

JOURNAL OF CRITICAL
GLOBALISATION STUDIES

Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies, Issue 1 (2009)

ISSN 2040-8498

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The *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* is supported by the Royal Holloway Faculty of History and Social Sciences fund for research activity 2009/10, in conjunction with the Politics and International Relations Departmental Research Committee. The journal is also supported by a fund from the New Political Communications Unit in the department. The journal is associated with the British International Studies Association working group: Global and Transnational Politics.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to our colleagues in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London. Without your support this journal could not have come to fruition. Thanks also to Costas Douzinas, Oscar Guardiola-Rivera and Stephen Hopgood for showing support for the journal. Our gratitude to David Broder for designing the journal's cover. And thanks to all our contributors for putting their faith – and scholarship – in the hands of this new, and uncertain, initiative.

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This world without another. On Jean-Luc Nancy and *la mondialisation*.

Pieter Meurs, Nicole Note & Diederik Aerts

In this paper, we turn to the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy. In his work La Création du Monde ou la Mondialisation of 2002 the French philosopher analyses the process of globalisation. Rather than denoting a new homogeneity, the term refers to a world horizon characterized in its inter-palpable multiplicity of cultural, socio-economical, ideological and politico-moral content. According to Nancy, globalisation refers to ag-glome-ration: the decay of what once was a globe and now nothing more than a glome. On the one hand, Nancy indicates that the world has changed by an unknown increase of techno-science, the worsening of inequalities between growing populations and by the changing and disappearing of given certainties, views and identities of the world and of man. On a large scale, this deformation is due to the relation between the capitalist evolution and the capitalising of worldviews. On the other hand, due to the inter-palpability of the multiplicity, this means that on our planet there is only space for one world. The world gradually becomes the only world. In this paper we will investigate what Nancy means with the becoming-world of the world and how this relates to our being in the world. For Nancy globalisation reveals two possible destinies of our relation with the world. In La Création du Monde ou la Mondialisation he discerns globalisation from mondialisation to analyze these two possibilities. We will investigate this distinction of Nancy and its consequences for everyday life.

Introduction

Already in 1848, Marx predicted that the mechanisms of the capitalist society would penetrate everyday life. Instead of a liberal focus on the local or the national, he foresaw the capitalist discourse weaving universal interdependence between nations. As such, the world market stands as a popular example for what we today call globalisation. However, rather than referring to a popular discourse on the growing liberal free market and an increasing dominant position of a capitalist Western form of living, the process of globalisation refers to fundamental changes in the spatio-temporal boundaries being in

the world. The term *world society* doesn't denote a global feeling of community, but gives an account of the interdependency as a collision of various economic, socio-cultural and political forms. Globalisation is an event that faces us with a change of scale to such an extent it is conceptually hard to grasp. Ulrich Beck rightly described globalisation as "the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks" (2000, p. 11). With its seemingly predominant focus on the socio-political context, this definition renders possible an understanding of the way the world is changing. Roland Robertson's (1992, p. 8) description of globalisation as a concept that refers "both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" adds another dimension that looks somehow slightly more appropriate for this paper as it mentions a new dynamic in our understanding of the world as a consequence of the dawning of the relativity of closed physical and meta-physical spaces. However apt both descriptions are, they don't seem to be able to fundamentally grasp the philosophical consequences of the process of globalisation.

What slowly but steadily unfolds is the idea that globalisation might not simply be a new concept to think and talk about, but that it fundamentally alters the very act of thought and speech. Heidegger (1996) was probably one of the first philosophers to critically grasp these implications with his consideration of the world as the sphere of our existence. He coined the term *Dasein* in his magnum opus *Being and Time* to designate that 'to be' means to be always already embedded and immersed in a world. *Dasein* is primordial in Heidegger's analysis and translates as being-there, with 'there' meaning the world. The meaning of the term *world* here shouldn't be confused with what it delineates in everyday speech. World as the *there* of being does not mean the space in which being takes place, but is the taking place of this being. It is not simply the place in which we live, but through which we live as well. Thus, if globalisation is to be considered as a process that alters the world we live in, we are definitely to reflect upon the meaning of this 'we' and its 'life': our being. And that is no evident task. In modern times¹ there is no longer a fixed or univocal meaning. As such, globalisation divides as much as it unites but refers foremost to the way people relate to the world. In *La Création du Monde ou la Mondialisation* French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy investigates this dynamic and discerns the term globalisation from the French *mondialisation*. Although they might seem synonymous, to Nancy the two words reveal very distinct meanings. In his prefatory note to the English translation he states the word *mondialisation* gives a better account of a "horizon of a 'world' as a space of possible meaning for the whole of human relations (or as a space of possible significance)" (2007, p. 27), while globalisation as an already established concept seems to designate a process revealing an enclosure in the undifferentiated sphere of an indistinct totality. In this paper we will investigate what Nancy means when he designates the world as a space of

possible meaning, and its implications for a philosophy of globalisation. It is our opinion the philosophy of Nancy in this debate has not yet reached a level of sufficient recognition. As such, it is not only a very critical but also utmost refreshing and innovating point of view. The philosophy of Nancy succeeds in focusing on a philosophical horizon that precedes everyday concrete reality and sketches the fundamental relation of our being to a globalised world, an issue that current debates within globalisation literature seem to fail to explore.

The end of the world

“There is no longer any world” Nancy writes provocatively at the beginning of *Le Sens du Monde* (1993, p. 13). Although he admits it is not evident to know how to grasp this expression, he presents it as a sign of our times. The expression refers to the end of an epoch that has completely encompassed the world in its efforts to ascribe it an assignable signification. In other words, in modern times there is a loss of an assignable signification. It is this loss, the crisis of sense and signification, that seems to be the challenge of our times. Not only in academic journals, but also in everyday life, we are confronted with this condition. There is no longer a truth of the world, an objective representation. These concepts have lost their sense. The end of the world means nothing else than the end of the world of sense, or the end of the sense of the world. There seems to be no longer any sense in sense. This does not concern a *certain* sense or conception of the world in as far as the issue is to search another one or restore an older one. According to Nancy the world withdraws itself bit by bit from *any* regime of sense, because it is the end of an epoch that offered us all the necessary points of reference in order to manage our significations². He refers to the absence of a *cosmotheoros*, an observer or theory of the world, with relation to whom or which sense could be represented. Throughout history such a *cosmotheoros* in the form of representations has always been present. Still to this day such a vantage point is claimed in various parts of life, be it in science, politics or religion. However, what comes to dawn upon us is the problematic tenability of these foundations. Gradually the firm and steady ground which an independent point of view assumes breaks up because of an *incredulity towards meta-narratives*.

Since Lyotard (1987) published his *La Condition Postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* in 1979, this crisis has been articulated in various ways and several ends have been proclaimed – the end of man, of history, of philosophy, of modernity, and so on. According to Rorty (1980) the history of thought that was marked by knowledge claims based on a set of objective foundations has come to an end. He analyses in *Philosophy and the mirror of nature* that these claims can't be the effect of such foundations, since they always already precede them. In *The End of Modernity*, next to Heidegger's philosophy, Vattimo (1988) refers to the work of Nietzsche to show that the notion of an objective

ground is questionable. And that is no surprise: already in 1887 Nietzsche (1998) stated that objectivity can't be a *contemplation without interest* for that would be a non-concept and an absurdity. The list of authors that describe this condition is endless. However fatalistic, hopeful, incorrect or apt their claims might seem, if there is one thing that binds them, it is the crucial point that the univocality and foundationalism of thought have been contaminated and as such lose their exclusivity and legitimacy, despite of the cravings of some (many?) for essence and fundamentalism. In order to fully grasp Nancy's statement, we have to place it – and his work – against the background of these authors. As a characterization of modern times this fragmented condition they describe, contrasts strongly with earlier moments in our history. Although probably always already present in the past, fragmentation was never as visible as it is today, for it was continually suppressed by a cosmotheoros of the world that appointed itself the only legitimate discourse and as such viewed the world as a simple representation. This fragmentation hasn't been always the case. In medieval times for instance, our world was presented as nothing more than a vale of tears compared to a heavenly and eternal divinity. God watched over the world as an external observer with the absolute sovereign power to judge man and world. He stood solely and in-dependent, as the one true cosmotheoros. When men of the West dethroned God at the beginning of modernity, this didn't mean the end of a cosmotheoros however. Man took God's place and represented the world in his stead. The world was regarded as a manageable external object to discover and explore. As a philosophy of the universal and of reason, man's relation to the world was to be characterized by clarity and Enlightenment. Reason and objective knowledge became the predominant standard and could only be reached by means of reliable methods and rational legitimacy. The world was to be mapped, represented objectively for an independent subject.

This search for a universal worldview³ on an intelligible world is not recent at all. It can be seen as the culmination of an ongoing tradition that has been taking place for centuries. Although no isolated event in history, the Enlightenment discourse is of key importance in this story. The central idea of Western Enlightenment is grasped within the concepts of subjectivity, today understood as a kind of individualism and autonomy. Influenced by the dawn of the scientific era in the 17th century, rationality became the main ground for wisdom and emancipation. The hope of the Enlightenment was founded on the belief in an increasing development of objective, rational science and in a universal morality and law. According to Habermas, one of the great defenders of this *project of modernity*, “the Enlightenment philosophers wanted to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life – that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life” (1993, p. 98). The central place of the subject in this Enlightenment discourse was to be understood as the potential to grasp the objectivity of one's own actions. One of the various endeavors to free mankind from the naive traditions of irrationality and from man's self-incurred

immaturity⁴ was the philosophy of Descartes. His dualism between subject and object could vouch for a rational epistemology. It fitted in a broader zeitgeist that slowly pushed aside the up till then predominant theological explanations and concepts in favor of scientific knowledge. The choice to single out Descartes here is twofold. Not only does Descartes, along with Galilei and Bacon among others, count as one of the prominent thinkers of what unfolds itself today as the modern worldview, his account of subjectivity is also fundamentally criticized by Nancy in his *Ego Sum* in 1979⁵. For our purpose here though, it will suffice to introduce the basic outlines of the Cartesian epistemology and mark its value for modern thought. Descartes tried to break with the prevailing philosophical traditions by his radical doubt as a mode of inquiry. Certainty had to be guaranteed. The only possible thing to remain certain of was rational thought. As such, thinking gained a specific and superior role. Even more, for Descartes the thinking ego couldn't be an illusion, it was the only thing there can be no doubt about: the thinking *I exists*. The rational ego became the one steady argument and foundation of not only knowledge and philosophy but led Descartes to claim that existence is derived from a rational argument. Being comes second to thinking. This *cogito ergo sum – I think therefore I am* – marks the birth of the Cartesian *cogito* that could penetrate the truth. This clear and distinct ego entails the subjectivity praised by the Enlightenment. It refers to the possibility to know reality objectively as a rational subject. The result of Descartes' critical investigation culminated in the radical dualism of subject and object. As such, the Cartesian system offers two parallel, but independent worlds: one of the subject and one of the object. Descartes' epistemology radically posed the independence of the subject as the foundation for the knowledge of objects. His distinction between subject and object considers the first as the center and initial true being with a priority over the latter. The inner world of the subject is discerned from the outer world of the object. As such, the subject is divorced from the world and the world is something outside of the subject. Although this dualist stance and the techno-scientific paradigm it subscribes has been fundamentally criticized by various actors in the 20th century (cf. supra), still today it seems to be one of the persistent albeit implicit basic principles of the techno-scientific society we live in.

Behind the mask of more than 50 years of continuous growth of welfare and technological progress, the rational order could consolidate its epistemological principles. Its *technical reason* has come to penetrate various layers of human activity to such an extent it concerns almost the whole of modern society (Van den Bossche, 1995). In offering an efficient and certain way of life it stretches out as far as material and immaterial levels. Society, nature and man – the world as a whole – is subjected to manageability and instrumentality. The world seems no more than an object *outside* of us that can be controlled and manipulated. Such a view implies a vantage point from where the world can be represented. As such, the world in our modern worldview becomes dependent on the gaze of a subject of the world. And here Nancy stands firm:

“A subject of the world [...] cannot itself be within the world” (2007, p. 40). He refers to Descartes' independent subject and questions the division between subject and object. Subject and object are always already linked in such a way its division annuls itself. According to Nancy the meaning of the world does not occur as a reference to something outside the world – a subject – that can weigh, investigate and describe it by means of objective representations. Our representations don't denote the objectivity of the world around us. For centuries however, we have tried to equate our words with things, as if they would be the objective reality themselves, as if they coincide with reality. When Nancy poses the end of the world it is exactly this what comes to bare: words are not the names of subsistent realities in themselves, but are nothing more than representations, names of concepts or ideas that are entirely determined within a regime of sense.

As a consequence, the phrase *the end of the world* indicates that the world can no longer be conceived of as a representation. As already stated, it subtracts itself from the entire regime of significations available to us. The meaning of the world, in the sense of an indication described by the modern worldview, is exhausted. Globalisation as a western project of encompassing the world, as the process of a search for a universal worldview, has played a very important and predominant role in the course of this crisis: Nancy remarks a connection between the evolution of capitalism and the capitalization of views of the world. Moreover, according to him there is no account of any other configuration of the world that formed a fundamental challenge to this. For Nancy, the predominance of the West in the course of history and of globalisation seems evident. Other influences have had their importance, but disappear in to thin air next to the Western dominance: “even when, and perhaps especially when one demands a recourse to the 'spiritual', unless it is to the 'revolution' (is it so different?), the demand betrays itself as an empty wish, having lost all pretense of effective capacity, or else as a shameful escape” (2007, p. 34). Globalisation first and foremost is thus the Western process to discover the world. However, in succeeding in conquering the world, globalisation has reached its limits these days: there is nothing more to be globalized, nothing more to discover. It stretches out *urbi et orbi*⁶. This formulation refers to the papal benediction and today means everywhere and anywhere. The West has made the entire world – everywhere and anywhere – *its* discovered world and now it has reached its limits. As such, this project “disappears as what was supposed to orient the course of this world” (Ibid.) and landed us in a deadlock. Globalisation leaves us with a profound nihilism concerning the direction or the sense of the world. The ideal of a globalised world doesn't fulfill the promise of knowing what to do with this entire world now that it discovered it. For Nancy in modern times the capacity to *form* or *make world* (*faire monde*) is lost. There is no longer an idea for the world now that we have succeeded in conquering it. And what is more, the world only seems to be on the downgrade into what Nancy calls an *immonde*, an *un-world*. He considers globalisation as an unknown

increase of techno-science, the worsening of inequalities between growing populations and as the altering and disappearing of given certainties, views and identities of the world and of man. Globalisation stands for an enormous geopolitical, economical and ecological catastrophe to such an extent that “everything takes place as if the world affected and permeated itself with a death drive that soon would have nothing else to destroy than the world itself” (Ibid.). Apparently, the loss of the capacity to form the world is contrary to the power to *de-form* or destroy the world. Take for example the immanent threat of nuclear weapons. Even almost 20 years after the so called Cold War, the issue of weapons of mass destruction is still a hot topic and keeps marking how transient life and the world can be. As an evolution of many years of technological progress and innovations that made efficient and controllable life possible by means of instrumental and methodical reason, globalisation tried to convince us of the makeability and manageability of the entire world. What this omnipotence primarily confronts us with, however, is our impotence to form a world and as such the destruction of the world. And according to Nancy, it is a fact that the world destroys itself, “it is not a hypothesis: it is in a sense the fact from which any thinking of the world follows, to the point, however, that we do not exactly know what ‘to destroy’ means, nor which world is destroying itself” (Ibid., p. 35). So, it is in the process of destroying itself that the thought of the world becomes possible. Globalisation as the event in which the world destroys itself, reveals the question relating to its own being. For Nancy, it is thanks to the process of globalisation that we can consider the meaning of the world. Therefore, now is the time “we must ask anew what the world wants of us, and what we want of it, everywhere, in all senses, *urbi et orbi*, all over the world and for the whole world, without (the) capital of the world but with the richness of the world” (Ibid.).

Globalisation versus mondialisation

In search for an ‘authentic’ thought of the world Nancy starts from Marx’s analysis of the revolution: in becoming global, the world market turns into a liberation from the alienating powers limiting the creation of humanity that produces itself as a whole⁷. For Marx, globalisation renders possible the revolution in the inversion of the direction of domination. The power and the necessity of globalisation is to be found in the interconnectedness of human beings. According to Nancy, Marx’s view on globalisation as the exponential growth of the global market is still valid in as much as it describes the increase of an interdependence that weakens the sovereign and independent orders of representations. Furthermore, it also remains that on the basis of Marx’s elaborations on globality, the notion of world has increasingly gained importance. However, for Nancy, although Marx did insist on these worldly and worldwide aspects of the world, he still couldn’t grasp “a concrete world that would be, properly speaking, the world of the proper freedom and singularity of each and of all without claim to a world beyond-the-

world or to a surplus-property” (Ibid., p. 38). According to Nancy the world as Marx proposed, didn't come to terms with its own being because it was not outside of representation. Nancy refers to the Hegelian notion of a *bad infinite* (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*). For Hegel (1969), the infinite is a complex notion that reveals the distinction between a *bad infinite* and a *genuine* or *actual infinite*. Starting with the finite that is defined by its limit, which is the in-finite, Hegel characterized the infinite as the limits of the finite. As such, the infinite remains posited over against a finite that Hegel called a bad infinite. It is a negation of the finite, but as such the infinite is still finitized by the finite. It is determined by the beyond of the finite. Consequently it is no genuine infinite. So, when Nancy states that Marx's description of the world only appears to us as a bad infinite, it is because in the seemingly infinite possibilities of the modern world, it still remains limited – or finite – under the order of representation. In other words, the world, considered as an unlimited sphere of possibilities, stays limited under the order of representations. This is why the world according to Nancy has not yet come to terms with its own being and remains secondary to the concept of a worldview. The world did not yet become world as such, as the space of possible meaning for the whole of human relations. It is this however, according to Nancy that what has changed – and is changing – with the culmination of globalisation and the confrontation with our loss of the capacity to form a world. In modern times, the world steadily emerges as nothing more than the space of our existence, the site of being and of beings as a whole⁸. Nancy speaks of *la mondianisation du monde*, the *becoming-world* of the world. It is thanks to the event of globalisation that the being of the world appears. The world is no longer simply an object of thought but first and foremost emerges as the place and actuality of being and thus of thought. It is first and foremost a totality of meaning rather than something we can have a meaning about. Nancy refers to the world as a whole “to which a certain meaningful content or a certain value system properly belongs in the order of knowledge or thought as well as in that of affectivity and participation” (Ibid., p. 41). Take for example the 'world of politics', the 'world of sports' or the 'third world'. Each of them is a meaningful totality and being part of it implies a certain understanding of this content, even if it is not always made explicit as such. To appear to us as world, one way or another we are already connected with some of its inner givens. We are already part of it; we always already share something – even the slightest thing – of its meaningful content. Nancy draws on Heidegger stating that we always already find ourselves in a world. This means the world does not appear for us as an object we are independent of. It is not something that lies outside of us or is a unity of the external order. This is why the Cartesian dualism never succeeded in thinking the world: it didn't conceive to be as being always already in a world. From this follows that the world is only a world for those who inhabit it as the place that allows this being to take place. In other words, there can't be an independent vantage point with relation to which sense could be determined as an objective encompassing of the world. It is the loss of this outside that

reveals the becoming-world of the world. Globalisation as the process that opens the world on itself reveals the becoming-world of the world. It makes clear that on this planet there is only room for one world and brings about the world as the *only* world, the space in which we live with each other. The world unfolds itself as a genuine and actual world. As such the world has become the one and only world in which there is room for the whole world, for everyone, “otherwise, this is not a ‘world’: it is a ‘globe’ or a ‘glome’, it is a ‘land of exile’ and a ‘vale of tears’” (Ibid., p. 42). It is in this sense the title of this paper should be understood. The expression ‘this world without another’ was never meant to depict a desire for a unity of the world, as a world is always a multiplicity of worlds as Nancy states⁹.

If the world unfolds itself as the one and only place of our existence and in addition does not emerge as a reference to something outside the world, the question arises how we are to think or act upon this. Whoever expects a clear and distinct answer to this question from Nancy, will be disappointed. It would be paradoxical if he were to suggest ready-made answers or representations. According to Nancy it is very important not to offer an alternative as a decisive solution. Furthermore, he remains clear that the contemporary form of globalisation can not be the right solution in our relation with the world. Globalisation as the process we nowadays know, for Nancy can only be understood in terms of what he calls an *agglomeration*, a conglomeration and unlimited expansion that only leads to proliferation of misery. This is why he contrasts globalisation with *mondialisation* as a mode of world-forming, a making of the world and of making sense. For Nancy *mondialisation* comes down to the *creation of the world*. And although this expression first and foremost has a religious connotation, the creation of the world has everything to do with the disappearance of God. According to Nancy, “a world outside of representation is above all a world without a God capable of being the subject of its representation (and thus of its fabrication, of its maintenance and destination)” (Ibid., p. 43). In what precedes neither God nor man can be a subject of the world. The loss of such an external point of reference means the loss of sense because there is no longer something in relation with which sense can be represented. This means the world can no longer *have* sense in reference to something outside. It is however not only this loss we have to deal with for it opens another contingency as well: the question for the necessity of the world as a totality of beings. Besides the loss of sense, the world also seems without reason or ground. The world is not given or created, it simply *is*. There is no God or ultimate cause that created the world at the beginning of days. As such, it is *in fact* a mystery, as an absolute fact even before and beyond its necessity or contingency. Nancy proposes to consider the world as a fact that is neither efficient nor final. The world comes before and is beyond our notions of necessity and contingency: “to think it [the world], is to think this factuality, which implies not referring it to a meaning capable of appropriating it, but to placing in it, in its truth as a fact, all possible meaning” (Ibid., p. 45). Here too, Nancy draws upon the

works on facticity of Heidegger to pose the being of the world. The world *is*, and as such it is only in and for itself. In withdrawing itself from the status of an object the world becomes nothing other than itself. It no longer refers to another world. For a better understanding of this factuality of the world Nancy refers to the notion of *enjoyment*¹⁰. To enjoy only refers to the enjoyment itself. It is no thing or act you can simply have or do actively or passively. Enjoyment is an excess as it is what is *beyond* having and being in the same way as it is *beyond* activity or passivity. It exceeds and always is excessive or it is no mere enjoyment. However, this also seems to count for something else that is present in modern society as the law of capital: *profit*. For Nancy, again turning to the Hegelian notion of the infinite, enjoyment and profit behave like two sides of the infinite: “on the one hand, [profit is] the infinite that Hegel called “bad”, the infinite of the interminable growth of accumulation, the cycle of investment, of exploitation and reinvestment (one could say that it is the cycle of infinite wealth as it began when the world, becoming precapitalistic, came out of the order in which wealth was accumulated for its shine rather than for its reproduction), on the other hand [enjoyment is] the actual infinite, the one by which a finite existence accedes, as finite, to the infinite of a meaning or of a value that is its most proper meaning and value” (Ibid., p. 46). For Nancy this perspective allows us to understand what is going on in our modern, globalised world: beneath the bad infinite of profit as (western, capitalist, ...) globalisation lies the hidden desire for an actual infinite, the desire of profit to become an absolute, unlimited or infinite value. Our globalised world makes clear however, that there no longer can be an absolute value or true representation of man and of world that can satisfy this desire. In other words, the bad infinite of globalisation can not turn in to a genuine infinite and does not have joy or enjoyment. So, the question arises how we are to enjoy the world or: how are we to conceive a world in the absence of an external ground? This question marks Nancy’s distinction between *globalisation* and *mondialisation* and reveals the words are nothing less than two possible destinies of our time.

For Nancy it is a matter of being able to consider the determination of *world*, in a way that dawns today. And that is in the sense that the sense of the world is no longer a reference to another world or external vantage point. The world only refers to itself. Nancy describes the factuality of the world by its immanent absoluteness in the sense that it is no longer referring to another world, subject or God. As such, the world exceeds its representations. And thus, “if the world, essentially, is not the representation of a universe (*cosmos*) nor that of a here below (a humiliated word, if not condemned by Christianity), but the excess – beyond any representation of an *ethos* or of a *habitus* – of a stance by which the world stands by itself, configures itself, and exposes itself in itself, relates to itself without referring to any given principle or to any determined end, then one must address the principle of such an absence of principle directly” (Ibid., p. 47). By referring to the poem of Angelus Silesius¹¹, Nancy marks the *without-reason* of the world. As the rose, the world is without reason. We must ask ourselves how we are to

understand this absence of ground, this without-reason. Wittgenstein strikingly put it like this: “it is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists” (2001, p. 88). The question is ours and contemporary. But it is a difficult one, for it comes from an extended tradition that always had a desire to find a reason for all things. Moreover, it is a troubling one, for it seems the without-reason of our world today not only can take form of the mystical rose of Silesius, but it can take the form of capital as well. By this Nancy marks that globalisation, as the system of capital that considers the rose as an ultimate revelation of the secret of capital, is a sign of our time. However, and that is the crucial point here, it particularly means that this system itself is without reason. Globalisation as the process that incarnates the connection between capitalism and the capitalization of views, is our condition, but has no ultimate ground nor legitimization. Moreover, as such it doesn't refer to a higher goal or to – what Nancy would call – a subject of the world (cf. supra). It exists in itself and as such it does without us being its necessity. If globalisation makes clear one thing, it is the exposition of capital to the absence of reason.

Still, the question remains how to think this without-reason of the world to know what the world wants of us, and what we want of it: how we are to counter globalisation as this search for a universal worldview with its destructing implications. By all means this implies we are to avoid recourse to representations. As already mentioned, according to Nancy, to do so, there is no better way to grasp the world according to the motif of *creation*. In his deconstructionist elaboration of the notion creation, Nancy makes clear that creation is not to be understood as something related to a creator. He compares it with the exact opposite of any form of production. Production starts from its elemental given components that are produced into a product during its production process. Creation however, is something completely different. The reason for this is that the idea of creation has always been understood – be it by the mystics of religion or systems of metaphysics – as a creation *ex nihilo*, a creation out of nothing. This doesn't reveal the genius of its creator for turning nothing in to something. “It means instead that it is not fabricated, produced by no producer, and not even coming out of nothing (like a miraculous apparition), but in a quite strict manner and more challenging for thought: the nothing itself, if one can speak in this way, or rather *nothing* growing as *something*” (Ibid., p. 51). The term 'growing' is the translation of the French 'croissant', that Nancy uses deliberate because it refers to the Latin word 'crescere' which means 'to be born', 'to grow' and from which descends 'creare', the Latin word for 'to create'. As such, creation means a growth from nothing that in its turn cultivates its growth. It means the world grows, is born from nothing as it is given from nowhere but itself: it only depends on itself. It is always already created out of nothing and this nothing doesn't mean pure and simple nothingness, but is nothing more than the without-reason of the world. It's not evident to grasp Nancy's words here, but it all comes down to this: there is nothing outside the world, no world, subject or god that would not be of this world. Nancy's

deconstruction of the notion creation ex nihilo makes clear that the sense of the world lies nowhere but in its own being and as such it marks a *displacement* of the sense of creation and of the world. As long as there was a reference to an outside, the sense of the world was determined by this representation; it could *have* a sense. The world has a sense because it is cast upon it or represented on to the it by something outside of it – God, Man, Reason, Globalisation as the displacement Nancy speaks about however, is no mere displacement of sense as a value of onto-theology or metaphysics, a displacement from a god outside the world to a god inside the world for instance, but a complete displacement of the production of sense. In *Le Sens du Monde* Nancy summarizes this aptly by stating the world no longer *has* sense, but that it *is* sense (1993, p. 19). The displacement that globalisation reveals, shows us the opening to another space. It is a space beyond representation where the meaning of the factuality of the world, its sense, is made possible by the without-reason. Now, Nancy states, “this means that it is meaning in the strongest and most active sense of the term: not a given signification (such as that of a creating God or that of an accomplished humanity), but meaning, absolutely, as possibility of transmission from one place to another, from the one who sends to the one who receives, and from one element to another, a reference that forms at the same time a direction, an address, a value, or a meaningful content” (2007, p. 52). The fact or the being of the world knows, or even better: *senses* itself being. This sense has nothing to do with an appropriation or a revelation. It doesn't signify or doesn't *make* sense. The sense of the world *is* the fact of the world. The creation out of nothing means nothing other than this: the world takes place and it is this taking place, its being, what constitutes its sense¹². World thus means being-there (cf. Heidegger's *Dasein*) and this is its sense. According to Nancy world and sense are tautological as they are both structured in the same way.

If we are to act upon this today, this means we should not signify the world or assign it a proper sense, but rather we should *enter* this sense. This is what Nancy indicates by *mondialisation*. To do so, according to Nancy, our task today is to enter the *worldhood* of the world, which is “the way in which the world symbolizes in itself with itself, in which it articulates itself by making a circulation of meaning possible without reference to another world” (Ibid., p. 53). It is this circulation of meaning that we are to take upon us¹³. This implies a shift from interpreting the world to transforming the world, a transformation of the sense of sense. To become a transformation of the world, our thought of the sense of the world can no longer refer to something external to the world that can ascribe or cast upon it a sense. It has to dwell *as* this sense and as such become a *praxis*, an act that effects the actor rather than the work. World-forming is nothing other than this praxis we always already are. So, for Nancy, this is no abstract or theoretical task: “it is the extremely concrete and determined task – a task that can only be a struggle – of posing the following question to each gesture, each conduct, each *habitus* and each *ethos*: How do you engage the world?” (Ibid, p. 53). We should ask

ourselves over and over again how we involve ourselves with the enjoyment, the without-reason of the world. The main focus here is not the necessity to give a possible answer to this question but it is the posing of the question to everything we do or think in each and every little moment of every day. With his call to question our engagement with the world, Nancy hopes to open the bad infinite of globalisation, that first and foremost still is a reductionist desire to unify the world under the form of capitalist economics. Only by questioning our everyday involvement with the world, it is possible to end this suppression and open the way for an 'authentic' world-forming or *mondialisation*. The word 'authentic' here however, doesn't refer to a form of essentialism. In Nancy's deconstruction, it rather means the impossibility to claim authenticity as it does never more than only question it. Posing this question then, is not a final and ultimate question, but rather a small quest of everydayness that breaks up closed spheres. It is an opening up of the space that is our (taking) place. This is no easy task however, as Nancy mentions. Even more, it is a risky one, maybe even the greatest risk that is ever to confront humanity. That doesn't have to be a surprise. It is a dangerous struggle in so far as we are engaged by various desires to install a thought of representation, although we are at the end of it. Nancy refers to the dangerous possibility of straightening a question mark into an exclamation mark. That would mean the symbolization of the world could turn into a system of representation and evolve again in a manipulating or reductionist worldview. For Nancy, the baseline for our difficult creation of the world *ex nihilo* can thus be nothing other than the immediately reopening of each possible claim or struggle of the world. This however "does not seek the exercise of power – nor property – whether collective or individual, but seeks itself and its agitation, itself and the effervescence of its thought in act, itself and its creation of forms and signs, itself and its contagious communication as propagation of an enjoyment that, in turn, would not be a satisfaction acquired in a signification of the world, but the insatiable and infinitely finite exercise that is the being in act of meaning brought forth in the world" (Ibid., p. 55).

Concluding, in *La Création du Monde ou la Mondialisation*, Nancy offers us a critical way of thinking the world. However, this is no mere way of thought, it concerns being as a whole. It is a complete involvement with the world, a *praxis*, as Nancy describes, for we are always already in the world. It is this fact that is our mystery, but becomes first and foremost our possibility: "the world is a possibility before being a reality" (2007, p. 65).

Notes

¹With *modern times* we don't simply mean the contemporary period of time. Rather, it refers to a general condition that started with the project of the Enlightenment. As

such however, in this paper it's not equated with modernity as opposed to post-modernity, but indicates our contemporary condition.

²Nancy clarifies the withdrawal from *any* regime of sense with respect to a major paradigm in our culture: "We cannot say of those who live or have lived in accordance with *myth* that their experience is a modulation or modalization of the 'sense of the world'. For we do not know in what sense they live a 'world' or a 'sense'" (SM, p. 16). For a long time, we believed in the possibility to know this, but from now on we can only acknowledge that it's impossible to have access to what we have designated as the world of myth. For in order to do so, we would have to lose our sense of the word and of sense.

³According to Nancy the world is secondary to the concept of a worldview. As an example he refers to the political and ideological role of *Weltanschauung* in Nazism.

⁴It was Kant that blamed man for his immaturity with his Enlightenment-creed *Sapere aude*. Although Kant criticized Descartes for his epistemology, both can be presented as prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment.

⁵In *Ego Sum* Nancy (1979) transforms the Cartesian *ergo sum* (therefor I am) in *ego sum* (I am). The being of the subject that expresses itself is no coincidence with its thinking, nor a thinking substance. It is a singular *corpus*, a mouth that speaks and as such exposes itself.

⁶*Urbi et Orbi* is the first chapter in Nancy's *La Création du Monde ou la Mondialisation*.

⁷Nancy cites Marx: "Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creation of man)" (Marx in Nancy, 2007, p. 36)

⁸As a possible case study one could refer to the being-world of the world that gradually seems to invade the debates on climate or ecological issues. Still, the debate is mostly caught up in representations in search for a global worldview.

⁹In the essay *Cosmos Basileus* in the *Complements* chapter of the English translation of *The Creation of the World or Globalisation* Nancy marks "the unity of the world is not one: it is made of a diversity, including disparity and opposition. It is made of it, which is to say that it is not added to it and does not reduce it. The unity of the world is nothing other than its diversity, and its diversity is, in turn, a diversity of worlds" (2007, p. 109).

¹⁰By means of Marx, Nancy refers to this factuality without cause or end with notion of *enjoyment* of the production of the world: "if the production of total humanity – that is, global humanity, or the production of the humanized world – is nothing other

than the production of the “sphere of freedom”, a freedom that has no other exercise than the “enjoyment of the multimorphic production of the entire world”, then this final production determines no genuine end, nor *telos* or *eschaton*” (2007, p. 45). Enjoyment depicts the absence of an external ground. It always is without reason.

¹¹Angelius' verse goes as follows: “the rose is without why, it blooms because it blooms, It pays no attention to itself, asks not whether it is seen”.

¹²In *Le Sens du Monde*, Nancy refers to the notion of *différance* to describe the spacing of the world: “être a lieu, mais son lieu l'espace. Être est chaque fois une aire, sa réalité se donne en aréalité. C'est ainsi qu'être est corps. Non pas “incorporé”, ni “incarné”, même en “corps propre”: mais corps, donc ayant son propre au-dehors, différent” (1993, p. 58).

¹³Moreover, for Nancy it is us who are always already this circulation. In *Being Singular Plural* (2000) he elaborates this condition of sense as our singular plural being.

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