

59th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 28th August 2013
ONTOLOGICAL NAKEDNESS
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1. The question of the subject – “*Who am I?*”, “*What is a human being?*” – is always flanked by the question as to meaning, the meaning and origin of human existence.
2. Philosophy lives from the phantasm of the prescriptive securing of the essence of the subject in a substantial subjectivity, subjectivity being the ontological name of the ontic singularity, which constitutes the individual (empirical, particular) subject.
3. The subjectivity of the subject means the universal being of the human being, insofar as it precedes its singular appearance, its empirical nature and its ontic manifestation in real space.
4. This being has been given various names in the history of the question of the subject, in other words the history of philosophy.
5. Sometimes people said *psyché*, sometimes *ens creatum*, sometimes *res cogitans*, sometimes *homo ectypus*, sometimes *reason*, sometimes *self-awareness*.
6. Friedrich Nietzsche brought movement into this ontological nomenclature.
7. He opened the subject into an exterior, a subject-exterior, which – instead of being the noumenal sphere of its ontological prescription – indicates the impossibility of substantial or teleological certainty.
8. The subject, the human being, is the animal *not bound by its instincts*.
9. Evidently this definition of the human being, which lies precisely in his not being ontologically defined, is still in the tradition of the onto-zoological definition of the human being as an *animal rationale* (or *irracionale*), as *zoon*

logon echon, as a living organism defined by the *logos*, the ability to speak and to encompass meaning.

10. Nietzsche's definition of the human subject opens the subject up to a *logos*, which does not simply confront non-meaning as its opposite.
11. Nietzsche says: The subject has the *logos* as the essentially undefined, his capacity for language and meaning is the opening-up to non-meaning and the margins of language, to the dimension of an unchained, out-of-kilter *logos* no longer assured in any principle, a crazy or errant *cogito*; to its truth as substantial desert and as a desert of the substantial, and of substance itself.
12. The substance, the essence, the meaning and the nature of the subject is found by Nietzsche in its lack of substance and essence, in non-meaning and in its ontological artificiality.
13. Instead of according with a divine plan and a substantial order, the subject marks the non-existence of such a plan and such an order: the ontological nakedness of human subjectivity.
14. Twentieth-century thought made the exploration of this nakedness, of this desert-situation of the subject, its task.
15. Martin Heidegger opens up human existence to its historicity and to the world as a universe "present for a purpose" ("zuhanden"), in which it sojourns and by which it orients itself practically at first, rather than reflexively or theoretically.
16. Jean-Paul Sartre urges the subject to assert its ontological nakedness as a desert of freedom for self-determination. In contemporary thought, Giorgio Agamben insists on the contentlessness of the subject as *l'uomo senza contenuto*.
17. What is true of the artist is what is true of the human being, insofar as the subject is an autopoietic subject, the subject of self-invention and *autoerectio*

in the desert of its non-substantiality and ontological indefiniteness: “He finds himself in the paradoxical situation of having to find his essence precisely in the non-essential, his content in mere form.”¹

18. That is the ontological situation of the subject today, and always was: having to give oneself a form and a purpose (one’s subjectivity), because it is a subject without subjectivity, the subject of freedom: purposeless, faceless, identityless, nameless, contentless, naked.²

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *L’Homme sans contenu*, Paris: Circé 1996, p. 74.

² Cf. M. Steinweg, “La nudité d’Antigone”, in *Faibles N° 2 (spring 2006): Situations de la philosophie*, p. 148ff.