

Contemporary Philosophical “Faith” without “Belief”: A Case of Jean-Luc Nancy

One of the characteristics of contemporary philosophy, at least in its phenomenological-poststructuralist lineage, is a kind of re/turn to religion. However, this re/turn itself is not properly religious; rather, it represents a “religion without religion”¹; it is a religion of exit from religion, a religion without belief, as it explores religious themes in a-religious, a-theological modes. At the same time, contemporary philosophy retains a discourse somehow related to “faith”, even if it is a kind of strange “faith”, if one can say so – “faith” in an impossible possibility of some inaccessible alterity opening up within the very limits of infinite finitude of human reason and worldly immanence, though on purely a-theological premises, in the absence of any metaphysical/theological principle, such as “God”, for example.

For exploring the theme of this paper – the contemporary philosophical reflection on “faith” – I will draw upon texts of a French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy – perhaps the last thinker to date in the line of the likes of Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida etc., sweepingly gathering, deconstructing and re/con/figuring in his own way the entire preceding philosophical tradition. His impressive project of the “deconstruction of Christianity” – perhaps yet another post-Nietzschean “genealogical” rendition of the development of Christianity/the West, or perhaps the missing part of Bataille’s unfinished *Summa Atheologiae*...

Be that as it may, his thinking is especially enlightening for the theme in question, for he has reflected on the subject of faith particularly, interpreting religious/Christian faith in his own fashion and then recognising these elements of faith in his own thinking when it reaches the very limits of the im/possible. Since Nancy’s understanding of faith cannot be viewed and understood separately from the abovementioned project of “deconstruction of Christianity”, before explicating, interpreting and questioning his understanding of faith, I will first lay out and systematise some basic relevant, interrelated themes within this larger context.²

Dis-enclosure of metaphysics and its Christian instance

Nancy’s conception of “faith” is situated within reason at its limits; therefore it is related to his views concerning overcoming metaphysics. Nancy enacts this overcoming by

¹ Jacques Derrida uses this phrase in reference to Heidegger in *The Gift of Death* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 49. John D. Caputo uses it as a subtitle of his book *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Indiana University Press, 1997).

² I will mostly do close reading of relevant fragments from Nancy’s programmatic texts “The Deconstruction of Christianity” (1995), “A Deconstruction of Monotheism” (2001), “Atheism and Monotheism” (2004) and “Opening” (2005), published in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (Fordham University Press, 2008) (hereinafter referred to as D in parentheses in the text), as well as make references to other texts as needed.

virtue of a move which he denotes by a term “dis-enclosure” (*déclousion*), referring to opening the enclosure of metaphysics in its dual heritage of philosophy and religion. The enclosure is reason’s self referentiality in its inability to reach its beyond, i.e. the beyond of metaphysics. Philosophy has always been aware of its own enclosure since Parmenides, Plato and many others subsequently, contemplating “the extreme limits of reason in an excess of and over reason itself” (D, 7). Also, the enclosure has been invariably dis-enclosed throughout the history of philosophy, especially since Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Levinas, Derrida and others, opening the philosophical system up from within, using its existing resources. Metaphysics always dis-encloses in itself the presence and certainty of the world founded on reason, at the same time delivering forever and anew the *epekeina tes ousias*, fomenting in itself the overflowing of its own rational ground, never losing the “tenuous ark that ties us to the inaccessible” (here Nancy uses Levi-Strauss phrase, D, 7f). Nancy situates himself in this strand.

The same enclosure of metaphysics takes place in Christianity, where it becomes even more aggravated by the construction of a supreme, arch-present and efficient being (D, 7). At the same time, Christianity has always enacted the dis-enclosure, always being aware of the *alogon* as a necessary dimension of the *logos*. However, Nancy has a particular interpretation of this *alogon* – in conformity with his own philosophy. As he argues, the “other world” of Christianity has never been a second world behind the worlds, but nothing else than a presupposition of the other of the world – as, for example, expressed by the Christian precept of living in this world as if not being of it, as if outside it, in the sense that this “outside” is not an entity (D, 10).

Nancy also astutely discerns the double motion of Christian metaphysics and its self-overcoming in Anselm’s *Proslogion* – overcoming by itself its own onto-theological formula *quo majus cogitari nequit* (God as that of which nothing greater can be thought) with the *majus quam cogitari possit* (God as greater than what can be thought). The latter formula expresses the idea that thinking can think that it thinks something in excess over itself (D, 11). Precisely this thinking constitutes reason in its unconditionality, in the infinity of the desire itself through which human being is caught up infinitely within reason. In this sense, in Nancy’s interpretation, Anselm is also a precursor of modern thinking of dis-enclosure, possibly including the modern thinking in Nancy’s own performance,³ measured by the question: Are we capable of grasping anew the demand that carries thought out of itself without confusing this demand “with some construction of ideals or with some sloppy assembly of phantasms?” (D, 11f)

Mono/theism and atheism

One of the key moves of Nancy’s “deconstruction of Christianity” consists in conflating Christianity and atheism into each other. Nancy lays out a genealogy of mono/theism, showing its own implicit atheistic premises from the times of its origination and throughout its development. Suffice it to say here that the conjunction of Greek atheism (resulting from demythologisation) and Jewish monotheism, in Nancy’s view, results in the elaboration of Christian “onto-a-theology”, ending up in the “evaporation of all divine presences and powers and designation of a principle that no longer has as ‘divine’ anything but the name – a name dispossessed of all personality, and even the ability to be

³ It seems that Nancy identifies himself as a “modern” thinker.

uttered" (D, 21). The word "God" names only the tautology of God's presupposed unitotality (D, 21).

As Nancy perceives it, monotheism thus constitutes atheism's condition of possibility. The unicity of monotheism is not so much a matter of setting it against the plurality of polytheism. Rather, this unicity results in "absentheism", for it conceives of "a presence that can no longer be given in this world [in the contrary case, it would be an idol], but rather must be sought beyond it" (D, 18, 32). Divinity is changed into a principle which is always absent, *Deus absconditum*, drawing into the "one" the entirety of its *numen* by dissolving the *nomen* "God" (D, 22). This is the common principal premise of both theism and atheism (I will hereinafter designate it as "a/theism").

The unity of the a/theistic premise and the unicity of God both comforted and opposed each other by means of a dual and violent movement. On the one hand, the unicity of God let itself be absorbed by the unity of the a/theistic premise. As a result, Christianity transformed into humanism, atheism and nihilism. On the other hand, the unicity of God resisted the premise by efforts to separate "the God of the philosophers and savants" from "the God of faith". This opposition is lodged at the very heart of a/theism itself as Nancy understands it – at the place where the very principle of the a/theistic premise collapses by itself, at the same time signalling the possibility of and the call for, a wholly other, anarchic configuration that this overcoming of a/theistic metaphysics by faith represents (see D, 24).

So, there is, in fact, little reason for usual conceiving of theism and atheism as opposed to each other by viewing the latter as the negation of the former. Theism and atheism belong to each other insofar as the a/theistic premise is asserted or correlatively denied. In either case, it collapses in its own positing or in being deposed. Also, as Nancy points out, one should take into account to what degree the negation retains the essence of what it negates. Atheism states the principle of the negation of the divine principle, i.e. the principle of an entity that is distinct from the entire world of entities, for which this distinct entity would hold the first cause and the final end. Atheism thus asserts either that the cause and the end, in fact, belong to a different, i.e. immanent order, or that these concepts must not be brought into play at all (D, 16). In the former case, the atheistic immanence – as matter, life, history, society, art etc. – does not displace anything in the ideal and practical statuses of cause and end, for, on the ideal part, their principles may become as restrictive or coercive as those of some "divine will" or "order of salvation", and, on the practical part, just like theism, leaves destitute or threatened the order of the in-common, of culture – as in communism and, when atheism conjoins with individualism, also in capitalism (see D, 16f). In the latter case, the disqualification of causes and ends – as, for instance, in global technology ensuing from physical understanding of reality – ends up with a tautological teleology, in this case, of the world (see D, 17).

Nancy himself opts for atheistic thinking. However, in view of the aforesaid, it cannot be a simple atheism in its previous modes. In his estimation, atheistic thinking up to now has remained privative, subtractive, defective, nihilistic. It has not achieved anything more than its own pointing "toward a repetition of its own *nihil*", played out around the bounds of the "void", the "absence", the "disaster", the "aporia", the combinations of "forms of life" etc. (D, 19) Such thinking has remained – as in the case of humanism, paradoxically

– even dehumanising (see, D. 19). Contrary to that, Nancy’s proposed new atheism requires “an effective modification of its tautology” – indeed, up to the necessity of a heterology (D, 20). The a/theistic premise should be retained but transformed to make withdraw from itself by means of exceeding qua principle its principiation itself (D, 23). The principle infinitely exempts itself by or from itself – heterogeneously to any tautology (D, 23).

Admittedly, whether this doubling of mono/theism and atheism can in any way communicate heterogeneity remains an open question. Can one be so sure that monotheism is nothing else than “the other, feeble, and clerical side of atheism?” (D, 23) However, leaving this question aside, Nancy here comes up with an ambitious, even quasi-prophetic utterance: “The time has come to understand our own history otherwise than it has heretofore sought to understand itself under the domination of its own principle or premise” (D, 23).

Now, what would be the basic characteristics of Nancy’s own alternative atheistic thinking? Nancy programmatically sketches the answer already in the opening paragraph of *Dis-Enclosure*.

It is not a question of reviving religion, not even the one that Kant wanted to hold “within the limits of mere reason.” It is, however, a question of opening mere reason up to the limitlessness that constitutes its truth.

It is not a question of overcoming some deficiency in reason, but of liberating reason without reserve: once everything is accounted for, it is up to us to show what remains beyond these accounts.

It is also not a question of repainting the skies, or of refiguring them: it is a question of opening up the earth – dark, hard and lost in space (D, 1).

The first two paragraphs of this quote represent the limitlessness of reason to which I will return, discussing Nancy’s understanding of “faith”. The last sentence sets forth a clue of Nancy’s thought that I now turn to.

Deconstruction of Christianity to the “transimmanence” of the world

If one reads the phrase “deconstruction of Christianity” without knowing the specifics of this project of Nancy, two things can immediately come to mind, namely, that it may mean either deconstruction of Christianity in the sense of taking its structure apart completely, which would be equivalent to destruction, or that it may mean its recuperation, revival after destruction, which would be de-*con*-struction proper. However, Nancy himself emphasises in various ways that the deconstruction of Christianity aims neither at attacking, denying, destroying Christianity, nor at reviving, defending, reconstructing it, nor returning to it.

According to Nancy, such attempts could only sharpen the already critical state of Christianity; moreover, they are not only out of season today but also completely irrelevant; they cannot achieve anything because Christianity as such has always already been and still is in the state of both its self-deconstruction and self-surpassing. Christianity is itself a deconstruction, a self- or auto-deconstruction at that. It is Christianity itself that brings up in the most ruinous, the most nihilistic way how it

shelters within itself – or better: “more intimately within itself than itself, within or without itself – the principle of a world without God” (D, 35).

In Nancy’s analysis, most Christian doctrines inherently have this auto-deconstructive effect. For instance, the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* implies an absence of necessity and the existence of a given without reason (D, 24); the doctrine of *kenosis*-incarnation – God’s alienation, atheising and atheologising of God’s self (D, 82), dispersion of God’s transcendence into pure worldly immanence, humanistic “divinisation” of human being etc. In any case, Nancy thinks that deconstruction itself has originated from Christian patterns. Christianity bears within itself all the resources necessary for deconstruction, as also evidenced by the dialectics of atheism, by demythologisation etc., and it perpetually surpasses itself by its own self-surpassing, disseminating the traces of the empty names of “god” through every secular discourse encountered in the West, resulting in “poly-atheism”.

As a matter of fact, this insight of Nancy, in principle, is not quite new or original. Nietzsche has already pointed out in his own way the auto-deconstructive nature of Christianity, especially in his work *Toward the Genealogy of Morals*, showing how atheism is “the most spiritual formulation”, the latest phase of development, the final form, the logical outcome of the Christian ascetic ideal. The atheism’s will to truth, by way of examination of conscience, leads to “the denial of the lie of belief in God”.⁴ Derrida’s trope of “autoimmunity”, though applied in a different context, is also analogous to Nancy’s proposed auto-deconstruction. Derrida takes the term “autoimmunity” from biological sciences to illustrate certain processes in society. By definition, autoimmunity is a condition when an organism turns in quasi-suicidal fashion against its own self-protection.⁵

It should be noted, as Nancy emphasises all over again, that the deconstruction of Christianity is intended to be neutral with regard to the overcoming or perpetuation of religion. However, I would qualify this neutrality by an adjective John Caputo once used referring to the relationship of Derrida’s deconstruction to religion – it is “armed neutrality”. Another important view to be noted, inasmuch as, for Nancy, deconstruction itself is Christian (D, 149), is possible only within Christianity (D, 148), he apparently conceives himself working from within Christianity, even if in his own peculiar way, i.e. considering his view that Christianity pervades every thinking to such an extent that it is not possible to overcome it “cleanly” but only by working from within it.

Methodologically speaking, Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity is an operation of disassembling, focusing on the origin or the sense of deconstruction that does not belong to Christianity but makes it possible, “like an empty slot that makes the structure work” (D, 149). It is the search for “a provenance of Christianity deeper than Christianity itself”, which still remains to be discovered and thought as the beyond of Christianity, by now having become globalised and atheised (D, 143, 32). Thus, the deconstruction of

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Dritte Abhandlung, #27.

⁵ Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Region’ at the Limits of Reason Alone” in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, *Religion: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 46; Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides”, Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 85-136.

Christianity goes back to or advances toward “a resource that could form at once the buried origin and imperceptible future of the world that calls itself ‘modern’” (D, 34). After all, “modern”, as Nancy perceives and himself exemplifies it, signifies always awaiting its truth of, and as, quite simply – world... a world whose proper sense is not given, always not yet; rather, always being in project or in promise, and perhaps beyond; it is a world in which “sense” itself defies all received and receivable sense (D, 34f). Thus, if I understand correctly, this “resource” which fills the “empty slot” of deconstruction, this “deep, nonreligious and nonbelieving”⁶ structure of Christianity yet to be discovered, is nothing other than “the sense of the world”.

In Nancy’s perspective, the deconstruction of Christianity indicates “a direction in thinking without which it is impossible to consider seriously the question of the sense of the world such as the West has given it to us as heritage – or as escheat” (D, 39). This direction is

not to lead toward the fulfilment of a new divine realm, neither in this world nor in another. Nor is it to rediscover the unity proper and immanent to a world of the myth that has decomposed in the Westernization-monotheization of the world. Instead, it is to think a “sense-of-world” or a “world-sense” (*sens-de-monde*) in a world divided in its own being-world, in an acosmic and atheological world, which is still a ‘world’ in some respect, still our world and that of the totality of beings, thus still a totality of possible senses – it being understood that this possibility is always also, in and of itself, exposed to the impossible (D, 39).

Or, as Nancy expounds already in the key section of his work of 1993 *The Sense of the World*, “as soon as the appearance of a beyond of the world has been dissipated, the out-of-place instance of sense opens itself up *within* the world”.⁷ Sense belongs to the structure of the world itself, hollowing out therein what Nancy names “transimmanence” – designating the transcendence of the very immanence of the world, or simply – its existence and exposition (SW, 55). Everything boils down to a simple statement, namely, “that the sense of the world is this world here as the place of existence” (SW, 56).

What are the consequences of this key element for the a/theistic premise? The world is without God, but notably, not because there is no God, but there is no God because there is the “there is” of the world, its configuration without a face (SW, 156). There is no God because, as every overcoming of onto-theology would also agree, God does not belong to the “there is”, which, nevertheless, is still “exposed to the impossible” – in and from within.

Faith – a tiny extreme touch of thought laid upon nothing

Writing about faith – and, as we will see in a moment, professing a kind of contemporary philosophical “faith” by himself, Nancy does not mean that a philosopher could “believe” in God or gods. In contrast, as Nancy eloquently and programmatically states, it is only a question

⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body* (Fordham University Press, 2008), 4.

⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 55. Hereinafter referred to as SW in parentheses in the text.

of wondering whether faith has ever, in truth, been confused with belief. In effect, it is enough to observe that belief is in no way proper to religion. There are many profane beliefs; there are even beliefs among scholars and philosophers. But faith? ... Should it not form the necessary relation to the nothing: in such a way that we understand that there are no buffers, no halting points, no markers, no indeconstructible terms, and that dis-enclosure never stops opening what it opens (the West, metaphysics, knowledge, the self, form, sense, religion itself)? (D, 12)

But let us start consecutively, beginning with Nancy's interpretation of Christian faith. As mentioned in the above quote, faith should not be confused with belief. The category of faith, as opposed to that of religious belief, "is faithfulness to an absence and a certainty of this faithfulness in the absence of all assurance" (D, 36). Faith never takes place within the domain of belief, because faith, in contradistinction to any *credo quia absurdum* of fideism – is not an adherence without proof, not a leap beyond proof. Rather, faith is its own work, a conviction that gives itself over in an act on the part of the subject, relating to God and God's name only inasmuch as it is not present (D, 152). Faith is adherence "to itself of an aim without other... without a correlative object, or with no fulfilment of sense but that of the aim itself," in a word, pure enacted intentionality (D, 152). Faith does not "believe". Faith is performative (D, 53). Nancy finds strong support for faith as act in the Epistle of James, the notorious "straw epistle" (Luther) that equals faith with works, and also in the Christian formula *fides qua creditur*, the faith by which one believes, actualising the sense of *fides quae creditur*, faith as content, faith that is believed (D, 153).

Furthermore, faith, as the being-in-act of a non-appropriable infinite sense, "becomes progressively, as faithfulness, faithfulness to nothing, faithfulness to no one, *faithfulness to faithfulness* itself" (D, 154). The faithful is faithful to nothing else than "to the very gesture of faithfulness" (D, 154). Equally important, for Nancy, faith, unlike belief, is not a weak form or analogy of hypothetical or subjective knowledge (D, 25, 52). "It is neither unverifiable nor received through submission, nor even through reason" (D, 25). On the contrary, it is the act of the reason that relates, itself, to that which, in it, passes *it* infinitely" (D, 25).

In this sense, paradoxically, but not surprisingly in view of Nancy's correlative understanding of theism and atheism, "the atheist who firmly refuses all consoling or redemptive assurance is paradoxically or strangely closer to faith than the 'believer'," which also means that atheism is itself "Christianity realised" (D, 36). And conversely, "faith stands precisely at the point of an altogether consequent atheism. This is to say that it stands at the point where atheism is dispossessed of belief in the premise or principle..." (D, 25)

It is the point Kant had already recognised – the incapacity of reason to satisfy by itself its own needs. Reason is not a sufficient reason for itself, justifying itself only in the acknowledgment of this insufficiency, recognising that it is not a lack or a flaw for which it should expect reparations from an other, but rather that "the logic of sufficiency and/or lack is not the logic appropriate to it" (D, 25). At the same time, through Kant's dictum to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith, the reason's critique of itself "makes unconditionally requisite, within reason itself, an opening and elevation of reason (D, 28). It is not a question of religious belief here; it a question of faith "as a sign of the

fidelity of reason to that which *in and of itself* exceeds reason's phantasm of justifying itself as much as the world and man [*sic*]" (D, 28).

As a consequence, faith is "the firm fidelity of reason to its own atheology" (D, 26).⁸ In atheological regime the name "God" refers not only to a ruining of the *a/theistic* premise but also to something, to someone or to a nothing "of which faith is itself the birthplace of the creative event" (D, 26). It is a thought profoundly foreign to both theism and atheism – that "God" may be the fruit of faith, which at the same time depends only on "God's" grace. "It is the thinking of alterity opened by and exposed outside of sameness, as that which exceeds thinking infinitely without in any way being principal to it" (D, 26). In this way, the same is altered into "a properly infinite alterity, which proves unappropriable, imprescribable and an-archic" – admittedly, leaving open the question whether "God" can and do represent names for this alterity of reason (D, 26).

In its auto-deconstructive ambiguity, Christianity, in its absoluteness has been opening only onto itself infinitely, resulting in the death of God. For Nancy, a question remains: "What is an opening that would not sink into its own openness? What is an infinite sense that nonetheless makes sense, an empty truth that yet has the weight of truth? How can one take on afresh the task of delineating a delimited opening, a figure, therefore, that still would not be a figurative capturing of sense (that would not be God)?" (157) As we have seen, it should be the sense of the world. How to think it? By thinking the limit, the singular line that "fastens" an existence – I would add, the sense of the "there is" of the world – according to the graph of an opening, not returning to itself, as Nancy writes, "according to the inscription of a sense that, no religion, no belief, nor any knowledge – and of course, no servility, no asceticism – can saturate or assure, that no Church can claim to gather and bless" (D, 157). How can this farsighted task be enacted? "For that," Nancy concludes, "there remains for us neither cult nor prayer, but the exercise – strict and severe, sober and yet joyous – of what is called thought" (D, 157). Such is Nancy's "faith" – "a faith that is nothing at all" (D, 61), concurring with that of Gerard Granel: "a thinking given over to that which comes to it from elsewhere because from nowhere, from *nulla partes*, from the null part of the nothing, and thus a faith that, in sum, is nothing – nothing but this tiny extreme touch of thought laid upon nothing" (D, 73).

Nancy's "faith" – contemporary heritage/escheat of Luther, Spinoza and Kant? A small exercise in intertextuality

I would say that Nancy has a distinctly Lutheran understanding of faith as *sola fide* in contemporary rendering, pushing this principle to its extreme limit, removing any correlates of this faith, up to the point of seeming nihilism – leaving just a faith-relation to the nothing, a tiny touch of thought upon "the null part of the nothing", which nevertheless claims not to be nihilistic by acknowledging the limitlessness of the nothing.

I would also say that Nancy has a distinctly Spinozian understanding of faith as active *amor Dei intellectualis* in contemporary rendering, divesting the redundant presupposition/name of God from the immanence of the world, a transposition of the classical *amor Dei intellectualis* formula into a contemporary *amor mundi intellectualis*

⁸ "Atheology" is exclusively Bataille's term – to designate an atheism freed from the schema of an inverted theism. In this regard, Nancy's view, of course, is in full conformity with Bataille's.

of sorts, envisaging this time the world itself *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the infinity of the “there is” of its worlding, as “species” of from inside dis-enclosed limitlessness.⁹

I would also say that Nancy has a distinctly Kantian understanding of rational faith of “religion within the limits of mere reason” (*viz. reiner Religionsglaube vs. Kirchenglaube*, not to speak of *Aberglaube* and *fides mercenaria* or *fides servilis*)¹⁰ in contemporary rendering, divested of any transcendental postulates or regulative ideals, even of any performative *als ob*.

Some concluding questions

What can one say, coming to a conclusion with regard to Nancy’s philosophical “faith”? Questions remain. One of these questions pertains to the legitimacy of transposing the name “faith” from its place in religious discourse to what after all seems a purely intellectual activity. Does not such an elitist, abstract, intellectual “faith” of sorts end up in what is just the opposite of *fides qua creditur* as an act after all? In religious context *fides intellectualis* has always been considered to be a peril.

Another related question concerns the im/possibility of an abstract *fides qua creditur* (faith) detached from any *fides quae creditur* (belief). Drawing an analogy from Kant’s epistemological dictum: Is not a purely rational, abstract faith in faith itself without specific content of practical, enacted, representable, perceivable beliefs empty (not even speaking of the blindness of beliefs without faith here)?¹¹

It is also a question of the im/possibility of difference between “faith” and “belief” in Nancy’s conception. Does not his “faith” end up being “belief” after all – namely, a belief with “content”, even if this content is “the nothing” itself? Especially, considering that Nancy seems to have a distinctly Heideggerian sense of the nothing not as nihilistic but as equivalent to the world itself in its indetermination – thus being itself?¹²

⁹ In this context, it is also understandable why Spinoza is for Nancy “the first thinker of the world” in line with Nancy’s own proposed paradigm, when he interprets Spinoza’s formula *deus sive natura* not so much as two names for one thing but rather meaning “that this very thing has its outside on the inside” (SW, 54).

¹⁰ See Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*

¹¹ See a similar, related argument in Joeri Schrijvers, “What Comes after Christianity? Jean-Luc Nancy’s Deconstruction of Christianity”, *Research in Phenomenology* 39 (2009), 284f.

¹² See Heidegger’s lecture “Was ist Metaphysik?”. Cf., for example, how Nancy explains the nothing to children: “Nothing is the something of that which is no thing... Nothing is the fact that there is something in general, all of us” (Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, 93).