

## JLN Memorial Symposium Programme

### Tuesday 11 January 2022: *Nancy's Pathways*

14:00-14:15: Opening of Symposium by Susanna Lindberg

14:15-15:15: two speakers

Aukje van Rooden: 'Eulogy / Jean-Luc Nancy In Memoriam'<sup>1</sup>

Irving Goh, 'A Melancholic Genius without Melancholy, or Shared Unshareability in Jean-Luc Nancy'<sup>2</sup>

*15 minutes break*

15:30-16:30: two speakers

Ignaa Devisch: 'Do we have anything to say?'<sup>3</sup>

Frédéric Neyrat: "'Infinir": Jean-Luc Nancy and the Situation of Contemporary Thought'<sup>4</sup>

*15 minutes break*

16:45-17:45: two speakers

Esa Kirkkopelto: 'Jean-Luc Nancy: Towards a Phenomenology of Participation'<sup>5</sup>

Paul Willemarck: 'Insensitivity'<sup>6</sup>

*15 minutes break*

18:00-19:00 two speakers

Boyan Manchev: 'The Insurrected Thought, Jean-Luc Nancy'<sup>7</sup>

Ian James: 'Prolegomena to a Manifesto of Open Community'<sup>8</sup>

### Wednesday 12 January 2022: *Opening New Worlds with Nancy*

14:00-15:00: two speakers

Susanna Lindberg: "'On Splendid Splintered Being'<sup>9</sup>

Maria Sá Cavalcante Schuback: 'Being with the Without'<sup>10</sup>

*15 minutes break*

15:15-16:15: two speakers

Artemy Magun: 'Adoration, Glory, Offering: Recent Philosophies of Hymn'<sup>11</sup>

Peter De Graeve: 'Nancy. Having (Lost) Universality'<sup>12</sup>

*15 minutes break*

16:30-17:30: two speakers

Georgios Tsagdis: 'Drawing Life: Freedom and Form in Jean-Luc Nancy'<sup>13</sup>

Nidesh Lawtoo: 'Shared Voices: Nancy-Lacoue's Mimetic *Methexis*'<sup>14</sup>

*15 minutes break*

17:45-18:45: two speakers

Martin Crowley: 'Exscription as Ecopoetics'<sup>15</sup>

Anne O'Byrne: 'Nancy for a New Generation'<sup>16</sup>

18:45-19:00: Closing Remarks

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<sup>1</sup> Aukje van Rooden: 'Eulogy / Jean-Luc Nancy In Memoriam'

**Bio:** Aukje van Rooden works as an assistant professor Philosophy of Art and Culture at the University of Amsterdam. She is also co-editor-in-chief of the literary-philosophical publishing house Parrèsia. Van Rooden has

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published numerous articles and books engaging with contemporary French philosophy and the work of Nancy in particular. Some of her recent books are *De nieuwe Franse filosofie* (Boom 2011, co-edited), *Re-Treating Religion: Deconstruction of Christianity with Jean-Luc Nancy* (Fordham 2012, co-edited) and *Literature, Autonomy and Commitment* (Bloomsbury 2019). Her latest book *L'Intrigue dénouée: Mythe, littérature et communauté dans la pensée de Jean-Luc Nancy* will be published by Brill in 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Irving Goh: 'A Melancholic Genius without Melancholy, or Shared Unshareability in Jean-Luc Nancy'

**Abstract:** The challenge of this presentation is to elicit from the works of Jean-Luc Nancy a melancholic dimension, the dimension where "negative affects" circulate. This will no doubt give a different tinge to the generally generous, positive, and optimistic hues that color Nancy's writings on the passage of existence as it negotiates with love, community, and existence itself in the world. Yet I would argue that highlighting this dimension could lead us to acknowledge an aspect of existence that is hardly shared with the rest of the world, if not one that an existent either is at pains to do or refuses to do so. With the melancholic dimension, community is no less "unworked" [*désœuvrée*]. Or else, it exposes the limits of sharing that passes between beings in the world. And what is unshared or unshareable through this dimension is perhaps not only a darker mystery or singularity of existence but also the trace of genius.

**Bio:** Irving Goh is currently Associate Professor of Literature at the National University of Singapore. He is the author of *The Reject: Community, Politics, and Religion after the Subject* (Fordham UP), which won the MLA 23<sup>rd</sup> Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Best Book in French and Francophone studies, and *L'existence prépositionnelle* (Galilée). With Jean-Luc Nancy, he has also published *The Deconstruction of Sex* (Duke University Press). He has also coedited with Verena Andermatt Conley *Nancy Now* (Polity Press), with Timothy Murray two volumes of the *diacritics* special issue on "The Prepositional Senses of Jean-Luc Nancy." He is editor of the forthcoming volume *Jean-Luc Nancy Among the Philosophers* (Fordham UP).

<sup>3</sup> Ignaas Devisch: 'Do we have anything to say?'

**Abstract:** Reconsidering the oeuvre of Jean-Luc Nancy, a lot of his writings are about the status of thinking and the question whether we have anything to say at all. It seems evident to speak up firmly and have strong opinions but the kernel of philosophy – Nancy's philosophy - is about thinking the place out of which one is thinking, while speaking up. Philosophy has to do with 'the question of the question' (J. Derrida, *Violence et Métaphysique*) and the ethics of opening up the question.

**Bio:** [www.ignaa.devisch.com](http://www.ignaa.devisch.com)

Professor in philosophy of medicine & ethics at Ghent University, author and opinion maker in the area of philosophy and ethics

<sup>4</sup> Frédéric Neyrat: "'Infinir": Jean-Luc Nancy and the Situation of Contemporary Thought'

**Abstract:** The title of my talk derives from an article called "What is to be done?" in which Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that the "necessity of unfinisheding (*la nécessité d'infinir*)" might become the core of a new relation with action. Leaning on Nancy's argument for the "necessity of unfinisheding," I describe the singularity of Nancy's intellectual position, especially from the context of the 1980's, focusing on Nancy's theorization of being-with (*être-avec*). I then put Nancy's thought in relation to the political and philosophical dimensions of the contemporary intellectual situation, showing how Nancy's philosophy can help us identify the repression of the infinite in contemporary thought. I argue that only unfinisheding—a turning of the infinite into an infinitive—can avoid the double pitfall of scared finitude (a spreading appetite for local survivalism) and the uninhibited indefinite (the development of digital capitalism).

**Bio:** Frédéric Neyrat is a French philosopher, Associate Professor and Mellon-Morgridge Professor of Planetary Humanities in the English department of UW-Madison (USA). He is editor of the electronic platform *Alienocene* and a member of the editorial board of the journals *Lignes* and *Multitudes*. Recently, he published *Atopias: Manifesto for a Radical Existentialism* (Fordham, 2017), *The Unconstructable Earth: An Ecology of separation* (Fordham, 2018), *Literature and Materialisms* (Routledge, 2020), and *L'Ange Noir de l'Histoire: Cosmos et Technique de l'Afrofuturisme* (MF, 2021). Website: [Atopies \(http://atoposophie.wordpress.com\)](http://atoposophie.wordpress.com)

<sup>5</sup> Esa Kirkkopelto: 'Jean-Luc Nancy: Toward a Phenomenology of Participation'

**Abstract:** The presentation asks the relationship between phenomenology and ontology in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy. Whereas in Heidegger the focus of thought moves from phenomenology towards ontology, Nancy, through his re-reading of *Sein und Zeit*, accomplishes an opposite move, discovering and actualizing in Heidegger's thinking of finitude new kinds of phenomenological zones. In the dialogue between Nancy and Jacques Derrida, this "re-phenomenologization" has taken place as guided by the phenomenon of "touch". In this presentation, I will ask how this turn relates to the practical side of Nancy's thought, where the idea of *freedom* has always played a central role. The reason to ask this today, after Nancy's passing, is obvious: The relevance of his thought to different kinds of practices, to start with the artistic ones that are the most familiar to me, depends on our ability to *access* the mode of experience or co-existence corresponding his singular plural ontology. In principle, the solution to this challenge is obvious: it consists of *participation*. However, what does

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participation imply as corporeal and collective act and how does it mediate between ontology and ethics? The presentation aims at formulating a starting point for a rethink of Nancy's thought of participation, starting with the Platonic *methexis*, continuing via Lévy-Bruhl's "participation mystique", and leading up to contemporary modes of community building in politics and arts.

**Bio:** Esa Kirkkopelto (born 1965) is philosopher, artist-researcher and performing artist. Currently, he works as a professor of artistic research at the Malmö Theatre Academy (University of Lund). Previously, he worked at the University of the Arts Helsinki, first as a professor of artistic research (2007-2017), then as the head of the post-doc Centre for Artistic Research (CfAR, 2017-2018). He also holds the title of docent in aesthetics at the University of Helsinki. He is the leader of a collective research project *Actor's Art in Modern Times* on the psychophysical actor training (2008-2011), the initiator of the *International Platform for Performer Training* (since 2014), core-convenor of the *Performance Philosophy* association and the founding member of the *Other Spaces* live art group (2004-). He is the author of *Le théâtre de l'expérience. Contributions à la théorie de la scène* (PUF 2008) and *Logomimesis. Tutkielma esiintyvistä ruumiista* (Tutkijaliitto 2020). His research focuses on the deconstruction of the performing body both in theory and in practice.

#### <sup>6</sup> Paul Willemarck: 'Insensitivity'

**Abstract:** Nancy says the '(i)n-sensible *différance* is sensible: it is the insensible in the completely sensible' (The sense of the world, p.129). Yet in *Fall of sleep* he also talks about a blind task of sleep, a task to let insensibility come. Examining the articulation between sensitivity and nutritivity in his account of the specificity of sleep we try to understand what Nancy does with Aristotle's layering of the soul as nutritive, sensitive and noetic. We try to understand how he is able to understand the composition of these layers in a differential logic of sense.

**Bio:** Paul Willemarck is an independent researcher working in France. Co-founder of Knooppunt Fenomenologie ([rudolfboehm.org](http://rudolfboehm.org)) and member of Nootechnics Collective.

#### <sup>7</sup> Boyan Manchev: 'The Insurrected Thought, Jean-Luc Nancy'

**Abstract :** Jean-Luc Nancy's thought is driven by a latent insurrectional force, which manifests when facing the ontological fact of finitude. Paradoxically or not, the most direct way to approach the hypothetical insurrectional dimension of Nancy's philosophy, is to confront it with his heretic reformulation of the idea of *resurrection*. In *Noli me tangere*, perhaps Nancy's most radical text in his "corpus" of "*deconstruction of christianity*", he implies the following risky connection: "Cette « tenue » fait proprement *l'anastasis*, la « résurrection », c'est-à-dire le relèvement ou le soulèvement (« insurrection » est aussi un sens possible du terme grec)." ("This 'standing' properly makes *anastasis*, 'resurrection', that is to say, uplifting or uprising ('insurrection' is also a possible meaning of the Greek term).", p. 33). Taking up the analysis of the concept of *ἀνάστασις*, I will try to measure the consequences of the connection between *resurrection* and *insurrection* for Nancy's intransigent thought of finitude.

**Bio :** Boyan Manchev is a philosopher, Professor at the New Bulgarian University and Berlin University of the Arts and former Director of Program and Vice-President of the International College of Philosophy in Paris. Manchev is the author of fifteen books, among which *Freedom in spite of Everything. Surcritique and Modal Ontology* (2021), *The New Athanor. Prolegomena to Philosophical Fantastic* (vol. 1, 2020), *Clouds. Philosophy of the Free Body* (2017), *Logic of the Political* (2012), *Miracolo* (Lanfranchi, 2011), *L'altération du monde: Pour une esthétique radicale* (Lignes, 2009; ), *La Métamorphose et l'instant – Désorganisation de la vie* (La Phocide, 2009), *The Body-Metamorphosis* (2007), *The Unimaginable* (2003).

#### <sup>8</sup> Ian James: 'Prolegomena to a Manifesto of Open Community'

**Abstract:** If finitude is shared in Nancy's philosophy, it is as much shared in birth as it is in death. The thought of the birth to presence appears recast in Nancy's later work, *Sexistence*, as 'une existence pulsionnelle différenciée et dirigée vers d'autres êtres' and this according to 'une pulsion primordiale qui pourtant ne précède pas à l'exister mais en lui force et forme sa jetée, son expulsion à être'. The irremediable loss of Nancy the man should surely be marked, not just in the pathos of his absence, but also in a rebirth and recasting of what the philosopher brought to presence in thought: the sense of that differentiated pulsating energy that gives birth to presence itself in its expulsion 'vers d'autres êtres'.

Nancy always appeared definitively to reject any simple passage from ontology to politics, or from 'inoperative community' to a political programme that would take shared, finite co-existence as its grounding principle. Yet he said of community in *La Communauté désœuvrée* 'On ne la produit pas, on en fait l'expérience (ou son expérience nous fait) comme expérience de la finitude'. This paper will explore the possibility of a politics which takes the experience of shared finitude as its sole authority bypassing philosophical foundationalism and the 'putting to work' of philosophical conceptuality. If such a politics were to have a programme or manifesto these would emerge only from the experience of finitude as this sole authority and only insofar as such an authority would (pace Blanchot) expiate itself.

**Bio:** Ian James completed his doctoral research on the fictional and theoretical writings of Pierre Klossowski at the University of Warwick in 1996. He is a Fellow of Downing College and a Reader in Modern French Literature and Thought in the Department of French at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Pierre Klossowski:*

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*The Persistence of a Name* (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), *Paul Virilio* (London: Routledge, 2007), *The New French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012) and *The Technique of Thought: Nancy, Laruelle, Malabou and Stiegler after Naturalism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Susanna Lindberg: 'On Splendid Splintered Being'

**Abstract:** Jean-Luc Nancy's "singular plural being" is an important attempt to rethink Martin Heidegger's *Mitsein*: another way of thinking the archi-ethical being-with of singular existents. But *singular plural being* is also an answer, or rather another articulation of the question of being itself. It says the *éclatement de l'être*, not in the sense of the catastrophic explosion of the unity of being, but in the sense of an originary splintering that brings the *éclat*, the splendor of being to the fore. But what really articulates this splintering? The plurality of the *many*? Many what - beings? Or the *with* that holds the many together? What is the *with* that unfolds as *touch*, *sense*, *technics*? How does Nancy fold the *with* and the *many* together? Furthermore, is the *splendid splintered being* still an answer to a *question* of being? Heidegger would say that the surprise of the event of being cannot come to the fore if not as a question? But then again: since the *Dasein* has been splintered into a singular plural being-with, to whom is the question of being addressed: to the philosopher, after all, or to the entire plurality of singular plural existents? Or just to thinking: but what does this mean?

**Bio:** Susanna Lindberg is a professor of continental philosophy at the University of Leiden, Netherlands. She is a specialist of German idealism, phenomenology, and contemporary French philosophy. In recent years, her research has carried on the questions of life and technology. After earning a PhD at the University of Strasbourg, she has worked at the Universities of Helsinki, Tampere, and associated to the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre. Her publications include *Techniques en philosophie* (Hermann, 2020), *Le monde défait. L'être au monde aujourd'hui* (Hermann, 2016), *Heidegger contre Hegel: Les irréconciliables*, and *Entre Heidegger et Hegel: L'éclosion et vie de l'être* (L'Harmattan, 2010). She also has edited several collected volumes, among others *The Ethos of Digital Environments. Technology, Literary Theory and Philosophy* (with Hanna Roine, Routledge, 2021), *The End of the World* (with Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) and *Europe Beyond Universalism and Particularism* (with Sergei Prozorov and Mika Ojakangas, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback: 'Being with the Without'

**Abstract:** In this presentation I would like to discuss Jean-Luc Nancy's ontology, addressing the question about the without, about absence, and the relation between "sens" and "sans", in his thoughts.

**Bio:** Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback is Professor of philosophy at Södertörn University in Sweden. She is a specialist in Phenomenology, German Idealism, contemporary philosophy, and aesthetics. She is an author of several books and numerous articles touching upon themes in phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, aesthetics and political thought, and also a translator of philosophical works into Portuguese, a.o. *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger. Among her latest publications, *Time in Exile: in conversation with Heidegger, Blanchot and Lispector* (SUNY, 2020), and *The Fascism of Ambiguity* (forthcoming Bloomsbury).

<sup>11</sup> 'Adoration, Glory, Offering: Recent Philosophies of Hymn'

**Abstract:** t.b.a.

<sup>12</sup> Peter De Graeve: 'Nancy. Having (Lost) Universality'

**Abstract:** Jean-Luc Nancy's contribution to the so-called post-foundational ontology is widely recognized. Focusing on one of his major philosophical concepts, *diffraction*, this paper first gauges Nancy's exact position in the postmodern *turning* of philosophy, then re-examines the reach of what Nancy himself calls a "diffracted being" – exposing humans to "fractal essence" and "fractal sense" – and, finally, attempts to question the very participation (or "sharing", *partage*, if you like) of his thinking in the event, *Ereignis*, of Western ontology. The extremely varied style of Nancy's writings, mirrored by the thematic richness of his oeuvre as such, could itself easily be mistaken for a singular kind of fragmentation; in fact, it testifies to a lifelong, and firm, being-centered on being, to Nancy's relentless being-*sensed* by being. As postmodernism (already characterized by Nancy and others as a "limit of philosophy") itself enters its terminal phase, the methodical deconstruction of foundation, henceforth definitely acquired, seems to lead to new and apparently insurmountable difficulties, one of which is the *demise of human provenance*. Therefore, my "fundamental" question would be: How *on earth* could philosophy have lost its *universality*, meaning *itself*? Can some answers be found, recovered, in Nancy? Or have we become, in that sense – in *his* sense – singularly lost for words?

**Bio:** Peter De Graeve. Philosophy Studies in Ghent, Paris (Kofman), Turin (Vattimo), Strasbourg (Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy) | Philosophy Teaching at LUCA School of Arts (KU Leuven), University of Antwerp (2004-2008), Chalmers University Gothenburg (2012-2015) | Publications on Nietzsche, Lefort, Deleuze, Nancy, Aesthetics, Political Philosophy.

<sup>13</sup> Georgios Tsagdis: 'Drawing Life: Freedom and Form in Jean-Luc Nancy'.

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**Abstract:** In 1988, Jean-Luc Nancy delivered a rare, sustained vindication of freedom, reclaiming a place for freedom's *factuality*, a place anterior to the locus of the subject, and one that would be ultimately equated with the space of thought and the wider domain of existence. Reflecting at the close of *The Experience of Freedom* on the fruits of his undertaking, Nancy insisted on the unfinished, indeed barely began, task of thinking freedom. Perhaps no other notion shows the invitation of this incompleteness as clearly as that of *experience*. Experience, as lived limit and finitude, resonates throughout Nancy's subsequent works. This essay wishes to explicate this resonance, by turning to Nancy's 2009 essay *The Pleasure in Drawing*. It undertakes to examine the minor theme of drawing, as the liminal practice of the creation of forms, and postulate it, in this precise sense, as the necessary supplement for the reanimation of the experience of living, and dying, on the edge of freedom.

**Bio:** Georgios Tsagdis teaches at Leiden University, the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Architectural Association. His work operates across theoretical domains drawing on 20th Century, Contemporary and Ancient Greek Philosophy. His essays have been published in various international journals, including *Parallax*, *Philosophy Today* and *Studia Phaenomenologica*. His editorials include special issues for *Azimuth* ('Intersections: at the Technophysics of Space', 2017) and the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* ('Of Times: Arrested, Resigned, Imagined', 2020), as well as the edited volume *Derrida's Politics of Friendship: Amity and Enmity* (EUP, 2021). Tsagdis created and convened the Seminar of Neoplatonic Studies at the Warburg Institute in the years 2013-19 and in 2020 he established the cross-border theory network *Minor Torus*.

<sup>14</sup> Nidesh Lawtoo: 'Shared Voices: Nancy-Lacoue's Mimetic *Methexis*'

**Abstract:** What's in a voice? And if the echoes a voice generates are neither singular nor plural but singular-plural, what shared voices are at play in Jean-Luc Nancy's untimely reflections on the affective participation, or *methexis*, at play in the agonistic confrontation between philosophy and literature? As Nancy made clear in one of his last interviews: "*methexis*...is intrinsic to the mimetic rapport" (Nancy and Lawtoo, 2021: 149). In order to continue the dialogue from the affective perspective of a philosophical-literary life in common, this paper considers the relation of *methexis* that ties Nancy's reflections on "shared voices" [*partage des voix*] (Nancy 1982) to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's account of a "*mimesis* without model" that generates "echo[es] of the subject" nonetheless (Lacoue-Labarthe 1989). Plato's rhapsodic dialogue, *Ion*, sets the stage to hear Nancy-Lacoue's shared voices affirming a mimetic *methexis* that is perhaps constitutive of the art of interpretation tout court.

**Bio:** Nidesh Lawtoo is assistant professor of philosophy and English at KU Leuven, and PI of the ERC project, *Homo Mimeticus* ([www.homomimeticus.eu](http://www.homomimeticus.eu)). His research is located at the intersection of continental philosophy, literary theory, and political theory, with special focus on theories of mimesis. He is the editor of *Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Contemporary Thought: Revisiting the Horror with Lacoue-Labarthe* (2012), and the author of *The Phantom of the Ego: Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious* (2013); *Conrad's Shadow: Catastrophe, Mimesis, Theory* (2016; Adam Gillon Award 2018); *(New) Fascism: Contagion, Community, Myth* (2019); and *Violence and the Unconscious: Catharsis to Contagion* (under contract). He is now working on a book titled, *Homo Mimeticus: Genealogy, Aesthetics, Politics*. As part of the ERC project he conducted an interview with Nancy, titled "Mimesis: Concept-Singulier Pluriel" also available as a video here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7je\\_FSOQDYU&t=2921s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7je_FSOQDYU&t=2921s)

<sup>15</sup> Martin Crowley: 'Exscription as Eco-poetics'

**Abstract:** In this talk, I will explore the possibilities offered by Nancy's notion of 'exscription', as developed in the essay 'L'excrit', for eco-poetic thought and practice. Bringing this notion into relation with the work of Nancy's friend and collaborator Jean-Christophe Bailly, with the writings of Anne Simon, as well as with material by Georges Bataille – at the heart of 'L'excrit' – and Nancy's own 'Oh les animaux de langue', I will affirm its capacity to engage nonhuman existences of many kinds and to mark a mode of specifically human responsibility that remains outside all anthropocentrism.

**Bio:** Martin Crowley is Professor of Modern French Thought and Culture, and Director of the French Section, at the University of Cambridge. He also serves as General Editor of the journal, *French Studies*. He has published various articles and book chapters engaging with Nancy's work, and his book, *L'Homme sans: Politiques de la finitude* (Lignes, 2009), features an afterword by Nancy. His latest book, *Accidental Agents: Ecological Politics beyond the Human*, will be published by Columbia University Press in January 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Anne O'Byrne: 'Nancy for a New Generation'

**Abstract:** J-L Nancy spoke movingly of coming of age philosophically and politically in the 1960s and 70s, and his political writings from *The Inoperative Community* all the way to the late reflections on COVID-19 were responses to the specific concerns of his time. What will this mean to a new generation? What will it be to teach Nancy now? I propose that the enduring value of his work will not be as an *opus* or *oeuvre* but as an Arendtian practice of keeping thought in motion, a practice needed by a generation coming of age in a time when the ocean is rising, the desert is growing, and political thinking seems stuck.

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**Bio:** Anne O'Byrne, Philosophy Department, Stony Brook University, is the author of *Nativity and Finitude* and *Democracy and Generational Being*, and the translator of several Nancy texts into English, including *Being Singular Plural* (translated with Robert Richardson) and *Corpus II: Writings on Sexuality*.