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Author

de Mazancourt, Coralie

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Review of Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Possibility of a World: Conversations with Pierre-Philippe Jandin*. Translated by Travis Holloway and Flor Méchain.

Jean-Luc Nancy is one of France's foremost living philosophers. His wide scope includes the deconstruction of Christianity and the sense of the world. Nancy belongs to the generation of French thinkers who carried out a deconstructive critique of phenomenology. His approach is influenced by Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida but he tackles the conceptual schemes of a variety of philosophers in order to think through the reality of a world of multiplicity. Pierre-Philippe Jandin teaches at the International College of Philosophy. His precise and extensive knowledge of Nancy's thought comes across in the pointed questions he poses.

The conversations between Nancy and Jandin offer a review and exploration of concepts; they include reflections on Nancy's personal life and on the thinkers who have shaped his thought. The text is divided into sections focused on concepts such as "The World" and "Community." These concepts are connected by the overarching argument of the text, namely, that we must greet the world because it is already here. The text preserves the spontaneity of oral discussion.

In the first section, "Formative Years," Nancy recounts how he became a philosopher. He recalls having always been drawn to thoughts and conceptions. Nancy entered the world during World War II, though he was unaware of the war. He states that he grew up in atmosphere that was politically, morally, and ethically vague and unclear. His recruitment by the Young Christian Students (YCS) led to two concomitant revelations. He developed a relationship with texts as an inexhaustible resource of meaning. In addition, YCS took militant action, which politicized Nancy.

The concept of the "obscure" or the "resistant" occupies a central position in the movement of thinkers to which Nancy belongs (this movement includes Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, and Emmanuel Levinas). Nancy stipulates that writing for him has to touch that which evades inscription. He seeks for his writing to have an effect on his readers. This sensitization of philosophy pertains to his aim of recovering the world, of forging an ethics of the world.

Then, the notion of crowds occupies a central role in the second and third sections, respectively titled "The World" and "Community." *Mundus corpus* is the world of pressing bodies. Presence must be understood in the sense of being next to something. The world is the possibility of the

between, in which the “between” of two concepts relates the one to the other and separates it from the other at the same time. Later, Nancy indicates that “community” has been opposed to “society” through affect. Beyond this distinction he asserts the importance of crowds in thinking through community. Multitudes produce an internal agitation, which can take the form of a deconstruction, a destabilization, or a mobilization.

In the fourth section, “People and Democracy,” Nancy acknowledges Derrida’s reluctant use of the term “people.” “People” has been used for identitarian purposes. Nancy does not, nevertheless, discard this term because humanity for him cannot be only one group. The “sovereign people” means that people must be able to make a self-declaration, without any superior authority to declare it or institute it as such.

In the fifth section, “Political Affects,” Nancy reflects on the affective relationship between the State and the people. He is interested in affectivity as a positive attachment which involves recognition and legitimization. For Nancy, two problems are at stake in discussing politics. The first problem concerns government in the broadest sense, that is, the way to ensure relations and the balance of forces and interests of a social group. The second problem concerns maintaining co-presence and cohesion.

Nancy expresses interest in a transformation, an opening of the human being to itself in the sixth section, “Politics and Religion.” This transformation would not be a return to some form of the sacred but it would allow for an opportunity to recover the possibility of admiring, of adoring that the world exists and that we exist.

In the seventh section, “The Quest for ‘Art,’” Nancy ascribes to Hegel’s declaration that art is dead in the sense that art is no longer meant to represent the truth or a general layout. Art, for Nancy, consists of the gesture of taking sensation to a particular intensity.

In the eighth section, “The Present, Presence,” Nancy emphasizes that a relationship gets created when people grace each other with “presence.” His understanding of presence posits that rather than being in a dialectical logic, we are trying to go between.

Nancy considers a world of joy that comes out of nihilism in the ninth and final section, “Nihilism or Joy.” “Joy” is conceived in relation to its appearance in Christianity; joy appeared in a place left empty by stoicism. Nancy proposes that we understand desire not as a relationship to a lack but as an impetus of existence, a “push” of Being. The push is toward the world.

The Possibility of a World is an important recapitulation and further development of Nancy’s philosophy as he seeks to forge an ethics of the

world. The text lacks explanatory footnotes which would assist the readers in grappling with his nuanced and complex thought. Nevertheless, the text succeeds in giving the readers a sense of his philosophy. Concepts are thought through in relation to other concepts, which allows for drawing connections and distinctions. The dialogic format is effective in reviewing and searching for new possibilities. *The Possibility of a World* will be of interest to philosophers and literary theorists, especially theorists of “world literature” who will find in this text elements from which to build a critical apparatus to theorize the “world.” The text is accessible to novices due to its dialogic format. Experts will garner new perspectives on concepts that are key to Nancy’s thought.

CORALIE DE MAZANCOURT,
French and Francophone Studies, UCLA