

Marc De Kesel

THE QUESTION OF THE WORLD

Some remarks on Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on globalization

Die Rose ist ohne Warum.
Sie blühet, weil sie blühet.
Sie achtet nicht ihrer selbst,
fragt nicht, ob man sie siehet.
(Angelus Silesius)

... alors cette question s'impose, nue et aveuglante.¹

In social and political debates, 'globalization' has become a hot topic. Our social troubles, our political actions, our cultural manifestations, somehow or other, they all concern the entire world – the world as a totality, as a 'globe'. The smallest decision of *one* nation is bound to have an impact on the *totality* of world politics. The slightest economic activity has to take into account the whole 'global' market. Because of the enormous problems it entails, globalization deserves our particular attention. Intellectuals, scientists, critics, philosophers, all should reflect upon globalization, its profits and its problems. However, perhaps globalization is not just a new topic upon which we should reflect and think, but is itself the question that changes the way we think and reflect. Perhaps it even modifies the very status of thought itself. In that case, globalization involves a fundamental, 'philosophical' revolution. It intervenes in the way we relate to the world, and even to ourselves, and therefore forces us to reconsider what thinking – or even being – as such is.

This is at least the thesis the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy defends in one of his most recent books, *La création du monde ou la mondialisation* (2002). To him, globalization not only has modified the world, it has essentially changed the way we relate to the world, our being in that world and, on a yet more fundamental level, our being as such. We can no longer consider ourselves as standing outside the world, i.e. as *subject* to whom the world is an *object*. Globalization has made clear that our very relation to the world is more basic than the autonomous subjects we suppose we are. In other words, globalization constrains us to take seriously what Heidegger (Nancy's most important reference) in the beginning of the twentieth century already said when he stated that we cannot consider ourselves as Cartesian subjects standing *in front of* the world but, as *Dasein*, being always already *in* the world. Globalization forces us to acknowledge we are nothing else than a 'being-in-the-world' (an '*in-der-Welt-sein*'). It is only as *Dasein* – and, more exactly, as *Mitsein*, as Nancy corrects Heidegger – that we are able to face the world *as world*, i.e. as totality, as a whole, a 'globe', a 'globalized' world.

In what follows, I will focus on the way Nancy develops that kind of 'facing'. To him, globalization compels us to face the world as a *question*. It is the question of what it means that there is a world at all, a world as such, a 'realized' and globalized world. It is also the question of who, within that globalized world, *we* are. But the most important thing is that it is a *question* and *only* a question. To Nancy, globalization implies we do no longer know what 'world' or 'we' or even 'knowing' mean. We do no longer know what all these things *are*. But nevertheless we do know two things. First, we do know that these are questions, open questions. And second, we are sure that in fact we do not yet know how to place or handle them.

¹ J.-L. Nancy, *La création du monde ou la mondialisation*, Galilée, Paris, 2002, p. 30

Our ‘globalized’ world has become an open question, and it is about the status of this question I will articulate some remarks or, so to speak, some questions.

1. Globalization ...

In our ‘globalized’ world, every act, utterance, manifestation or whatever has its worldwide repercussions is at least immediately included in a system – a ‘globe’ – of worldwide exchange. The internet and the world market are only the most eye-catching illustrations. The limits of our world – the ‘world’ we are living in, in the existential, phenomenological sense of the term – coincide with the boundaries of the entire planet. This is of course the result of a historical process. For centuries that planet was to a large extent a series of unknown, undiscovered continents. And before the era of discoveries – in antiquity and in medieval times – we even were not interested in discovering dark continents. Only towards the end of the Middle Ages did we become interested in discovering the ‘covered’, in laying bare the unknown. And so our way of being, our ‘world, discovered’ – read: conquered – the whole ‘globe’. Our world got globalized.

Indeed, it is *we* who have discovered and conquered the planet and made it into our world – ‘we’, meaning the West. It was the project of the Western ‘world’ to discover and – as Nancy put it – to ‘recover’ the entire planet, to make the whole globe its ‘world’. During the last five centuries, we *made* the globe – the world, in the objective sense of the word – into our ‘world’ in the phenomenological sense of the word². Our ‘world’ or our way of being became one of creating and discovering, and for that purpose we ‘subjected’ all other ‘worlds’ – and at the end the whole planet – and forced them to live in our ‘world’. It is this ‘world’ – our world – that now has recovered the whole ‘globe’. A few decades ago, there were still several worlds, at least there was the capitalistic Western and the communist Eastern one. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, we had to face again what since the French Revolution we never stopped to believe: that on this planet, there is only one world, which offers a place for every one, for every ‘citoyen’, for every culture. We had to face again that the new ‘world’ we created in 1789 had an intrinsic ‘globalized’, ‘mondialized’ dimension.

It is precisely for this reason that our world got stuck in an impasse. This is at least what Nancy claims:

“[B]y this movement [of globalization], it [the West] has disappeared as the one who was supposed to give the course of this world his orientation”.³

Precisely because we successfully finished our project and made our world as great as the whole planet, we no longer know how to continue that project. “The world has lost its capacity to make world”, Nancy writes.⁴ Certainly, we have not stopped discovering unknown dark continents or creating new things, and we are still sure to obtain new results from them, but we nevertheless feel we have reached a kind of an end. This is for the same reason that we succeeded in making the whole planet our world – i.e. in ‘globalizing’ our world – we no longer know exactly what to do with this world, we are no longer able to “make world”. All

² Nancy gives a clarifying example of ‘world’ in the phenomenological sense of the term by referring to the “world of Debussy” or “the world of the hospital” (see Nancy, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35).

³ “L’Occident en est venu à recouvrir le monde, et dans ce mouvement il disparaît en tant qu’il était censé orienter la marche de ce monde.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 15-16.)

⁴ “Le monde a perdu sa capacité de faire monde: il semble avoir gagné seulement celle de multiplier à la puissance de ses moyens une prolifération de l’immonde qui, jusqu’ici, quoi qu’on puisse penser des illusions rétrospectives, jamais dans l’histoire n’avait ainsi marqué la totalité de l’orbe.” (*op. cit.*, p. 16). It is in that sense one can speak of the ‘end of the world’, at least the end of the ‘western world’ (see for instance: J.-L. Nancy, *Le sens du monde*, Galilée, Paris, 1993, p. 15-16).

the more, however, we seem to know that, with the same capacity, we are able to *'unmake'*, to *destroy* the world. To quote Nancy again:

it is as if the world is driven and traversed by a death drive, which in a little while will have nothing else to destroy than the world itself.⁵

It is precisely our technical omnipotence that gives us a feeling of an embarrassing 'impotence', of an incapacity to act in conformity to the global 'world' – the global way of being – we created.

Unlike the antique world, ours is no longer a world of masters to whom the majority of the people owe obedience. We even removed our spiritual godly Master, the cornerstone of the medieval world. Modernity made us masters of ourselves and the 'high tech' world we created made us masters over the whole planet (and, virtually, over the entire universe). It is this absolute mastery that, paradoxically, we cannot master. It is as if the sovereign mastery we obtained is only able to manifest itself as a brutal and self-destructive negativity. Only the threat of an explosive power by which we can blow away our whole world, including ourselves, gives us an idea of our own omnipotent sovereignty. The ultimate realization of our globalized world seems to involve the possibility of its total self-destruction, a possibility, towards which we do not know how to behave.

That the world destroys itself is not a hypothesis: in a sense, it is the observation, which is feeding every thought of (and about) the world.⁶

In this respect, it becomes clearer why globalization forces us to reconsider philosophy's old metaphysical questions. What is still a 'world' when, becoming total, it manifests itself first of all as what can be destroyed or even destroy itself? And who are 'we', when the highest realization of our technical capacity converges with our capacity to annihilate ourselves? How can we enjoy the worldwide realization of our project (the project of freedom and science, in other words the project of the Enlightenment), if the sovereignty we obtained is mortally dangerous? Does enjoyment then equal destruction and, ultimately, self-destruction? And what, in this case, is enjoyment? What is sovereignty, freedom? Globalization compels us to reconsider the most basic axioms of our modern world. In the most radical way we must even reconsider what a 'world' is, what or who 'we' are.

2. ... has to turn into "mondialisation"

To deal with these questions, Nancy uses Heideggerian philosophy as his main frame of reference. In *La création du monde ou la mondialisation* he refers, for instance, to Heidegger's essay on 'The Age of the Word Picture' (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*, 1938).⁷ There Heidegger explains how, since Descartes, we have reduced the world to a picture, to a representation or an object situated *outside* us. Consequently we have put ourselves – as spectators, as subjects of representation – *outside* that world picture. Separated from each other as subject and object, man and world have lost their ontological inner correlation. They have become each other's 'outside'. It is true that precisely this broken correlation gave man an unlimited power over the world and made him the high-tech genius that he nowadays is.

⁵ "Pour finir, tout se passe comme si le monde se travaillait et se traversait d'une pulsion de mort qui n'aurait bientôt rien d'autre à détruire que le monde lui-même. (*Ibidem*)

⁶ "Que le monde se détruise n'est pas une hypothèse: c'est en un sens le constat dont se nourrit aujourd'hui toute pensée du monde." (*Op. cit.*, p. 17.)

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 31, 38. See: M. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1980 (1950), p.73-110.

The other side of the coin however is that his unlimited power threatens to turn into a self-destructive negativity. As the Cartesian ‘subject’ he took a position outside the world and so inherited the position of the monotheistic God when he created the universe. But now that he is near to obtaining the omnipotence God once had, he seems more like the Devil, only able to destroy the world by which he became like a God.

That is why man has to reconsider the ‘world’, not as what is *outside*, but as the place where he irreversibly is *in*. Even when he claims a position outside, he can only do so from *within* that world. His being in the world is constitutive to his being as such. Rather than having a relation to the world, he *is* that relation. He is, as Heidegger calls it, a ‘being-in-the-world’ (an ‘*in-der-Welt-sein*’). He is not a subject constituted by the gap between him and the world, as implied in the modern axiom of the Cartesian doubting *cogito*. He *is* the very place where a world can take place, where a world can *be*. He *is* the very place where being can occur, can take place, can *be*. That is why Heidegger defines man as a ‘*Dasein*’, as a place where being (‘*Sein*’) can be ‘*da*’ (there), where it can occur, can take place.

Our globalized world is not the totality of all the objective things – beings – there are; totality *as such* also is an *event*, in the strong sense of the word. It is not simply ‘all what is’; it is not simply the sum of all beings it contains. That sum itself is an *event* that *occurs*, *happens*, *take place*, each time in a unique, singular and contingent way. To Nancy, we should consider globalization as such a radical kind of ‘event’. And this changes the very way we have to consider ourselves. For the *Dasein* we are is nothing else than the *open place* for that ‘event’, for that *being* (in the active sense of the word) of our globalized world. We are the ‘*da*’ of this ‘*sein*’. In other words, the *Dasein* we are is the place where being *differs* from itself; it is the open place where being as such – or, which amounts to the same – the totality of what is – happens each *singular* time again in a *different*, *unique* and *contingent* way. That is why our world, even when it recovers the whole planet, is *openness*: a radical openness, not towards a different, ‘other world’ (as taught in many religions), but towards itself, towards the alterity of its own ‘happening’. Nancy writes:

A world is precisely this where is place for the whole world [for every one, *pour tout le monde*]: but place in the real sense of the word, a place that really *gives reason to be there* (in this world). Otherwise it is a ‘globe’ or a ‘glome’, i.e. an «exile soil» and a «valley of tears».⁸

In ancient times, our world was openness towards another world: the ‘next world’, the ‘world beyond’, the realm of God and his angels. Our mortal, human world was only an “exile soil” or a “valley of tears”. But with God’s death, this openness to another world has become senseless. The world has lost its grounding ‘outside’. What remained was solely our inner, at first sight groundless, ‘worldly’ world. This is what Nancy calls the “*mondanisation du monde*”. The world became exclusively the one described in Christian times as terrestrial, finite, mortal, et cetera. And only this mortality and finitude could give it sense. Nevertheless, this finite, ‘worldly’ world – ‘ce monde *mondain*’ – recovered little by little the whole globe and so seemed to overcome its finitude. It regained a new kind of boundlessness. This finite worldly world conquered the whole globe and even, virtually, the entire universe. This is what Nancy refers to, using here the old word ‘globe’ or ‘glomus’ (which we can still recognize in the word ‘agglomeration’, an limitless growing of the city [*urbs*] – until it reached the whole world [*orbs*]): this is what is meant by “*Urbi et orbi*”, the title of the first chapter of his book). He describes it himself as

⁸ “Un monde est précisément cela où il y a place pour tout le monde: mais place véritable, celle qui fait qu’il y a véritablement *lieu d’y être* (dans ce monde). Sinon, ce n’est pas «monde»: c’est «globe» ou «glome», c’est «terre d’exil» et «vallée de larmes.» (Op. cit., p. 34.)

a conjunction of a boundless expansion of techno-science, a correlative exponential growth of the population, an aggravation among it of all kind of inequalities – economic, biological, cultural – and a confused dissipation of certainties, images, identities of what the world was [...].⁹

This confused ‘globe’ where nothing is sure any longer and everything has become possible – in a word this “glome” – nevertheless threatens to lose itself in its limitedness. According to Nancy, it therefore remains, after all, still a *closed* world, blindly locked up within its own boundaries. This boundless and infinite “glome” or “globe” – this ‘globalization’ – has not yet encountered its own specificity. It has not yet faced its boundlessness or its globalization *as such*. This “glome” or “globe” still remains an indifferent, limitless accumulation of ‘conglomeration’ of beings. It has not yet assumed its own being – its own ‘event’ – *as such*. Or, as Nancy puts it in his French parlance: “globalisation” has not yet become “mondialisation”. It has not yet become “un monde”, a ‘world’ in the phenomenological or, more exactly, Heideggerian sense or the word. Instead, it remains a ‘globe’. It has not assumed its boundlessness as its genuine way of being. It has not yet made its boundlessness ‘its own’.

Nancy articulates the transition from “globe” (or “glome”) to “monde” – from “globalisation” to “mondialisation” – in manifestly Hegelian terms.¹⁰ In all its boundlessness, globalization still remains a “false infinite”. Its movement – which Hegel would think in dialectical terms as being driven by ‘negativity’s force’ – is indeed an infinite movement. However, this infinite movement has to negate *itself* as well. It has to negate its own infinite and so realize itself as its contrary, i.e. *as finite*. It has to realize its infinite *as finite*. The infinite has to ‘actualize’ itself, it has to be realized in a contingent, finite act. That is where, according to Nancy, actual globalization got stuck. It has not already realized (actualized) its infinity *as finite*. For this reason it remains what Hegel calls a “false infinite”, an infinite that has not yet negated itself – i.e. realized itself – as a finite, contingent act.

To be sure, Nancy is not a hard-line Hegelian for whom this kind of finite, contingent act implies at the same time the reinstallation of a higher – more spiritual – infinity. What is at stake here is not what Hegel calls “*Aufhebung*” (sublation). For Nancy, the realization of the infinite is to be considered as a radical finite act, an act whose finitude cannot be ‘sublated’. We must realize our infinite, boundless ‘globe’ as a ‘world’, a “*monde*”, which is and remains per definition a finite contingent ‘world’. Certainly, this ‘world’ is thoroughly traversed by negativity, as Hegel has rightly emphasized, but this negativity is more the source of enduring restlessness, rather than the dialectical path toward an “absolute knowledge”, as is explained in the famous last chapter of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. What Nancy stresses in Hegel’s ‘negativity’, is this never-ending restlessness.¹¹ In a way, this emphasis is a very Heideggerian one.

But what does it mean to realize a globalized infinite world as being finite? What does it mean to be the finite ‘*da*’ of an infinite globalized ‘*sein*’? These questions circle around a certain paradox. In his book, Nancy mentions two important concepts in which this paradox comes to light: *sovereignty* and *enjoyment (jouissance)*. The paradox itself will be articulated in a deconstruction of the concept of ‘creation’.

3. Sovereignty, enjoyment ...

⁹ “Dans ce *glomus* se joue la conjonction d’une croissance indéfinie de la techno-science, d’une croissance corrélatrice exponentielle de la population, d’une aggravation en elle des inégalités de tous les ordres – économique, biologique, culturel – et d’une dissipation égarée des certitudes, des images et des identités de ce qui fut le monde [...]”. (*Op. cit.*, p. 14-15.)

¹⁰ Nancy refers to § 93 and 94 of the *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* (*op. cit.*, p. 29).

¹¹ The book on Hegel Nancy wrote has the significant subtitle: “The restlessness of the negative” (J.-L. Nancy, *Hegel: L’inquiétude du négatif*, Hachette, Paris, 1997).

In the first part of “Urbi et orbi” (the first chapter of *La creation du monde ...*), Nancy articulates the problem of globalization by referring to the Marxist theory. For Marx the human *Dasein* is defined by labor or production. Man is the kind of being that is able to produce, to create himself. Not in an immediate way (like the monotheistic God did), but by mediation, i.e. by producing and creating a ‘world’. At the same time, man himself is produced and created *by* that world. Only as producer of a world *and* as produced by a world is man autonomous, i.e. his own ‘producer’. Only as a ‘being-in-the-world’ is man a self-creator. This is, in Heideggerian terms, the Marxist definition of man’s autonomy and freedom. So, for Marx too, freedom – or, which amounts to the same, labor or production – is a ‘worldly’ freedom, in the phenomenological, Heideggerian sense of the word. That is why freedom, rather than setting people against each other, brings them together instead. It makes them share a common world and build up a community. Not as individuals, one separated from the other, but as ‘singular plural’ ones, sharing the same ‘world’.¹²

Certainly, it is true that this same freedom – in the shape of a ‘liberal’ industrial production-process – set people against each other and created the socio-economic catastrophe Marx’s oeuvre so sharply analyzed. The world has fallen apart into separate, alienated individuals, who, instead of being master over their own productions, were themselves mastered *by* these productions. Man’s world became an alienated one, in which ‘community’ and ‘communication’ coincided with a limitless ‘free market’, i.e. an exchange system of autonomous, fetishized economic products. Everyone – capitalist as well as proletarian – became the slave of free market’s ‘false infinity’. The social result was disastrous: a world divided into two worlds, into two classes, fighting each other in an apparently endless class struggle.

Nevertheless, it is Marx’s claim that only *in and by* this struggle can man regain his lost freedom, i.e. the enjoyment of his labor. More precisely, it is the *globalization* of both capitalism and class struggle that can give man back his unalienated ‘world’. Both alienation and class struggle must inevitably increase and, at the end, recover the whole planet. A small capitalist class will increasingly dominate the whole of the free market world, in which the masses of proletarians are more and more oppressed. But it is precisely this worldwide oppression that will make ‘the proletarians of all countries’ join one another and start the revolution. The very globalization of free market – and thus of capitalistic tyranny – will leave the proletarians no way to escape *outside* this world. They will be forced to liberate themselves *within this world* and therefore to change this world as such. Moreover, they will be forced to take over from the superseded capitalists a *globalized* world and to rearrange – to recreate, to reform, to ‘revolve’ – the *whole* globe. Their revolution will make the whole globe to their ‘world’. So, finally the whole planet will be one free world, a world where labor no longer is alienated, but becomes pure enjoyment. Finally, man will be the creator of his own ‘world’. Man, not as an individual, but as made by the community that made him. In a word: as ‘communist’. Nancy summarizes it strikingly:

If it is allowed to summarize in an extreme way: commerce brings about communication, which requires community and communism. Or also: man creates the world, which creates man, who creates himself as absolute value and enjoyment of that value.¹³

For centuries man was a slave, a slave of his own ‘world’, of the fetishistic reification of what he was not able to see as his own creation. In ancient times, he was a slave of immortal and

¹² Nancy elaborates this idea in *Être singulier pluriel* (Galilée, Paris, 1996).

¹³ “S’il est permis de concentrer à l’extrême: le commerce engendre la communication, laquelle exige la communauté, le communisme. Ou bien encore : l’homme crée le monde, qui produit l’homme, qui se crée comme valeur absolue et jouissance de celle-ci.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 21.)

mortal masters, in Christian times he was a slave of the One God and his so called noble servants, and in modern times he even became – and still is – a slave of his freedom, i.e. his free market. All that time, the sense and the value of his life and world were situated *outside*. Full enjoyment was postponed to the Beyond. Globalization forced him to acknowledge that there is no outside at all, that he himself is the sense of his life and that his *raison d'être* is to enjoy life here and now, to enjoy 'worldly' life, not because of one or other exterior value but because of the "absolute value" he is himself. He finally lives in a world that is its own *raison d'être*. To have sense, world and man – man, precisely as 'being-in-this-world' – need no longer have some transcendent reason or some higher value. The world as *being there*, and man as its *Dasein* (as the place where that word can be there) owe their full sense to their own being. They no longer need any reason to be what they are. They are 'without reason' and this is the highest "value" they can enjoy. So man and world have regained their absolute sovereignty, the sovereignty of the Angelus Silesius's "rose", which is as well known "*ohne warum*", "without reason".¹⁴

To Nancy, who is still interpreting Marx here, this makes sovereignty different from political power in the common sense of the word. For power is per definition subordinated to an aim or a reason, while sovereignty is enjoyment and therefore 'without reason'.

Power is built upon itself as upon an ever sufficient reason for its exertion, even if it is destructive or self-destructive. Enjoyment does not need any reason.¹⁵

Does sovereignty, then, imply that man is no longer hindered by any limit and that he no longer needs to give account for whatever he is doing? Certainly not. The sovereignty he obtains is the sovereignty of his 'being-in-the-world'. He is more than ever responsible for the world, certainly now that he has become a 'being-in-the-globalized-world. Neither 'God' nor 'fate' can lighten this responsibility any longer, as was the case in earlier times. Now it is more than ever exclusively us, mortal human beings, who have to make the world. And we must make it for no other reason than for our enjoyment, i.e. for the 'without reason' we are.

However, is not the 'globe' or 'glome', i.e. the world, which is not yet acknowledged as world, the capitalistic free market, is not that 'worldless' world too 'without reason'? Or, as he argues in another passage:

the 'without reason' can take a double face, both as capital and as mystic rose, which represents the absolute value of being "without reason".¹⁶

In other words, was not the very problem of globalization the fact that everything has lost its reason, because it has become part of a 'false infinite', i.e. a global system where anything, including man himself, indifferently is exchangeable for anything? Surely, *within* the system, nothing or no one is ever 'without reason'. Their very 'raison d'être' is given by that system. It is to be found – and *only* to be found – in the fact that they can be exchanged for something or someone other. But globalization means precisely that this system, which within its boundaries gives everything a reason, has itself become – *as such, as totality* - 'without reason'. It has become an autonomously functioning system which no longer has any aim or purpose except itself and its own aimless boundlessness. In fact, such a globalized system is the summit of alienation, because it is even able to function *beyond* the self-preservation of

¹⁴ Angelus Silezius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* (1675), I, 289 (see the motto at the top of this paper). Nancy refers to it in: *op. cit.*, p. 47, 53.

¹⁵ "La puissance se fonde sur elle-même comme sur une raison toujours suffisante de son exercice. La jouissance ne rend pas raison de soi." (*Op. cit.*, p. 30.)

¹⁶ "[...] c'est que la sans-raison puisse prendre la double face du capital et de la rose mystique qui représente la valeur absolue du « sans raison »" (*op. cit.*, p. 53).

the system-holders. That is why, as Nancy observed, we have to be aware of the death-drive at work in the very heart of our ‘globalization’. The system can function smoothly without looking after us. As if it were not *our* system. As if *we* were not its very *raison d’être*.

This is what globalization forces us into: to become the *raison d’être* of the global system again. This is the revolutionary task it compels to: to ‘revolve’ the global system into a ‘world’, ‘our’ world; or, as Nancy puts it: to change “*globalisation*” into “*mondialisation*”. And the whole problem, therefore, is that we have to assume globalization’s ‘without reason’. We have to make it *ours*. Indeed, what we should not do is give a reason again to our new world in order to correct the lack of reason of the old one. For our new world too will have no reason outside itself, and in that sense it will also be ‘without reason’. This is, after all, how Nancy defines world’s regained sovereignty: as gratuitous enjoyment. But instead of denying this sovereignty as being ‘without reason’, which is what happens in the ‘false infinite’ of actual globalization, we should affirmatively assume it.

4. “Creation” as deconstruction

Nevertheless, the question remains *how* we should we do so? What kind of revolution – and in fact, to Nancy, this task is a revolutionary one, prepared by the great revolutions of the last two centuries¹⁷ – is able to affirmatively assume the sovereignty of our ‘globe’ becoming a ‘world’? For Nancy it is clear that such a revolution does not consist in a frontal attack against – or a straight destruction of – the global system. Instead of blowing its construction away, we rather have to *deconstruct* it.

At first sight, it is strange to see Nancy making use of a very *constructive* word in order to articulate this *deconstruction*. He focuses on a term, which is full of old metaphysical and even theological reminiscences, namely ‘creation’. To counter the false infinity of globalization or, which amounts to the same, to counter our existing *Weltbild* – i.e. our world defined as ‘picture’, as ‘representation’ – we should not so much create a new world (because this world too should be the result of representation), but assume that the world is *always already* created and that, nevertheless, only we are its creators. Therefore, so Nancy writes, a “thought of the world” – a thought affirming the world in its proper (phenomenological) sense – must go beyond representation:

So, to separate a thought of the world from ‘representation’, there is no more precise access than this: to comprehend again the «world» by one of its most constant themes in western tradition – in so far this is also tradition of monotheism – i.e. the theme of creation.¹⁸

Here we come across a strategy typical for the way Nancy deconstructs the metaphysical tradition. He takes one of the most metaphysical terms of a particular tradition, he interprets it ‘literally’, and from this perspective he performs a ‘displacement’ of that entire tradition. In *La création du monde ou la mondialisation* he zooms in on ‘creation’, one of the most central terms of our western – Christian and, more broadly, monotheistic – tradition, and takes this term literally for what it means: creation *ex nihilo*.¹⁹ God did not construct or build the world;

¹⁷ See for instance his beautiful essay “Changement du monde”, that gives an affirmative interpretation of ‘the sixties’ and their revolutionary élan (J.-L. Nancy, *La pensée dérobée*, Galilée, Paris, 2001, p. 139-148).

¹⁸ “Or, pour éloigner de la représentation la pensée du monde, il n’y a pas de voie plus précise que celle-ci: ressaisir le « monde » selon un des motifs constants dans la tradition de l’occident – pour autant su’elle est aussi tradition du monothéisme –, à savoir le motif de la création.” (*Op.cit.*, p. 54.)

¹⁹ “Si la «création» veut dire quelque chose, c’est l’exact opposé de toute forme de production au sens d’une fabrication qui suppose un donné, un projet et un fabriquant. L’idée de création telle que l’ont élaborée les pensées les plus diverses et les plus convergentes à la fois, chez les mystiques des trois monothéismes mais aussi à travers des dispositifs complexes de toutes les grandes métaphysiques, c’est l’idée du *ex nihilo*.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 55.)

he called it up out of the great Nothing that preceded the act of creation. To the Christian tradition, this means that nothing has value or sense *in itself*, for everything is grounded in a groundless Nothing. Surely, according to this tradition, things have sense or value, but this is due to the almighty goodness of God who delivered man and world from that Nothing, or, in other words, who created them *ex nihilo*. Sense and value are grounded in a transcendent ‘outside’: this is what is essentially meant by *creatio ex nihilo*.

Nancy stresses that the most effective critique of this theological metaphysics came precisely from metaphysics itself. Instead of declaring this ‘outside’ non-existent, they tried to think it *inside* the world, *within* the boundaries of being. This was at least the intention of the great rational tradition in modern philosophy, so Nancy stresses, and for that, he refers explicitly to Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz.²⁰ They wanted to think God (a name for this transcendent ‘outside’) *within* the frontiers of being. Their rational systems tried to articulate the *transcendent* God as an *immanent* one, a ‘interior outside’. So, rather than thinking it *away*, they ‘displaced’ this ‘outside’. They attempted to give it a place *within* being. Each in his own way claimed that the ‘outside’ is to be situated *inside*, in the inner heart of being. This was also what Hegel’s ‘power of the negative’ was about. The outside (the negative) was the very place where the inside meets itself. Being itself was not *open* towards a transcendent outside, it was a dialectic of openness towards itself *within itself*. And according to Hegel, at the end, the dialectic of this openness runs into the apotheosis of a final *Aufhebung*, the realm of ‘absolute consciousness’. There the openness meets itself as what gives being its final boundaries. So finally, for Hegel, being, in its very openness, nevertheless is closing.

Philosophy after Hegel tried again and again to reopen this openness of being, and attempted to give the ‘outside’ *as such* (as radical outside) an open place *within* being. It is clear that Nancy’s thought occurs within this tributary of Heidegger’s. For Nancy, the openness that being is in itself, is more precisely the very *place* where being occurs. It is the place where being creates itself, where it ‘grows’ out of nothing. Nancy refers to the etymological background of the word *creatio*, “*cresco*”, which means to grow, to get born.²¹ And the place where being ‘grows’ is to be considered not as something, but as nothing, as a ‘nihil’. It is the place of a ‘*creatio ex nihilo*’. But this ‘nihil’ is not something other than being, it is the very place where being *occurs*, where it takes place – in the active sense of the word. It is the place where being, even if it is happening in its totality (as is the case in globalization), does not coincide with itself. It is the place where being *differs* from itself, where it rests upon the *gap* between ‘itself and itself’. This very gap is the ‘outside’ *within* being. It is the Nothing, out of which being is created or, more exactly, is permanently creating itself.

For Nancy, the modern metaphysical tradition is a progressive displacement of the ‘creation’ that being is. Globalization is the most recent event that forces us to reconsider – to deconstruct, to displace – that ontological ‘creation’. As he recapitulates it:

[...] when the ‘becoming world’ [la mondialisation] (i.e. the detheologization) displaces the value – immanentizes it – before the ‘becoming world’ displaces the production of the value – by making it universal –, both are displacing «creation» in the “non-reason” of the world. And this displacement is not a transposition, a «secularization» of the onto-theological or metaphysical-Christian scheme: it is the deconstruction of it, it makes it empty, and it opens an other play area – and a risky one – in which we hardly can enter.²²

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 55, 90.

²² “[...] si la mondialisation (la déthéologisation) déplace la valeur – l’immanentise – avant que la mondialisation déplace la production de la valeur – en la faisant universelle –, les deux ensemble déplacent la «création» en «non-raison» du monde. Et ce déplacement n’est pas une transposition, une «sécularisation» du schème onto-

Value's ground has been 'displaced' from the transcendent realm of God to the immanent word of man (a displacement that for Nancy is to be defined rather as a "detheologization" than as a "secularization")²³. Then, the immanent, 'worldly' value has been displaced into a globalized free market value. And both have displaced "creation": they made it sovereign, enjoying, 'without reason', "non-reason". This displacement lands us in another place, another space, a "risky" and dangerous space, wherein we can hardly enter. This is the space beyond representation, a beyond we have to enter but which is still lying before us, in the future.²⁴

Indeed, we *have not yet* entered this "space". We have not yet assumed the "space" where being grows up – creates itself – out of the 'nihil' it is. We have not yet assumed the place where our world takes place. In other words, we have not yet assumed ourselves as *Dasein* or, more correctly, as *Mitdasein*²⁵, i.e. as the place, the 'da', of that globalized being, of that 'mundialized world' ('*mondialisation*').

5. Question

We have *not* yet done so. We still *have* to do so. 'Not yet done' and 'still to have': in a way, this is where, here, Nancy's thought is ending: an acknowledged negativity and an assented task. We have to know that we are living in a kind of suspense between the 'globe' ('*globalisation*') and the 'world' ('*mondialisation*')²⁶, between the false infinite and the finite actualization of that infinity yet to come. Our 'globe' is *not yet* our 'world': this is what we first of all should be aware of. But for all that, we must recognize that this knowledge alone does not change much. For we still have something to do. Or, more exactly, knowledge itself has to act. Thought only makes sense as *praxis*, as an *act*, and more precisely as an act creating a world. Otherwise, man remains locked up in his thoughts, i.e. in his 'representations'. He remains locked up in the false infinity of our modern '*Weltbild*'. The radical praxis Nancy refers to has to break the very logic of representation. It has to assume the sovereign creative 'nihil' denied by representational logic, and so create a 'world'. But if 'creating a world' is an act done by a practical *thought*, does this not mean that after all, this act still remain a question of thought, of knowledge, of consciousness?

At the very least, it is a question of creating or "inventing forms"²⁷, in which the world can be 'symbolized'. This is what, at the end of his essay "Urbi et orbi", Nancy describes as the "current task" of our time: creating a new "symbolization" of the world, or, more precisely, in creating finally a symbolization of the '*world*', 'world' taken here in the strongly phenomenological sense of the word. And he immediately adds "this may seem the greatest risk humanity has to face".

théologique ou métaphysique-chrétien : il en est la déconstruction, l'évidement, et il ouvre un autre espace de jeu – et de risque – dans lequel nous entrons à peine.." (*Op. cit.*, p. 55-56.)

²³ Nancy is here very near to the thesis of Marcel Gauchet who argues that modernity rather 'leaves' religion ("sortie de la religion) than it is to be considered as a secularization (M. Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde*, Gallimard, Paris, 1985).

²⁴ See a few pages before the preceding quotation: "Il est à tous égards non seulement raisonnable, mais exigé par la vigueur et la rigueur de la pensée, de se refuser aux représentations: l'avenir est précisément ce qui excède la représentation. Et nous avons appris qu'il s'agit pour nous de ressaisir le monde hors de la représentation." (*Op. cit.*, p. 53-54.)

²⁵ To Nancy, *Dasein* is always already a *Mitdasein*. In almost all his books published in the nineties (and especially in *Être singulier pluriel*) Nancy attempts to radicalize this *Mitdasein* more than Heidegger did, from whom he borrowed the concept (see *Sein und Zeit*, §25-27).

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

Our current task is nothing less than the task to create a form or a symbolization of the world. This may seem the greatest risk humanity ever has had to face.²⁸

In what follows, Nancy leaves this “greatest risk” unexplained. But it is clear what, on the most fundamental level, this risk implies. For one can easily imagine how difficult it is to create a “symbolization of the world” without falling into the trap of *representing* it, without creating a new ‘Weltbild’, i.e. without falling back into the “Zeit des Weltbildes” we precisely have to leave behind. How can the “symbolization” or the “inventing of forms” Nancy refers to, go beyond representation? It seems quite impossible to manage this without the means of representation.

In that case, there seems to be only one way out. These representations should at least represent their own incapacity to represent a ‘world’. They should be representations immediately representing the finitude of their own infinite capacity. In fact, this seems to be the way to give the false infinity its requisite finite realization, its ‘actualization’ as Nancy calls it, referring to a Hegelian concept.²⁹

And indeed, without so naming it, Nancy offers us such a kind of ‘self-broken’, finite representation. At least this is how one can interpret the fact that the risky task he refers to consists particularly in putting a question mark after everything that represents our world, after every act, every “gesture”, every “attitude” that we present. Two sentences further, he characterizes this task as follows:

It is the extremely concrete and specified task – a task, which can be but a fight – to put to each gesture, to each attitude, to each *habitus* and to each *ethos* the question: how do you engage the world? How do you refer to a real enjoyment of the world and not to an appropriation of a quantity of equivalences [i.e. the free market]?³⁰

Or, to clarify the last question: How do you realize the sovereignty our world obtained by getting globalized? How do you affirm the ‘*ex nihilo*’ from which we create the world?

Let us read the quoted passage carefully. What is our risky task said to be precisely? Not so much to realize what these questions are asking for, but to put these questions – in their very quality of question – to everything that we are thinking and doing. We have to question the way we are ‘habiting’ the world, i.e. our “*habitus*”, our “*ethos*” (as Heidegger defines it).³¹ The new *ethos* this risky task exhorts us is precisely to *question* our *ethos*, to make *questioning* itself our new *ethos*. And by doing so, at the same time we create a “symbolization”. More exactly, we represent our world by representations, in which the beyond of representation is suggested. So, we represent the world as a representation that opens towards its beyond, i.e. towards its *inner* beyond, towards the beyond it is in the very heart of its being, towards an openness being itself is.

It is this questioning, elevated into an *ethos*, that is the precise “form” of “symbolization” the “risky task” was asking for. This is the way the infinity of our globalized world can be actualized, i.e. can be realized in a finite act. The only concrete form of such an act Nancy is able to give, is the act of questioning. This is the act, which opens effectively the ‘false infinity’ of our globalization and brings it to the openness, the *nihil*, the self-creation and the groundlessness it is grounded in. And this is also the act that realizes us as what we really are:

²⁸ “Notre tâche aujourd’hui n’est rien de moins que la tâche de créer une forme ou une symbolisation du monde. Cela peut paraître le plus grand risque que l’humanité ait eu à affronter.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 59.)

²⁹ See, as already mentioned before, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³⁰ “C’est la tâche extrêmement concrète et déterminée – une tâche qui ne peut qu’être une lutte – de poser à chaque geste, à chaque conduite, à chaque *habitus*, à chaque *ethos* la question : comment engages-tu le monde ? comment renvoies-tu à la jouissance du monde en tant que tel, et non à l’appropriation d’une quantité d’équivalence ?” (*Op. cit.*, p. 59.)

³¹ “Un monde est un *ethos*, un *habitus* et une habitation.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 36; see also p. 58.)

Dasein, *Mitdasein*, the common ('mit') place ('da') where the world *as such* – i.e. as sovereignty, as enjoyment, as 'without reason' – can be ('sein'). In this ethos of questioning, man is no longer the subject of representation, is delivered to the singular open place which men (inherently plural) cannot appropriate, because they themselves – as *Mitdasein* – are nothing more than the place where this representation – and in our case this representation as the entire world, as 'globalization' – takes place, occurs, happens.

There – in this *Dasein* assumed as such, in this *Dasein* assumed as the place where a 'world' is 'habited' and therefore assumed as such – a 'world' can *properly* occur, take place, 'be'. In the context where Nancy articulates this "taking place" ("*avoir lieu*"), he writes:

Taking place is occurring in an authentic way [*proprement*], it is not only «being near» to occur, it is not only happening. It is occurring as something authentic and occurring as authentic to a subject. It is what takes place in a world and for the reason of that world. A world is the common place of a set of places: presences or dispositions for possibilities of taking place.³²

The *Dasein* where a 'world' occurs is a 'common *Dasein*', a 'being-in-common' ('*être en commun*'). It is the place where a world differs from itself and takes place in the very space – the displacement, the "*espacement*" – of that difference. That is why this place is never a full presence, but rather a presence full of absence, where new presences can take place incessantly, in a word, a presence of "dispositions for possibilities". And these dispositions are not given a chance by the act of a Cartesian subject (which defines itself as bearer of representations), but by the act of a Heideggerian and Nancyan 'subject', i.e. by human beings assuming themselves as bearer of the event of the world, as *Dasein*, which is for Nancy, more radical than Heidegger claims, *Mitdasein*.

In that kind of *Dasein*, a world takes place *properly*, *authentically*. There, *Dasein* assumes itself *properly*, *authentically*. Do we here, in Nancy's reasoning, come upon a logic of authenticity? Does not the risky task we are standing for ask us to assume *authentically* to be the *Dasein* of the globalized world?

Indeed, Nancy's thought ends here in a certain appeal for authenticity. However, it is not a substantial authenticity, an authenticity giving back man's very essence. It is a strictly *formal* authenticity, which consists in assuming that such a real, substantial authenticity is by definition impossible. *Dasein* – *Mitdasein* – is authentic only when it assumes it does not coincide with its substantial self, but with the openness it is, openness ("exposition") towards the world, openness towards the openness the world itself is. It is only authentic in being aware it can never claim authenticity.

In other words, it can only claim authenticity as something that questions authenticity. We can only claim it as a *question*, as an ethos of *questioning*. By questioning the ethos we now have towards globalization, we can realize openness towards the 'world', towards "*mondialisation*", towards the openness the globalized world *is*. But we can only be this openness by questioning the cunning closedness our globalization actually is. In Nancy's thought, *questioning* and *formal authenticity* seems to be two sides of the same coin. The way he articulates the question of globalization can only end up in a cultivated way of questioning and in the elevation of that question to the very 'essence' of authenticity.

6. Double bind

³² "Avoir lieu, c'est arriver proprement, c'est ne pas seulement « faillir » arriver, et ce n'est pas seulement « se passer ». C'est arriver comme un propre et arriver en propre à un sujet. Ce qui a lieu a lieu dans un monde et en raison de ce monde. Un monde est le lieu commun d'un ensemble de lieux : de présences e de dispositions pour des avoir lieu possibles." (*Op. cit.*, p. 36.)

Nonetheless, there is in Nancy's thought a certain trace or even an onset of another formulation of the same problem, which does not necessarily run into a logic of (formal) authenticity. In "Vaille que vaille" for instance, an essay written two years before "Urbi et orbi", Nancy reflects upon the same problem of 'globalization', and there too, his reasoning runs into a question. Again, this question repeats the whole problem precisely *as question*. However, here, it is still a 'naked' question. It is not yet assumed as an *ethos*, as it was the case in former essay. It is still a question, to which that kind of ethos is only one of the *possible* answers. In the last paragraph of that essay he speaks of a "deal" we have to make, a "transaction" from world market's 'false infinity' to an assumed 'finite infinity', i.e. the "transaction" from (what he in "Urbi et orbi" calls) "*globalisation*" to "*mondialisation*".

What kind of transaction man finally has to make towards himself: a transaction, in which he exchanges absolute value for a indefinite increase of relative value, or [in other words] a transaction, in which he exchanges both the sense of his own existence and the sense of the world for the "*vaille que vaille*" [it is worth what it is worth] of an interminable sense that radiates in all directions? But is it really a transaction? [...] How far can he go in being the dupe or his own market? How far, on the contrary, can he go in being brave and hold himself for the one who resists all exchange? Or is he that extraordinary that at the same time he is able to be of both sides? Of the side of general equivalence and of the side of absolute absence of equivalence: on the one side indefinite rate exchange, on the other side finite images capturing infinity? Two ways of capturing infinity? One opposite to the other?³³

Globalization makes us face the choice between, on the one hand, the endless infinity of the 'globe', which is, as we know from the other essay, the *inauthentic* way of inhabiting the globalized world, and, on the other, the finite infinity of a world assumed as such, which is the *authentic* way of inhabiting our 'globe'. We seem to have the choice between two alternatives. If, at least, there is not a *third* choice, Nancy immediately adds: the choice of choosing *both* or, which amounts to the same, of not choosing at all. Maybe the two opposite ways of capturing the infinity are both equally proper to man. Maybe both are equally authentic, and perhaps precisely to the extent "one [is] opposite to the other".

Nancy brings this third alternative up with apparent reservation. To him, it is nothing more than a hypothetical possibility, cautiously formulated as a question. But is this *question* able to become an "attitude" or "ethos", as he claimed concerning one of the other alternatives? Can the choice, which does not choose or which chooses both, become an 'ethos of questioning'? It seems that therefore the possibility of being "of both sides" is too much a *double bind*.

Double bind: this is how Nancy, a few times, describes the relation between globalization's false infinity on the one hand and its sovereignty, its enjoyment, its being 'without reason', on the other hand. See for instance the following passage in "Changement du monde":

Untied from its impeding old forms, capital develops an autonomy and an 'autotely' [*autotélie*: orientation towards itself as its own *telos*], which both are terrifying. But at the same time, it operates at the [other] extreme point where it is neither opposed to anything nor justified by anything: this is the double bind, which, slowly and without great noise, has been woven.³⁴

³³ "Quelle transaction l'homme finit par passer avec lui-même, de sa valeur absolue contre un accroissement indéfini de la valeur relative ou du sens de son existence et de celle du monde contre le *vaille que vaille* d'un sens interminable et qui part sans tous les sens? Mais est-ce bien une transaction ? [...] Jusqu'où est-il capable d'être la dupe de son propre marché ? Jusqu'où au contraire est-il assez valeureux pour tenir bon sur l'inéchangeable ? Ou bien est-il assez inouï pour être des deux côtés à la fois ? Du côté de l'équivalence générale et du côté de l'absolue absence d'équivalence : *exchange rate* indéfini d'une part, images finis de l'autre, capturant l'infini ? Deux captures de l'infini ? L'une contre l'autre ?" (*La pensée dérobée, op. cit.*, p. 154.)

³⁴ "Il est vrai: le capital dégagé de formes anciennes qui l'entravaient développe une autonomie et une autotélie terrifiantes. Mais il se prote en même temps à une extrémité où il n'est plus ni opposé à rien ni justifié par rien : tel est le *double bind* qui vient à se nouer, lentement, à bas bruit [...]" (*La pensée dérobée, op. cit.*, p. 141).

Here, capital is literally “of both sides”. It is both of the false and of the good infinity, of both the side of inauthentic ‘*globalisation*’ and of authentic ‘*mondialisation*’. But can we as *Dasein* claim such a situation of double bind as *our* position, as Nancy suggests at the end of *Vaillle que vaille?* Can we assume this position of double bind *as such*, can we make it our *ethos*? It seems to me that the ethos of questioning that Nancy’s reflections in “Urbi et orbi” ends up with is precisely a way to avoid – and even to neutralize – that possibility. From this perspective, it is no wonder that in this essay we no longer find any trace of the option of the double bind suggested in the earlier essay.

However, another kind of deconstruction is possible where the double bind relation between capital as “autotélie” and capital as sovereignty is radically affirmed. The relation between free market’s false infinity and the real, ‘actualized’ infinity of an assumed globalized world, or, what amounts to the same thing, between ‘*globalisation*’ and ‘*mondialisation*’, between ‘globe’ (or ‘glome’) and ‘world’ can be interpreted as a double bind. Even the difference between authenticity and inauthenticity could be interpreted this way. Here too, one is always “of both sides”. Hence, what we are facing today is perhaps not so much a “transition” from one condition to the other (for instance from false to real infinity, from inauthentic ‘globe’ to authentic ‘world’), but rather their intertwining in a double bind. At least, this is the case if we apply here the “terrifying, but fatal logic of the auto-immunity of indemnity”, explained in Derrida’s “Foi et savoir”.³⁵

There, Derrida articulates the logic hidden behind the mutual relation between what he calls ‘tele-techno-science’ and “religion”. In a way, he describes the current high tech communication network as what Nancy – with Hegel – calls “false infinity”: a domain where nothing is holy because everything is always already lost in an infinite and alienating universe of exchangeable signs. On the other hand, religion defines itself as the domain where at least a few things are acknowledged to be unique and immune to that alienating exchange system. Or, to put in Derrida’s own terms, there things remain “indemne”, “sain(t) et sauf”, “sacre”.³⁶ But, Derrida argues, although the difference between techno-science and religion is irreducible, they nevertheless function as each others “*supplement originaire*”. One always already sustains its claim against the other precisely with the secret assistance of that other.

Rather than a dialectical logic in the Hegelian sense of the word, this indicates a logic of “auto-immunization”. The original biological concept specifies the process by which an organism, so to say, defends itself against its own defense system. Auto-immunization is the name for the process by which strange elements, which normally are repulsed by an organism, nevertheless are accepted. This permits an organism to build up antibodies. Auto-immunization allows, for instance, transplantation. It is possible to put in one’s body an organ originating from another body, because the immunity system does *not* perfectly operate. Thus, a living body’s immune system is in a way only functioning by means of elements that are disturbing – deconstructing – that system.

In a similar way, the tele-techno-science, within which everything is exchangeable and nothing is fixed, only functions because of a strong basic trust in the system and in its possibility to communicate fixed and ‘holy’ messages. On the other hand, religion, within which messages and values receive a fixed holy status people have faith in, nonetheless only functions if this faith is delivered to the, by definition, ‘unholy’ domain of tele-techno-science. In other words, these holy messages or values are communicated with others who can always affect their holiness. Religion’s claim to keep things “*sain(t) et sauf*” only functions by means of what always already disturbs or deconstructs this claim. Tele-techno-science only

³⁵ J. Derrida & G. Vattimo (Eds.), *La religion*, Seuil, Paris, 1996, p.59 (« cette terrifiante, mais fatale logique de l’auto-immunité de l’indemne »).

³⁶ J. Derrida & G. Vattimo, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

functions by means of a basic trust in its system, supposed to be able to protect the ‘holiness’ of the message.

What if the relation between ‘*globalisation*’ and ‘*mondialisation*’ is to be considered in the same relation of double bind? What if the ‘world’, in the “real sense of the word”, always already supposes the support of “a ‘globe’ or a ‘glome’, i.e. an «exile soil» and a «valley of tears»³⁷; and, conversely, if the ‘globe,’ too, already supposes the hidden support of a ‘world’? Or to put it in another way: what if the beyond of representation (and its ‘*Weltbild*’) always already supposes the support of representation, and representation itself is secretly sustained by its beyond? In that case, the passage to a ‘beyond’ is by definition affected by its contrary or its impossibility. And in the same way, every refusal to go beyond is nevertheless affected by it.

Does this mean that we cannot simply ‘stay before’ nor definitively ‘go beyond’? We seem to have got stuck *in* the very movement of going beyond, in the open space between ‘globe’ and ‘world’, between representation and its beyond. It is there that Nancy placed the new “symbolization of the world” he proposed at the end of “*Urbi et orbi*”, i.e. a symbolization using representations to suggest the beyond of representation. A ‘self-broken’ representation adequate to that purpose seemed for Nancy to be the ‘question’. And this ‘question’ was at the same time the most appropriate way to assume this ‘place’ between representation and its beyond, between ‘globe’ and ‘world’.

However, when one does not consider the two terms at issue (for instance ‘globe’ and ‘world’) as though there has to be a passage from one term to the other, in other words when one considers them in a relation of the double bind, it no longer seems possible to assume this open place between globe and world. A double bound relation can no longer be assumed as our authentic worldly *Dasein*, because our very authenticity is affected by it. Even assumption itself – or *Dasein* and *Mitdasein* – have acquired the structure of the double bind.

Therefore, in that case, the ‘question of the world’ cannot be assumed as our *Dasein* in the way Nancy interprets this term. It is certainly possible that we are the *Dasein* of our globalized world and that we realize by this what he calls ‘*mondialisation*’, but this ‘*mondialisation*’ and its *Dasein* will never have the implications Nancy ascribes to it. They will not have the status of an ‘ontological’ ethos we have to assume. Rather the imperative here will be the one that obliges us to deconstruct the very possibility of assuming our ‘globalized’, authentic ‘worldly’ *Dasein*. Here, each logic of authenticity – even the most formal kind of authenticity, found in Nancy’s thought – is impossible. Certainly there is a *Dasein* or a *subject* at issue, even the required deconstruction supposes a subject, but it is impossible to assume it authentically. And, what is more, this kind of deconstruction does not need such an assumption at all.

In this case, we remain in a way more Kantian: we incessantly have to deconstruct the logic of the double bind hidden within our actual globalization discourse, but we cannot assume a *Dasein* of this deconstruction as being the *Dasein* – *Mitdasein* – of this globalized world. The only thing we have is our ‘*duty*’ to incessantly deconstruct the logic of the double bind in which the actual globalization is involved. To perform this duty – i.e. to endorse the impossibility of this duty – we do not need to assume (authentically) our ontological status. We rather incessantly have to deconstruct it.

That is why this kind of deconstruction, when it claims to be a radical *praxis*, appeals to the notion of ‘decision’. It is not the deconstruction’s *Dasein* that makes the decision, nor the *Mitdasein* of the ‘we’ (or the ‘world’) concerned in it (as Nancy claims). As Derrida so often argues, it is the ‘other’, which makes the decision. Deconstruction is *praxis*, it is an act, which

³⁷ See the already quoted passage: “Un monde est précisément cela où il y a place pour tout le monde: mais place véritable, celle qui fait qu’il y a véritablement *lieu d’y être* (dans ce monde). Sinon, ce n’est pas «monde»: c’est «globe» ou «glome», c’est «terre d’exil» et «vallée de larmes».” (*Op. cit.*, p. 34).

cannot be assumed by its own actor or (more phenomenologically) its own *Dasein*. On the most fundamental level, only the other can claim the act. That is the way this kind of deconstruction ‘assumes’ the logic of the double bind. Man being ‘of both sides’, it is always on the impossible other side where ultimately the decision is made, and this can only be assumed in the very act of decision itself, and not by the *Dasein* of this act.

For Nancy too, ‘decision’ is an important concept in his thought. But for him, it is ultimately not the *other’s* decision that I have to make, but *mine*. This does not mean that it is a decision of the ‘subject’ I am, in the traditional (Cartesian) sense of the word. The decision is to be made by the ‘*Dasein*’ that I am. That’s why, for Nancy, an act and its *Dasein* are not so much “of both sides” but rather ‘in between’, i.e. *in* the passage or the transition from one side to the other, for instance from inauthentic “*globalisation*” to authentic ‘*mondialisation*’. For *Dasein* (*Mitdasein*) *is* this ‘in between’. It is the place between ‘us’ and ‘ourselves’, between us and the others, between us and our world. This is the same as saying that we are openness towards the world, towards the others, towards ourselves.

It is there – in the openness we *are* – that we have to make decisions, and this decision is only possible when we ourselves have assumed the openness we *are*, i.e. the openness every one of us *is* towards the others. This is the openness, which for Nancy is *Mitdasein*. Moreover, for Nancy, being as such is openness. It is ‘ex-position’, it is being ex-posed to the outside. We are our being ‘ex-posed’, exposed to the world, to the other as well as to ourselves. We are the openness towards the openness the others and the world – and particularly the globalized world – are. Therefore, being is ‘creation’, i.e. what ‘grows’ from nothing (and) for nothing (sovereignly). It *is* the transition from nothing to something.³⁸ It is not this ‘nothing’, nor is it this ‘something’, but it is the sovereign transition from nothing to something. It is the sovereign ‘in between’.

Globalization forces us to a decision. Since our ‘world’ has become a ‘globe’, we have to realize what a ‘world’ is – or, more precisely, we have to reinvent it. We have to *create* the world, i.e. we have to create the ‘creation’ that the world *is* – the world, sovereignly growing from nothing ‘without reason’. Nancy knows exactly what this does *not* mean. It is not the false infinity of the capitalist free market’s endless ‘creation’. But to explain what this creation then means in a positive sense is a more difficult question, also for Nancy. Therefore, he explains, we need a deconstruction of globe’s false infinity. At least, we have to take the decision to *this*: to deconstruct the logic of the double bind in our globalization discourse. But will we then not get locked up *within* the act itself of deconstruction? How then could we *create* a world? For Nancy, remaining within the act of deconstruction implies remaining within the ‘deconstruction’ that the world itself is. Our world is the deconstruction, i.e. the *passage* and the *transition* from the globe (to be deconstructed) to the ‘world’ (as what is supposed to be the result of this deconstruction). That’s why the new ‘world’ to which we have to decide, i.e. the ‘world’ beyond the ‘globe’, will not *really* be beyond. The ‘*mondialisation*’ will remain within the transition towards this beyond. It will remain in the act of creation that it *is*. The ‘*mondialisation*’ will force us to redefine our world as being this very transition. And to create such a world, we have to assume ourselves as being the *Dasein* of that transition. In the case of globalization, we have to be the place (*Dasein*) where the event of the transition from ‘globe’ to ‘world’ happens, occurs, takes place. We therefore have to assume our own being as transition, as an ‘in between’ as such.

³⁸ “[La] substance [de l’être] est égale à son opération, mais son opération n’opère pas plus qu’elle aussi bien être ou (se) faire ... *rien*, c’est-à-dire, comme on sait, *res*, la chose même. Cet être n’est pas rien : il *est* (transitivement) *rien*. Il transit rien en quelque chose, ou rien s’y transit en quelque chose.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 90; Nancy’s italics.)

That's why, actually, one of our most important tasks is the one of a new "symbolization" of our globalized world. In a way, Nancy's own oeuvre is due to the decision to create such a new "form" or "symbolization". His work itself is to be read as an attempt to create a new language in which the false infinity of globalization is brought back to its finite *Dasein*. It tries to create a new 'form' in which the world is not an object of representation but a 'symbol', a form in which it comes together to assume its own *Dasein*, the sovereignty of its very being 'without reason'. As I suggested, this "symbolization" can only be created by means of representation: self-broken representations, in which every representation will be put into question, but in which this questioning at the same time will behold these broken representation. Only by the means of such a "symbolization", i.e. of this kind of 'questioned' representations, we will be able to assume this transition from 'globe' to 'world' – this transition or this 'in between' as such – as our very being, as the *Dasein* of our 'world'. In the way Nancy deals with the question of the world, that world will remain a question.