

42th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 11th August 2013
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PHILOSOPHER TODAY?
Marcus Steinweg

1. Jean-François Lyotard has defined intensity as an incommensurable energetic value.
2. This enables him to identify the “production of concepts” in a representative discourse with an “attenuation of intensities.”
3. Intensity is what resists being channeled.
4. It defies the attempt to instrumentalize it as well as any *limited economy*.
5. Like Georges Bataille’s heterogeneous, it marks the point of resistance that needs to be affirmed by a thinking that allows itself to be enraptured by it into experiences from which it cannot emerge unaltered.
6. Intensity drives thinking to excess, it renders thinking itself intense, headless and precipitate, precise and blind.
7. The dream moves to imagine an intense theory, intense concepts.
8. It is the dream of a language and a thinking that are no longer the antagonists of life and the libidinous intensities by slowing them down and stopping them as they confine what is incommensurable in them into concepts—thus the reproach that was, all too simplistically, leveled against Hegel.
9. Instead of being reproductive like the Owl of Minerva, this thinking is to be productive, hyperbolically turned toward an uncertain future without abdicating as thinking, without renouncing concepts and the rigor of their disposal in more or less consistent constellations.
10. The dream of intensity is the dream, itself intense, of a philosophy that would be different from the one that exhausts itself in reproductive commentary and professorial paraphrase.
11. The dream of entire generations of philosophers who attempt to wrest philosophy from its history, the forever recurring dream that threatens at any time to jolt thinking out of its academic slumber in order to lead it to its critical point.
12. Intensity disrupts historic filiation, destroys the great continuities to which people ascribe causal necessity, which they consolidate into unified blocks that construct coherencies and identities at the price of reductive simplifications in order to offer pedagogical assistance to the subject, promising it orientation by providing it with consistencies.

13. These consistencies always serve to reinforce the fabric of fact, just as the experience of intensity begins to unravel it.
14. Intensity offers resistance to the terror of the doctrines as well as the dictatorship of tradition.