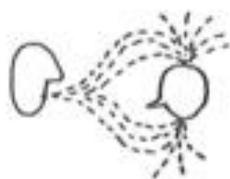
poetry as an equivalent of philosophy



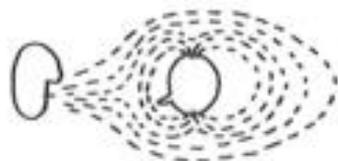
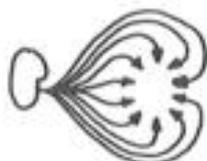
irony becomes the element that structures language and art



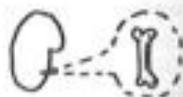
irony becomes a medium



early Romanticism:
the Absolute can
only be alluded to



pre-Romanticism:
the Absolute
is claimed



early Romanticism:
the Absolute is being
alluded to

reality consists,
at the very last,
in what is not
language



irony says
something
and means
something
else

and it is
nonetheless
understood
(affirmative)



doubt whether
it can be understood
correctly at all
(neutral)



no longer knowing
oneself which
other was meant
(subversive)

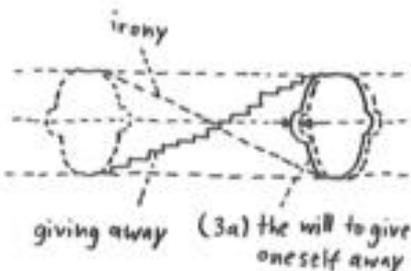
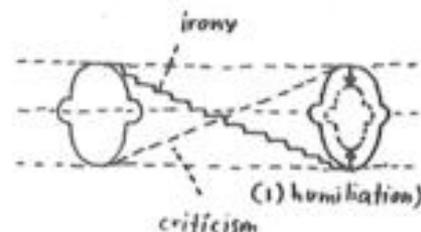
Modern irony cannot be tied to one of its three modes; it switches between them, which is why it cannot be tied exclusively to an affirmative, neutral, or subversive function either. This switching also occurs when we no longer just ask the epistemological question of the (un)intelligibility of irony. For if we leave abstract philosophical questioning behind and turn to concrete examples or applications, we see that the change of phenomena under investigation immediately changes the problems they give rise to. In concrete everyday situations, hermeneutic-epistemological questions necessarily become ethical and subsequently (and within a historical logic) political questions. In these transformations, the three ironical logics always follow the particular practices of the field in which they become manifest.

Irony and Ethics

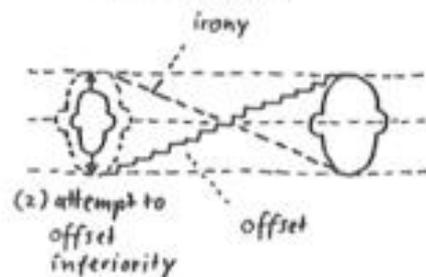
Ironical Seduction

affirmative—neutral—subversive

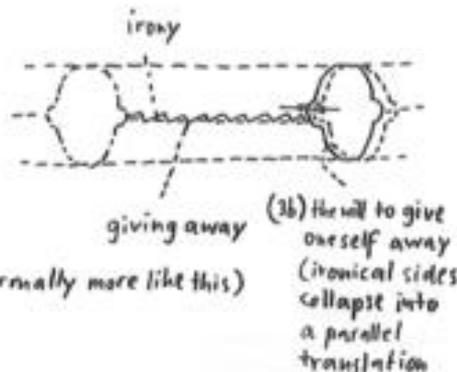
Medial-ironical seduction is a seduction of paradoxical success, of a unification of disjointed elements. For why would one seduce what one does not desire, succumb to what one has not already succumbed to? [...] Seduction is playing with semblance without the phantasm of controlling semblance. It is a seductive activity that by no means relinquishes intentionality but instead allows for a pleasurable experience of the complication and frustration of its own goals. Only the "duel relation abolishes the law of exchange" (Baudrillard). The goal is the Passion: as seduction against the hysterical discourse of love.



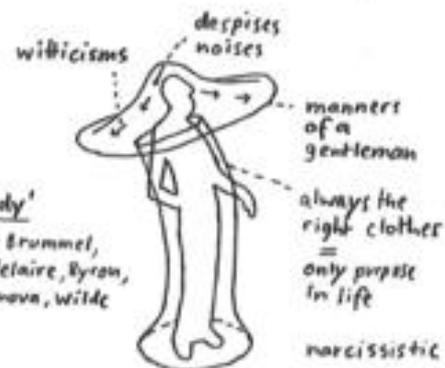
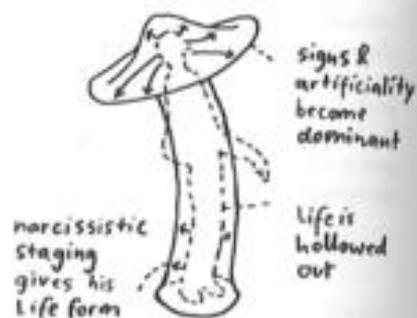
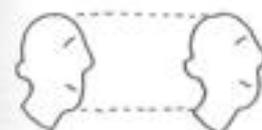
the model must be retained,
or else it would not be an
ironical model



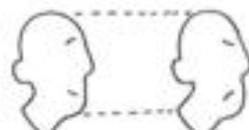
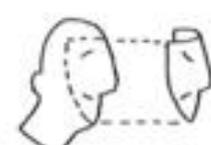
Hegel & Kierkegaard
ironist = churl ("unethical")



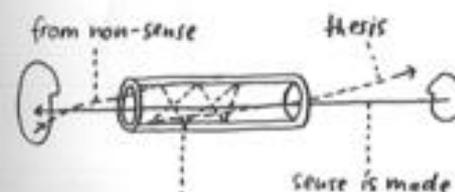
Types of Ironists

flaneurEdgar Allan Poe
"The Man of the Crowd"dandyBeau Brummel,
Baudelaire, Byron,
Casanova, Wildenarcissistic
staging
gives his
Life formSeducerKierkegaard:
seduction = simulation
mood without content or
ethical structureaesthetesentry & meaningful
(instead of beautiful & ugly)
harmony in nature and in art

we imitate

we are autonomous
when we imitate incorrectlyconcealment mask
dissimulationsomething
that is missing
is pretended
simulation

from simulation to imitation

the irony of
incomprehensibility
can be understood
as nasty,
smartalecky
etc.the irony of
incomprehensibility
can be interpreted
as more gentle,
more loving, i.e.
as ethically better(the three rhetorologies remain
though they are deployed differently)controllable
excess of language

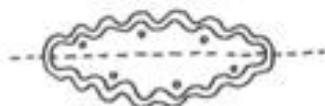
sense is made

We are able to see the irony of masks not as a consciously
deployed mystification but as a protective and, above all,
automatic reflex. Ultimately, such a "pathos of difference"
also functions as a contextual effect beyond the control of its vehicle.
The desire for communication and agreement can only be
maintained if it is ironically refracted. Subsequent developments
manifest an entire series of historical incarnations of an *ars
viventis* thus conceived.

Irony & Poetics



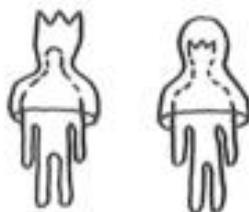
Schlegel:
 novel = progressive
 universal poetry
 (without form, can
 incorporate everything)



epic: narration in verse
 cultural significance:
 in the past, e.g. unity
 of the state



Carnival
 (= Bakhtin)

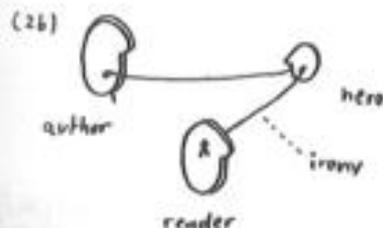
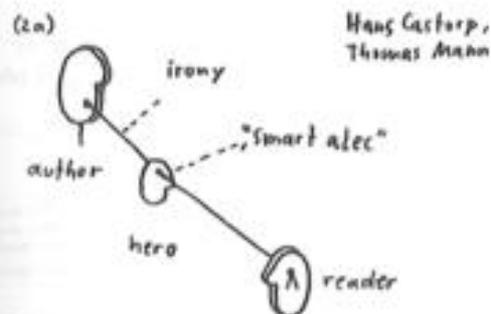
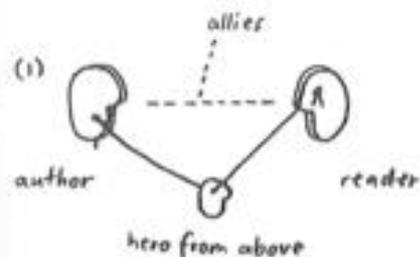


everything is
 turned around

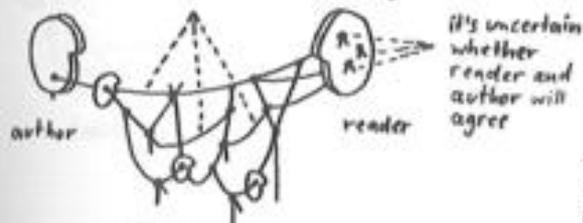
transcendental
 homelessness:
 hence the novel



irony - poetics: novel



(3) context-dependent understanding



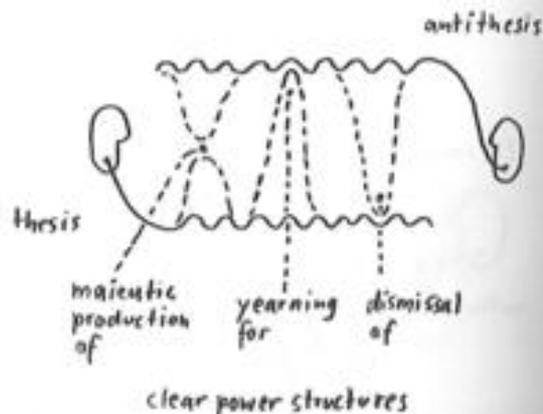
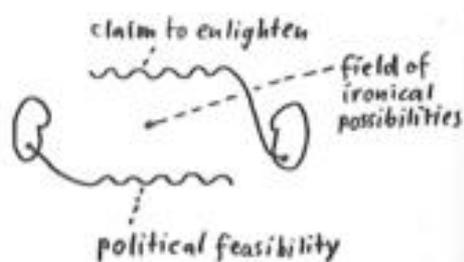
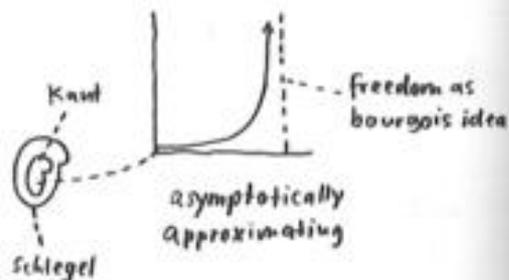
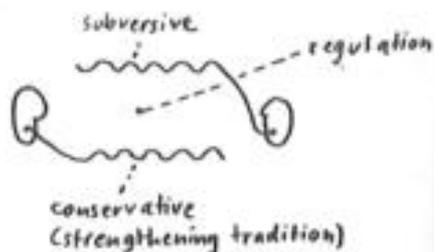
Epistemologically good (because comprehensible) irony can, as a poetic mode, abet conservative tendencies in writing. And conversely, the most extraordinary novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are often the most difficult to interpret. Without making any value judgment, we may say that—to name but one example familiar in this context—the clearly comprehensible irony of naïve narrator-subjects in Thomas Mann's work (an irony of opposition) has not necessarily produced better novels than Musil's irony, which is sometimes resolved only with great difficulty. Finally, we can distinguish the ironical modes of parody, pastiche, and quotation. To do so, it is necessary to differentiate (historically as well) three forms of narrative irony: a) irony between the author-character and the reader, b) ironical relationships between narrator and hero, and c) contextual irony.

author loses control over
 the text's readability
 (= Man Without Qualities,
 Finnians Wake)

Irony: Ethics—Poetics—Politics

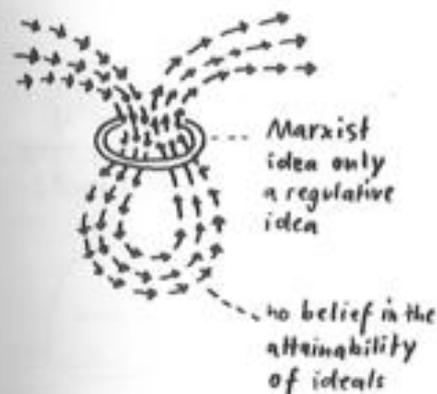
It turns out that because the paradoxes of modernity I have detailed are ironical, irony in the twentieth century can be understood as a political phenomenon just as it could be seen as a moral phenomenon in the nineteenth. In addition, there is the philosophical insight into the linguistic constitution of the political sphere as such, that is, the possibility of political speech and political discourse (and not just of political theses about irony).

discourses are ironical

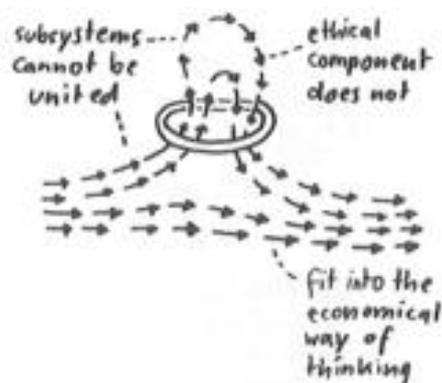
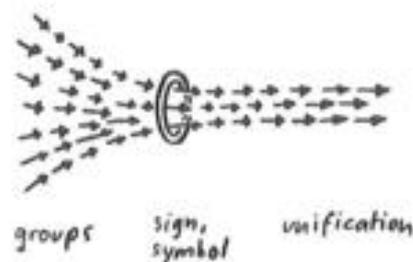
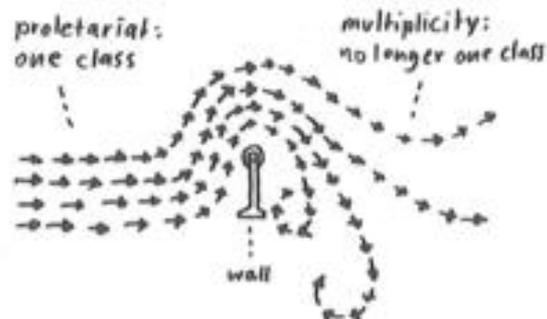


societies need irony

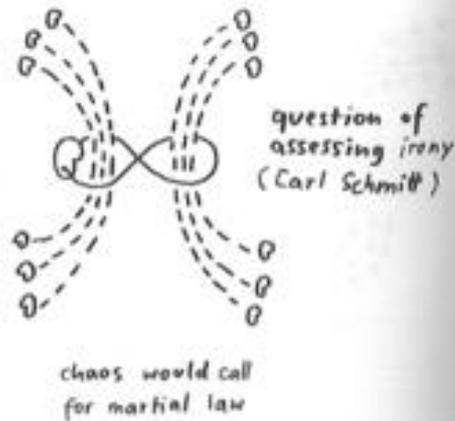
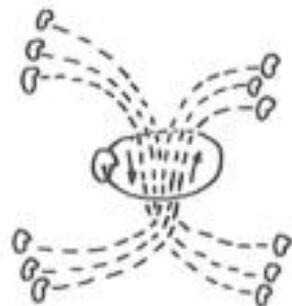
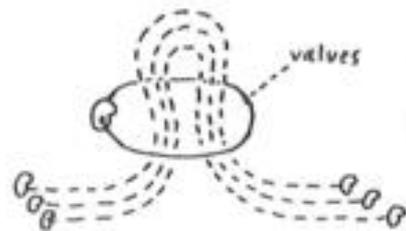
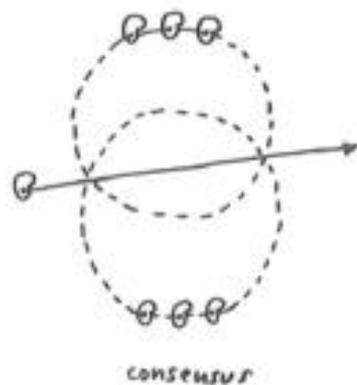
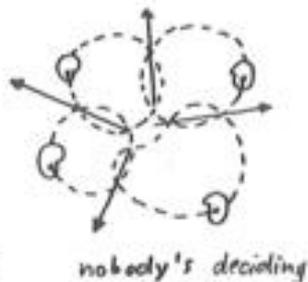
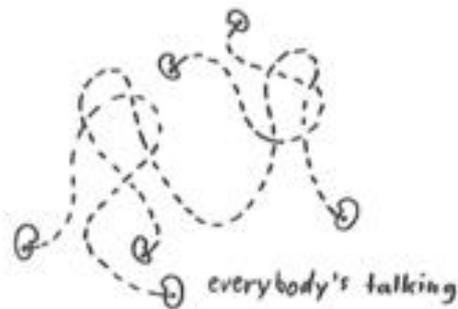
Laclau / Mouffe



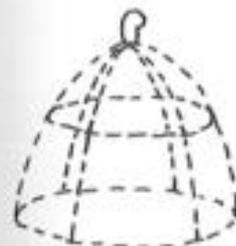
postmodern Marxism



Schmitt's classicist aestheticism expresses his sidelining of this always-already-being-impure of the political and his unwillingness to admit the subversion of the political by ethical, economic, and aesthetic moments, and it leads him to overlook both important aesthetic dimensions and the decisive political dimension of irony. A (Schmittian) understanding of post-facto aestheticization therefore has to be countered by pointing to the originary rhetoricity and linguisticity of the political. The question, in Schmitt as in Kierkegaard, is the question of the fundamental or legal status of irony.



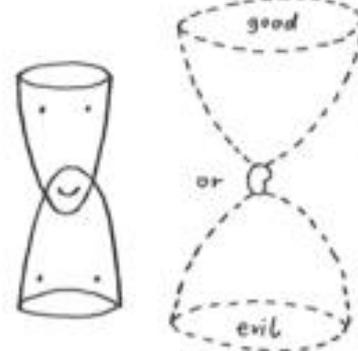
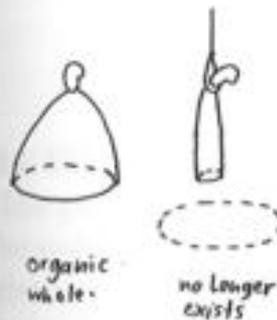
On a political field staked out by attempts at a maieutic production of, infinite desire for, and anarchistic repudiation of clear structures of power, the abstract dichotomy between conservative or progressive political irony must remain an antinomy.



Romantic society

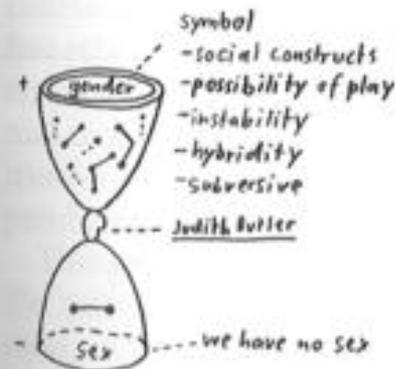
destroyed by the French Revolution

irony

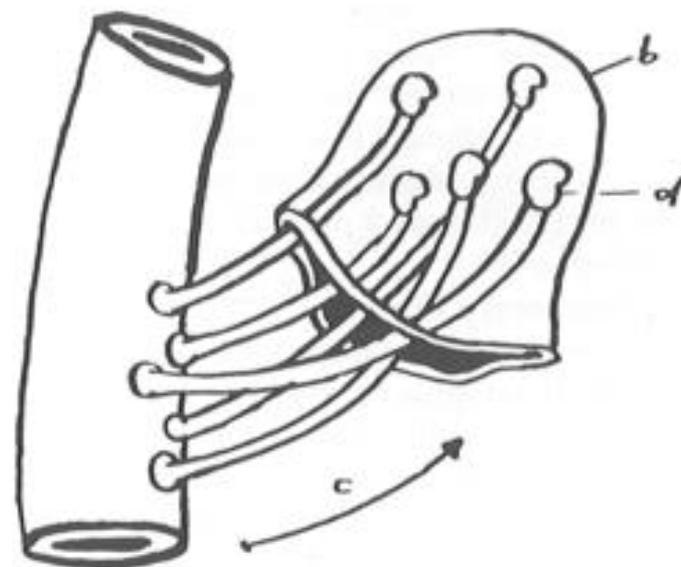


Richard Rorty:
essayistic life is possible, the self can be defined

Carl Schmitt:
irony dissolves and undermines values



Schlegel reinvents irony to be able to think modernity



14 Ethics of Knowledge / Poetics of Existence Armen Avanesian

The premise of *Ethik des Wissens / Poetik der Existenz*, due to be published in January 2015, is that the university should be the site where creative labor and individual freedom make autonomous research possible. In reality, however, the discourse of the university (as Jacques Lacan once put it) gives free rein to hatred. Among academics, overpowered by a generalized pressure to be innovative and ashamed of their perennial insufficiencies, depression is rampant. This is generally true for an expanded academia whose always-critical discourse panders to contemporary capitalism's aesthetic spirit.

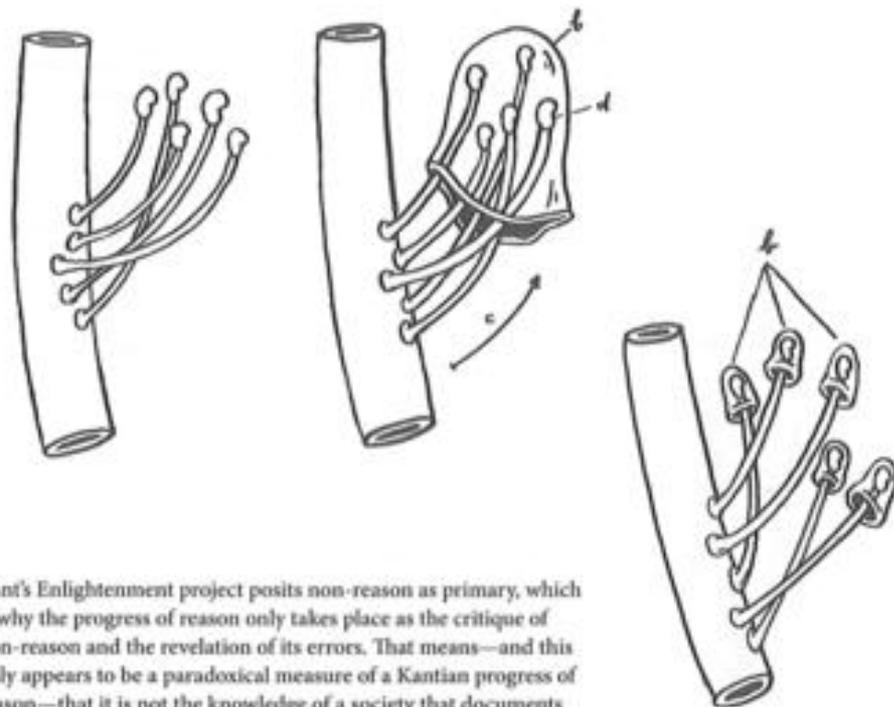
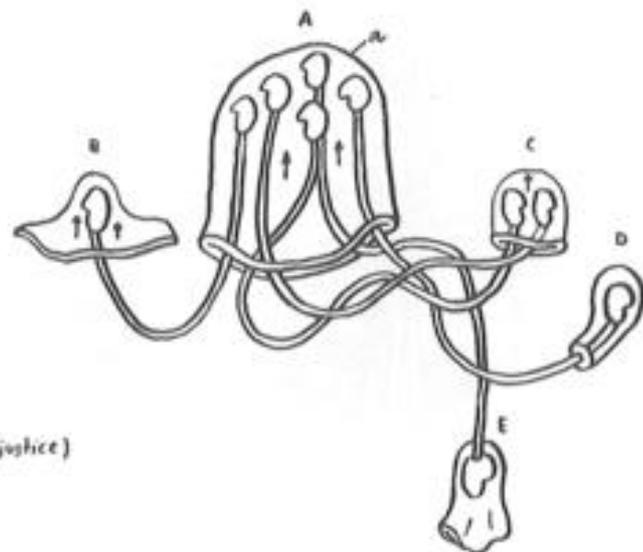
This general aestheticization has actively been spread from the universities across society since its invention around 1800, in the absurd demand for criticality and authenticity in dissertations and academic papers often written exclusively to advance one's career. Against it and in contrast to what

Michel Foucault famously called an “aesthetics of existence,” I suggest a poetics of existence. At stake is the production of a knowledge that implies the ethical auto-formation of a writing subject unwilling to surrender its speculative desire for truth. The development of a truth does not generally fail because of intellectual deficits, but touches upon the ethical dimension of thinking as a practice of *resisting the present* (Deleuze/Guattari).

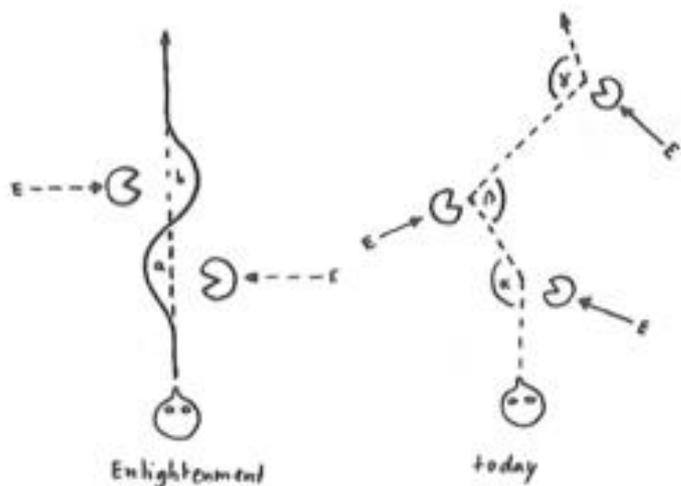
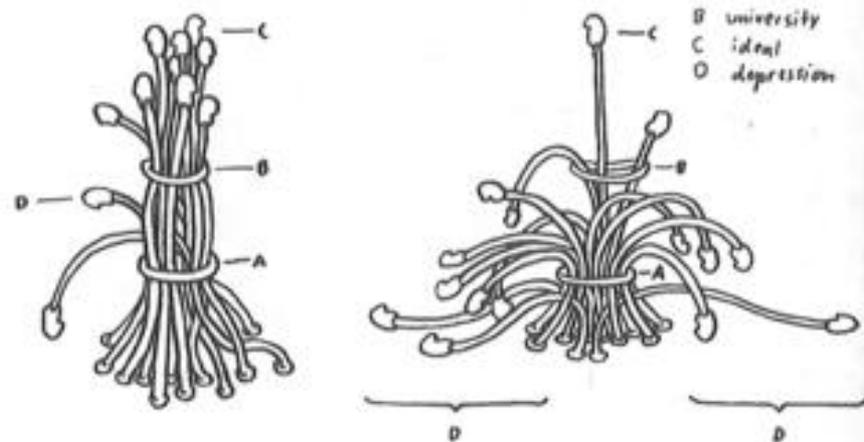
Our contemporary third spirit of capitalism (Boltanski/Chiapello) is not simply a danger for academic thinking, as is often claimed. The dogma of creativity and originality in our regime of thinking, usually traced back to nineteenth-century artists, goes back to the Romantics’ invention of the modern research university (as marvelously described by William Clarke). Against this backdrop it makes sense that Speculative Poetics has increasingly depended on strategic alliances with institutions outside academia, particularly in the art world.

Writing a poetics (or poietics) of existence is the ethical consequence and research-political summary of this development. If, as Giorgio Agamben explains, poiesis is the production of an object that is the site of a truth, then speculatively poetic research implies a becoming aware and a making aware; it implies the task of producing knowledge via another logical mode of inference—not by induction or deduction, but by abductive reasoning, by working, through writing, toward a poetic existence. This leads to a clear ethical demand for action: to take responsibility for the poetic constructivism of one’s own production, and responsibility for one’s own abductive academic work.

- A university
- B expanded academia
- C gallery
- D home
- ↑ desire for knowledge
- E depression
- a knowledge as veil (Lacan)
- b veil of not knowing (Bataille, theory of justice)
- x decisive situation for social organization
- d uncertainty about one’s social position

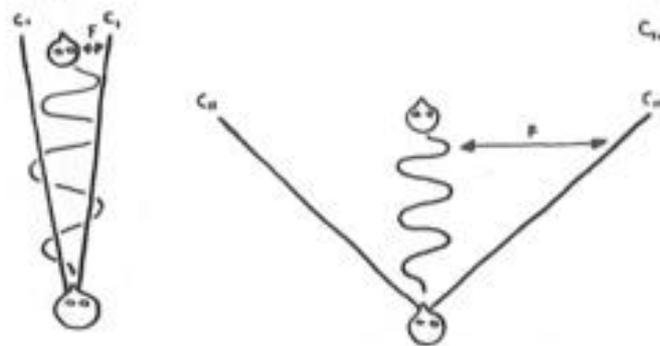


Kant’s Enlightenment project posits non-reason as primary, which is why the progress of reason only takes place as the critique of non-reason and the revelation of its errors. That means—and this only appears to be a paradoxical measure of a Kantian progress of reason—that it is not the knowledge of a society that documents its Enlightenment and progressivity but, if anything, the insight in (its own) ignorance.



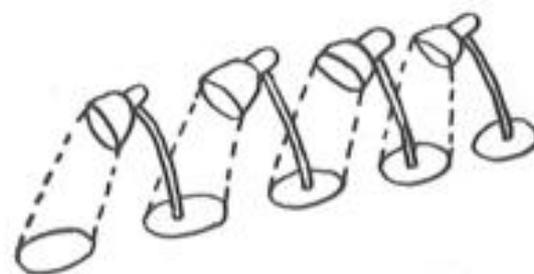
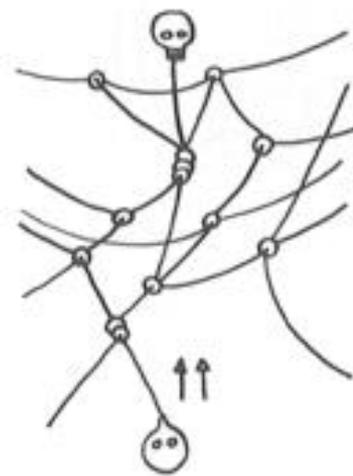
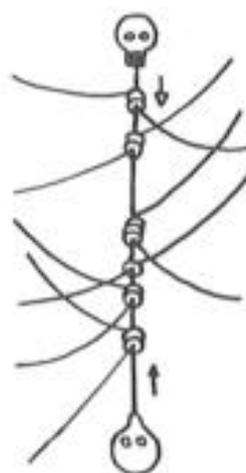
Criticism as Enlightenment
ideal
E demand of the times
E today we have to constantly reinvent ourselves

α, β, γ originality
α, β criticism, conflicts
c prohibitions
F distance from attainable happiness
C₁ freedom



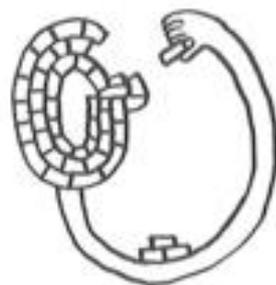
Foucault: for the Greeks
existence is care of the self,
a beautiful image of oneself
for posterity

↑ time
↕ perspective from
out of which one
fashions oneself



Fichte's argument for a renaissance of medieval doctoral degrees under the sign of originality, Kant's piece on the Conflict of the Faculties in the spirit of critique, and Humboldt's idea of *Bildung* in the form of the Prussian university bureaucracy have resulted in something that observers abroad described as the most economical disposition of contemporary knowledge. In the nineteenth century, the alleged ivory towers of German universities were the most consensual of trading hubs for critical knowledge.

Aesthetics of existence



concept: working on oneself



The conditions of our existence change thanks to our knowledge and our actions. [...] Our conflicts are the measure according to which we change ourselves, and the explication of objective contexts, it seems to me, is necessarily tied to an active change, an othering of our selves.



core & skins
(high density,
minimal extension)



high efficiency
(maximal extension with
a minimum of material)
high impact



seeking to
remain valid
for posterity



→ poetics of
existence

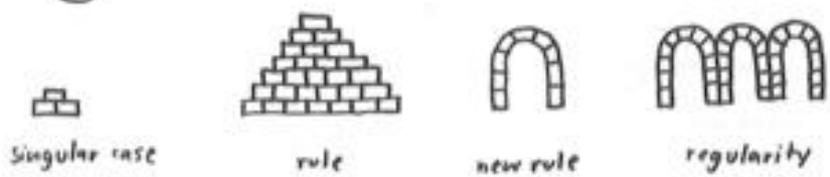
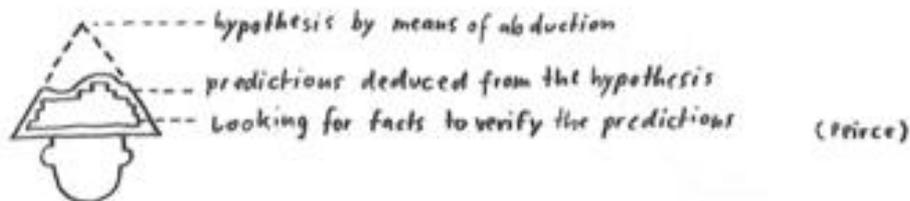


Aristotle:
the steps of
producing a work
of art can be taught



Charles Sanders Peirce:
procedure that
produces the
explanatory
hypothesis

(v. deduction and induction)

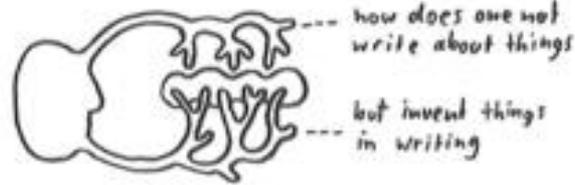


creative
(or meta)
abductions:
inventing
a new rule

Creating oneself in one's own writing—this phantasm was articulated most memorably in the Renaissance by Montaigne: "I have not made my book any more than it has made me—a book of one substance with its author, proper to me and a limb of my life."



inventing
asynchrony



Foucault:
creating
oneself
as a
character



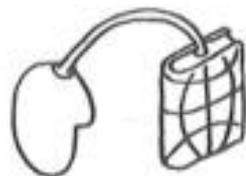
artificial
character



multiple relations,
each showing part
of the spectrum of
the character



I did not create this book any more than the book created me

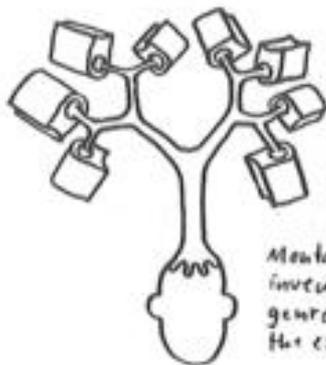


of all the worlds created by men the world of books is the most powerful. (Heinrich Heine)

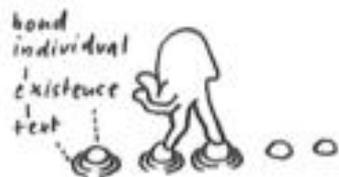


truth tied to a person

I don't describe being, I describe being on the way



Montaigne invents the genre of the essay



hand individual existence text

etho-poiesis (Foucault)



creation of truth in writing

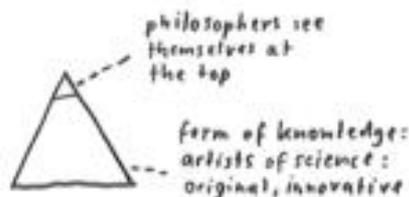
reservation toward everything fixed, certain and absolute



writing as product of truth



essays: an author's personal engagement with a topic



philosophers see themselves at the top

form of knowledge: artists of science: original, innovative

University of Berlin Humboldt, Pichte, Schliermacher, ca. 1800 Prussian Police Minister & curriculum: prescribing course content

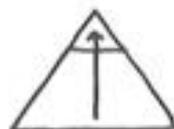
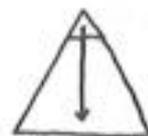


dissertation

instead of



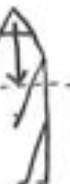
disputation



tyranny of innovation



writing qualifying papers



supervisor, examiner



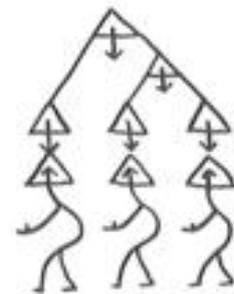
tyranny of innovation



claim to critique



produces depression



society of shame

"The disputation was an oral event. It aimed not at the production of new knowledge but rather at the rehearsal of established doctrines. What was produced—oral argument—was consumed on the premises. The disputation did not accumulate and circulate truth." (William Clark, Academic Charisma)



we want to be
even better &
more creative
(Humboldt's
invention)



demand
to develop

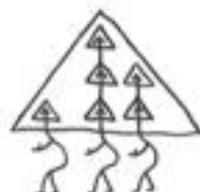


failure to
live up to
one's own
demand



economizing
teaching

discourse within the academy
gives free rein to hatred



students have to
be original, comb
through the same
canon with new
methods



canon and
a perspective
to be chosen



everyone is
'critical,'
power relations
remain intact



Niklas Luhmann: reproduction of a social stratum



ego alter
ego

traces
it back to
external
conditions



traces
it back to
character

"As has been established by empirical research, this gradual division between acting and observing tends to create a discrepancy of the attributes the partners ascribe to each other and ultimately can become a conflict of attribution. In other words, the actor judges his acting to have been called for by the particular circumstances of the situation, whereas the observer in contrast tends to attribute the acting to the characteristics of the actor's personality. Accordingly both partners start from different points of departure when searching for causes of action, and this in itself leads to conflict" (Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion*). Are there ways of reconciling these two in writing? In the ideal case, everything I know is in conflict with the other's theses. It really is only when all of the knowledge I possess contradicts your thesis and I nonetheless prove to you why you are right that my I transforms into an other, that my position is altered in that fundamental way we may call speculative othering.



every body
must work ...



... which is
asking too much



in everyday life,
every body must
be creative



compulsive creativity
produces depressions
(instead of neuroses
? Freud)

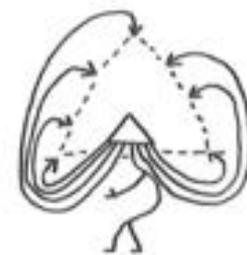


reintroduce conflicts

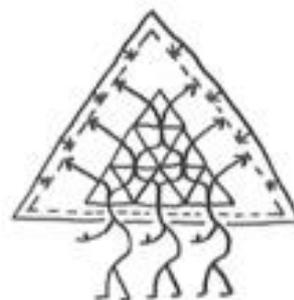


transgress
the law

for the law to be visible



make thinking
the law possible



(? Futurist Manifesto)



(? Manning)

The only real support is given to the correct normalization of desire. Support is given to the one who strives diligently and does not let this striving interfere with the law (of desire).



legislator and
legislatee



humor:
grotesque
over-fulfillment
of the Law
(Schwejk sitting
extra straight)



irony:
question of the
next higher
(e.g. just wars)

Looking for a different setting for one's work



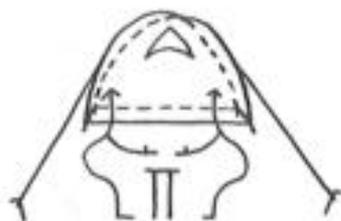
look at
cognitive
process



working in
collaboration



writing on
topics one knows
nothing about



working too quickly

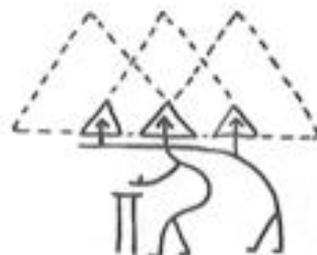


overproduction

Jacques Lacan
-discourse of psychoanalysis
-sublimation (production
of new knowledge)



student master
(universe of mastery)



Lacan: the only setting in which truth
emerges is the setting when results
are unknown



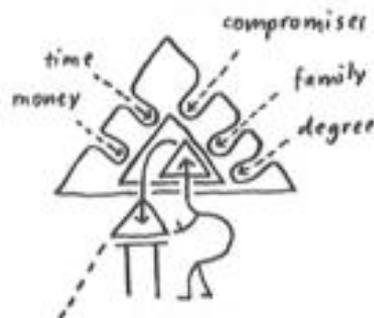
Socratic
inquiry



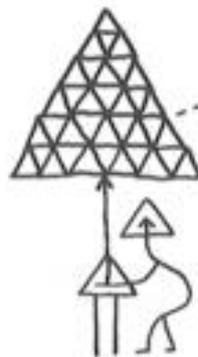
how is truth
defined?
as the transformation
itself, not the result



a truth that
no one has

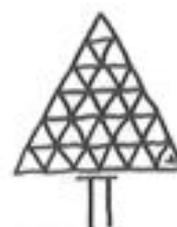


creativity for a
'qualifying paper'

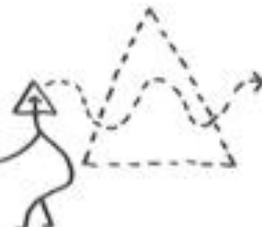


Self-
protection
by means
of an
intrinsic
construct
of material

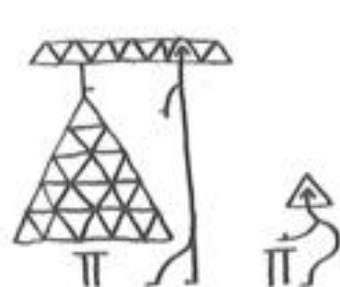
work leads
to overproduction



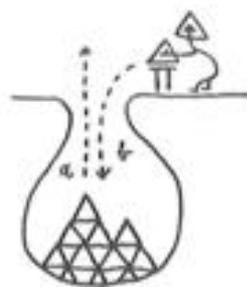
overproduction



despite
the ideal of
serendipity

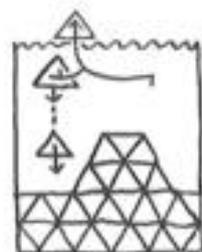


overproduction
- because 'it's possible'?
- because one has begun
to have no time

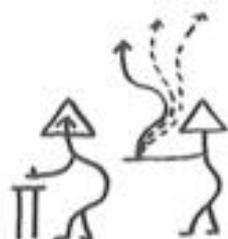


short term
production
(living bad
value for money)

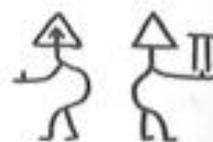
a desire for quality
to become
apparent at
some point
& permanent
addition of
short-term
solutions



producing
until one gains
a footing



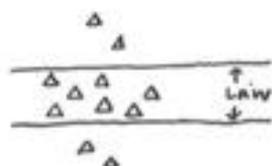
sadist: does
not believe
in the law



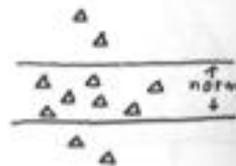
fetishist:
magically
invests objects



neurotic
"e.g. professor"



belief
in the law



Law = norm,
defined only by
distribution

psychoanalysis / Freud



neurotic knows
consciously &
unconsciously
he is castrated



psychotic does
not know he
is castrated



perversive knows
consciously
and enjoys
unconsciously
that he is
castrated

Slavoj Žižek (Lacanian psychoanalysis → popular culture)



Kinder
Surprise



Kinder
surprise:
desire
(enjoyment)
for function-
lessness

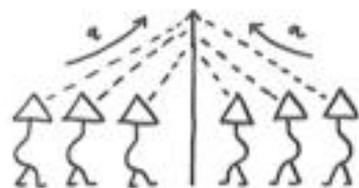
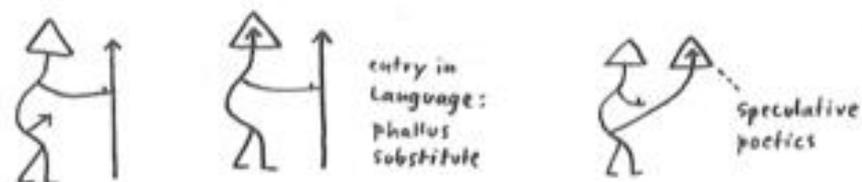


vase:
Container
around a
central
void



The ethics of a (performative) production of knowledge requires us to understand the authority of the superego not only as an instance of judgment and command, i.e., as moral authority, but at the same time as a supervisory instance at the interface of ethos and logos. Because Lacanian psychoanalysis bases the subject on knowledge, Lacan is central for an ethics of knowledge. The knowledge he speaks of is one that precedes and forms the subject.

From the point of view of the fetishist, most academics (like all subjects that flaunt the law as an excuse) are the most well-behaved of neurotics—in their own view, however, they are depressed victims or just plain depressive.



phallic object (column)^{*}
work because those in the
back can see too

a: production of signifiers

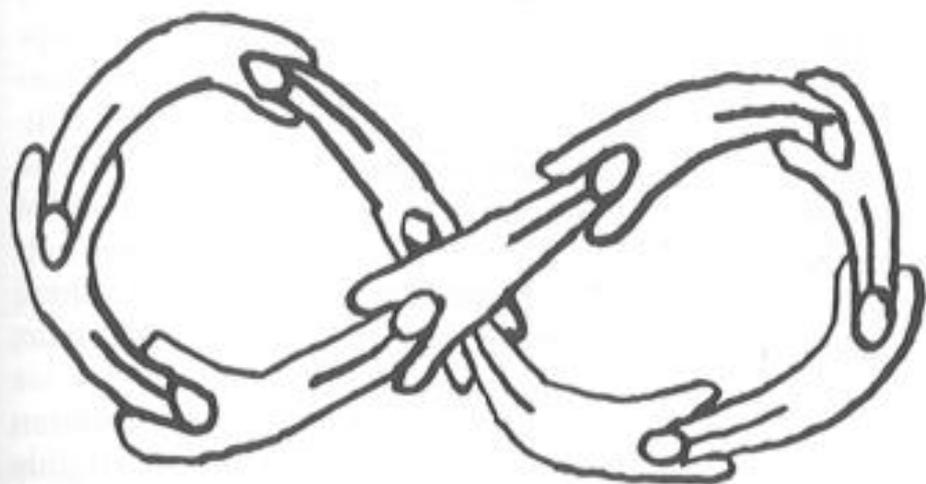


never heard of magic holes^{*}
because those in the back
can't see

(^{*} Umberto Eco, *Pendulum*)

* pyramids

* bridges



15 #Acceleration Armen Avanessian, ed. Thinkers on the left have long been fascinated by acceleration. The theme has been prominently discussed, from Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, via Deleuze and Guattari's anti-Oedipal Nietzscheanism and Nick Land's apocalyptic deterritorialization fantasies, to the "Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," which was published in the summer of 2013 by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams and stands at the center of the book *#Acceleration* (*#Acceleration*). As part of the larger speculative philosophical movement, accelerationism has given new life to the often-sterile discourse of the political Left, stuck as it is in picturesque provinciality or apocalyptic voluntarism.

Taking a cue from Alberto Toscano and Ray Brassier, who have reintroduced the mythological figure of Prometheus, we may call this new approach a Promethean accelerationism. It relieves rationalism—most recently popularized by Alain

Badiou and Slavoj Žižek—of its decisionist or voluntaristic airs (the conjuring of empty events), and instead connects it with concrete historical, economic, and biological developments. Above all, however, accelerationism opposes the cardinal vice of an all-too-comfortable and self-contented Left: the fetishization of grassroots democracy and the nostalgia for authenticity that comes with it. And like the rationalist current in speculative realism, which opposes folk psychology with a Promethean affirmation of Enlightenment values, Srnicek and Williams oppose various forms of folkloristic, provincialist kitsch in what they call “folk politics.”

Against all voluntaristic, decisionist, or communitarian conceptions, #*Akzeleration* affirms that capitalism is a highly abstract object. Like the modes of production they come with, neoliberal forms of power and governance are simultaneously omnipresent and abstract. An alternative political subject, therefore, can only be conceived on a correspondingly complex or abstract level.

Today, progressive political thought and action have no use for a decelerating turn to the past; they need a cognitive acceleration. Without a cognitive mapping that lives up to the status quo in science, technology, and media, there can be no political action (unless we confuse politics with what Jacques Rancière polemically calls “police”).

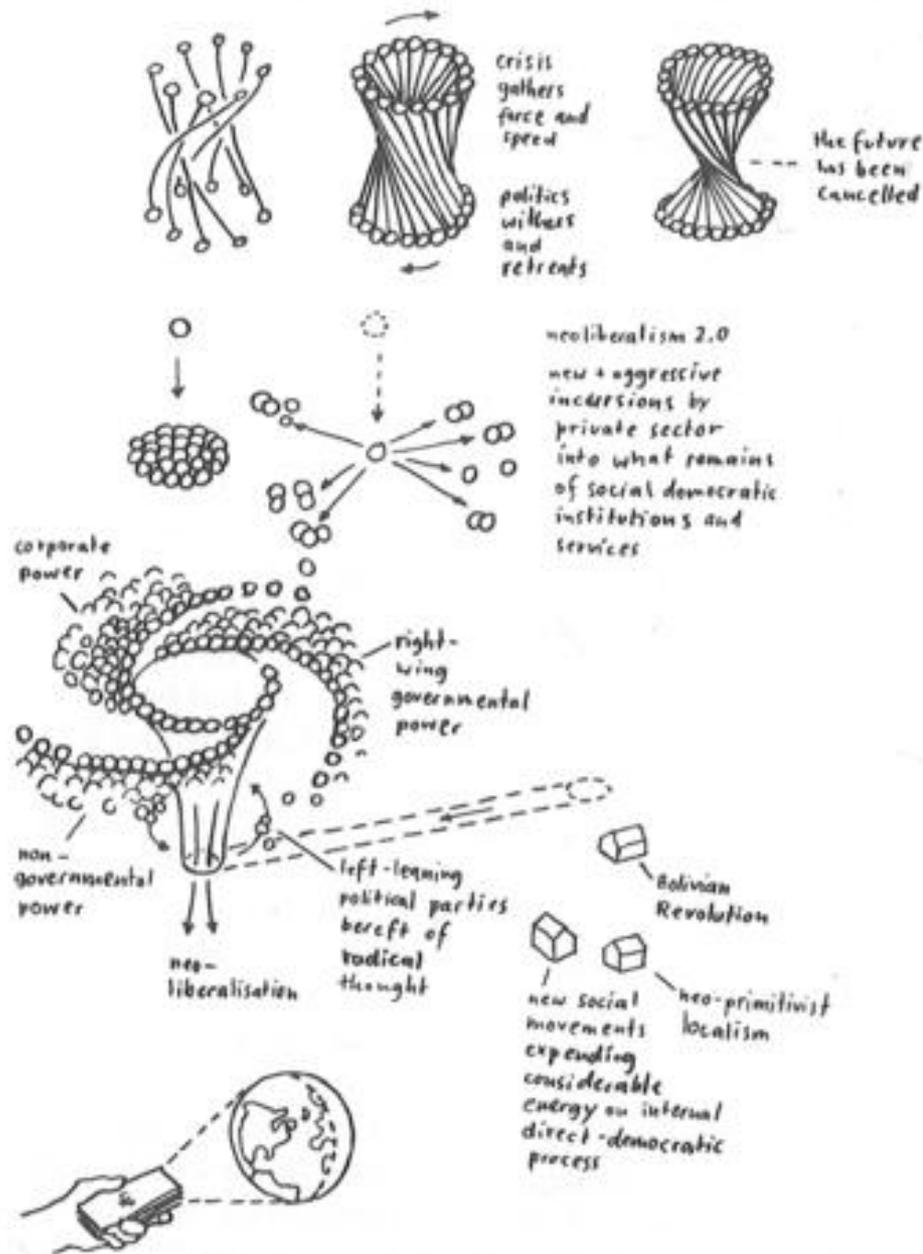
At the basis of all accelerationist thought lies the assessment that contradictions (the contradictions of capitalism) have to be countered with exaggerations. This strategy has to avoid two risks: on the one hand, a cynical trust in a *politique du pire*, a politics that assumes the worst; on the other, an idealistic hope that the intensification of capitalism’s crises in contemporary neoliberalism will lead, according to the model of a double negation, to the sublation of its internal contradictions, even to its implosion. Nonetheless, from the

point of view of accelerationism, a truly progressive thought is made possible only by a politics of acceleration oriented toward the future. And only such a politics can open up a speculative perspective on political systems to come.

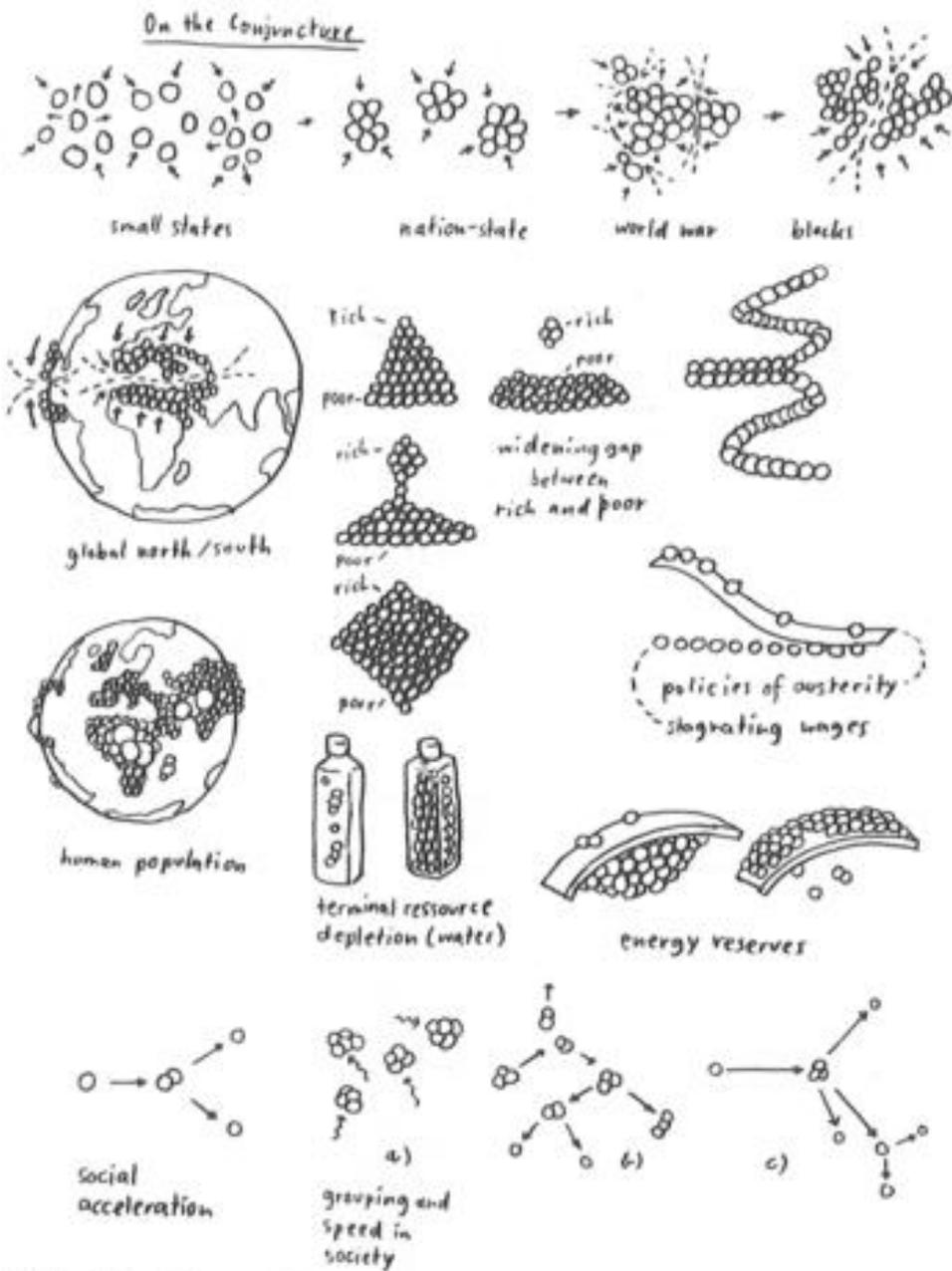
The concept of the *future* is one of the key terms in the debate for and against accelerationism. Accelerationism aims for the future, yet perhaps not only, as Benjamin Noys writes, as a back to the future but also as a back from the future. (In the volume, Noys and Bifo defend positions critical of accelerationism; Matteo Pasquinelli, Patricia MacCormack, accelerationist pioneer Land, and I give more positive assessments.) The present is endowed with contingency and openness (once more) only when it can be examined from the point of view of a future yet to be projected.

Acceleration is thus a genuine concern for Speculative Poetics not only because of the worrisome speed (worrisome for me as well) of all its (writing) projects, but because of this time-political or time-philosophical dimension. It also brings out more clearly the ethical and political dimension of concepts that are central to Speculative Poetics. Promethean accelerationism, for example, seems to replace reflection (as insight into the possibility of change) with recursion. Recursion brings a dynamic into processes, which endows them with a poietic, productive contingency instead of stabilizing them in the form of a merely quantitative “more” (of the same).

On the level of epistemology, this implies a change in the possibilities of knowledge. In the field of politics, it becomes possible to change goals: the Promethean task of recursively assembling a (new!) whole presupposes a speculative focus on an absolute and can only be achieved thanks to a change, an acceleration of its dynamics, an acceleration of time. Not a time of catastrophism, but of anastrophism.

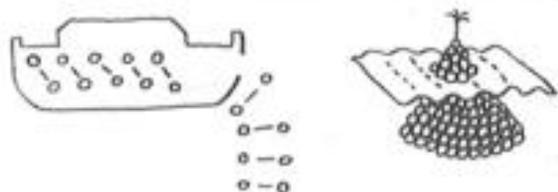


Thirty years of neoliberalism have rendered most left-leaning political parties bereft of radical thought, hollowed out, and without a popular mandate. At best they have responded to our present crises with calls for a return to a Keynesian economics, in spite of the evidence that the very conditions which enabled post-war social democracy to occur no longer exist. (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)



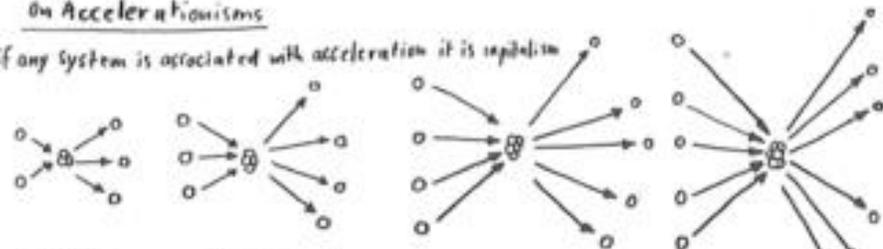
At the beginning of the second decade of the Twenty-First Century, global civilization faces a new breed of cataclysm. These coming apocalypses ridicule the norms and organisational structures of the politics which were forged in the birth of the nation-state, the rise of capitalism, and a Twentieth Century of unprecedented wars. (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)

Recovery of lost possible futures



On Accelerationisms

if any system is associated with acceleration it is capitalism

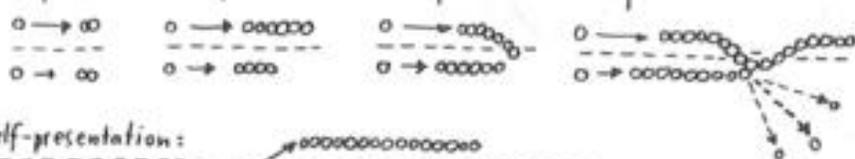


competition between individual capitalist entities

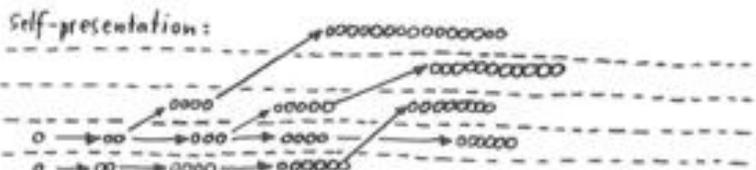
setting in motion increasing technological developments

to achieve competitive advantage

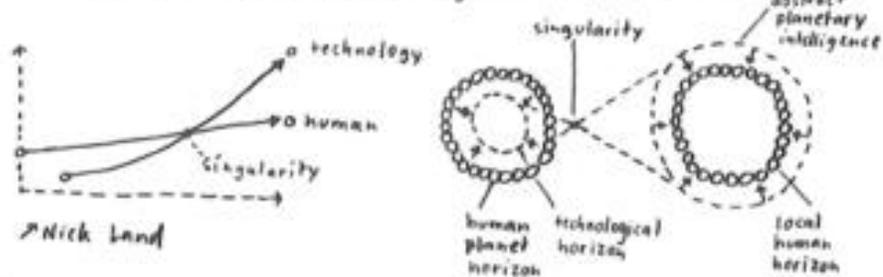
all accompanied by increasing social dislocation



Self-presentation:

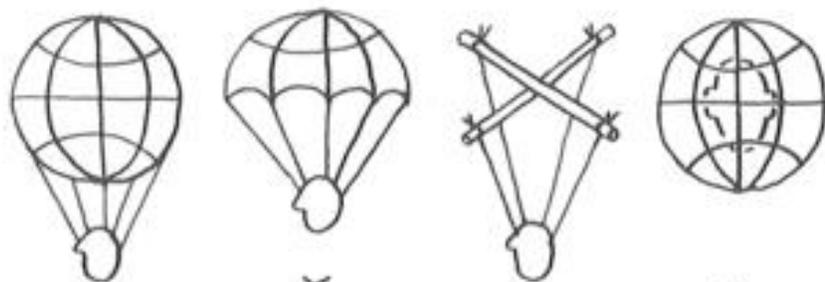
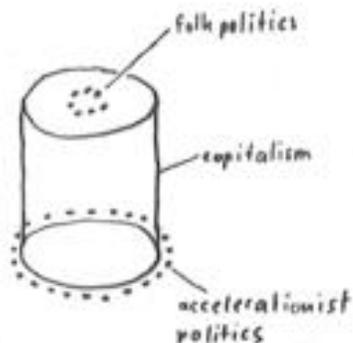
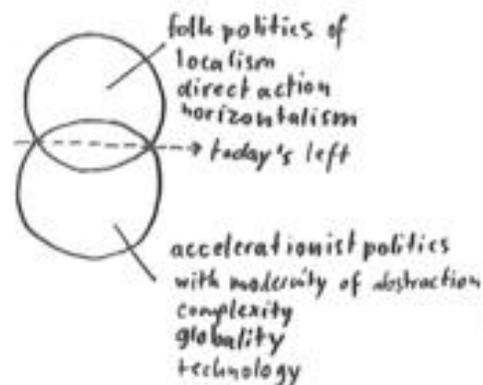


Setting free ever-accelerating technological and social innovations



We may be moving fast, but only within a strictly defined set of capitalist parameters that themselves never waver. We experience only the increasing speed of a local horizon, a simple brain-dead onrush rather than an acceleration which is also navigational, an experimental process of discovery within a universal space of possibility. (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)

Manifest: On the Future



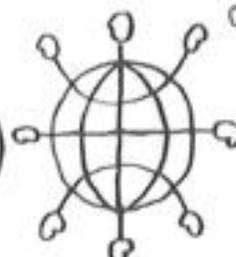
global

local

capital

complexity

direct action



globality

technology



localism

small & temporary spaces of non-capitalist social relations



global action



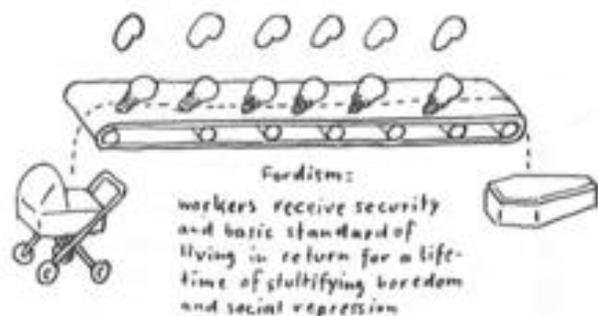
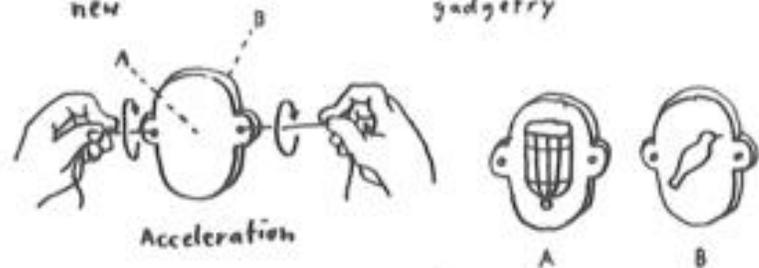
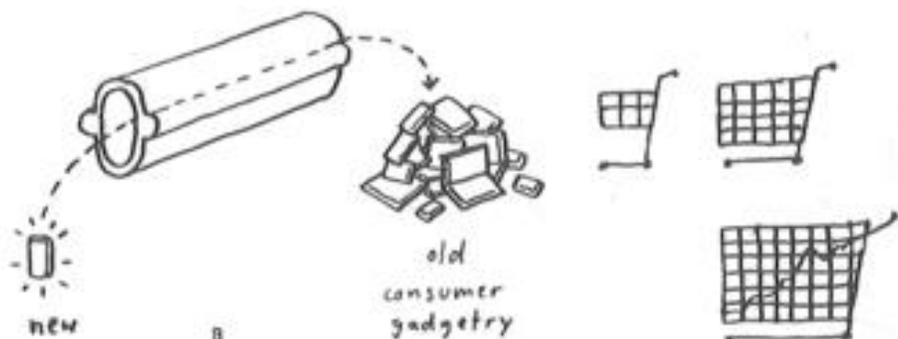
local action



The Economic Prospects for Our Grandchildren (Keynes, 1930)

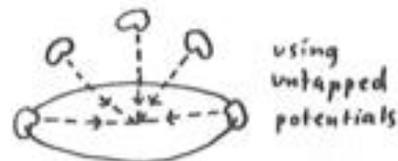
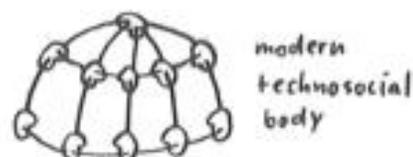
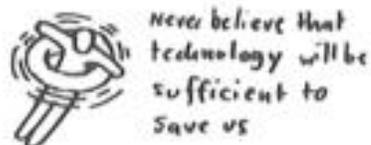
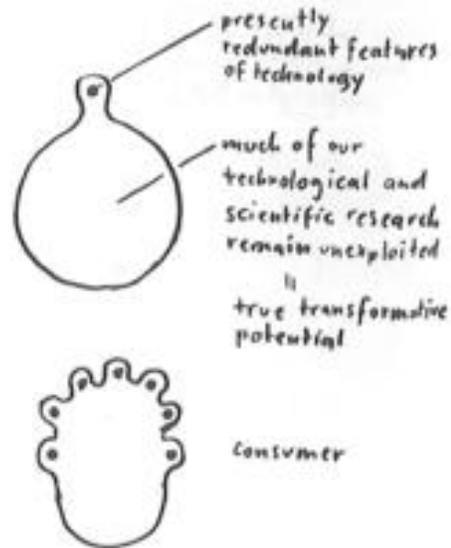
Elimination of work-life distinction

social factory

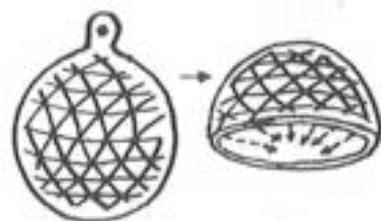


Fordism: workers receive security and basic standard of living in return for a lifetime of stultifying boredom and social repression

The properly accelerative gains of neoliberalism have not led to less work or less stress. And rather than a world of space travel, future shock, and revolutionary technological potential, we exist in a time where the only thing which develops is marginally better consumer gadgetry. (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)



technology should be accelerated in order to win social conflicts.





post-capitalist planning



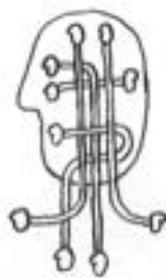
the habitual tactics of marching and holding signs risk becoming comforting substitutes for effective success



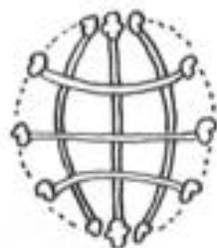
develop a cognitive map of existing system

and

a speculative image of the future economic system

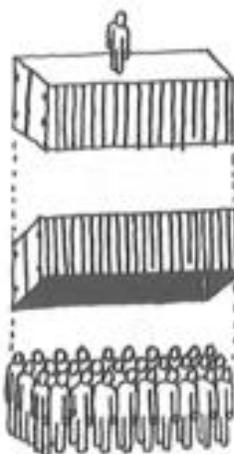


Economic modelling is a necessity for making intelligible a complex world



quantification is not an evil, but a tool

The tools to be found in social network analysis, agent-based modelling, big-data analytics, and non-equilibrium economic models, are necessary cognitive mediators for understanding complex systems like the modern economy. The accelerationist left must become literate in these technical fields.
(Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)



strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution

(Lenin, "Left Wing" Childishness, 1918)

the overwhelming privileging of democracy-as-process needs to be left behind



fetishization of openness, horizontality, and inclusion set the stage for ineffectiveness



Marx used most advanced theoretical tools and empirical data to fully understand and change his world

Marx (along with Lenin) paradigmatic accelerationist thinker

Any transformation of society must involve economic and social experimentation.



secrecy, verticality, and exclusion all have their place in effective political action



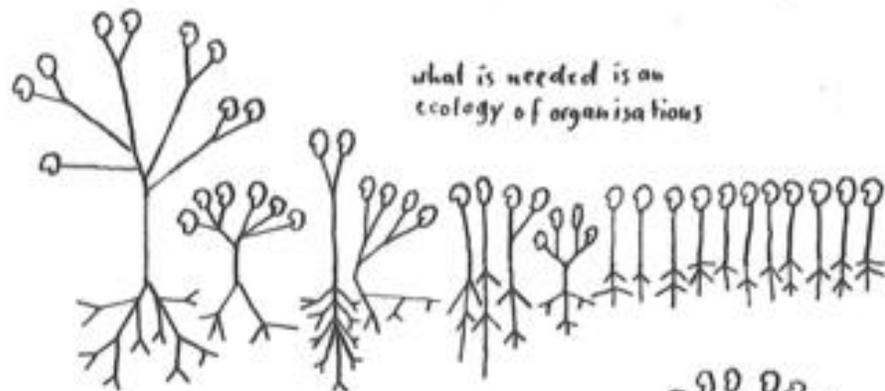
Politics must be treated as a set of dynamic systems, riven with conflict, adaptations and counter-adaptations, and strategic arms races. This means that each individual type of political action becomes blunted and ineffective over time as the other sides adapt. (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams)



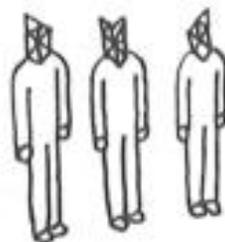
Real democracy must be defined by its goal - collective self-mastery (not by its means: voting, discussion, general assemblies)



what is needed is an ecology of organisations



vs. sectarianism and centralisation



build intellectual infrastructure



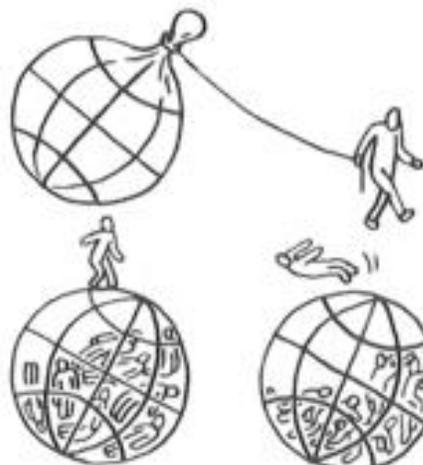
mimicking Mont Pelerin Society



The left must develop sociotechnical hegemony



Platforms are the infrastructure of global society



our technological development suppressed by capitalism



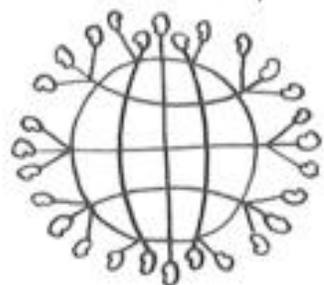
capitalism not only unjust and perverted but a system that holds back progress

accelerationism is the basic belief that suppressed capacities can be let loose

recover the dreams of an expansion beyond limitations of the earth

choices either a globalised post-capitalism

or a slow fragmentation towards primitivism, perpetual crisis, and planetary ecological collapse



the future needs to be constructed

accelerationism pushes towards a future that is more modern



the future must be created open once again towards the universal possibilities from the Outside

neoliberal capitalism is promise of greater inequality

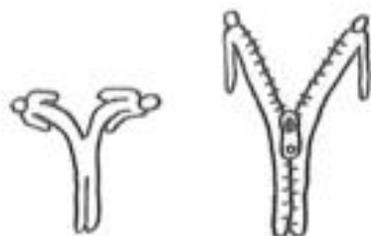
conflict and



chaos

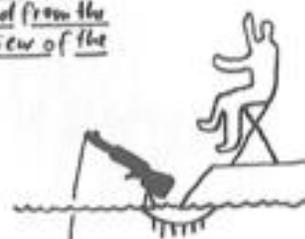
collapse

Franco Berardi Bifo
Accelerationism
Questioned from the
Point of View of the
Body

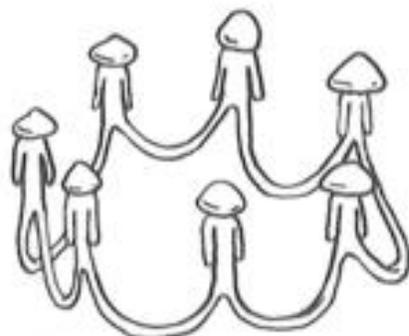


which is the revolutionary path?

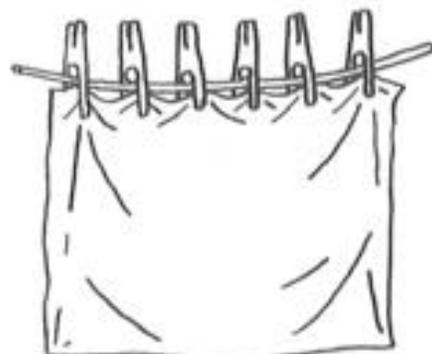
is there one?



Deleuze
Anti-Oedipus



go further — in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization?



world market



or withdraw from world market

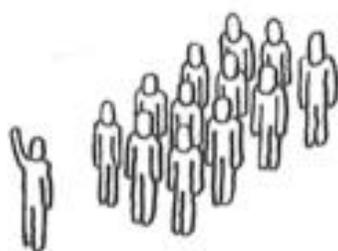


Run comrade, the old world is behind you! (1968)

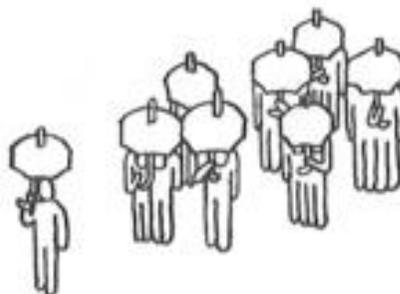
The reciprocal implication of desire and capitalist development can be properly understood through the concept of schizo deterritorialization. But when it comes to the process of the recomposition of subjectivity and the formation of social solidarity, acceleration implies the submission of the Unconscious to the globalized machine. (Franco "Bifo" Berardi)



we require just a little order
to protect us from chaos
(Deleuze, Guattari, Anti-Oedipus)



understand the effects
of the accelerating machine
on social subjectivity



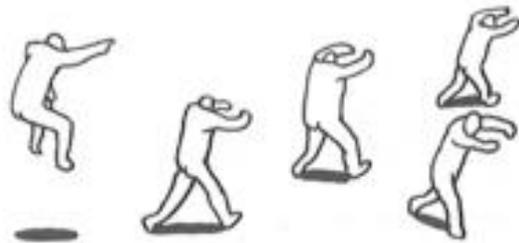
recomposition of subjectivity
and the formation of social solidarity



chaos is the
painful perception
of speed



acceleration is
one of the features
of capitalist
subjugation



the unconscious is submitted to the
ever increasing pace of the infosphere
the subsumption generates panic before
finally destroying any form of
autonomous subjectivation



there is no
transcendent
dimension in
capitalism

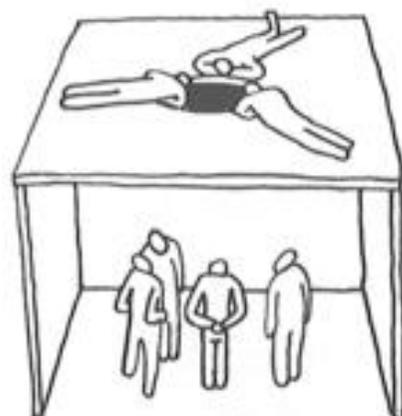


the historical process
has nothing to do with
the implementation
of an ideal

Immanence / Possibility



the possibilities
of the future are
contained in the
present composition
of society
(technical potency and
cultural forms that
capitalism has developed)



there is no outside



"immanentism"
(radical materialism)



Spinoza's rejection of
transcendentalism:
God is here, God is everywhere,
God is nature

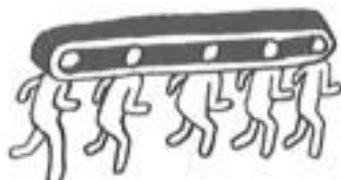


We just need to see
his presence, allow his
potency to emerge

an immanent force contained in present social composition



not hidden in God, not in Philosophers but inside the present form of social production



no external project can propel the a process of transformation which leads to a new form of self-organization

the permanent conflict and cooperation of work and capital is the sphere where the process of deployment happens

Accelerationist Hypothesis

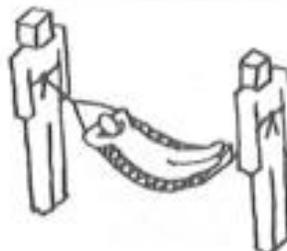


1. accelerating production cycles make capitalism unstable

- a) no rational but automatic governance
- b) acceleration destroys social subjectivity
- c) rhythm of bodily desire = spasm



communism is contained in the folds of capitalist present (Marx, "Fragment on Machines")



detrterritorialized Subjectivation (the general intellect intrinsically ordained to fully deploy itself)

Hardt and Negri do not consider the possibility of a stoppage in the process of deployment



hypercapitalism cannot be stopped

we can no longer run at the same pace

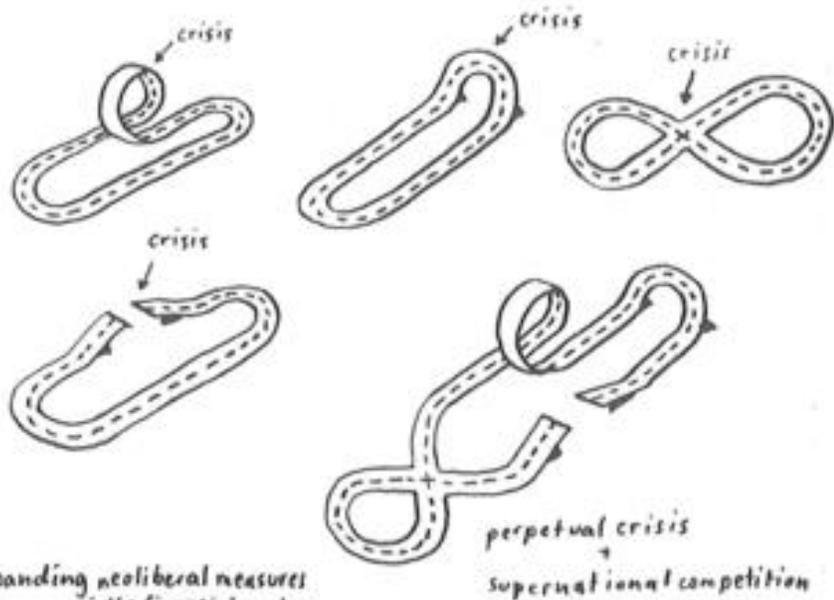
social subjectivity is captured and subjugated by capitalist governance

If we investigate acceleration from the point of view of sensibility and the desiring body, we see that chaos is the painful perception of speed, and acceleration is the chaotic factor leading to the spasm that Guattari speaks about in *Chaosmosis*. (Franco "Bifo" Berardi)

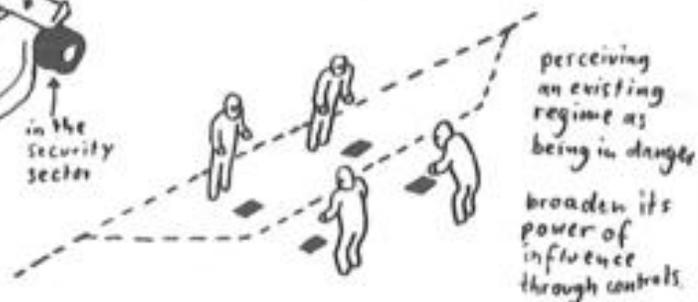
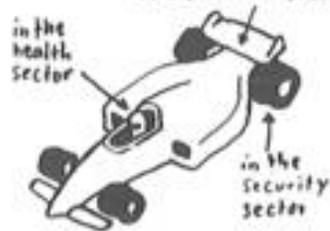
Criticism - Crisis - Acceleration



perpetual crises are immanent and constant means of capitalist production



expanding neoliberal measures
in the financial sector



dependent upon one another



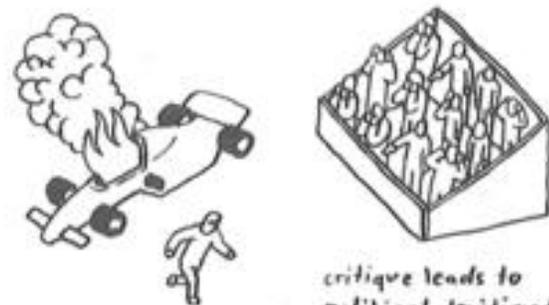
neo-liberalism:
ideology of crisis



crisis



Critique:
typical response to acute crisis



critique leads to political legitimization



critique as representation of dissent



bestowing its object with importance



Critique legitimizes the object of critique as the one who criticizes



critique sustains both itself and the crisis



we must see critique as being part of the problem



critique seeks to limit and legitimize the very crisis under critique, instead of leaving it behind

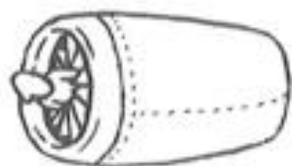


aimless speed
useless brakes
= nostalgic stagnation
(redundancy)

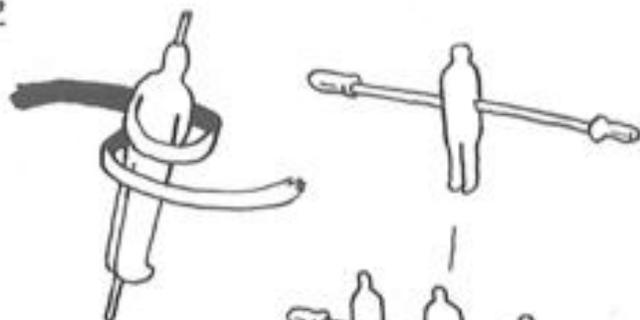


acceleration + direction = progression

If progress—be it technological, social, or political—can only be thought via an acceleration that overcomes the reterritorializations operated by the Left and the Right, then the task (in the wake of Hegel) is an updated speculative "critique" of Kant's still (i.e., in the fifth or eighth generation, depending on how you count, of the Frankfurt School) effective criticism of speculation. [...] The project of an accelerationist (political) thought opposes technocratic muddling on in the service of the given by speculatively holding on to the absolute as concrete politics. [...] Acceleration keeps capital moving and makes opposition to capital possible. (Armen Avanesian)



Franco Berardi Bifo



productivity increase
implies intensification
in rhythm of production
and exploitation



the power of capitalism
is not based on stability



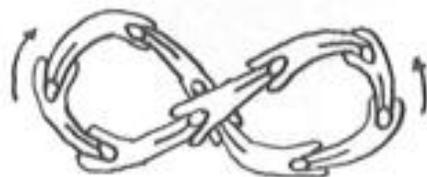
capitalism's ability to profit
from catastrophe (Naomi Klein)



reject the pretense of
anti-globalist return
to national sovereignty



rejection of nostalgia
for the slowness of
pre-capitalist past



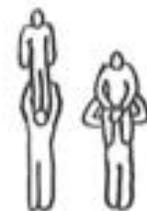
Schizophrenia is
all about speed



the speed of the
surrounding universe
in relation to

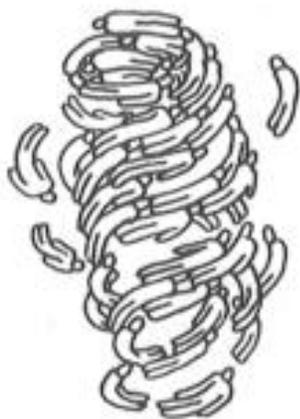


the speed of
mental interpretation



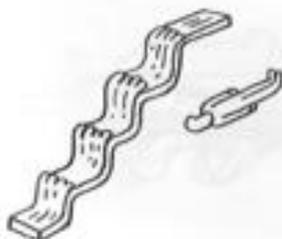
there is no
dimension
of mental
normalcy
to restore

Capitalist power, in the age of complexity, is not based on slow, rational, conscious decisions, but on embedded automatisms which do not move at the speed of the human brain. Rather, they move at the speed of the catastrophic process itself. (Franco "Bifo" Berardi)



"And of course we suffer, we capitalised, but this does not mean that we do not enjoy, nor that what you think you can offer us as a remedy—for what?—does not disgust us, even more. We abhor therapeutics and its vaseline, we prefer to burst under the quantitative excesses that you judge the most stupid. And don't wait for our spontaneity to rise up in revolt either."

"The passion that accelerationism mobilises is the remembrance by the people that a future is possible. In disparate fields—from politics to art to design to biology to philosophy—people are working through how to create a world that is liberated from capitalist incentives."



1 The Present-Tense Novel

The excerpts were taken from:
Armen Avanessian and Anke Hennig, eds., *Der Präsensroman* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Der Präsensroman</i>
p. 45	p. 273
p. 46	p. 276
p. 48	p. 20
p. 49	p. 273
p. 50	p. 263
p. 51	p. 263
p. 52 ↑	p. 268
p. 52 ↓	p. 261

p. 52: Marcel Beyer, *The Karnau Tapes*, trans. John Brownjohn (London: Vintage, 1998), 227. Originally published as *Flughunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 300.

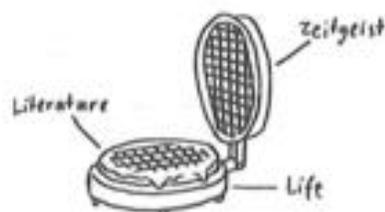
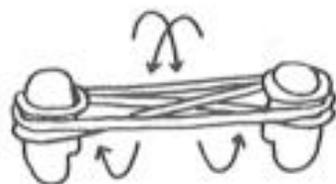
2 Present Tense: A Poetics

The excerpts were taken from:
Armen Avanessian and Anke Hennig, *Präsens: Poetik eines Tempus* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2012). The English translation by Nils F. Schott is currently in peer review.

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Präsens</i>
p. 57	p. 229
p. 58	p. 107
p. 59	pp. 10–11
p. 60	p. 237
p. 61	p. 20
p. 63	p. 277
p. 64	p. 277
p. 66	p. 288
p. 67	p. 282
p. 68	pp. 288–89
p. 69	p. 74
p. 70	p. 241
p. 71	p. 276
p. 72	p. 274
p. 73	p. 277

p. 59: Walter Benjamin, "The Reading Box," in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 141–42.

p. 69: Claude Simon, *The Georgics*, trans. Beryl and George Fletcher (New York: RiverRun Press, 1989), 15. Originally published as *Les Géorgiques* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1981), 21.



3 Time and Verb

The excerpts (pp. 78, 81–2, 84–89, 92–96) were taken from:

Gustave Guillaume, *Zeit und Verb*, ed. Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig (Zurich: Diaphanes, forthcoming). Originally published as *Temps et verbe: Théorie des aspects, des mondes et des temps* (Paris: Champion, 1929).

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Temps et verbe</i>
p. 86	p. 113
p. 89	p. 15
p. 92	p. 54
p. 93	p. 2
p. 94	p. 78
p. 95	p. 81
p. 96	p. 107–8

p. 88: Gustave Guillaume, *Foundations for a Science of Language*, ed. and trans. Walter Hirtle and John Hewson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984), 141.

4 Poetics: Past Narratives, Current Positions

The excerpts were taken from: Armen Avanesian and Jan Niklas Howe, eds., *Poetik. Historische Narrative und aktuelle Positionen* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2014).

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Poetik</i>
p. 100	pp. 8–9
p. 102	p. 9
p. 104	p. 10
p. 105	pp. 92, 140
p. 106	p. 11
p. 108	pp. 9–10
p. 109	p. 12

p. 105: Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics" in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 358.



5 Poetry and Concept

The excerpts (pp. 117, 121–25, 127) were taken from: Armen Avanesian, Anke Hennig, and Steffen Popp, eds., *Poetik und Konzept* (Zurich: Diaphanes, forthcoming).

p. 122: Ezra Pound, *Collected Early Poems*, ed. Michael J. King (New York: New Directions, 1976), 146.

6 Abyssus Intellectualis: Speculative Horror

The excerpts were taken from: Armen Avanesian and Björn Quiring, eds., *Abyssus Intellectualis: Spekulativer Horror* (Berlin: Merve, 2013).

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Abyssus Intellectualis</i>
p. 132	p. 22
p. 133	p. 10
p. 134	p. 139
p. 135 ↑	p. 219
p. 135 ↓	p. 82
p. 136	p. 260
p. 137	p. 102
p. 138 ↑	p. 109
p. 138 ↓	p. 279
p. 139	p. 214
p. 140	p. 205
p. 141 ↑	p. 186
p. 141 ↓	p. 239
p. 142	p. 47
p. 143	p. 62
p. 144	pp. 127–28

The excerpts on pp. 132 and 133 (from the introduction by the editors) were translated by Nils E. Schott. The excerpts on pp. 134–35 (top), 138 (top), 138 (bottom), and 140–41 are quoted from the unpublished English manuscript by the authors.

Other contributions have been published in English and are quoted from:



7 Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials

p. 135 (bottom): Philip K. Dick, *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick*, ed. Pamela Jackson, Jonathan Lettlem, and Erik Davis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 384.

p. 136: Iain Hamilton Grant, "Being and Slime: The Mathematics of Protoplasm in Lorenz Oken's 'Physio-Philosophy,'" in *Collapse Vol. IV: Concept Horror*, ed. Robin Mackay and Damian Veal (Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2012), 307. First published by Urbanomic in 2008.

p. 137: Graham Harman, "On the Horror of Phenomenology: Lovecraft and Husserl," in *ibid.*, 360.

p. 139: Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987–2007*, ed. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2012), 398.

p. 141 (bottom): Anna Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka and Other Stories*, ed. Rhys Davies (London: Peter Owen, 1970), 112.

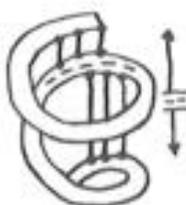
p. 142: H. P. Lovecraft, *Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. S. T. Joshi (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1995), 103.

p. 143: Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 223.

p. 144: Quentin Meillassoux, "Metaphysics and Extro-Science-Fiction," in *Speculative Solution*, ed. Robin Mackay (Vienna: Editions MEGO, 2011), 27. CD audio, booklet.

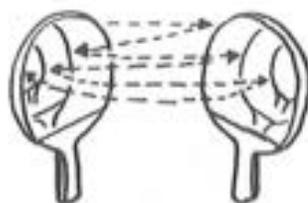
The excerpts were taken from: Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008). The German translation by Roland Voullié will be published by Merve in 2014.

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>Cyclonopedia</i>
pp. 148–49	p. 149
p. 150	p. 138
p. 152	p. 43
p. 154	p. 49
p. 158	pp. 19–20



8 Genealogies of Speculation: Materialism and Subjectivity since Structuralism

The excerpts (pp. 164–65, 167–70, 173) were taken from the draft of the introduction by the editors and from abstracts of the contributors. The book will be published by Bloomsbury in 2015.



9 The Concept of Non-Photography

The excerpts were taken from: François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. Robin Mackay, 2nd ed. (Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2012). The German translation by Ronald Voullié will be published by Merve in 2014.

<i>Speculative Drawing</i>	<i>The Concept of Non-Photography</i>
p. 178	p. viii
p. 180	p. 2
p. 183	pp. 35–36
p. 184	p. 101
p. 186	p. 16
p. 188	p. 22
p. 190	p. 31
p. 192	p. 41
p. 193	p. 110
p. 194	pp. 48–49
p. 196	p. 60
p. 197	p. 74

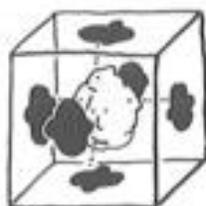


10 The Quadruple Object

The excerpts were taken from: Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011). The German translation by Andreas Pöschl will be published by Merve in 2014.

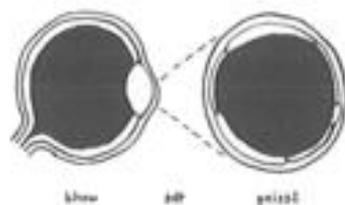
Speculative Drawing *The Quadruple Object*

p. 202	pp. 48–49
p. 203	p. 13
p. 204	p. 36
p. 209	p. 17
p. 210	p. 103
p. 211	pp. 53–54
p. 212	p. 79



11 Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign

The excerpts (pp. 219, 221–22) were taken from Meillassoux's unpublished manuscript, and translated by Robin Mackay. A German translation by Roland Frommel will be published by Merve in 2015.

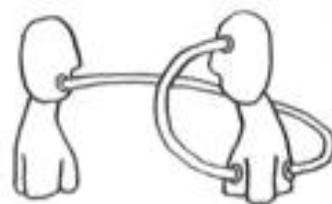


12 Metanoia: Speculative Ontology of Language

The excerpts were taken from: Armen Avanessian and Anke Hennig, *Metanoia. Spekulative Ontologie der Sprache* (Berlin: Merve, 2014). The English translation by Nils F. Schott is currently in peer review.

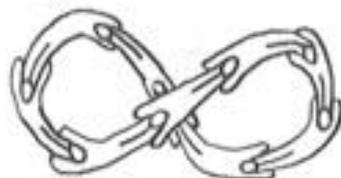
Speculative Drawing *Metanoia*

p. 229	p. 8
p. 230	p. 7
p. 233	p. 9
p. 235	p. 11
p. 237	p. 14
p. 238	pp. 14–15
p. 239	pp. 83–84
p. 240	p. 18
p. 243	p. 70



13 Irony and the Logic of Modernity

The excerpts (pp. 248–52, 254, 256–57, 259, 261–62, 264–65) were taken from Avanessian's unpublished manuscript. The text, translated into English by Nils F. Schott, will be published as part of the Paradigm series (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).



14 Ethics of Knowledge / Poetics of Existence

The excerpts (pp. 269, 271–73, 275–77, 280–81) were taken from the German manuscript, which will be published by Merve in 2015.

p. 273: Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), II.18:755.

p. 275: William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 79.

p. 276: Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, trans. J. Gains and Doris L. Jones (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 34–35.

15 #Acceleration

The excerpts were taken from: Armen Avanessian, ed., *#Akzeleration* (Berlin: Merve, 2013).

Speculative Drawing #Akzeleration

p. 286	p. 23
p. 287	p. 21
p. 288	p. 25
p. 290	p. 29
p. 292	p. 31
p. 293	p. 33
p. 297	p. 54
p. 301	p. 54
p. 303	pp. 78–79
p. 305	p. 50

The contributions that have been published in English are quoted from:

pp. 286–88, 290, 292–93: Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," <http://accelerationism.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/williams-and-srnicek.pdf>.

pp. 297, 301, 305: Franco Berardi Bifo, "Accelerationism Questioned from the Point of View of the Body," *e-flux journal*, no. 46 (June 2013).

Thanks to all the people who supported us.

p. 306 (top): Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 114.
p. 306 (bottom): Nick Srnicek, Alex Williams, and Armen Avanessian, "#Accelerationism: Remembering the Future," *Critical Legal Thinking*, February 10, 2014, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/02/10/accelerationism-remembering-future/>. Originally published as "Zukunft—was war das noch?," *fez*, February 4, 2014.

