Title: Value of Nothing

Author: Daniel Rubinstein

Abstract: Critical approaches to photography have one thing in common: they share an understanding that photographs must be approached visually. They take it as a given that photographs are pictures to be looked at, and they all agree that it is only through looking that photographs communicate. Whatever subsequent interpretations follow, the priority of vision in relation to the image remains unperturbed. This belief in the visibility of the photograph imperceptibly bonded together otherwise dissimilar and sometimes contradictory methodologies, preventing them from noticing that which is the most unexplained about photography: the precedence of looking itself. This self-evident truth of visibility blocks the possibility of inquiring after everything that is non-visual in a picture. However, the digital image forces a reevaluation of visibility because it clear that the visible cannot account for images that begin their life as binary data, developed algorithmically and driven to various points across the network not as individual pictures but as packets of data. Through a reading of Heidegger, Deleuze and Benjamin this paper suggests that digital-born photography cannot be explained away in representational terms; rather it calls for a theory that can account for proliferation and self-replication as the purveyors of meaning online.

Philosophy of photography, new media, undecidability, network, identity, invisibility

Affiliation: Central Saint Martins, London

Email address: d.rubinstein@csm.arts.ac.uk

Daniel Rubinstein is a philosopher, writer and teacher who has published extensively on contemporary visual culture, photography and digital art. His current work investigates the radically fractal nature of images with a specific link to desire and memory. He is the editor of the journal Philosophy of Photography, co-director of the Centre for the Research of the Networked Image (CRNI) and Course Leader of MA Photography at Central Saint Martins.

1. Where is the latent image

The latent image occurs when photographic film is exposed to light and the action of the charged light particles on the silver halide grains forms sites of metallic silver. The changes to the film as a result of the exposure are on a molecular level and require subsequent chemical development in order to become visible to the eye. From the moment of exposure and up to the ensuing chemical development the latent image has to be kept in light-tight film canisters or dark-slides until it is ready to be developed. Developing the film destroys the latent image since it converts silver halide crystals to metallic silver grains and produces the film negative. Given the fundamental importance of the latent image to the process of making a photograph, it is thought provoking that it is habitually omitted from the orthodoxy of photographic criticism and theory. While the latent image has very specific meaning in photographic chemistry and physics as the invisible image left on the light sensitive surface by exposure, histories and theories of photography rarely devote more than a passing reference to it, and while its importance to the photographic process is usually acknowledged on a technical level, photographic criticism has nothing to say about it, making it doubly invisible. Michel Frizot's monumental *New History of Photography* states that that latent image 'remains fundamental to the photographic process' yet it addresses it in a single paragraph. (Frizot 1998, 61) Thus, the latent image is both 'fundamental' and there is nothing to say about it. It is the invisible image that has been forgotten. The reluctance of theory to talk about this primordial state can be considered symptomatic of the desire to focus on the visible and tangible object-image and ignore the invisible without questioning the basic premise of the distinction itself.

However, the transition towards electronically produced and algorithmically computed images suggests that the non-visual aspects of images are at least as important to meaning creation as visual qualities. It will be a mistake to approach such an image as an abstraction, as a representation of external reality or as a *painting with light* because there is always a multiplicity of forces at play that place the image in a range of contexts, assemblages and situations. The hyper-growth in various forms of digital imagery for screens provides a quintessential example of this multiplicity at work. The triumph of the photographic image as the internally eloquent and profoundly apt expression of networked culture also provides a new lens upon which to investigate how representation affects norms of meaning-creation, and the ethical and political consequences of the acceptance of images as purveyors of truth. For instance, the emphasis placed on the visual content of images tends

to obscure the processes of dissemination, production and dispersion that contain their own intelligent messages, quite apart from the semantic content that clings to the surface of the image. Indeed, the proliferation of various forms of automatically produced, read and distributed images disrupts the familiar understanding of the photograph as a verisimilitude that provides reliable representation of reality.

2. The spectre of representation

There never was a 'clean break' with the analogue past. The digital image is based in part at least on old technologies and old means of production. For instance, the lens at the front of a digital camera is exactly the same piece of glass that graced film cameras before the invention of digital photography (some digital cameras are even designed to accept those old manual lenses). In addition, the digital image is often said to resemble an analogue photograph: comparisons of grain to pixels abound to prove that the digital image can capture just as much detail – if not more – than the film photograph. However, drawing these parallels between digital and analogue processes risks missing the paradigmatic shift of digitality, which both overcomes and transfigures the limits of representation. If the image on the computer screen seems to resemble the look of a traditional photograph this is mostly due to the work of computational processes designed to make these data packages look familiar and homey. Modern digital cameras offer the ability to recreate the aesthetics of photographic films: with a push of a button one's snaps can look like they were shoot on Velvia© or Provia©. But imitation does not stop there: the totality of the digital image is in fact a skeuomorph – its adherence to the visual conventions of photography is simply an ornamental decision taken by the creators of the processing algorithms, as the data captured by the camera sensor could be just as easily output as something completely different: a string of alphanumeric characters, a sound or even remain unprocessed as binary data. (Rubinstein and Sluis 2013b, 22-40)

Even the notion that the digital image is a self-contained entity is misleading: one of the characteristics of the digital age is that all images are potentially linked through communication networks which distribute, mediate, assemble and re-assemble electronic signals that might or might not appear as a picture at some point of a perpetual cycle of packaging and re-processing of data. As all the images are drawn from the same infinite torrent of networked files, to some extent it is possible to speculate that there only ever was and only ever will be one networked image. The representational model that sees each picture

as an autonomous entity linked with an event in the real world falls apart in the face of the perpetual circulation of data that only occasionally appears as images. If taken seriously, these considerations suggest that the essence of the photographic image online has little to do with the semiotics of representation, economy of signs, signifiers and indices, rather the truth of the image has to be found in its inherent incompleteness and the constant bifurcation into divergent but interconnected narratives. Therefore the digital image consists not in reflecting external reality but in showing the extent to which reality itself is inseparable from the computational processes that shape it. Thus the arrival of the digital image is first and foremost overwhelming; images do not appear as singular, individual or discrete; they do not have borders that separate one image from another, rather data is distributed according to certain rules, sending some of it to the screen as an image, some of it to the speakers as sounds and some of it to the printer as text. These 'images' traverse the networks not as snapshots but as dynamic arrays of electronic signals and packets of data. Hence the necessity of another language with which to speak of the image. It gets worse, as what is required is not only another vocabulary, but also another ethical framework with which to conceive of the image as political force. The ethics of traditional photography is inseparable from the assumption of correspondence between the image and some form of reality of which it is said to be an imprint, but in an environment in which correspondence is replaced with predictive algorithms and computation it is unclear what, if any, is the ethical stance of the image.

The demand for a language that allows speaking about images without excessive reliance on such categories as form–matter and subject–object is of course not new. In the context of visual culture one could trace its genealogy at least to the work of Walter Benjamin, who throughout his life meticulously opposed all forms of idealist aesthetics. Given Benjamin's place in photography theory it is perhaps not surprising that his work helps to articulate some of the issues raised by the algorithmic turn in photography, however it is not his writings on photography that help to come to terms with the liminal space of the networked and the algorithmic image. Specifically, it is not to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* essay that we turn to – despite this being one of the most often reproduced texts in photographic literature – because it offers a rather crude opposition between technology and aura.[1] Instead, we turn to his sprawling investigation into the crisis of experience brought about by the proliferation of technology and the technology of proliferation in *The Arcades Project.* For Benjamin of *The Arcades,* the most astounding aspect of modernity is in the way it both demolishes the recent past and recovers forms of

pre-rational and pre-historic knowledge, so that the peculiar dialectic of modern technology paradoxically points towards the past as well as towards the future:

> "Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old. […] what emerges in these [...] images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated–which includes, however the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination […] back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history <*Urgeschichte*>–that is, to elements of classless society. And the experiences of such society–as stored in the unconscious of the collective–engender, through interpretation with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions." (Benjamin 2002, 4)

What Benjamin discerned in the shopping arcades of Paris was not only the worldwide network of commerce; the global system of exchange that defines, catalogues and integrates all parts of the world into something like a living organism made of glass and iron and an image of a society posited on the universal contract as the highest law. He also saw among the wrought iron and the curved glass how, by compressing the world into a single point, this new globalized modernity undermined the foundations of its own metaphysical order that was posited on linear chronological time, flat spatiality, rational logic and the clearest of distinctions between spirit and matter, Image and reality. As Benjamin observed, the age of global networks and synthetic materials suggests a move beyond systems of representation into a plastic space that demands not only a new aesthetic regime but also a new political ontology. The computer networks of silicon and fibber-optic cables parallel this move beyond representation; it is simultaneously a move forward towards universal control and global information capitalism and a move backwards, in the direction of the classless, non-hierarchical existence in which knowledge is unconscious, sensuous, non-reflexive and intuitive.

3. The undecidable is Real

As the visual counterpart of the move beyond representation, the digital image stands against the whole of the philosophical tradition of Descartes' *cogito* in which the subject comprehends the world through representing it to itself as an image. (Judovitz 1988), (Rubinstein and Sluis 2013a 22-40) Might we therefore be better served by drawing on another thought, one that rejects the Cartesian and dialectical heritage, one that introduced into our philosophy the mistrust of representation – by laying bare its historical foundations – and one that demands paying close attention to that which falls outside of visibility, certainty and positive knowledge. It is perhaps not surprising that until recently the post-representational turn in philosophy had little impact on photographic theory, but perhaps now we are in a position to better appreciate its purchase on the image. The key landmarks of this thought can be found in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, in Nietzsche's rejection of coherent and stable individual identity and of his suspicion of scientific analysis that appeals to the higher powers of reason and morality and in Heidegger's essays *The Question Concerning Technology* and *The Age of the World Picture* in which he exposes the origins of representation in Western metaphysics. Subsequent developments of this trajectory might also include the work of Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari. Despite the significant differences in political motivations and philosophical commitments, all the above thinkers are concerned with the long term damage caused by attachment to regimes of representation and subjectivity. Within this tradition the confrontation with representational thought is considered essential as means of recovering those aspects of experience that are lost when the logic of identity and rationality rules the day.[2]

For Heidegger, for instance, modern technology is nothing technological, it is not a tool in the service of progress; rather, it is the way by which subjectivity is constituted through the process of creation:

> Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e. of truth." (Heidegger 1977, 12)

How might we explore this difficult Heideggerian thought in relation to the post-representational image? We have already seen that digitality renders the image as a calculable surface, or, to invoke Heidegger again, as a "standing reserve" in which the photograph is valued not as a singular object but as a resource to be deployed in endless and variegated successive contexts: "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for further ordering" (Heidegger

1977, 17). Heidegger's insight could be interpreted to suggest that the visible aspect of the digital image on the computer screen conceals the immense and unimaginable forces that operate behind the surface of the screen:

> The gigantic is rather that through which the quantitative becomes a special quality and thus a remarkable kind of greatness. Each historical age is not only great in a distinctive way in contrast to others; it also has, in each instance, its own concept of greatness. But as soon as the gigantic in planning and calculating and adjusting and making secure shifts over out of the quantitative and becomes a special quality, then what is gigantic, and what can seemingly always be calculated completely, becomes, precisely through this, incalculable. *This becoming incalculable remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into subjectum and the world into picture*. (Heidegger 1977, 135)

As a consequence of this paradigm shift from the visual to the incalculable, photography has become something immense, even unimaginable, which calls for a very different approach to the image. It is no surprise then that there is a tendency to refer to the post-industrial technical apparatus which supports image production in terms of amorphous and immaterial 'clouds' of information and 'data shadows'. However, what the bucolic idioms of clouds, flows, shadows, streams, farms and cookies are supressing is the profound unknowability of the picture. In the context of the digital image, Heidegger's insight suggests that the visible aspect of the digital image on the computer screen conceals the immense and unthinkable forces that operate behind the surface. The state of 'becoming incalculable' speculatively suggests that the digital and networked image is not an image at all, rather it is a two dimensional subset of a four-dimensional object that we familiarly call 'the web'.

4. The outside of the Image / the image of the outside

As we have seen, In *The Age of the World Picture* Heidegger characterised the modern age as the overwhelming arrival of the gigantic and the incalculable and suggested that when things become enormous and immeasurable they also become non-representable. As the digital image traverses the network it unfolds within two perimeters that constitute its envelope: the internal kernel of its specific origins and the conditions of creation and the external boundary that is limited only by the limits of the network.[3] Amid the gradual expansion of the network beyond the limits of the computer, it is increasingly difficult to say where augmented reality ends and 'real' life begins. Practices such as wearable computing,

life-caching and life-logging continually push this envelope by expanding the external boundary of the digital image, bringing forth new opportunities for classification, new assemblages, new aggregations. The three-point perspectival space of the visible image is augmented by various additional spaces that cannot be accounted for either aesthetically or representationally but must be considered phenomenologically as the embodiment of the network by the user. The digital-born image is never fixed to a single viewing position, it moves between spaces and it compels the user to move with it: navigating through Google Street View for instance requires body movements that parallel the movements of the photographer though the physical space of the street. (Pink 4-13) Within such platforms there is no static viewpoint, no distinct separation between spectatorship and authorship, but an array of temporary constellations of images that determine the direction that the spectator follows. The presentation of images from the underlying database is dependent on the sensitivity of the software not only to the search query, associated metadata and specific parameters coded into the interface but also to the physical movements executed by the spectator. By way of example, the simple process of logging into Flickr or Facebook will trigger the retrieval of multiple data streams (photofeeds, status updates contingent to a user, time or tag) which are assembled on the fly to form a webpage. For this reason the phenomenological experience of time online is radically different from chronological, or linear time. All the history of one's searches is contained within the present webpage as it unfolds: photography here does not perform the function of an indexical connection with the past, but of manifest bifurcation of present into multiple streams with their own peaks, crevices and barriers.

This destabilisation of photographic meaning is the direct result of the image being detached from its teleological origins. Traditional ontologies of photography maintain an identity between the moment of exposure and all subsequent images, copies and prints that follow from it. This identity is ensured because the object is being assimilated by the action of light, and transformed by the photographic process that negates the object and preserves it at the same time (Cassar 201-215). One of the characteristics of the digital age is that all images are theoretically linked through communication networks which distribute, process, assemble and re-assemble electronic signals that might or might not appear as an image at some point of a cycle of packaging and re-processing of data.[4] Therefore, considered from the perspective of the network, the post-representational image allows us to conceive of the reconfigured relationship between humans and images. A networked image is both

instantaneous in the sense that it can move across the Internet close to the speed of light and multiple in the sense that it can bifurcate into any number of simultaneous copies. In this networked environment repetition, self-replication, immediacy and divergent parallel narratives take precedence over signification and representation. These notions of instantaneity and simultaneity introduce into our thinking the experience of stepping outside of biological and historical time and inhabiting a different temporal and spatial dimension in which the image is not a marker of a linear chronology but of something that is much harder to define and yet this something appears apt to describe the fundamental experience of a life lived both inside the three dimensional physical space and outside of it, both inside the computer screen and outside of it. Seen from this perspective, the post-representational image emerges as the go-between that weaves together these two worlds; the physical world of three-dimensional objects and the augmented world of data. (Rubinstein and Sluis 2013a 151-9)

Whilst the image on the computer screen bears some visual resemblance to a projection of a three dimensional space onto a two dimensional plane, and for that reason can be said to conform to the logic of the Cartesian perspectival space it is altogether different for its internal logic is not that of visual correspondence between an original and a copy but of a continuous proliferation of imperfect variants, partial topologies and self-referential assemblages. The post-representational image can be said to reproduce nothing, to resemble nothing and to stand in for nothing, instead it always offers connections with something else: with other images, with its own outside, with screens, tablets and phones on which it flickers, with human beings.

For this reason, it is remarkable that the focus on the visible aspect of the image tends to ignore precisely those qualities of the image that are immanent to the network. As the following image (Fig. 1) assembled from a Google Image Search demonstrates, Hippolyte Bayard's *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* has a different sense in each one of its iterations. Difference, and not identity becomes here the visual manifestation of photography.

fig 1. The Bayards (image: Katrina Sluis)

In the above image, the search algorithm creates a heterotopia of images connected not through a hierarchy of original–copy or of degrees of resemblance but through a non-hegemonic patterning and correlation of search data and corresponding image results ("Bayard", "self-portrait", "drowned") which creates differences of intensities. (Foucault 2000, 175-185) The dialectic of original–copy becomes subordinate to a differential logic of infinite bifurcation; it is no longer meaningful to ask whether one image instance is a better reproduction, because the question of resemblance is rendered undecidable by the search algorithm's respond to the query with almost indefinite number of results. Instead, what matters is that every version is a springboard towards yet another instance, triggering an infinite succession of image-instances that are all suspended in their own irreducible difference from each other. Here photography is not so much a vehicle of representation but an expression of the possibility of variation and difference that happens through repetition.[5] It is significant that in the above image the difference between each version is not 'analytically decomposable' (Lingis 2000), i.e. it can not be explained by means of a semiotic analysis because these images do not have a 'fixed' reference point, as within each possible context their meaning can be fundamentally altered.[6]

Rather than considering this image as thirty five imperfect copies of instances of corruption and degradation of the original, the logic of the network allows us to speculate that this is an image of post-representational photography glimpsed through the repetition of disparate image fragments. Difference her appears not as something visible, but as the invisible that is closest to the visible, nurtured and sustained by it.[7] It is as if these images are framed not by their own borders – which are purely symbolic anyway – rather they are enclosed by the differential between them. By evacuating the essentialism of original-copy from this (photographic) archive and restoring to it a play of distinctions between degrees of intensity, it becomes possible to rethink photography away from the logic of representation. This archive of Bayard bursts open the teleological connection between the object and its referent, establishing post-representational photography not as the vehicle of identity but as the main mechanism by which difference appears within the visual field.

The difference that arose out of the impurities and distortions of data in this example is the result of an interaction between images that does not depend on any underlying representation or 'ground' in the form of an original, primordial image. It is pointless to ask which of these is a true likeness of Bayard's masterpiece, as this image foregrounds not a new form of representation but a kind of texture comprised of noises, differences, distortions and contaminations more akin to a-tonal music than to the pre-ordered harmony of a musical scale.[8] What is being archived here is not a copy of an original but the possibility of bifurcation between copies. In short, we are presented with a sensual kind of logic that compels the viewer not to evaluate resemblances but to glimpse the production of difference through repetition and self-replication. This multiplicity of repetitions suggests not a hierarchy of representations – with some closer to the original than the others – rather, it suggests that there are only repetitions without ground and without foundation. As the product of algorithmic computation photography is considered here as a process of differentiation which creates a visible yet ungraspable image of ourselves as we step out of the representational paradigm.[9]

5. Conclusion

As photography becomes an encoded, networked object, the emphasis shifts from considering it in visual terms towards the semantic processes valorised within computational culture. This in turn establishes photography as a kind of unstable surface that produces meanings not through indexicality or representation but through the aggregation and the

embodiments of data. There is then a need to address the topologies that represent relations amongst data, and the way in which the movement of images, their clustering and accretions reorganize themselves around the movement of the user as they traverse the interface.

This paper proposed that the image within the network is doing something other than showing us pictures, and it is doubtful if the vocabulary of visual aesthetics and representation is fit to tackle this new condition of the image. Because the system of representation that has been historically indispensable for photography is increasingly inadequate in apprehending the post-representational image, a new set of conceptual tools is necessary. What is required is a different ontology of the image, not one of transcendental truth, dialectics, light, vision and identity, but an immanent ontology that can engage with the undecidable, fragmented, recursive and multiple rhythms produced and sustained by the multiplicity of images online. Proliferation and self-replication release the image from its stillness, giving it a new meaning as the shape of continuous re-invention, underpinned by endless succession of spectators-who-become-authors. The question remains: do we have the ears to hear this new, inaudible music emitted by images as they combine and recombine on their invisible journeys through the network.

Reference list

Adorno, Theodor W, *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Kentor–Hullot, London: Continuum, 1997.

Benjamin, W. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Trans. B Doherty and M W Jennings. N.p.: Belknap Press, 2008. *Google Scholar.*

Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland, and Kevin McLaughlin Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Cassar, Ignaz. "The Image Of, or In, Sublation." *Philosophy of Photography* 1.2 (2010): 201-215.

Deleuze, Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton, London: Continuum, 2004. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. 1985. London: Athlone Press, 1989.

Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A M Sheridan Smith, London; New York: Routledge, 1989.

Foucault, Michel, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 2, Aesthetics*. Trans. Robert Hurley, and others, London: Penguin, 2000.

Frizot, Michel, *New History of Photography*, Trans. Susan Bennett, Liz Clegg, John Crook, and Caroline Higgitt, Paris: Könemann, 1998.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Philosophy of Right*. Trans. S W Dyde, Mineloa, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2005.

Heidegger, Martin, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*. Trans. Andrew J Mitchell, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Heidegger, Martin, *On the Way to Language*. Trans Peter Hertz, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982.

Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Judovitz, Dalia. *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Khalip, Jacques, and Robert Mitchell. "Introduction." *Releasing the Image: From Literature to New Media*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Lingis, Alphonso. "The Murmur of the World." *American Continental Philosophy : A Reader*. Ed. Walter Brogan and James Risser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Nechvatal, Joseph. *Immersion Into Noise*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011.

---. *Towards An Immersive Intelligence : Essays on the Work of Art in the Age of Computer Technology and Virtual Reality 1993-2006*. New York: Edgewise Press, 2009.

Pink, Sarah. "Sensory Digital Photography: Re-thinking Moving and the Image." *Visual Studies* 26.1 (2011): 4-13.

Rubinstein, Daniel, and Katrina Sluis. "Notes on the Margins of Metadata." Photographies 6.1 2013: 151-159.

Rubinstein, Daniel, and Katrina Sluis. "The Digital Image in Photographic Culture; Algorithmic Photography and the Crisis of Representation." *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*. Ed. Martin Lister. 2nd Edition ed. London: Routledge, 2013. 22-40.

Widder, Nathan. *Genealogies of Difference*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Notes

[1] One of the most damning criticisms of the *Work of Art* essay comes from Theodor Adorno: 'Benjamin's theory of the artwork in the age of its technical reproduction may have failed to do full justice to this [locating the irrational within the rational – DR]. The simple antithesis between the auratic and the mass-reproduced work, which for the sake of simplicity neglected the dialectic of the two types, became the booty of the view of art that takes photography as its model and is not less barbaric than the view of the artist as creator.' (Adorno 1997, 72) It is however worthy of note that Benjamin authored a second version of the same article, translated to English as *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, in which some inroads are laid for recovering the auratic within the technological. (Benjamin 2008)

[2] The logic of identity finds its fullest expression in Hegel's dictum: "What is rational is real". (Hegel 1996, xix). In *The Thing* Heidegger raises the question of nothing (non-being) in order . . .

to extract it from the dialectical formula set up by Hegel: 'Death is the shrine of nothing, namely of that which in all respects is never some mere being, but nonetheless essences, namely as being itself. Death, as the shrine of nothing, harbours in itself what essences of being. As the shrine of the nothing, death is the refuge of being.' (Heidegger 2012, 17) In treating being and nothing not as dialectically opposed entities but as the 'belonging together' of being and nothing Heidegger overcomes Hegel's key dictum that 'what is rational is real' and opens a path for considering the limitations imposed by dialectical reasoning.

[3] Or as Deleuze puts it: "The crystal-image has these two aspects: internal limit of all the relative circuits, but also outer-most, variable envelope, at the edges of the world, beyond even moments of the world." (Deleuze 1989, 80-81)

[4] "The recent rise to prominence of technologies of digitalization has offered possibilities of understanding the image beyond this premise of ocularcentrism, for digital images emphasize the extent to which the indexicality of photographic or cinematic images–the sense of an ontological link between representation and the "real" objects or actions that it represents–can be produced through manipulation of algorithms." (Khalip and Mitchell 2011, 2)

[5] The notion of difference is a staple of post-metaphysical thought. For Heidegger difference is that which lies so near to us that we never notice it, and yet it is difference that allows for identity (and for representation) to happen. His conception of difference is most clearly articulated in the lecture *The Onto-Theo-logical constitution of Metaphysics*. See also Deleuze's monumental critique of representation in *Difference and Repetition*. For an overview of the problem of difference see (Widder 2002)

[6] Deleuze clarifies this point succinctly: "The diversity of narrations cannot be explained by the avatars of the signifier, by the states of a linguistic structure which is assumed to underlie images in general." (Deleuze 1989, 137)

[7] This understanding of difference as the pre-condition of identity is drawing on Deleuze: "Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse. Difference is not phenomenon but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon". (Deleuze 2004, 280)

[8] Alphonso Lingis wrote at length on the noise in the message and on the message of the noise: 'Is it not also false to suppose that only the meaning attached to words by a code, fixed or evolving, communicates? The rhythm, the tone, the periodicity, the stammerings and the silences communicate.[…] This noise is not analytically decomposable, as communication theory would have it, into a multiplicity of signals, information-bits, that are irrelevant or that conflict […]. (Lingis 105) Specifically on noise as the aesthetic determination of networked, non-Euclidian environments see (Nechvatal, *2011* and 2009)

[9] For Foucault this kind of archive is never closed, never completed, never achieving the totalizing and universal state of 'truth', and yet it is productive of a form of existence that reclaims difference from representation, a surface out of depth and singularity out of homogeneity: "[I]t dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history: it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man's being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside." (Foucault 1989, 131)

…