

THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE

*Understanding the implications of Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis of
the transformation of sacrifice for humanism*



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Table of contents	2
Synopsis	5
Foreword	7
0 Introduction	10
0.1 Sacrifice, humanism, and worldviewing	10
0.1.1 Pre-axial times	11
0.1.2 Three aspects of the axial revolution	11
0.1.3 Conclusion	13
0.2 Jean-Luc Nancy and sacrifice studies	14
0.2.1 Nancy's notion of sacrifice.....	14
0.2.2 Uniqueness of Nancy's approach amidst other literature.....	16
0.3 Relevance	18
0.4 Questions, methodology, summary	19
1 Nancy's transformation of sacrifice	22
1.1 Context of 'The Unsacrificeable'	22
1.1.1 Nancy's work	22
1.1.2 'The Unsacrificeable'	23
1.2 Pre-axial sacrifice	26
1.2.1 Conclusion: five elements.....	27
1.3 Transformation by mimesis	27
1.3.1 What mimesis is.....	28
1.3.2 A sacrifice of sacrifice	28
1.3.3 Mimesis of.....	30
1.4 Self-sacrifice	30
1.4.1 Philosophical sacrifice.....	31
1.4.2 Christian sacrifice.....	34
1.5 Unique, and for all	35

1.6	The revelation of truth.....	37
1.6.1	In spirit, to truth	38
1.7	Overcoming sacrifice	39
1.8	Conclusion.....	42
2	<i>relation to worldviewing.....</i>	44
2.1	Viewing an open world	44
2.1.1	The dynamic between experience and reflection	45
2.1.2	A definition of worldviewing	45
2.1.3	Worldviewing as an activity.....	46
2.1.4	What is viewed?	47
2.1.5	Conclusion	50
2.2	Sacrificial worldviewing	51
2.2.1	Two methods of the approach	52
2.2.2	The Entrance.....	54
2.2.3	The exit	57
2.2.4	Conclusion	58
2.3	Inferences from the description of sacrificial worldviewing.....	59
2.3.1	An implicit consequence of Nancy’s sacrifice	59
2.3.2	Sacrificial element of endurance of loss central to worldviewing	60
2.3.3	Find meaningfulness in rediscovering the world	60
2.3.4	Sacrificial worldviewing as a humanist practice	61
2.4	Conclusion.....	64
3	<i>implications for humanism.....</i>	67
3.1	Nancy’s critique.....	67
3.1.1	<i>Ereignis</i>	67
3.1.2	Critique on humanism	70
3.2	A possible humanist response.....	71
3.2.1	Critique on principality and the term ‘offer’	72
3.2.2	Phenomenological necessity	72
3.3	An alternative to sacrificial worldviewing.....	74
3.3.1	The primacy of eksistence	74
3.3.2	Phenomenological truth	75

3.3.3	Worldflowing	76
3.3.4	The spiritual humanist practice of phenomenological worldflowing	79
3.3.5	Relation between sacrificial worldviewing and phenomenological worldflowing	80
3.4	Coda: Viewing the great beauty	83
3.5	Conclusion.....	85
4	<i>conclusion</i>.....	87
5	<i>references</i>.....	90

SYNOPSIS

This thesis departs from the idea that (the ritual of) sacrifice started transforming right at the moment that humanism appeared. Humanism, with its practice of worldviewing, is seen as a way for mankind to autonomously and beyond revelation form its own views of the world. The problem is that it is unclear into what exactly sacrifice transformed, and what precisely the implications of this transformation are for humanism. Jean-Luc Nancy, provides in 'The Unsacrificeable' a good entry to research into this topic. In the first chapter, I analyse the transformation of sacrifice that is described in that text. In a close reading of this text, I follow the transformation into a new type of sacrifice. All that is left after the transformation into this new sacrifice, is a process. This process of new sacrifice can be described as an ontotheological appropriation of the self by means of transgression. This is a process by which the (modern) subject infinitely loses itself, but only to better come back to itself, in what can be called 'a mimed passage through negativity'. The old type of sacrifice is copied or 'mimed' in an image in which the subject is destroyed, but only in order to be affirmed again through a negation of negation. In the second chapter, I try to understand this new type of sacrifice through the lens of what in humanistic studies has been called 'worldviewing'. I argue that the process of new sacrifice is the performative structure that makes the humanist practice of autonomous worldviewing possible. This is the first major result of my research and I call this approach 'sacrificial worldviewing'. This relates to the idea that an autonomous and humanist worldview is enacted and made possible by a new notion of sacrifice. The third chapter begins with a close reading of Nancy criticism of sacrifice. This is based on the notion that existence itself can't be sacrificed and that sacrifice doesn't lead to full self-presence because Nancy's concept of sense infinitely exceeds meaning and so cannot function as its foundation. Using this criticism, I rethink the relation of transformed sacrifice and humanism in depth. The first way I do this is by defending the humanistic practice of sacrificial worldviewing through the argument that it might be futile because it is never complete yet remains phenomenologically necessary since this is what humans do to create self-sustaining meaning in a meaningless world. The second way I do this is by developing an alternative approach to worldviewing that I call 'phenomenological worldflowing'. This is the second major result of my research and with it, I attempt to both develop humanism and its practice of worldviewing and to

deeper understand Nancy's call to 'think at a distance' from sacrifice.

Phenomenological worldflowing takes place on the level of lived experience in which the subject follows the flow of sense. I argue that it can be called humanistic because it can be placed under the banner of spiritual humanism, and I argue that it should be more primary than sacrificial worldviewing because it is better suited against Nancy's antihumanism and because it reduces the necessity for sacrificial worldviewing.

FOREWORD

This thesis marks the end of my years of study at the University of Humanistic studies. It is with a mixture of feelings that I sincerely think of this place as being my *alma mater*. The playfulness and historicity of the building, the like-minded students, the unique and caring teachers, all, within the first few months of my studying period, made me feel as if I'd found my place in the world. I experienced my first years as an explosive journey into studying and friendship. I engaged in a diversity of activities to still my intellectual hunger and to fulfil my social life.

As far as these first years were characterised by an 'opening up and connecting', the finishing years can be characterised by 'closing and demarcating'. I've become humbler in following my interests and more vulnerable and understanding in recognizing my limits. It is a dynamic that I think is best described by Otto Rank's tension between 'life anxiety' and 'death anxiety'. The project of writing this thesis can be characterised similarly: I started with an incredible hunger to understand the curious worldview of Nancy, of whom I only read a sentence or two during my studies. But I then found out that I lacked quite some philosophical and theological knowledge that Nancy presupposes in his texts. His style was also new to me, French philosophy has a certain slipperiness that took me some time to get used to. Looking back, I now feel like, with a more demarcated research question, the first two chapters could have been the subject of a thesis on their own. Yet, in my hunger to think in-depth about the implications of my work, the third chapter allowed me to find my own voice, which is a humanist perspective. And for that I am grateful.

The first person to thank here is Laurens ten Kate, whose teachings and fields of interest have always fascinated me. Without him, I wouldn't have dedicated this thesis to such a curious topic as sacrifice. If the University of Humanistic Studies truly is my *alma mater*, then Fernando Suárez Müller was my Socratic teacher, since he guided me and a group of students on a philosophical adventure. Although a lot of teachers inspired me in different valuable ways, he was the one who recognized my philosophical talents and inspired me to develop my own thoughts. With pleasure, I recall the philosophical reading groups in which I participated in my initial years. He encouraged me and others to find our inner voices. These were prosperous and exciting times and for this and his

advice in the last months of my thesis, I am deeply grateful.

I also want to express many thanks to Bram van Boxtel, who anchored me in the university, inspired me, and has been a close friend ever since. Nick Bongers then, a close friend who managed to hit a soft spot in everybody's heart, has been a warm and enthusiastic companion for all this important time of my life, also outside the academic realm. More so than to both individually, I want to express my gratitude for the strange and almost inexplicable sense of loving and often deeply provocative humour that we share among us: it will always accompany my worldviewing process. Humour always makes life (and the world) more bearable. I cherish the evenings and nights we share. Of course, I also want to thank my parents, who, in their own way, always tried to support me in my life choices.

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Some refuse the loan of life to avoid the debt of death

Otto Rank

0 INTRODUCTION

Although this thesis has a broader academic and societal relevance, this thesis is a product of the University of Humanistic Studies and therefore relates to the study of humanism. Throughout history, there have been many views on what humanism is, and there are undoubtedly more to come. A common aspect of humanism is that it deals with the existential and ethical ways in which humans relate to the world around them. This also implies the ways in which humans relate to what transcends them, to those parts of our lived experience that we use to call ‘spirituality’ and that often is experienced as falling outside the domain of rationality.

With this thesis, I want to contribute to the study of this ‘spiritual’ aspect of humanism by *researching the relationship between sacrifice and humanism through the lens of what is called ‘worldviewing’*. I will first clarify why this research is necessary (section one). I will then introduce a key thinker on the topic, Jean-Luc Nancy, and argue that amidst other literature on sacrifice his work is best suited for the particular research delineated in this thesis (section two). Finally, I will explicitly state the relevance of this research, the specific research questions, the methodology, closing this introduction with a brief overview of the chapters to come (section three and four).

0.1 Sacrifice, humanism, and worldviewing

Humanism, as a conceptual framework dealing with the ways humans relate to the world around them, can be argued to originate in the period that is first described by Karl Jaspers as the ‘axial age’. This theory of the existence of an axial age was for the first time developed in *The Origin and Goal of History* (1953). As it was introduced by Jaspers, the theory deals prominently with the period between 800 and 200 BC. In this period, the world or human history, ‘pivoted’ and ‘turned around its axis’. It is from here that the theory derived its name. Jaspers’s book thus described the origin of modern history by showing how the axial period demarcated a break between a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ that today still endures and continues to influence ideas about the goal of history. Although the axial period is currently often argued to begin around 1400 BC and to continue up till today, with different internal shifts that can be pointed out throughout human cultural history, I want to focus on the time period pointed out by

Jaspers (Bellah & Joas, 2012). I will argue that it is during this ‘axial revolution’ that sacrifice transformed and partly parallel to it humanism began.

0.1.1 Pre-axial times

As I said before, the axial revolution according to Jaspers marked a ‘before’ and ‘after’. It is in this in-between that I want to situate my argument. I will use this distinction from the pre-axial time to show how sacrifice changed and how humanism was made possible.

Jaspers (1953) describes the pre-axial world as mythological, inhabited by the Gods. It is a world of myths, in which the Gods manipulate the world. It was the narrative world of *mythos*. Humans living in these times felt as though their lives and their world were completely determined by the stories around the Gods. They thus experienced their lives and the world to be subject to certain powers both within and outside them. The relationship between mankind and the Gods, or the divine and earthly realm, was a relation of *immanence*. The transcendent Gods were worldly-immanent.

Pre-axial sacrifice can be understood within this context and worldview. The lives of humans were ‘given’ to the Gods. Sacrifice was a bloody and horrifying ritual by which people ‘gave’ some part of their life back to the Gods. It is a ‘returning of life’ to the Gods; in order to please and favour them, or to keep them on friendly terms. Sacrifice as a ritual was thus anchored in the pre-axial worldview for thousands of years. It was a necessary act in a world in which myths were dominant. In a certain sense, sacrifice was a performative accomplishment of the mythical worldview: with the experience of sacrifice and awe for the Gods, the worldview itself was reaffirmed again and again.

0.1.2 Three aspects of the axial revolution

It is in the axial period, that the first classical texts from the Hebrew prophets, and Greek, Chinese, and Indian religious and philosophical thought appeared, thereby initiating a fundamental momentum for change in human history. Three intertwined aspects of this period are of relevance for my research: a) the self-emancipation of humankind, b) the emergence of the idea of transcendence, and c) the birth of philosophy and humanism.

The axial religions were rational and moral. This means that humans beyond the narrative of myths about the world, started to think and develop rational explanations of

the world and how to live morally in it. They self-emancipated themselves from the world of *mythos* and thus entered the world of *logos* and *ethos*. With this self-emancipation, the gods are no longer *in* the world: the axial religions move from polytheism to monotheism and from immanence to transcendence, the monotheistic God is distant. It is a God that does no longer interfere with everything happening in the world and that takes up a ‘transcendental position’ *outside* it. The once immanent relation between mankind and divinity thus becomes a transcendent one, the fully sacred is by this also placed outside of the world. Instead of God, humans now take up a central position in the worldview (Gordon, 2011; Jung, 2012; Kate, 2014, 2015a; Suárez Müller, n.d.). The idea of transcendence is radicalized: the worldly-immanent transcendence of pre-axial times now really becomes fully transcendent. Suárez Müller shows how this creates an ontological dualism between the transcendent and the immanent (Suárez Müller, 2018, 19). This transcendent is either seen as an exceptional experience that ‘pulls us out of the ordinary’ or as ‘ideas’ or ‘ideals’ which were the subject of a rational endeavour (Suárez Müller, 2018, 13). The axial period so witnessed the birth of philosophy as part of the development of religious consciousness. ‘Being’, is no longer just experienced, but contemplated upon. Philosophy became a systemic rational reflection that criticised and interpreted the sacred in different ways (Suárez Müller, 2018, p. 20). With their self-emancipation to *logos*, humans so became rational and independent actors who argumentatively formed their own image of the cosmos. For the first time, a worldview originated that caught the world in one image in both time and space. Western Philosophy and humanism are intertwined in their (Greek) roots: “philosophy as a discursive attempt of humankind to unravel the meaning of being human ‘is’ a manifestation of a humanist disposition” (Suárez Müller, n.d., p. 9). It is for example, in the thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that ideas of human dignity and what it means to be human are first formulated and developed (Vanheste, 2007, pp. 16–19). The origin of philosophical thinking thus also marks the start of the humanist adventure of radical self-reflection, of viewing the world differently than in religious revelation. It is in this axial turn that the notion of ‘world’ whereupon different views were possible, emerges (Brague, 2003). Worldviewing as a conscious and autonomous act thus begins right in this axial turn with the birth of philosophy and humanism.

What then, happens to sacrifice in this axial turn? The word ‘sacrifice’ is often associated with the archaic, pre-axial ritual. Yet, a second association tells us that sacrifice, as a word that denotes gestures of ‘giving it all away’, of ‘destruction’, of ‘receiving’, of ‘struggle’ in general, is still part of popular discourse. We know that sacrificial rituals are still performed but in general, the western world has moved away from such practices. It is precisely within the axial age that the first association of sacrifice disappears and makes room for the second association of sacrifice. With the emancipation from the Gods and the consequent forbidding of human sacrifice, sacrifice seems to transform.

Nancy, the main protagonist of my thesis, begins his essay on sacrifice with a quote from Diogenes Laertius about Thales of Miletus, a Greek Mathematician living right in the middle of the axial turn: “Pamphile says that, having learnt geometry from the Egyptians, Thales was the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle, whereupon he sacrificed an ox” (Laertius, 1942, pp. 24–25). With this epigraph, Nancy wants to indicate a remarkable coincidence between two developments: the rise of science and the ritual of sacrifice. How did it come that science today takes sacrifice as an object to study, as a category of bygone thinking, whereas sacrifice once used to be strongly interwoven with science, or scientific progress? Nancy shows that sacrifice started to transform right at the heart of the axial turn from mythos to logos.

0.1.3 Conclusion

So why study sacrifice and humanism via worldviewing?

The pre-axial sacrifice had a firm place in the worldview people had at that time. The axial turn marks the beginning of three (interrelated) trends: sacrifice transforms, humanism and philosophy begin, and worldviewing becomes a conscious act of a self-reflecting humanism. The transformation of sacrifice from the axial turn onwards is therefore related to a movement towards humanism. With placing the sacred outside of this world, sacrifice as a way to maintain a relationship with the Gods didn’t disappear but rather was transformed.

In this thesis, I don’t want to engage with the precise conditions that made the axial period possible. Rather, I want to study the implications of the transformation of sacrifice for humanism. It is relevant to analyse this because sacrifice was a way to

maintain a relationship with the transcendental and because humanism has always been in a tense relationship with the transcendental or the religious. With both movements originating in the axial period, what has sacrifice come to mean for humanism in our current age? Because philosophical worldviewing can be seen as a practice of self-reflecting humanism, and because pre-axial sacrifice was performatively anchored in the worldview at the time, the question concerning the relationship between transformed sacrifice and humanism can be demarcated and better answered by focusing on their relation to worldviewing. If pre-axial sacrifice derived its meaning from the worldview in which it took place, what then did its transformation mean for a self-reflective and active worldviewing and humanism? What portion of this old sacrifice still exists in new sacrifice, and how is it entangled in the new active worldviewing processes which we still identify today? What is the meaning of sacrifice in relation to our modern worldviews as they find their expression in our daily modern lives? Worldviewing so becomes a lens through which the implications of the transformation of sacrifice for humanism can be understood.

0.2 Jean-Luc Nancy and sacrifice studies

In this section, I will introduce Jean-Luc Nancy and I will argue that his work offers a good entrance into the subject of my study. I will first show that his analysis of sacrifice is useful because he describes how sacrifice, in general, was transformed and also because he is critical of this transformation. I will then set out that Nancy's perspective on sacrifice is unique and relevant amid other contemporary literature on sacrifice.

0.2.1 Nancy's notion of sacrifice

Professor of philosophy at the University of Strasbourg, Jean-Luc Nancy has produced a vast body of works.¹ Topics that he often addressed are religion, art, the senses, and community. In these works, Nancy often engaged with thinkers like Hegel, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot, and Bataille (Devisch & Rooden, 2011, pp. 113–114). Although Nancy mentioned the notion of sacrifice in several places, there is only one text that is entirely devoted to this issue: 'L'Insacrifiable' (1991). This text was originally written as part of a larger collection of essays: *Une Pensée finie (A Finite Thinking)* and only translated into English in 2003. In 'The Unsacrificable' Nancy, in

¹ Sadly, Nancy passed away last august.

conversation with Georges Bataille, traces a genealogy of sacrifice from pre-axial to axial time.

Already in the opening paragraphs of this text, Nancy takes us right to the question of sacrifice after the axial turn:

We would need to evoke another representation here: the image of the past ten centuries, during which sacrifice, first at the edge then at the heart of Western foundations, is shaken loose, sublated, transfigured, or withdrawn. This happens with the prophets of Israel, with Zoroaster, Confucius, the Buddha, and, finally, with philosophy and in Christianity. (...) Nothing, perhaps, marks out the West more distinctly (albeit obscurely) than this dialectical assumption or subsumption of sacrifice. (2003b, p. 52)

In this text, and his larger work, Nancy doesn't refer explicitly to the axial theory, but his work often revolves around the dynamic between religion and secularisation. Nancy suggests that the transformation of sacrifice is the hallmark of the rise of the west. He thus indicates that after the axial turn, sacrifice did not disappear, but rather was transformed. A transformation that is in some way in symbiosis with the rise of the west, which means, with the origin of philosophy and the monotheisms. Nancy will describe this transformation and finally claim that there is a general sacrificial logic in the west. This is useful for my research because it seeks to get a general understanding of sacrifice for humanism. Authors who study more specific aspects or instances of sacrifice are thus less suited for my purpose.

Nancy has a critical stance about the direction of the transformation of sacrifice. He, for example, asks whether it "isn't about time that we acknowledged the end of real sacrifice and the closure of its fantasy?" (2003b, p. 54). Nancy tries to deconstruct sacrifice as a fundamental trait of western culture, arguing that it needs to be abandoned. Therefore, studying Nancy's notion of sacrifice is relevant for my research for two reasons. Firstly, to study the relationship between sacrifice and worldviewing as a practice of humanism. Secondly, to reflect on the way humanism relates to Nancy's criticism of sacrifice.

0.2.2 Uniqueness of Nancy's approach amidst other literature

Sacrifice as a ritual can be seen as a characteristic phenomenon of religious traditions. Yet, in recent years, it is also studied outside the religious domain. The sacrificial act is often studied in its relation to violence, self-destruction, and also devotion and submission.

If it is seen as violent, sacrifice can be approached historically for example to ask whether the violent founding of the French Republic is sacrificial (Goldhammer, 2006). Or it can be approached anthropologically to study important cases of pre-axial human sacrifice (Bremmer, 2007). Or it is studied within the frame of law to see whether certain acts of political violence, such as torture and terror, can be described as sacrificial (Kahn, 2008). For this thesis, which investigates what sacrifice can mean for humanism, research that moves beyond this violent perspective on sacrifice is more relevant. Both McClymond's (2008) and Hedley's (2011) studies are interesting, but the first is based on non-western notions of sacrifice and the latter deploys a theory of sacrifice in view of the ecological crisis. Both studies are therefore not relevant for my research, because I aim to ask what sacrifice in general terms means for (western) humanism.

A promising recent contribution to sacrifice studies is the 2017 volume *Sacrifice in Modernity*. In it, several approaches to the sacrificial act have been edited together. They deal with community, ritual, and identity. Sacrifice is not seen as primarily violent but as an expression of gratitude, community spirit, and commitment to the poor (Duyndam et al., 2017, p. 5). Although this recent volume on sacrifice in modernity offers refreshing analyses, shaping a multifaceted notion of sacrifice in relation to community and identity, all its contributions approach the phenomenon by analysing a specific, demarcated example. In contrast, I am interested in what sacrifice means in general terms for humanism. The approach taken in the mentioned volume is that sacrifice is always seen as something that someone or a group of people does; it is seen as an act, demarcated in time and space. This act then may or may not bring forth or renew a certain relation to community, ritual, and identity. In contrast, Nancy's more existential approach to sacrifice sees it not as a way of doing, but as a way of being (Ffrench, 2007a, p. 5). Besides this, in *Sacrifice in Modernity* sacrifice is seen in relation to something else, rather than as a fundament that underlies these kinds of

relations, as Nancy does. This volume therefore begs the question of my research: How can it be that so many sacrifices are identifiable in the modern west? What is the underlying logic of this? Where do all these sacrificial structures come from and what should we do with them? Nancy's critical genealogical approach offers the possibility to answer all these questions. A humanistic perspective on sacrifice should study this *general structure* of modern sacrifice, rather than its numerous manifestations.

Regarding more philosophical approaches to sacrifice, there are a lot of (continental) philosophers who have all their views on sacrifice. Although they react to each other, a clear line of understanding sacrifice 'in itself' remains open (Bubbio, 2014, p. 1). Two philosophers deserve mentioning: René Girard and Giorgio Agamben.

Girard's scapegoat mechanism is central to his theory of religion and describes how, as an outcome of mimetic rivalry, a victim or group of victims is blamed for an existing disorder. This is done via a so-called 'surrogate victimage': the victim becomes a victim by virtue of a mimesis of accusation, is killed, and so peace is restored to the group.

Sacrifice is an institutionalised repetition of this scapegoat mechanism (Fleming, 2014).

The unicity of Girard's approach is that human violence and conflict are better explained by mimetic rivalry than by biological aggression or economic scarcity. Even very recently, Girard (2011) published *Sacrifice*, in which, by building upon his early mimetic analysis of sacrifice, he investigates how similar mechanisms of sacrifice are present in the Vedic tradition. This work is of importance if we want to understand other notions of sacrifice, but in itself, the work doesn't present a general theory of sacrifice such as Nancy's. His work constitutes the focus of scholarly attention (Coakley, 2012; Cowdell et al., 2014; Keenan, 2003a; King, 2016; Newman, 1993; O'Shea, 2010), but makes no connection to modern humanism, worldviewing or Nancy.

Agamben's sacrifice plays a role in his *Homo Sacer* project. Here the sacred is seen as an original political figure that was once exceptional and excluded from public life. The classical definition of 'sacred life' was that it could be "killed but not sacrificed". This *homo sacer* was banned from the community and this life had no meaning except that of mere or 'bare' life. Sovereignty then refers to the power to decide or manage this 'bare life' (Walt, 2005). Thus, for Agamben, a ban and not a sacrifice, serves as the originary act of political sovereignty (Martel, 2006). Agamben so shows that modern political

theory, specifically its bio-political essence stems from Roman law. Therefore, although Agamben is critical of sacrifice and wants to overcome it, his writing is strongly focused on political issues related to sacrifice such as sovereignty and biopolitics (Ffrench, 2007a, p. 189). With this referral to classic Roman times, his work is thus interesting, yet too political to have merit for my research.

So, as far as I can see, no research is done explicating the relation of sacrifice to the phenomenon of worldviewing or humanism. The implications of Nancy's concept of sacrifice for my topic had no prior attention. Philosophical research on sacrifice uses to engage with the political implications of Nancy's take on sacrifice and focuses mostly on his response to Bataille, relating this to other writings on community and sovereignty (Arnould, 1996; Beistegui, 1997; Harbaš, 2018; Kaur, 2018; Keenan, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Mayblin & Course, 2014; Moore, 2012; Morin, 2013, 2006; Norris, 2012; Pump, 2010; Schuback, 2016).

0.3 Relevance

The first reason for the academic and societal relevance of my study is that, by looking at the transformation of sacrifice as a condition for the possibility of western culture, and for worldviewing as the main practice defining humanism, is that conclusions can be drawn for the way humans derive meaning from the world and the way they interact. Since worldviewing encompasses the ways in which people autonomously give meaning to life, it deals with intersecting visions of the good and forms of meaning-making. As such, worldviewing is closely related to processes of humanisation or dehumanisation. It will help us to better understand how to live a meaningful life in a just society. My study directly contributes to the research on meaning-making and humanization, as has been developed in humanistic studies.

The second point of mainly academic relevance has strong implications for religion. The relevant implications of sacrifice for worldviewing also show that the process of worldviewing is not necessarily a strictly secular activity (even though the content of it might be). My study in fact takes place in a larger debate about the role of humanism in the intertwining of religion and secularisation in contemporary worldview positions. The third aspect of academic relevance lies in understanding the way Nancy's sacrifice is discussed in contemporary literature. His general statements on sacrifice are often

quoted verbatim, which is understandable since his text is quite complex and difficult to express in other words. A reason might also be that there is little concern for Nancy's argumentation in 'The Unsacrificeable', leaving open what exactly is meant by certain passages. This in my view should be an additional reason to study Nancy's approach to sacrifice in more detail and to reconstruct his arguments rather than taking over the conclusions. Literature quoting Nancy's idea of sacrifice often doesn't bring these claims in conjunction with his other works. By doing so, I try to shed light on Nancy's text situating it in his broader philosophy. This will do more justice to Nancy's text and help us to understand the transformation of sacrifice in distinct ways: specifically in the way it relates to worldviewing. As I noted before, Nancy's statements are often applied to political philosophy. This makes sense given the content and context of 'The Unsacrificeable', but in my view, Nancy's notion of sacrifice is primarily delineated as a fundamental aspect of the western culture, and it is this profound sense of this notion that deserves research on its own. So, my study will thus be academically relevant not only because it studies Nancy's sacrifice in relation to worldviewing, but also because it seeks a more contextualised understanding of the claims he makes. Finally, my research is academically relevant, because of the general connection it looks to establish between sacrifice, worldviewing, and humanism. A connection that has hardly been researched. I could only find studies approaching sacrifice as a ritual act or relating it to non-western worldviews. No research was done explicating the relation of sacrifice to worldviewing. The practices that we referred to as sacrificial may have changed, and with this change, we might find it less useful to still use the word sacrifice – but these practices are still imbued with the notion of sacrifice. To be able to highlight what these practices are and what can be called sacrificial about them, it is useful to study Nancy's general view on sacrifice, and how it relates to worldviewing as a practice of humanism.

0.4 Questions, methodology, summary

In view of what has been said above, my main research question is:

“What is the implication of Jean-Luc Nancy's critical analysis of the transformation of sacrifice for a humanistic concept of worldviewing?”

The sub-questions are:

‘What does Jean-Luc Nancy’s analysis of the transformation of sacrifice entail?’

‘How can Jean-Luc Nancy’s analysis of the transformation of sacrifice be related to humanistic worldviewing?’

‘What is Jean-Luc Nancy’s criticism of the transformation of sacrifice and what are the implications for humanism as a practice of worldviewing?’

With these questions, my research follows three goals:

It will describe Nancy’s concept of the transformation of sacrifice in detail, analyse the implications of this transformation for worldviewing, and delineate a humanist perspective based on Nancy’s critique of sacrifice in relation to worldviewing.

My methodology will be thematic and critical, engaging in argumentative discussions with relevant literature. I will study in detail Nancy’s complex text ‘The Unsacrificable’ and situate it within his larger work. My study is thematic because it limits itself to the topics of sacrifice and worldviewing. My study is argumentative because Nancy’s arguments will be translated and applied to the context of humanistic worldviewing. This will be done critically in the sense that both Nancy’s notion and the problems he relates to will be criticized from a humanist perspective.

The first sub-question will be answered in chapter one. First, ‘The Unsacrificable’ is contextualized in Nancy’s broader work. Second, pre-axial sacrifice is described to understand how it transforms. Third, parts of ‘The Unsacrificable’ are read in detail in order to study the transformation of sacrifice from the pre-axial time onwards.

The second sub-question will be answered in chapter two. First, humanism and worldviewing are described in detail in order to put this in conjunction with Nancy’s concept of ‘world’. Then, the process of worldviewing is described in such a way that it can be seen as following the structure of the transformed type of sacrifice. This is what I call ‘sacrificial worldviewing’.

The third sub-question will be answered in chapter three. First, Nancy’s criticism on sacrifice, and by proxy, on worldviewing and humanism, is described. Then, this criticism is defended, first by showing a phenomenological necessity of sacrificial worldviewing, then, to better understand Nancy from a humanist perspective, an

alternative approach to the process of worldviewing is described as ‘phenomenological worldflowing’.

1 NANCY'S TRANSFORMATION OF SACRIFICE

This chapter will answer the question: 'What is Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis of the transformation of sacrifice?' As stated above, I will provide a detailed reading of Nancy's 'The Unsacrificeable'. I will mainly focus on those parts of the text that answer the abovementioned question (parts three and four). At points where Nancy is less argumentative, I will provide a contextual explanation derived from his other works. If this too is lacking, I will try to supply arguments based on my own research into the matter.

1.1 Context of 'The Unsacrificeable'

Before starting, I will contextualise Nancy's essay by giving an overview of his main work and the topics and authors he engages with. I will then give a summary of the text.

1.1.1 Nancy's work

At the start of his academic career, Nancy engaged in commentaries of Kant, Hegel, and Lacan. It was in the 1980s that he, together with his colleague Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, founded the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political. Besides the political, another important interest of Nancy pops up, that of deconstruction. Deconstruction was one of the central aspects of Derrida's work as a way of doing philosophy by looking at the complexity and hidden contradictions in texts. This implied a close reading of philosophical texts, showing moments of tension or conflict within them. The two most important works that came out of this deconstructive period were bundled together under the title of *Retreating the Political* (1981). The Centre for Philosophical Research closed, but Nancy kept on publishing political works, most notably on the question of community. The most well-known of these is *The Inoperative Community* (1983 [1991b]). In it, a deconstruction of sovereignty goes along with a new grounding of politics. Other concepts that will be important in later works such as finitude and relationality are also studied. Community is thus shown to be a "resistance against immanent power" instead of being the result of a fusion or production (Morin & Gratton, 2015, p. 7). A more metaphysical work concerning philosophy, meaning, and humanism was 'The Forgetting of Philosophy', an essay published in *The Gravity of Thought* (1986 [1993]). I will refer to it in more detail in the final chapter. Nancy's dissertation *The Experience of Freedom* (1988) was focused on

ontology and engaged with Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Heidegger. *A Finite Thinking* (1990 [2003a]) then, was a collection of essays on different topics related to ‘finitude’. One of the essays was ‘The Unsacrificable’. In later years, Nancy’s thought on deconstruction aimed at what precedes it: the possibility of deconstruction. Nancy here didn’t focus on a deconstruction of texts, but rather on aspects of existence. This gave rise to more ontological works like *The Sense of the World* (1993 [1997]), *Being Singular Plural* (1996 [2000]) and *The creation of the World or Globalization* (2002 [2007]). In the second work, he comments on and engages with Heidegger, reflecting on the concept of *Mitsein* (being-with) in order to develop a ‘plural ontology’. I will refer to this in more detail in the next chapter. A central tenet that results from this is that existence itself is deconstructed and shown to be unstable, changing, and multiple (Devisch & Rooden, 2011, pp. 114–115). In parallel, and also later, Nancy will develop reflections on ontology and metaphysics, using art and a corporeal ontology such as in *Corpus* (1992), *The Muses* (1994), *The Ground of the Image* (2003 [2005]), *The Fall of Sleep* (2007), and *Corpus 2* (2013). And in the 1990s, he starts another project: the deconstruction of Christianity in works like *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity 1* (2005 [2008]) and *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity 2* (2010 [2013]). Here Nancy questions the opposition between atheist modernity and religion, and he proclaims that Christianity in fact ‘auto-deconstructs’ itself, by which he means that elements of atheism are already visible in Christianity. It is in fact a study of how Western religious and philosophical foundations are caught up in a process of decomposition that has been brought about by Christianity itself. Instead of opposing Christianity and secular and atheist humanism, Nancy recognizes similarities. An important one is that both argue that existence is given meaning by some kind of instance (either God or the subject). Nancy thus shows the intertwinement, or co-originality of Christianity and modern, secular society (Rooden, 2008, p. 285). These books will be referred to throughout my research since the transformation of sacrifice is caught up in this intertwinement of Christianity and humanism.

1.1.2 ‘The Unsacrificable’

‘The Unsacrificable’ is a conversation with Georges Bataille, whose writings were deeply influenced by his experiences in the Second World War. Nancy is interested in three of his topics: community, sacrifice, and writing. In all these topics, Nancy follows

Bataille only to a certain degree. With *The Inoperative Community* (1991b) - a work that made Nancy famous in the philosophical debate on community - he argues that western thought often revolves around a longing for an original community, which enacts a certain nostalgia. This mythic longing for community is simply an imagination of a bygone period. This he calls 'immanentism' and it is innocent unless it becomes the basis for a politics of community. Here nationalisms arise excluding the so-called external. Nancy questions the possibility of such a community since history has shown that such political projects end up in terror (Devisch & Rooden, 2011, pp. 117–118). In 'The Unsacrificable', Nancy takes Bataille's *Inner Experience* as a primary source about sacrifice. He argues that Bataille doesn't follow the sacrificial logic through as it should result in the notion that existence is unsacrificable. I will now present a summary of the text, all details that are relevant for my research will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

In 'The Unsacrificable' Nancy describes the transformation from an 'old' to 'new' type of sacrifice. 'Old sacrifice' can also be called 'religious', 'real', or 'ancient' sacrifice. Religious, because it took place in religious contexts and/or had a relation to the sacred. Real, because it concerned the *material* sacrifice of goods, animals, or humans. Ancient, because it is a very old phenomenon, taking place up until 15000 years ago, the man of Lascaux. 'New sacrifice' can also be called 'Western', 'Christian', or 'Modern' sacrifice. Western, because Nancy specifically associates the transformation of sacrifice with the rise of the west. Christian, because the rise of the west is very much intertwined with the rise of Christianity (as Nancy's project of deconstruction of Christianity shows). Modern, because Nancy will eventually see sacrifice as a process that structures modern thought (2003b, p. 51). From here on, unless one of the other adjectives is more relevant, I will preferably use the terms 'pre-axial sacrifice' and 'new sacrifice'.

In the second section of his essay Nancy (p. 54) starts to engage with the work of Bataille, because he had an ambiguous interpretation of sacrifice. Then, Nancy introduces Socrates and Christ, two figures who are exemplary for the relationship of the west to sacrifice. This relationship is one of both distance and repetition. Both figures distance themselves from sacrifice and simultaneously represent its metamorphosis or transgression. Nancy calls this 'mimesis', because the pre-axial

sacrifice is imitated. In this mimesis, a new truth is produced, which is why Nancy refers to the process as a ‘mimetic rupture’. Something is breached, broken, or disturbed in this process of mimesis itself. New sacrifice is the outcome of this rupture and has four characteristics. First, it is a self-sacrifice; then, it “is unique, and it is consummated for all” (p. 57); thirdly it is “inseparable from the fact that it is the revealed truth of every sacrifice, or of sacrifice in general” (p. 58); and finally it sublates the moment of finitude in the pre-axial sacrifice, the so-called ‘sacrifice of sacrifice’.

In the fourth section, Nancy discusses this mimetic rupture and shows how the external mimesis of pre-axial sacrifice becomes the inner and true mimesis of genuine sacrifice. This he calls ‘transappropriation’, which constitutes an appropriation via a transgression of finitude.

In the fifth section, Nancy then takes up the role of art in relation to sacrifice. The transgressive presentation of a subject who appropriates himself and allows himself to be appropriated is a dominant topic in art. Because sacrifice is weaved into art and literature Nancy thinks it stimulated the western spiritualization of sacrifice. He also discusses the difference between mimesis and methexis (participation) in art and argues that art has a supplementing role in relation to sacrifice: it doesn’t replace it, but it does keep the possibility of sacrifice ‘open’ (p. 65).

In the sixth section, Nancy discusses Bataille’s reflections on Nazism, and discussing the camps, Nancy concludes that they show, finally, that sacrifice doesn’t achieve anything (Bulhof & Kate, 2000, p. 17).

Finally, Nancy expresses the need to think beyond sacrifice. If we follow the logic of sacrifice, this leads to the notion that existence can’t be sacrificed, because it is already offered to the world. This is Nancy’s central point explaining the title of his essay (Nancy, 2003, p. 74).

Let’s have a closer look at the analysis of the transformation of sacrifice. It is useful to ask what type of sacrifice is being transformed. What does the pre-axial sacrifice entail?²

² It is arguable whether we can know anything of pre-axial sacrifice. At least, Nancy seems to think we can’t. Throughout his text, he mentions at several points that we cannot know what pre-axial sacrifice was like. We only have an image of it based on best assumptions, which are about the way it functioned, what kind of ‘economy’ it was based on, and what role it played in a community (Nancy, 2003, pp. 55, 61–62, 73–74). Of course, there are scholars from various other disciplines presenting evidence and various

1.2 Pre-axial sacrifice

A classic on sacrifice is *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1898 [1964]). It responds to other significant works on sacrifice such as Edward Burnett Tylor's (1871 [1974]) Robertson Smith's (1894 [2017]; 1885 [1970]), Sylvain Lévi's (1898 [2003]), and James George Frazer's (1890 [2020]). Hubert and Mauss laid out the sacrificial scheme and its corresponding vocabulary: 'the sacrificer', 'the victim' (the sacrificed), and 'the exit' (of the ritual) (Hubert & Mauss, 1964, pp. 19–50). They also distinguished between personal and objective sacrifices. In the first, the personality of the sacrificer is affected and in the latter, it is the objects that receive the sacrificial action. Some sacrifices are regular, others are occasional (p. 14). With this scheme, they sought to show how sacrifice, which takes up many forms and functions in different religions can still be placed under a common denominator. They sought what unifies all these types of sacrifice and concluded that sacrifice:

always consists in one same procedure, which may be used for the most widely different purposes. This procedure consists of establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed. (p. 97)

Nancy takes up the idea that sacrifice is one of the first expressions of a relationship between the earthly (or profane) and 'the sacred' (the 'another world' or 'the gods'). This function of sacrifice, linking one world to 'an outside', is crucial for Nancy, since it often had a specific goal, aimed at by an 'offering' (Nancy, 2013, pp. 6, 50).

Pre-axial sacrifice was practised in different ways, both in space and time, it manifested itself in these different specificities. In shamanistic and perhaps other pre-axial 'religions' for example, sacrifices were rites in which something was offered at certain times to specific gods for specific goals. Specifically, the shaman 'knew the road' to the gods and could escort the sacrificial victim (Eliade, 1989, pp. 181–183, 199, 235, 238). The goal could be to cure someone, to simply maintain the relationship with the sacred,

arguments that do validate these assumptions, who would disagree with Nancy. I will not engage with such discussions here, since, as I will show later, it is the posterior 'image' of pre-axial sacrifice, whether valid or not, that fuels and propels the transformation of sacrifice.

to please divine kinships, to hierarchically organize society, to ask for gifts, or to expiate the soul (Bellah, 2011, pp. 213,234,401-402, 485–490; Eliade, 1989, p. 216; Graulich, 2000).

1.2.1 Conclusion: five elements

From all the above-mentioned literature about the pre-axial sacrifice, I want to distil five elements or essential characteristics. Although Nancy doesn't explicitly refer to them in his text, I want to highlight them, because they enable us to trace the transformation of sacrifice.

The first element is 'the actor', with which I refer to the ones participating in the sacrifice. In pre-axial sacrifice, this could be the priests or shamans (the sacrificers), but also the victims (the sacrificed). Who participates in sacrifice, who carries it out, and who or what is sacrificed?

The second element is 'the effectivity', with which I refer to the result or goal of sacrifice. In pre-axial sacrifice, this could be to cure someone for instance. What are the goals of sacrifice, and how effective is it in reaching them?

The third element is 'the outside', with which I refer to that which the sacrifice refers to. Pre-axial sacrifice for instance maintained a relationship with the sacred. What is sacrifice referring to? What happens to the outside?

The fourth element is 'the visibility', meaning the manifested aspects of sacrifice. Pre-axial sacrifice happened at certain times at certain places, often in front of the community. By which features can we recognize sacrifice? How does it manifest itself?

The fifth element is 'negativity', with which I refer to a certain transgression by which something or someone is destroyed. In pre-axial sacrifice, this was the sacrificed, the victim. What is transgressed or destroyed in sacrifice?

1.3 Transformation by mimesis

Let us see how Nancy depicts the transformation of sacrifice into 'new sacrifice'. I will start with the question that Nancy (2003) himself answers at the beginning of part three:

What is the nature of the West's initial relation to sacrifice? More precisely, upon what kind of relation to the sacrifices of the rest of humanity (or the

representations of these sacrifices) does the West map out, so to speak, its own ‘sacrifice’? (p. 54-55)

He answers that Socrates and Christ, whom he refers to as ‘the double figures of onto-theology’, show new sacrifice to be a matter of mimesis.³ Nancy takes no time to explain this, and only says that it refers to reproduction and repetition.

1.3.1 What mimesis is

Mimesis means ‘imitation’ or ‘repetition’ in ancient Greek. In contemporary philosophy, it is closely associated with Girard’s theory of the relationship of the sacred with violence. Girard uses the idea of mimesis in two ways: first in this general sense and then in a specific sense, relating it to sacrifice. Generally, a ‘mimetic desire’ means that we desire what we desire because we mime (imitate) the desires of others. Specifically, members of a community imitate each other in appointing to a specific member as the victim, the ‘scapegoat’. This scapegoat was sacrificed, and the group could return to peace (Girard, 2017).

Nancy understands and uses mimesis as a form of reproduction. To do so, he combines mimesis with another Greek term: methexis, or participation (Nancy, 2003, p. 62). As a concept, it is in close familiarity with mimesis, because there is no participation without mimesis. To participate, I must imitate that which I participate in. Participation is then my specific reproduction of this phenomenon (Nancy, 2003b, pp. 62–63, 2016, pp. 74–75). In this sense, both concepts thus imply each other. Without methexis, mimesis would just be a copy.

1.3.2 A sacrifice of sacrifice

That mimesis is not a simple copy suggests that the transformation of sacrifice is not referring to sacrifice as some kind of ‘format’ being given through different generations, transforming in the process. Nancy (2003) writes: “the gesture of a ‘mimetic rupture’ is necessary to inaugurate it” (p. 55). If something is ruptured this means that it is breached, broken off, disturbed. We can maybe clarify this gesture using the analogy of tearing a rope in two. We end up with a second rope that is like the first rope, and yet it

³ It is for this reason that Nancy calls new sacrifice ‘Western sacrifice’ since it is visible from Socrates and Christ on in the onto-theology of the west. The transformation of sacrifice is thus intertwined with the history of western philosophy and religion, in particularly that of Christianity and monotheism.

isn't. We don't know any more how the whole looked like; we are only left with our new rope that shows signs of a rupture, but precisely this has a proper function. This is where the concept of 'rupture' of sacrifice refers to. The old type of sacrifice is broken, and we end up with a new sacrifice that is in some way visible as connected with the old, yet also completely new and transfigured. An important outcome of such a rupture then, is that there is no logic of continuity, as Foucault would say.

Early sacrifice is, up to a certain point, reproduced in its form or schema, but reproduced in such a way as to uncover within it a completely new content, a truth previously buried or unrecognized, if not perverted. In the same way, *early* sacrifice is represented as having constituted only a previous imitation, a crude image of what *transfigured* sacrifice will hence-forth bring about. (Nancy, 2003, p. 55)

New sacrifice is thus the outcome of a rupture from pre-axial sacrifice. Nancy suggests that pre-axial sacrifice is represented as merely preceding new sacrifice, which harbours the "truth of true sacrifice". For now, it is unclear what Nancy means by this.

In the process of the transformation of sacrifice, envisioned in the gesture of the rupture, sacrifice thus breaks with itself and (as new sacrifice) installs itself by destroying pre-axial sacrifice. If sacrifice means as much as 'destroying or losing something and returning with something new', this could suggest that 'the West' sacrifices (breaks with) sacrifice. This whole process of a mimetic rupture can itself be described as a sacrifice (dedicated to ourselves) in order to achieve a newfound truth; sacrifice becomes a sacrifice (rupture, immolation, abandonment) of a former (pre-axial) type of sacrifice: "A sacrifice to sacrifice through the sacrifice of sacrifice" (2003, p. 55).

Nancy refers to this transformation as a 'sacrifice of sacrifice'.⁴

⁴ It should be noted, that just like Nancy's remarks on the lack of knowledge of pre-axial sacrifice, his claim that there is a break between pre-axial and new sacrifice has also been contested. For example, Meyer (2016), in following the empirical evidence of the kind of cultures that are described as transforming in the Axial period, argues that "sacrificial violence, superceded, superogated, abolished, or abrogated, doesn't simply go away, but still exists, censored and repressed, within the collective subconscious of the contemporary human species" (p. 60). This is a difficult argument in itself. Since Nancy's analysis of sacrifice will show to be relevant in as far as sacrifice was spiritualised, I will come back to this remnant of sacrificial violence in the next chapter.

1.3.3 Mimesis of...

After the axial period, human sacrifice was forbidden. Socrates and Christ, according to Nancy, can be seen as examples of human sacrifice showing the end of sacrifice through mimesis. Socrates exemplifies philosophical sacrifice and Christ religious sacrifice.

They are exemplary in two ways. Firstly, with their killing, the executioners were hoping to kill the 'idea' they stood for. They are so 'made an example' for the public. Secondly, and this is the way Nancy prefers to understand it, their sacrifice is an example of the transformation of sacrifice itself via mimesis. Their sacrifices will be mimed, and so sacrifice will transform into new sacrifice.

This new sacrifice is characterised in four ways by Nancy. Each of these characteristics shows itself to already be present in the story of Socrates and Christ (and is mimed from there on). Nancy sees this sacrificial logic extended throughout the whole of the western (onto-theological) tradition. The following four sections are all dedicated to analysing one of these characteristics.

1.4 Self-sacrifice

The first characteristic that Nancy describes is that new sacrifice is a self-sacrifice. In this, he is not only referring to the event of the deaths of Socrates and Christ.

In both cases, the event of sacrifice proper (...), the actual putting to death, merely punctuates and lays open the process and the truth of a life that is itself sacrificial through and through. With the West (...) it is a matter of a life that, in and for itself, is nothing other than sacrifice (...). The life of the subject – what Hegel calls the life of Spirit – is the life that lives by sacrificing itself. (Nancy, 2003, p.56)

New sacrifice as self-sacrifice thus does not refer to death, but to the lives of the sacrificed subjects. Life itself is sacrificial. This means that even though neither the sacrificed nor the executioners are represented as participating in an actual sacrifice, Nancy argues that it can be said that our protagonists lived their lives as a movement towards their death, their whole life was sacrificial. The act of sacrifice itself, the moment of death, takes place after a certain type of life, after a performance leading up to this point. The life lived before death becomes a sacrificial itinerary. New sacrifice is absolutely subjective: it is a sacrifice of, and by, the subject. The 'of' here refers to the

subject being both sacrificer and sacrificed (Nancy, 2003, p. 56). Why, exactly, this all is the case is not so clear. In both the examples, Nancy merely cites one other source about the event of their sacrifice. In Socrates' example, this source is the *Phaedo*, in that of Christ, the source is the Pauline doctrine of kenosis. Let us have a look at each of these sources and so figure out what in Nancy's underlying argument supports his claim that these are examples of self-sacrifice.

1.4.1 Philosophical sacrifice

In describing Socrates as the example of this self-sacrifice, Nancy (2003) writes:

The *Phaedo* suggests nothing other than the reappropriation of the situation by the subject Socrates: he is in prison, he is going to die there; all earthly life is designated as a prison, one from which he plans to free himself through death. *Philosophy* appears thus not simply as *knowledge* of this liberation, but as its genuine *operation* (p. 56)

This philosophical self-sacrifice from Socrates onwards thus 'appears' as the 'operation' of a 'liberation' of (earthly) life through death. Nancy doesn't give much more context to what this means. The only context is that in the *Phaedo* the liberation through death can be read in Socrates' argumentation for the immortality of the soul. Socrates explains that a philosophical life should seek to free the soul from the body (as an earthly prison), which finally happens in death. Now, what *is* a philosophical life? The next section will show this to mean a life according to *logos*, via dialectics.

1.4.1.1 Philosophical life: sacrifice as a dialectical self-development

It is with Socrates that dialectics begins, evolving towards what Hegel made of it. Dialectics usually refers to a certain kind of philosophical argument. The classic example is that of a dialogue between Socrates and those with whom he was in conversation. In this back-and-forth dialogue, both sides present ideas or concepts which are opposed. "Both partners depend on one another; personal views and convictions must be risked, tested and reformulated in the process of the exchange with the other, so that between them the truth will emerge" (Kate, 2015b, p. 25). In Hegel - whose work has had a tremendous impact on western philosophy - dialectics changes. His dialectical method consists of three moments. The first is the moment of understanding or fixity. At this moment, concepts have a stable definition. The second

is the moment of instability, the dialectical or negatively rational. The first fixed definition passes into its opposite, which is called self-sublation (*aufhebung*). This *aufhebung* thus negates and preserves the concept at the same time. The third moment is the positively rational moment and in it, the unity between the first two moments is achieved (Maybee, 2020). Because of the way Hegel uses his dialectics in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ten Kate (2015b) argues that dialectics is not only, or no longer a method of reasoning or relation, but it becomes an ontological and existential logic referring to the way history proceeds and humans live their existence. This is what Nancy means when he refers to Hegel's 'life of Spirit'. It is not so much a philosophical method anymore, but an ontology. Socrates' self-sacrificial, philosophical life is thus mimed as dialectic, which refers to a process or experience wherein consciousness (in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*) fails to achieve its purpose and so undergoes a transformation by means of negativity (Stern, 2002).

1.4.1.2 *From Hegel to Bataille, and to Nancy*

It is Bataille who, in reaction to his teacher Kojève, points out this idea of sacrifice in Hegel as follows:

The fact that Hegel himself said, in this respect, that Spirit 'only attains its truth by finding itself in absolute dismemberment' goes together, in principle, with Kojève's negation (...). Kojève simply states that the idea of death 'is alone capable of satisfying man's pride' (...). Indeed, the desire to be 'recognized', which Hegel places at the origin of historical struggles, could be expressed in an intrepid attitude, of the sort that shows a character to its best advantage. 'It is only', says Kojève, 'in being or in becoming aware of one's mortality or finitude, in existing and feeling one's existence in a universe without a beyond or without a God, that Man can affirm his liberty, his historicity and his individuality – "unique in all the world" – and have them be recognized'. (Bataille, 1997, p. 289)⁵

⁵ Not only in Hegel's and Bataille's philosophy does this idea take hold. The idea of death-experience as life-altering experiences of revelation are a common topic in existentialism, and in existential psychotherapy (Yalom, 2009).

Sacrifice, as described by Bataille, is visible throughout the whole movement of the phenomenology in which the spirit journeys through a series of configurations that will grow out of resolving previous problems. Sacrifice can thus be described as a specific form of determinate negation in which recognition plays a central role (Bubbio, 2012; Cohen, 2007; Goggin, 2018, 2019). Bataille so significantly highlights the idea of sacrifice as a developmental necessity of negativity within Hegel's philosophy. Sacrifice is linked to the requirement of attaining the truth through absolute dismemberment. This truth refers to man as a being-toward-death. In sacrifice, 'death lives a human life' (Bataille, 1997, p. 286). Bataille sees this necessity of negativity to find truth through sacrifice all over the world and primarily in pre-axial times. 'Death' then, is not the core moment of sacrifice, since it 'reveals nothing' and 'never takes place'. Our bodily or animal being supporting the human dies and so the individual does not witness the revelation coming with death. Instead, much like Girard, the sacrificed is a surrogate victim: "the sacrificer identifies himself with the animal that is struck down dead. And so, he dies in seeing himself die, and even, in a certain way, by his own will, one in spirit with the sacrificial weapon" (p. 287). In another essay, Bataille gives the example of a horse being butchered. The horse is then destroyed as an object, but in this same instant, it reveals...

a reality which is immanent to or rather between the horse and myself, the reality of exposure, at the limit, to the chance of not existing. What is at stake in sacrifice is thus something other than death, what is revealed is not death as such but the exposure of life to death, at the abyssal limit of life. (Ffrench, 2007b, p. 91)

Although Bataille also studied the ethnological and anthropological phenomena of sacrifice, as well as their ontotheological interpretations, he thus saw and sought in sacrifice something more than killing. Sacrifice does not revolve about death, but about the exposure of immanent life, about finitude. Sacrifice becomes the denominator of any experience of nonknowledge, of death and interruption, this is what he calls the 'inner experience' (Arnould, 1996, p. 87). The problem, which Bataille encountered, is that sacrifice was finite, it was temporary. It was only a subterfuge of the passage through negativity, only giving knowledge of death via a detour. In this subterfuge, the subject only dies momentarily and therefore sacrifice must be repeated again and again.

For now, I conclude this section with a suggestion linking the ‘truth’ of new sacrifice as self-sacrifice, of a philosophical, or dialectical life quoted by Nancy in the example of Socrates, to this truth that reveals humans as finite and being-to-death. The core moment of sacrifice is the revelation of this truth, the exposure of human’s finitude. Throughout a close reading of the other characteristics of sacrifice, I will try to give argumentative support for my suggestion.

1.4.2 Christian sacrifice

In describing Christ’s example of self-sacrifice, Nancy (2003) writes:

In the case of Christ, the Pauline doctrine of *kenosis* is familiar enough: the gesture by which Christ, “being in the form of God... humbled himself,” becoming man even unto death. God, lord and master over the death of all creatures, inflicts this death upon himself, returning to himself and his glory the life and love that he has lavished upon creation (p. 56).

The self-sacrifice of Christ for our sins is indeed familiar enough, but Nancy doesn’t explicate what more he refers to with this specific citation from Paul. When reading his *Dis-Enclosure*, it becomes clearer that this death of God for Nancy signifies the withdrawal of God from this world. This is shown in the God of the monotheisms, and the conceptions of god in onto-theology. Whereas in pre-axial times, the God(s) were *in* the world:

The unicity of god, on the contrary, signifies the withdrawal of this god away from presence and also from power thus understood (...) he expects no sacrifices destined to capture the benevolence of his power (...) with the figure of Christ comes the renunciation of divine power and presence, such that this renunciation becomes the proper act of God, which makes this act into God’s becoming-man. In this sense, the god withdrawn, the god “emptied out,” in Paul’s words, is not a hidden god at the depths of the withdrawal or the void (a *deus absconditus*): the site to which he has withdrawn has neither depths nor hiding places. He is a god whose absence in itself creates divinity, or a god whose void-of-divinity is the truth, properly speaking. (Nancy, 2008, p. 36)

Nancy thus doesn't strictly follow axial theory in saying that God becomes distant. Rather, this citation suggests that the doctrine of *kenosis* shows the death of Christ to be the sacrifice of God *into* humanity. Sacrifice is so an act that reconciles God with existence, Christ sacrifices himself as an expression of the divine. It is in this sacrifice, that humanity finds its divinity. With the withdrawal of power that the gods in pre-axial times had, it finds that this new God requires no sacrifices, I only sacrifice for myself, as myself. The mimesis of this Christian self-sacrifice is thus aimed at this revealed truth of 'a god void-of-divinity'. I will continue this idea of sacrifice as a revelation of truth below.

For now, I conclude this section by saying that the Christian sacrifice shows new sacrifice to be a self-sacrifice because, through the death of Christ, God withdraws from the world and thus no longer needs sacrifice. Therefore, sacrifice is done for, and by the self. This parallels the axial self-emancipation of humankind from the Gods. Nancy shows that humans not only emancipate from the pre-axial gods but also from this God and so they sacrifice for themselves.

1.5 Unique, and for all

The second characteristic of new sacrifice is that this

sacrifice is unique, and it is consummated for all. More precisely still, within it all are gathered, offered, and consecrated (...) The uniqueness of sacrifice is thus transferred – or dialecticized – from a position of exemplary uniqueness, whose value lies in its exemplarity (...) to the uniqueness of the life and of the substance in which – or to which – every singularity is sacrificed (...) Western sacrifice upholds the secret of a participation or communication devoid of limit. (Nancy, 2003, p. 57)

There is thus a shift from exemplarity to singularity, from exemplary uniqueness to singular uniqueness. Ten Kate (2015b) helps in showing what this refers to and means for my research question.

In pre-axial sacrifice, the sacrificed was an 'example'. They were taken out of the community as a representative of that community. It is through this exemplification, that the sacrificer "touches upon its negation carefully, with respect and awe, but never

absorbs this negativity” (ten Kate, 2015b, p. 33). In new sacrifice, this perspective shifts from exemplarity to ‘the uniqueness of the life and of the substance in which – or to which – every singularity is sacrificed’. This again confirms the transformation of the element of the actor. In new sacrifice, the actor is thus both sacrificer and sacrificed, they are merged into one, one and the same.

In pre-axial sacrifice, there was an important unicity of the sacrificer and the sacrificed. The sacrificed example was unique in that it was them that were taken out of the community. The sacrificer that led the ritual was unique in their function, they ‘knew the road’ for instance. Now that new sacrifice is a self-sacrifice, these specificities are no longer needed. Whereas pre-axial sacrifice is demarcated in time and space, new sacrifice is not. And whereas pre-axial sacrifice had an external authority that decided that sacrifice was necessary, it is now the subject themselves that decide. Pre-axial sacrifice thus loses its specific locality and temporality (p. 36). The actor of new sacrifice is not an example, but primarily the singular being that sacrifices and is sacrificed by themselves. The outcome of the process of mimesis is thus that it breaks with the type of exemplarity of the pre-axial performance. The ‘uniqueness’ refers to the unicity of the actor. With this rupture in the performance of exemplarity and the determination of singularity a shift appears in which the only specificities of the sacrifice are now those of the unicity of the singular subject that is both sacrificer and sacrificed. Sacrifice can now be ‘organized’ by one single individual. No complex rituals with priests or shamans are needed anymore. Sacrifice loses its relationality, but it wins autonomy.

An example of this can be seen in another form of mimesis of Christian sacrifice that Nancy mentions: the ritual of the Eucharist. In this ritual, bread is eaten, and wine is drunk, symbolizing the flesh and blood of Christ. In this consummation, Christ’s body is connected with the redeemed body of God, all within the finite believer. This happens when the priest announces the *hoc est enim corpus meum* (this is my body) over the bread. The bread is so the signifier of Christ’s sacrifice. The whole ritual is a bodily ‘play’ between inside and outside. The divine sacrifice of Christ is mimed, and so death is overcome via a mimetic repetition of divine sacrifice. The two characteristics of new sacrifice thus far are visible: it is a self-sacrifice in the sense that it is consciously

chosen (Nancy, 2003, p. 56), the ‘this is my body’ shows it to be unique and functioning as an example by which all are sanctified (overcoming death).

1.6 The revelation of truth

The third characteristic of new sacrifice is that it:

is inseparable from the fact that it is the revealed truth of every sacrifice, or of sacrifice in general. It is not simply unique, therefore, but by virtue of its uniqueness, elevated to the principle or the essence of sacrifice (...) the truth of sacrifice is brought to light in terms of its mimesis: early sacrifice is an external and, by itself, futile figure of this truth in which the subject sacrifices itself, in spirit, to spirit. Through spirit, it is to *truth itself* that true sacrifice is offered up, in truth and as truth that it is accomplished. (Nancy, 2003, p. 58)

This passage thus claims that sacrifice is spiritual and is accomplished in and as truth. We see this in Socrates, his death as the first major tale of a self-sacrifice is a sacrifice not to the gods but to truth and reason. It is a choice he made in the name of philosophical thought: the knowledge of truth demands sacrifice. Both Socrates and Christ sacrificed their physical bodies in name of a higher, transcendent truth, appropriating the self in its own negativity. In this passage through negativity, “death is sublated into a means of access to a supreme moment of transcendent truth” (Keenan, 2005, p. 42). Keenan, therefore, argues that both in the philosophical and Christian traditions that Nancy describes in this passage, as well as in Bataille’s notion of sacrifice, sacrifice is thought of as a revelation. In the tradition it is the revelation of truth (in the sublation of its negation), in Bataille, it is the revelation of the ‘nothingness’ of death itself. We already have encountered this idea of sacrifice as a revelation of truth, of a sacrifice *to* truth above. I take up that line of thought here.

For Nancy, this truth is that of finitude and the ‘outside’ of the world. The truth of sacrifice refers to the idea that the outside of the world is no longer outside, but right here, inside the world. This opening onto the infinite within the world shows that alterity is part of the world, it is the openness of sense. The outside in this sense is ‘unlocalizable’, yet within the world itself (Nancy, 2013, p. 39). Truth thus refers to the world *as* the world. A world that is exposed to the Other that is itself. In contrast to the

description of transcendence in axial theory above, Nancy thus argues that Christianity brings the transcendent to the ‘down here’ as the openness of the world. Christianity atheizes itself by showing that God is not a ‘being’ (Nancy, 2013, pp. 28–29). This clarifies why ‘The Unsacrificeable’ is part of *A Finite Thinking*; the finitude of the here and now shows itself (via sacrifice) to be the expansion and truth of the infinite (Nancy, 2008, p. 18). I will build on this reasoning of ‘the transcendent down here’ afterwards. For now, we just need to understand what Nancy means by ‘spiritual aspects’ and how this relates to this truth of new sacrifice.

1.6.1 In spirit, to truth

By shifting the focus to the death aspect of sacrifice, new sacrifice is rendered spiritual and universal. No longer is it concerned with a real offering, with slaughtering a victim, but it mimes this traditional, physical sacrifice in a spiritualized way:

In the central section of the dialogue, dedicated to the truth of the immortality of the soul, Socrates warns: “As for you, if you will take my advice, you will think very little of Socrates, and much more of the truth. (...) Pascal writes: “Circumcision of the heart, true fast, true sacrifice, true temple: the prophets showed that all this must be spiritual. Not the flesh that perishes, but the flesh that does not perish”. (Nancy, 2003, p. 58)

Reflecting on this passage, Nancy goes as far as to state that the “truth of sacrifice” is that it literally dialecticizes itself: it “sublates, along with the flesh that perishes, the sacrificial moment of sacrifice itself” (p. 58). Exactly with this sublation, sacrifice becomes universal: it is there every time and everywhere, and no longer needs the particularity of temporality and locality. We saw already that this is true for the singular subject of sacrifice, and now we see that it is true for sacrifice in general. This internalisation and spiritualisation of sacrifice directly mean that it becomes ambiguously visible.

With its truth, sacrifice is spiritualized and internalized since it no longer is material and external. The subject sacrifices itself ‘in spirit, to spirit’. This has implications for the element of effectivity. Pre-axial sacrifice was an effective sacrifice in that it maintained a relationship with the sacred (the outside). Gifts, for example, were offered to the gods, but, this kind of sacrifice needs to be repeated over and over again. Construction

sacrifices, for example, had to be made with each new building (Bremmer, 2007, p. 7). Gifts are always needed to please the gods. The sacrifices that were brought were finite. The offered flesh of the sacrificed would perish and new flesh would be needed, sooner or later. Yet, new sacrifice revolves around ‘the flesh that does not perish’ and with its uniqueness, it is ‘elevated to the principle or essence of sacrifice’. Instead of referring to an outside, new sacrifice aims at or offers itself to truth. It is ‘as truth’ that it is accomplished. Whereas preaxial sacrifice had a specific purpose, such as healing someone, new sacrifice just shows the deeper truth of sacrifice in general that is always effective.

Now that sacrifice is thus both spiritual and universal, Ten Kate argues that sacrifice no longer needs the context of religion. It can become secular and humanised. He shows how this transformation is already visible in Augustine:

In the *Confessions* the dialectical movement between man and God, between the confessing “I” giving everything away (indeed, confession is surely a form of self-sacrifice too) and its Other, is dominated in a remarkable way by the human side of the relation. “I” offer myself to God, but this God’s meaning or role is primarily to give the “I” back to itself: so the “I” be sublated, that is, purified, enriched. This movement between man and God has to be repeated and renewed continuously, as we have seen, so that the negative, sacrificial moment is kept in the centre and kept alive; but the Other in the relation is first of all a function of the self. The believer’s spirituality is concentrated not on worshipping transcendent power, but on the discovery of one’s own “truth”, one’s authenticity. (Ten Kate, 2015b, pp. 37–38)

The alterity of God is thus brought to the inside, even within myself. With the spiritual sacrifice, it becomes internal. The unique, singular subject of new sacrifice thus finds its own truth through sacrifice. A truth that is effectively found again and again each time the truth of sacrifice is revealed.

1.7 Overcoming sacrifice

Let’s have a look at how Nancy describes sacrifice as being spiritual and as effectively aiming at truth:

the truth of sacrifice *sublates*, along with “the flesh that perishes”, the sacrificial moment of sacrifice itself. And this is precisely why Western sacrifice is basically an overcoming of sacrifice, its dialectical and infinite overcoming. Western sacrifice is already infinite in that it is self-sacrifice, universal sacrifice, and reveals the spiritual truth of all sacrifice. Equally, though, it is – indeed, *has* to be – infinite because it absorbs the finite moment of sacrifice itself and because, logically it has to sacrifice itself as sacrifice in order to attain its truth. (Nancy, 2003, p. 58)

So, new sacrifice seems to have four characteristics, from which the fourth shows it to be an infinite overcoming of pre-axial sacrifice. This is what Nancy meant when he said that the mimetic rupture makes pre-axial sacrifice to merely be a predecessor of new sacrifice. And yet, because new sacrifice is an overcoming of pre-axial sacrifice, a ‘sacrifice of sacrifice’, pre-axial sacrifice is constantly reinstalled in the heart of modernity. With the flesh aspect of sacrifice perishing, ‘the sacrificial moment itself is sublated’. This again shows that new sacrifice doesn’t revolve around the specificities of a certain ritual. From this modern point of view pre-axial sacrifice appears as a complex, but in a certain sense also ‘unnecessary’, external ritual representing through self-sacrifice this deeper ‘truth of sacrifice’.

Such is the consequence of the mimetic rupture: sacrifice is the sublation of its finite functions and its exteriority, yet a fascinated gaze is still fixed on the *cruel* moment of sacrifice as such (...). Western spiritualization/dialectization invented the secret of an infinite efficacy of transgression and its cruelty. (p. 60)

Sacrifice now moves from an external to an internal and more spiritual mimesis. Pre-axial sacrifice now appears to be an empty format, a mere external and futile figure of the truth of sacrifice. Another way to express this: Sacrifice is spiritualized in the new type since its materiality, predominant in the old one, is not the essence of sacrifice. The finite functions and exteriorities of pre-axial sacrifice have been sublated, thus sacrifice becoming an internal process. This transformation started first with claiming the relative ineffectiveness of pre-axial sacrifice and a subsequent claim of increased effectiveness ascribed to this internal mimesis. New sacrifice is seen as being always effective but to a certain degree still needing to be repeated. However, this sacrifice is clearly different

from the pre-axial one, because in it the actor ‘knows’ that its effectiveness is guaranteed.

Nancy works out the consequences related to this fourth characteristic of new sacrifice as a recurrent overcoming of pre-axial sacrifice:

Mimesis, then: spiritual sacrifice will be sacrifice only in a figurative sense. In truth, it is “the reconciliation of the absolute essence with itself.” Mimesis, *but* repetition: sacrifice is overcome *in the name of a higher, truer mode of sacrificial logic alone.* (p. 59)

The overcoming of sacrifice thus leads to a new mode of sacrificial logic. As to its visibility, we only recognize it to be a sacrifice in a metaphorical sense. The quote just given about the reconciliation of absolute essence with itself stems from Hegel. Yet, this reconciliation

demands nothing less than its passage through absolute negativity and through death. It is through this negativity – and even *as* this negativity – that essence can communicate with itself. “Sacrifice” means: the appropriation of the Self in its own negativity; and if the sacrificial gesture has been abandoned to the finite world, it is simply in order to draw out all the more clearly the infinite sacrificial structure of this appropriation of the Subject. (p. 59)

It is here that Nancy comes closest to defining new sacrifice as the infinite sacrificial appropriation of the self in its own negativity.

With this, the external mimesis of early sacrifice becomes the inner and true mimesis of genuine sacrifice (...). We might call this mimesis “transappropriation” – an appropriation, through the transgression of the finite, of the infinite truth of this very finitude. (p. 59)

The truth, of course, refers to an outside that nevertheless is within the world. It is the alterity of the world. It is also an openness to an overarching meaningfulness behind the world, and to humans as beings-toward-death who want to understand this meaning. In this way, new sacrifice transgresses finitude, the subjects affirming themselves in a deeper truth of the world. New sacrifice as a pure process of spiritualization is only recognizable in this moment of negation of fleshly sacrifice, which, according to Nancy,

is a transgression of the law of self-presence (p. 59). Transformed into a pure, spiritual process, sacrifice becomes ambiguously visible and is only recognizable through a moment of transgression.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to answer the first sub-question which was: ‘What does Jean-Luc Nancy’s analysis of the transformation of sacrifice entail?’ In order to answer this question, we had a close reading of parts three and four of Nancy’s ‘The Unsacrificeable’, which I combined with five elements of sacrifice that were distilled from a description of pre-axial sacrifice. Nancy says that sacrifice transformed by way of a mimetic rupture towards new sacrifice. We saw that this new sacrifice has four characteristics that could be extracted both from the philosophical and Christian traditions of sacrifice, represented by Socrates and Christ. The four characteristics are: a. new sacrifice is a sacrifice of and by the subject who lives a sacrificial life, b. this sacrifice is unique and consummated once and for all, c. this new sacrifice is spiritual and a revealed truth of sacrifice in general, and d. the new sacrifice in itself a dialectical and infinite overcoming of sacrifice.

The position of the actor has now changed from that of different participants in old sacrifice, whereby the sacrificed was just an example, to that of one single individual, the singularly unique person (Socrates, Christ) who is sacrificed. This uniqueness means that every individual can in fact organize and work on their own sacrifice. Sacrifice so is no longer bound to locality or temporality, it can take place anytime, anywhere. The aspect of effectivity changed in that the materiality and specificities of the finite moment of the pre-axial sacrifice are sublated. New sacrifice reveals the truth of sacrifice in general in that it can be spiritual, internal, infinitely effective and the actor knows this. Due to its spiritualization and internalisation, the element of visibility was transformed: new sacrifice as a process is now only ambiguously visible and only recognizable by its moment of negativity. Sacrifice became the expression of a general logic, an ontotheological fundament of the west for which we no longer use the word ‘sacrifice’. The singular subject themselves represent this negation and transformation into a mimed passage only made possible by this negativity.

In short, new sacrifice has become a vehicle transporting an ontotheological appropriation of the self. This trans-appropriation is the inner and true mimesis by which the finite law of self-presence of old sacrifice is transgressed, and the self is appropriated in the mimed moment of negativity. The finite moment of existence is infinitely being appropriated in an infinite overcoming of sacrifice. The transgression of pre-axial sacrifice that linked the worlds of the gods and the humans together is now transformed into an infinite process of the subject losing itself in order to better come back to itself – a negation of oneself in order to reappropriate oneself. The finite being appropriates its truth or essence via absolute negativity and death. The truth, that is revealed by sacrifice, is the truth of the exposure of life to death, of man as being-to-death, of finitude, of the outside-inside, referring to the world as the world. The subject of new sacrifice thus affirms themselves in the truth of the world.

2 RELATION TO WORLDVIEWING

In this chapter we will deal with the second sub-question: ‘How can Jean-Luc Nancy’s analysis of the transformation of sacrifice be related to worldviewing?’

To answer this question, I will first give a more detailed description of what worldviewing is and specify its relation to humanism. Then, by intertwining the findings of the previous chapter with this concept of worldviewing and with Nancy’s further writings, I will argue that the sacrificial process can be discerned in the humanist practice of worldviewing itself. By this, I mean that sacrifice as a performative structure is analogous to the process of worldviewing. This way of understanding worldviewing is what I call ‘sacrificial worldviewing’ and it is my answer to the sub-question of this chapter. This will also be the subject of discussion in its implications for humanism in the final chapter. Worldviewing will so be used as a lens through which the main implications of new sacrifice for humanism come to light.

2.1 Viewing an open world

In the introduction, I described humanism as originating in a process of self-emancipation of mankind that took place in the axial period, and to be dealing with the ways we humans relate to the world around us. From this time on, humans started to take up a central position in the existing worldviews, and, as we saw in the first chapter, a dualism between transcendence and immanence was established. Human beings were seen as rational and independent actors who finally with the aid of philosophy and reflective theology formed their own worldview in a process of radical (self)reflection on experience. I will now explain in more depth how these active, explicit and self-reflective forms of worldviewing resulted in humanism.

The root word of ‘worldviewing’, ‘worldview’, as Rémi Brague explains, leads back to the axial age, as it was here that the notion of ‘world’ as a totality created by divinity first emerged. The idea arose that there is a world upon which I or we can have a certain relation to, that is, a certain ‘view’ of (Brague, 2003). But ‘worldview’ as a concept is often also closely associated with humanism (Wolters, 1989, p. 20). This of course doesn’t mean that all so-called worldviews are humanist; it merely means that the concept of a world as a counterpart of somebody having a view of, as the image by which humans try to grasp the world, as a ‘product’ of man’s view, is a key concept in

humanist thinking. This has to do with the emphasis humanism places on humans as being able to reflect about their own experiences. Let's have a closer look at this.

2.1.1 The dynamic between experience and reflection

Jaap van Praag (1965), the 'founding father' of Dutch humanism argues that humanism is an approach to our human condition that appeals only to human capabilities and not to revelation. This attitude of looking at the world as a totality without this being the work of a revelation is a direct outcome of the self-emancipatory tendency that developed from the axial turn onwards. The central human capability, progressively substituting the work of revelation, is the capability to rationally reflect upon the world, and to transcend our worldly situation by reflection, thus gaining knowledge about how reality is experienced by way of a self-induced worldview.

For Van Praag, humanism holds that the world itself is inscrutable. Both our experience and our reflection are mere 'models of reality':

Reality is thus a common something, that is experienced by all humans in a humanly way. Although every person projects his personality on being, and so lives in his own personal world, to a certain extent one can de-project that personal world to the border of common reality. (Van Praag, 1965, p. 118)

This dynamic is described by Van Praag as an 'adventure' in which the human tries to find a 'self-sustaining meaning in an originally meaningless world'. It is a highly unique and personal process and most humanist values such as rationality, unicity, human dignity, autonomy, freedom, responsibility, and resilience relate to it. The outcome of this dynamic can be called 'a worldview'. But now that we have an idea of *how* a worldview comes about, we can ask: *What* determines the content of a worldview? How can we define this content as a product?

2.1.2 A definition of worldviewing

We can all imagine what is meant when we speak of 'the way we view the world' and for this reason, the concept of worldview is often not precisely defined. In the history of philosophy, it can be found in Kant, but different definitions are also posed by Hegel, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, Husserl, Jaspers, Heidegger, and others. A common definition is one used by Leo Apostel who defined it as a "coherent collection of concepts allowing

us to construct a global image of the world, and in this way to understand as many elements of our experience as possible” (Vidal, 2008, p. 3). I follow this definition because it aims at understanding experiences. A worldview can so be conceived as the outcome of the humanist dynamic between experience and reflection.

A worldview is important as it encompasses the way we conceptualize reality on both an individual and a social level, and because with it, we can interpret our experience and our existence in general. A worldview is constituted by different concepts and propositions regarding the ways we grasp ourselves in relation to the world. These concepts and propositions might not always be fully available and explicated since it is a ‘global’ image, but we all presuppose such an image in our daily lives. It is always present, as Husserl says, in the background. And yet, our worldview changes from time to time so how should we consider this changing of the worldview? Is my worldview truly *my* worldview? Is there such a thing as a singular worldview?

2.1.3 Worldviewing as an activity

It is in answer to these questions that Hans Alma and Christa Anbeek (2013) use ‘worldview’ as an ‘activity’ or ‘process’, speaking about ‘worldviewing’ as a continuous, dynamic, contextual, and intra- and interpersonal process. By doing this, they stress that a worldview is not just something one *has* but rather that it is something one *does*. This ‘doing’ is necessary because both the self and the world are continuously changing and so ‘a worldview’ can never be a finished product. And worldviewing is not an isolated practice. It takes place in a certain context, is subject to different power dynamics, societal norms, values, and pressures. Different sources influence this process. On the one hand, it is a dialogue with the self, but it is also something that happens in interaction with others.

Metaphorically speaking worldviewing is like sailing the ship of Theseus. It is a process I do in the midst of the sea (the world, the context) and I need a ship (worldview) to ‘anchor’ myself in this sea and to navigate with. The ship, like Theseus, needs to be continually adjusted to continue my voyage. I change the course and repair the ship (reflection) in adjustment to changing weather conditions and changing destinations (experience). I am not alone in this, nor am I the sole captain, others influence my sailing too. Sometimes I know what I am doing, sometimes I’m not sure. Even when the

ship seems to be sailing in a stable way, waves are crashing onto it, and the wood begins to rot.

So far, I have described what a worldview is, and what humanistic worldviewing is. But in these descriptions, the notion of the world has only been mentioned as something ‘inscrutable’, something that is ‘experienced’ and ‘reflected upon’. What is the world? To understand Nancy’s notion of sacrifice through the lens of worldviewing, it is important to know what his concept of ‘world’ could refer to.

2.1.4 What is viewed?

An important part of Nancy’s concept of world stems from his radicalisation of Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein*. Two major points of Heidegger’s analysis have been underscored by Nancy. Firstly, the world of *Dasein* is a with-world (*Mitwelt*), which means that there are more beings in the world than just me, so being-there is always being-with. Secondly, *Dasein* also means being-in-the-world. ‘World’ here is not understood as a container, a place to be in, but as a structure or a web of meanings within which the *Dasein* is situated (Heidegger, 1962, p. 155). Being-in-the-world is thus always being with others. Nancy addresses both points in more detail.

2.1.4.1 Being singular plural

In response to the first point, Nancy claims that Heidegger misunderstood this existential notion of being-with. Heidegger either understands it as based on a ‘we’, a commonality, or as having an external relation. In contrast, Nancy argues that we shouldn’t understand being-with in terms of something else (commonality or relationality) but in its own terms as a presence to each other that is unrepresentable:

the with as such is not presentable. (...) It really is, “in truth”, a mark drawn out over the void, which crosses over it and underlines it at the same time, thereby constituting the drawing apart [traction] and drawing together [tension] of the void. As such, it also constitutes the traction and tension, repulsion/attraction, of the “between”-us. The “with” stays between us, and we stay between us: just us, but only [as] the interval between us. (...) But if the unrepresentability of “with” is not that of a hidden presence, then it is because “with” is the unrepresentability of this pre-position, that is, the unrepresentability of presentation itself. “With” does

not add itself to Being, but rather creates the immanent and intrinsic condition of presentation in general. (Nancy, 2000, p. 62)

According to Nancy the word ‘with’ doesn’t refer to an external relation between isolated individuals or the community, but to the co-presence of a multiplicity of singular beings. The ‘with’ is not ‘added’ to being, but it is its primary way to be, its fundamental ontological structure.⁶ In Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural*, he radicalises Heidegger’s notion of *Mitsein* by giving the ‘with’ a fundamental role in ontology. *Dasein* is a being-with in the world. Although this being-with immediately begets the question of being-together and other questions of society, the radical thinking of being-with that Nancy proposes ascribes no more commonality or essence to the entities than this ‘with’ itself. All singular plural is simply exposed to each other. Ontology will thus have to focus on co-presence; being can only mean ‘between’. It is something put into place among us. Being can thus not be written as either singular or plural as it is simultaneously both, the singular and the plural. This is where the title of the book of Nancy is derived from. He even goes so far as to say that one cannot write or speak of ‘singularity’, but only of ‘singularities’ that are constantly rearranged.

2.1.4.2 *The sense of the world*

The second point of Heidegger’s analysis that Nancy works out is that of ‘world’ taken as a structure or web of meanings. In his work *The Sense of the World*, Nancy argues that ‘the world has no sense’ and yet, this statement ‘makes sense’, thus he says, ‘the world is sense’. The world to Nancy is always *open*, and it remains so. Sense, according to Nancy, is not the same as signification, but rather a previous possibility or opening: “there is no longer any assignable signification of ‘world’, or that the ‘world’ is subtracting itself, bit by bit, from the entire regime of signification available to us” (Nancy, 1997, p. 5). For Nancy, sense is not constituted as an autonomous subject, nor something to be found in the world. It rather occurs to us, it is ‘stretched out’ among us (Librett, 2015). Sense is not a space in which we are, but it is the world, taken here as relationality. Therefore, his social ontology of being-with should be seen as a bodily ontology (Nancy, 2000, p. 84). Sense in the meaning of ‘sensuality’, ‘sensation’ or

⁶ The notion of a community that is not based on a mythic ‘we’ (whether idealist nor essentialist) constitutes the main subject of Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*.

‘bodily direction’ is congruous with a concept of the world as ontologically relational. Sense ‘circulates’ in this world. Sense, or ‘the world’, both name the ‘singular plural’ as a co-emergence of singularities, as a fundamental exposure of singularities to each other (Hiddleston, 2015). Nancy doesn’t want to equate the concepts of sense and world, rather he tries to say that our existence always ‘touches’ the sense of the world (as it is touched by it) (Nancy, 1997, p. 10).

2.1.4.3 Nancy’s ‘open world’

Nancy’s world is thus roughly characterizable by a circulation of sense as the being singular plural. Before concluding this section and relating this all to sacrifice, I want to zoom in on the metaphysical thought underlying Nancy’s world.

In the previous chapter I showed that for Nancy, the outside becomes an outside-inside.

The onto-theological God is thus no longer the creator of the world. Rather, the outside shows that the world opens *inside* itself. This alterity of the world opens onto the circulating of sense (Nancy, 2008, pp. 71–72). The ‘giver’ of sense is no longer outside, but inside: sense is opened up *within* the world. God here doesn’t ‘come down’, nor is a hidden divinity (*deus absconditus*). The world is simply the ‘there is’:

Nothing: the fact of the world, a being-the-there that, first of all, is the *here* of this world *here*, without any creation at its origin (...) The world is the infinite resolution of sense into fact and fact into sense: the infinite resolution of the finite (...) the “itself” of sense (...) precedes all ego-ity and all subjectivity (...) If the world is not the work of a God, this is not because there is no God (...) But there is no God because there is the world, and because the world is neither a work nor an operation but the space of the “there is,” its configuration without a face. (Nancy, 1997, pp. 155–156)

It is because of this, that Nancy calls the opening of sense also ‘nothing’ because it refers to nothing higher or more transcendent than this outside itself.

The outside-inside so sublates the concepts of transcendence and immanence, leading Nancy to a newfound concept of ‘transimmanence’ (1997, p. 55). With this concept, he tries to capture the relational ontology, the symbioses between sense and world that

reflects a tension between transcendence and immanence. In my view, a certain proximity to Spinoza's pantheism can be asserted here.

When sense is always circulating and taking place, transimmanence names the whole dynamic of this circulation. The human subject then (although Nancy doesn't speak in these terms) is thus not an entity on its own, but neither dependent on something transcendent. The transimmanence of sense is 'simply' the world as interrelations (Devisch & Rooden, 2011). The concept of transimmanence captures the tension between the "outside within as unceasing opening of existence to itself, on the one hand, and the congealing of thought and existence into presences that are 'immanent and enclosed, self-constituted'" (Taylor, 2015, p. 116).

All above observations regarding being singular plural, sense, the outside, and transimmanence, are captured in Nancy's concept of 'world' (Nancy, 2008, pp. 5–6).

2.1.5 Conclusion

I want to conclude this section by combining my research into the humanist practice of worldviewing and Nancy's concept of world. This combination will reflect on the remainder of this chapter.

The humanist practice of worldviewing is based on the continuous dynamic between experience and reflection. What this experience is, is the experience of the circulation of sense. In this interrelational world, the human subject as singular plural attempts to grasp this experience via the process of worldviewing. Van Praag's emphasises on the world being inscrutable (hence the need for continuous worldviewing) resembles Nancy's concepts of transimmanence and sense as an opening of signification. This inscrutable sense that we touch upon is reflected upon to grasp in a more coherent, meaningful whole, that we call a worldview.

I now want to explore how worldviewing, as a humanist practice in which the human subject as a rational meaning-maker appropriates his existence in this world, can be related to new sacrifice. In the next section, I will argue that new sacrifice is the performative structure of worldviewing. It is in this performance that sense is transformed into 'meaning' or 'signification. The transcendent converges with the immanent. I will call this process 'sacrificial worldviewing'.

2.2 Sacrificial worldviewing

There are two arguments to investigate and argue that a sacrificial performance can be discerned in the practice of worldviewing. Firstly, as we said in the previous chapter, due to the mimetic rupture, sacrifice is becoming ambiguously visible. It is only identifiable by its moment of negativity (Nancy, 2003, p. 51). Although this ‘sacrifice of sacrifice’ is integrated with the modern world, the word ‘sacrifice’ no longer refers to it. Many kinds of practices, such as worldviewing, thus might be sacrificial in this same sense, yet we don’t see them as such. Secondly, in the process of worldviewing; old worldviews are constantly destroyed and appropriated as new worldviews, all within the same subject. The subject thus destroys itself and then reappropriates itself. This mirrors the performance of sacrifice. Since they are both unique, individual, and continuous processes, I want to see what the implications are of describing a sacrificial performative structure in worldviewing.

I, therefore, want to investigate sacrifice as a performative structure of worldviewing. To do this, I want to start from Nancy’s claims that sacrifice is only identifiable by its moment of transgression and that this passage through negativity can only be mimed:

Sacrifice as self-sacrifice, universal sacrifice, the truth and sublation of sacrifice, is the very institution of the absolute economy of absolute subjectivity, which can only really mime the passage through negativity, in which, symmetrically, it can only reappropriate or transappropriate itself infinitely. The law of dialectic is always a mimetic law: if negativity was indeed the negation that it properly ought to be, transappropriation would be unable to break through it. Transgression is thus always mimetic. As is, as a result, communication or the participation that is the fruit of transgression. (2003, p. 62)

With this idea of a ‘passage’, I thus refer to the moment of transgression in the sacrificial structure, not to a historical passage of time such as that between pre-axial and new sacrifice. The sacrificial performance in worldviewing might become visible by looking at this tell-tale sign of transgression. To look at worldviewing via this aspect of transgression, thus revealing its performative sacrificial structure, is a way of approaching the practice that I call ‘sacrificial worldviewing’.

2.2.1 Two methods of the approach

Two questions are important to understand what ‘sacrificial worldviewing’ is. Firstly, what is the moment of transgression by which it becomes recognizable? Secondly, what constitutes here the truth or essence, that is arrived at via the negative moment of sacrifice? The first question asks us to further analyse what Nancy means when he says that sacrifice ‘can only really mime the passage through negativity’ and which inherent aspects of worldviewing can be called transgressive. Nancy is quite vague when it comes to clarifying what this mimed negativity looks like. Other than that it is a transgression of the law of self-presence, he hardly tells us anything about it (Nancy, 2003, p. 59). (a). The second question requires us to understand in more depth what the appropriation of the self means, and at what truth this sacrificial worldviewing finally arrives (b). There are two ways to approach these questions.

2.2.1.1 *Bataille*

One way to approach these questions is to study Bataille’s idea of transgression, which occupied Nancy so much. For Bataille, transgression is very much linked to philosophical thought itself. He sought a language for ‘thinking at the limit’, which Foucault linked to the death of God as necessary in a world without any positive meaning of the sacred (Foucault, 1998, p. 32). Against the philosophy of Hegel, a philosophy of utility, Bataille posed a different mode of understanding, that of non-discursive existence, laughter, and ecstasy. Nigro underscores the transgression of philosophical thought in its classical form:

The language of philosophy has been intertwined with dialectics since its beginning. To speak a language stripped of dialectics means to draw thought back toward the limit of the impossibility of language, toward the limit at which the essence of language is called into question. In a language stripped of dialectics, the philosopher learns that even he does not inhabit the whole of his language. (Nigro, 2005, p. 11)

Central in Bataille’s transgression is a form of self-loss, an experience of transgressing a law; a law of which the subject becomes aware of precisely in the act of transgression. It is through such a step of transgression that the subject finds sovereign negativity (Ford, 2015; Surkis, 1996). Sacrifice, with its inherent step of transgression, is an archetypal

form of Bataille's inner experience.

This brief sketch of Bataille's transgression already shows that to understand the mimed negativity of Nancy using Bataille would require a detailed analysis of this last philosopher, such as understanding his thoughts on community, expenditure, language, inner experience, communication, and the sacred, which would go beyond the scope of this thesis (Irwin, 1993; Libertson, 1977). However, I think that further nuances of Bataille's transgression will find their way in Nancy's criticism on sacrifice and its relation to humanism, which I will deal with in the next chapter. Neither Foucault, Bataille nor Nancy relate sacrifice to worldviewing. I, therefore, think that this way to answer the questions above is troublesome and that it is better to embark on my own argumentations based on Nancy's position that, in response to Bataille, sees sacrifice as a revelation of our finitude, and takes negativity to be a transgression of the law of self-presence.

2.2.1.2 Sacrificial worldviewing: de-selfing and selfing between the limits

It is in this other way of answering the questions that I want to describe sacrifice as a performative structure in the process of worldviewing. I do this by building my argumentation on the idea that new sacrifice mimes the passage through negativity. If sacrifice, as this passage, reveals finitude, our existence between birth and death, then these limits of existence are present on either side of the passage. I so take the mimed passage through negativity of sacrifice as a performative structure. Much like the ritual of pre-axial sacrifice consisted of an 'exit' of the ritual, I split this passage of the performance of sacrificial worldviewing into two distinct pieces or moments. These moments are that of 'the entrance' which consists of the conditions that demand the subject to engage in sacrificial worldviewing and 'the exit' which consists of the outcome in which the subject returns from the performance of sacrificial worldviewing. These moments are merely key instances of the complete mimed passage through negativity and flow into each other during the passage.

Since this is a *mimed* passage through negativity, I will investigate the moments of the passage via what they are miming from real pre-axial sacrifice. This mimesis of the performance of the old ritual will show that new sacrifice is performatively analogous to the process of worldviewing. This is my contribution to more deeply understanding both Nancy and the humanist practice of worldviewing.

2.2.2 The Entrance

The first moment of the passage as a performative structure of worldviewing is the entrance.

In real pre-axial sacrifice, the negativity would be death. But this ‘flesh that perishes’ is spiritualized; the material component is sublated. Since new sacrifice is a self-sacrifice, the mimesis of this death would be the mimesis of suicide. In this mimesis, the subject engages in the passage in order to return better at the exit. New sacrifice so mimes self-destruction, but as a means to overcome death by a new type of birth. It is thus via the phenomenon of suicide that we can illustrate the conditions under which the subject engages in sacrificial worldviewing. To do this, I want to use Jean Améry’s phenomenology of suicide.

In (1976 [1999]) *On Suicide A discourse on voluntary death*, Améry distinguishes between voluntary death (suicide), the person contemplating or playing with the idea of suicide (suicidal), and the persons who commit suicide (suicides). Trying to translate this distinction to sacrifice, we could distinguish between the person or subject who engages with the dynamic of sacrifice (the sacrificed), who feels the sacrificial demand (the sacrificial), and the person who sacrifices (the sacrificer).

Suicide or suicidality, just like sacrifice or sacrificial(ity) is singularly unique (Améry, 1999, p. 5). An interesting aspect discerned by Améry is that of the lived situation ‘before the leap’ (before the act of suicide), the *situation vécue*. This is a situation that has a total and unmistakable singularity and is unexplainable to others. If we translate this in terms of worldviewing, this might mean the following: As we (as singular plural beings) are constantly looking for meaning, constituting a coherent view on the world, this singularly unique situation preceding sacrifice (or suicide) could be identified as an incommensurability existing between a subject and its world. The subject feels alienated from its world. Its worldviewing doesn’t manage to ‘fit’ within the world, its life doesn’t cohere with what is happening out there. This incoherence is felt by the subject as a singularly unique situation; the ‘sacrificial’ here is the urge to undo a feeling of detachment from the world as a plurality. There is singularity but no singular-plural, and this is felt as an uncomfortable position. The subject feels detached from the world and is therefore unable to really relate to the world, to view and experience it. The meaning of the world is not supportive of the subject anymore. Worldviewing as an effort to

create a coherent whole of concepts by which the self can have meaningful experiences doesn't function anymore in this situation of singular uniqueness.

A first outcome of approaching worldviewing as following a performative sacrificial structure is thus that it starts with a disfiguration of the self, in the entrance to the passage there is no self; it cannot be, since the self is not grasped as belonging to the world, as part of the total action of worldviewing.

According to Améry, people who once were suicidal but went into therapy and are no longer so, have become different people. Their former suicidal urge was however not illegitimate or 'illogical' at that time, but they now have adjusted themselves to the world, they have interpreted their situation between birth and death differently: "every temporal section of our existence, in fact even every moment, has its own logic and its own sense of honour, that the temporal process of maturing is also at the same time a process of dying" (Améry, 1999, p. 11). The *situation vécue* is 'the' reason for suicide, but it adheres to its own logic. Much like this, the incommensurability of a worldview has its own logic which is separate from the singular subject and makes it sacrificial. But this feeling of sacrificiality (or incommensurability) can change from moment to moment, simply because the experience the subject has changes. This means that the *situation vécue* needs not to end in sacrificial worldviewing. The entrance to self-sacrifice can be ignored.

A second outcome of approaching worldviewing as following a performative sacrificial structure is thus that it isn't always necessary because the sacrificiality may change. I will come back to this in the next chapter.

Let's pose that the subject does need sacrificial worldviewing; it experiences incommensurability, a disfiguration of the self, and thus enter the passage in its engagement with the process of sacrificial worldviewing. Morin (2015b) describes this passage as a turn toward an outside and a restoration in truth. Instead of real death, real negativity: "the subject is turned toward an outside or an Other; it spills itself outside of itself in order to be restored to itself in its truth" (p. 205). A mimed transgression takes place, encompassing actions that may not even be (physically) violent such as exclusion, rejection, repression, suppression, negation, renunciation and such more, wherewith the subject effectively finds its truth (Ptacek, 2006). Lacking a real outside, the modern subject of new sacrifice manages to affirm itself by an act of transgression,

by which it frees itself from an enclosure in its own singular uniqueness and teleports itself to an outside. The subject is thus restored in its truth, gains confidence in its meaning in the world and in its own subjective truth. Sacrificial worldviewing so manages to affirm the value and truth of the subject; returning the subject with a coherent worldview.

A third outcome of approaching worldviewing as following a performative sacrificial structure is thus that the passage will end in the subject finding its truth and having a coherent worldview again.

From this third outcome follows a fourth one, which is that the subject has an ambiguous moment of ‘presence-to-self’ because it knows the effectivity of the sacrificial worldviewing to be guaranteed: it knows that it will find its truth and have a coherent worldview again. Let me explain this.

“Suicides plunge into the abyss of an even deeper contradiction by not only dying (or preparing to die), but by de-selfing their self themselves” (Améry, 1999, p. 29). The de-selfing is an autonomous act, it is a chosen death. Améry sees in the act of transgression of the self a self that is most ‘itself’ and therefore really present-to-itself. The de-selfing of the self curiously becomes the most ‘selfish’ thing to do. This is not meant in the sense of egoism, but in the sense of reconfiguring the self. Améry postulates that when our life does not correspond to our self, then the decision to commit suicide can precisely bring about a renewal, a new affirmation, of the self. Améry describes suicidality as a recognition of this feeling of incoherence, of a ‘suffering from échec’. Many examples of (politically motivated) suicides express, I think, this inherent message.⁷ The de-selfing can become an affirmation of the self, an act of presence-to-itself.

This all similarly holds true for the performance of sacrificial worldviewing. Both suicide and self-sacrifice are the work of a subject. But in a mimed sacrifice the actual negation can be negated, and the singularity of the self is transgressed. In the mimed negativity of sacrifice, the subject returns to itself as a singular-plural and overcomes its position of singular uniqueness. The subject is part of the whole, of the world, again.

⁷ I’m thinking here on such instances of self-immolation like Thich Quang Duc or Mohamed Bouazizi. Whose politically motivated suicides arose out of a situation of lived denial. The message of this suffering spread have stirred a lot of commotion in the public space and ultimately led to the downfall of the regimes that they were a part of (Bargu, 2016; Gambetta, 2005).

The subject so de-selves itself by transgressing its finitude, thus appropriating the self, because the subject knows itself to return to a better state. Suffering from 'echech' is comparable to the experienced incommensurability of the worldview. A worldview can always fall short, can always be doubted. The world needs to be reinterpreted again and again, confronting us with echech all the time. The subject suffers, and thus engages in sacrificial worldviewing *because its effectivity is guaranteed*. It appropriates and affirms self-presence. The spiritualization of sacrifice, with its infinite effectivity, thus shows that there is an affirmation of the self, taking place at the start of the crisis of a worldview. The 'exit' of the passage prospectively reveals this gesture of an affirmation of the self.

2.2.3 The exit

If 'death', via the concept of suicide, illustrates the entrance to the passage as a performative structure of worldviewing, then 'birth' would illuminate the exit of the passage. In contrast to a destroying of existence in the entrance, the return from the passage by the subject is that of a creation of existence, of a coming in the world. If the entrance is that of 'de-selfing' or dying, then the exit is that of 'selfing' or being born-again. To illustrate this point of 'birth' I think we can benefit from the concept of natality as evoked by Hannah Arendt.

Natality is one of the conditions of humans that Arendt describes in *The Human Condition* (1958 [1998]). In this work, Arendt tries to define the conditions of humanness in view of our belonging to the same species. Natality is strongly connected to plurality and politics and is a good concept, I think, to elucidate the result of new sacrifice in the case of 'sacrificial worldviewing'. Natality primarily has to do with a new beginning, which is inherent in the human condition of action in contrast to Arendt's concepts of work and labor (1998, p. 8). The condition of natality shows that we are born amidst other humans that are much like us. This means that we are not independent but are part of a relational frame of intersubjectivity.

Ontologically, there is a passive and active element in natality: we are thrown into the world, which is passive, and then have to act in it, which is active (Villa, 2006, p. 188). In this moment of natality, we reinterpret our particular worldview again, trying to get out of the state of incoherence of a former alienation from the relationality of the world. By this, natality links action with speech, with meaning-making and narrative (Saeidnia

& Lang, 2017). In my interpretation of worldviewing as a free act of the modern subject, worldviewing becomes sacrificial; the subject appropriates itself as meaningful in a world of relating entities. But this is just a temporary result because new sacrifice is something happening continuously. If we look at worldviewing as a sacrifice it is so in a continuous way, continuously renewing the self, and continuously working at a synthesis of self and world. These two terms are continuously converging and communicating.

If de-selfing is comparable to a withdrawal from the world, as we said before, then natality can be compared with again immersing oneself into the world, into a world with others (Villa, 2006). Much like Heidegger's 'thrownness', natality for Arendt designates a new beginning in the world. And this is what I claim the result of sacrificial worldviewing is. Before the performative act of sacrificial worldviewing, the situation is one of misrecognition. After it, the subject returns recognized, having affirmed itself in a new worldview as a singular-plural in the world. With this act, the subject appropriates itself and situates itself among the things in the world. The subject views the world now from a single vantage point that finds its place in relationality to other things. A fifth outcome of approaching worldviewing as following a performative sacrificial structure is thus that it shows that, in contrast to pre-axial sacrifice which reproduces a dominating worldview at the time, *new sacrifice is the re-affirmation of the subjective act of worldviewing.*

2.2.4 Conclusion

In this section, I have argued with the concepts of suicide and natality that the mimesis of the performance of pre-axial sacrifice shows that new sacrifice is performatively analogous to the process of worldviewing. With this, I provide a deeper understanding of Nancy's sacrifice and of the humanist practice of worldviewing. This deeper understanding lies in five outcomes: it starts with a disfiguration of the self in an incommensurability of the worldview with the world (1), this sacrificiality may change (2), the subject finds its truth in a coherent worldview (3), knowing this truth to be found, the subject is present as it de-selfes itself (4), the performance so re-affirms the subjective act of worldviewing (5).

2.3 Inferences from the description of sacrificial worldviewing

In this section, I want to zoom out from the description of sacrificial worldviewing. I will talk about it in more general to think it through and so draw several conclusions from my description of the process of new sacrifice as the performative structure of worldviewing. I so want to show that this practice of worldviewing is still conceivably humanistic when its performative structure of sacrifice is emphasised. By deepening the idea of sacrificial worldviewing as a humanist practice, I am taking a step towards my next chapter about the implications of Nancy's critique of sacrifice for humanism.

In claiming that worldviewing shares a performative structure analogous to Nancy's sacrifice, I don't want to claim that we have said all there is to say about modern worldviewing. But, I think, this sacrificial aspect is crucial in the structure of modern and humanist efforts of meaning-making. By emphasizing these sacrificial elements, worldviewing can be used to better understand the deep relationship between sacrifice and humanism. The first major result of my research implies this recognition of the sacrificial structure in modern worldviewing that in modern humanism configures meaning-making. My research findings in the next chapter will further focus on what this implies for humanism.

2.3.1 An implicit consequence of Nancy's sacrifice

The first conclusion I want to draw is that the existential endeavour of sacrificial worldviewing is an implicit consequence of Nancy's analysis of sacrifice. Even though he doesn't articulate new sacrifice in terms of new sacrifice, I have argued that Nancy's sacrifice is relatable to worldviewing in terms of its process as a performative structure. The first aspect of sacrificial worldviewing is 'stepping out of oneself' or 'to de-self ourselves' as a reaction against the feeling of incommensurability of self and world. This transgression however reaffirms the self (selfing), thus inciting the subject to reengage in a new process of worldviewing. And this occurs again and again. The modern self is always in an intermediary position between de-selfing and re-selfing. The transgressional aspect of pre-axial sacrifice that linked the worlds of the gods and the humans, is now translated into an infinite process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the self (de-selfing, re-selfing).

2.3.2 Sacrificial element of endurance of loss central to worldviewing

The second conclusion I want to draw is that the image of sacrificial worldviewing shows that the endurance of loss is central to the process of worldviewing. Sacrificial worldviewing means: becoming myself by continuously transgressing the law of self-presence, which means that I am first in loss, in negation, in struggle. This moment of negativity is, I argued, an infinite and effective feature of sacrificial worldviewing. Via transgression, the singular subject reappropriates its existence and re-affirms its self-presence and this means that the subjectivity starts performing world-interpretations. The subject starts 'to worldview' again. The endurance of loss is a crucial element at the heart of worldviewing. This shows an aspect of transappropriation operating inside the performative act of worldviewing. Here a finite being reappropriates its 'truth' as performative or goals of worldviewing. Coming finally back to the metaphor of the ship of Theseus, the self can proclaim: 'this is my ship!'

Living a sacrificial life in this sense then doesn't mean that my life only makes sense in view of my death, but that the mimed negativity of free worldviewing, as an existential and continuous endeavour, allows me to sacrifice my worldview continuously within my own life. Living this sacrificial life with this endurance of loss thus doesn't mean that life is full of suffering. It just means that through 'sacrificial worldviewing' the modern subject can better reach itself coming to a higher truth of itself and the world. Loss and pain are an integral part of this free modern worldviewing which in this sense is sacrificial.

2.3.3 Find meaningfulness in rediscovering the world

The third conclusion that I want to draw is that new sacrifice as a performative structure shows that the rediscovered meaningfulness as the outcome of the worldviewing is that of the world as a relational place. The regeneration of the subject leads to a renewed effort to create a coherent worldview, the self thus situating itself among the things and other subjects of the world. In this sense, they are 'reborn' again amidst others as a being that is 'singular plural' and not just a singularity alienated from the world. Thanks to this relational refinding of the subject itself, the subject appropriates itself again as meaningful, giving birth to its existence amidst the things in the world. Before this birth, the 'me' situated itself in a transcendental truth, and with this birth, this self-constitution converges with 'rediscovery' of the world as a relational place where the self can find

meaningfulness. This seems to be the point of Nancy's attempt to distinguish the singular from the plural. "We die into the world as we are born into it: singular, whatever" (Nancy, 1997, p. 73). There is first a re-affirmation of the self, precisely as to make it possible for the self to re-discover the world in a new worldview. This is the point, in which the subject overcomes its singularity again and again in order to become 'singular-plural'.

2.3.4 Sacrificial worldviewing as a humanist practice

The fourth conclusion that I want to draw is that sacrificial worldviewing is a humanist practise because it reveals the modern humanistic idea of the subject as a rational meaning-maker who relates to the world and the transcendental. The outcome of this process is that of performatively finding 'truth'. What this truth is, is formally speaking a worldview that fits and affirms the self as a singular-plural subject, but the specific contents of this worldview depend on the person engaged in a constant revaluation of their worldview. The concept of truth in this perspective formally refers to all that propositions that conglomerate into worldviewing. This includes propositions regarding who I am and what the world is. Thanks to transgression, sacrificial worldviewing is a continuous negation (deconstruction) of these propositions and their specific conglomeration as created by a subject. Sacrificial worldviewing is the constant establishment or assemblage of a personal truth by the subject. This formal and performative truth as a unity of subjectivity relates to the onto-theological tradition and illustrates the modern humanistic idea of a subject, who by its own means, is a rational meaning-maker of the world. This process of meaning-making is, as I argued, deeply sacrificial since it is a transgression of our finitude and singularity by a continuous reappropriation of the performative act of finding the truth. Thanks to this transgression my 'me' becomes a transcendental subject, that performatively reinstalls itself in an attempt of situating the singular amidst the plural. Continuously I must transgress myself to recreate meaning, to integrate my being in the world. It is through sacrificial worldviewing, that the modern subjectivity feels 'unique in all the world', but as a point of relationality with the things in the world. Theseus' ship is constantly being rebuilt in a manner that better suits the waves in the ocean. Pieces of wood drift in the ocean as a result of this humanist sacrificial worldviewing, some being re- appropriated to reshape the ship.

This affirmation of transcendence via sacrificial worldviewing is a humanist practice because humanism is based on the mere horizontal relationship between man and the world. It is on this horizontal level that meaning-making takes place. Hans Alma and Adri Smaling define existential meaning-making as a “personal relation to the world in which our own life is encompassed in a broader frame of coherent meaningfulness in which purposefulness, value, connectedness, and transcendence are experienced, as well as competence and recognition, so that feelings of motivation and of well-being are experienced” [my trans.] (Smaling & Alma, 2010, p. 23). With this value of rationality, meaning-making is based on the idea that man can rationally reflect upon his own experiences, and thus constitute a private view of the world. This idea of humanism thus has a strong orientation towards the subject as a rational performing ‘worldviewer’. In this sense, sacrificial worldviewing is a genuine humanist practice, because creating a broader ‘frame of coherent meaning’, ‘transcendence’, and ‘competence and recognition’ are integral parts of sacrificial worldviewing as ‘incommensurability, subjective truth, and ‘de- and re-selfing’. Sacrificial worldviewing so performatively mirrors the humanist practice of relating to the world and the transcendental.

The fifth and final conclusion I want to draw is that sacrificial worldviewing is also a humanist practice because it shows worldviewing to be the contextually-bound humanist adventure of finding meaning in a meaningless world.

The performative aspect of truth shows that modern worldviewing fits the axial condition of humankind. With the emancipation from the gods, ‘real’ or ‘fleshly’ sacrifice is no longer a necessity as it was once in pre-axial times. Rather, new sacrifice also configures what I have called ‘sacrificial worldviewing’, designating the way humans, as humanist actors in a world void-of-divinity, try to affirm themselves and reaffirm the world. They cannot but find their own truth in this world. Worldviewing, although relating to others in this world, becomes an individual self-sacrificial process. Since there is no longer an outside, a divinity out there, to sacrifice to, sacrifice is merely done for its own sake, that is for the sake of the performative truth underlying sacrifice. The infinite effectivity of sacrifice keeps sacrificial worldviewing ‘going on’. In new sacrifice, the outside-inside can take many forms. It can be the other of the world, the other human, the other within the self, etc. With sacrifice having transformed from a ritual act to a performative structure visible in worldviewing, its relation to this

other changes as well. Worldviewing is a contextually-bound process. Although the axial turn was a turn towards *logos*, this does not mean that humans can grasp everything. On the contrary, the element of doubt and constant re-examination comes in. New sacrifice was the vehicle that permeated western metaphysics to see that part of the world that escapes human *logos*. Sacrificial worldviewing, as a continuous practice of sacrificing our worldview, is in this sense a fruitless attempt to grow to something beyond the human. There is no real outside, and sacrificial worldviewing only leads to subjective truth. This is why worldviewing is such a complex and ambiguous process in modernity, taking place in different (religious and non-religious) contexts on both an individual and societal level. Many different modern religions, ideologies, and other frames of meaning contest each other in this space left void by the disappearance of an outside. Sacrificial worldviewing brings in replacements for the outside, borrowing elements of it so as to ensure that my worldviewing is uniquely mine. This 'mine' is also the interpersonal aspect of worldviewing, as my attitude to the world vis-à-vis the attitude of others. If we understand sacrificial worldviewing as a process of negation and appropriation of the world resulting in subjectivity as a singular-plural being in the sense of Nancy, then 'others' are partaking in their own performances of my worldviewing as well. They can negate certain propositions of my worldview or reappropriate them in their worldview. It is this possible reappropriation that makes me feel recognized by others.

Since the axial turn, humanism, as mankind's effort of emancipation from the gods and taking over the central position in the world, has never been able to integrate those parts of experience that fall outside the domain of rationality. Contemporary humanism should not be understood as the result of a century-long atheist and secularist striving of humanity towards the realisation of human values and dignity, rationality, freedom, responsibility etc. Rather, I think, humanism, taken as a movement of humans, who, throughout the centuries, have busied themselves with what it means to be human, especially a good human being, has also always been involved in the question what it means not to be human, what is the nonhuman that transcends humanity. Sacrificial worldviewing in fact captures this relation towards the transcendental both beyond the world and inside us. Since the axial period, the sacred may well have been placed outside this world, yet humans are still experiencing this transcendence. Throughout

history, humanism wasn't a fixed idea, but rather there were quite different, context-dependent perspectives on humanism (Bullock, 1985). In this view it is not just the emancipation from a pre-axial world of Gods, but also a daunting task, humans have always felt facing what transcends them. With human self-emancipation, something is both lost and won. This 'condition' is portrayed in Nietzsche's famous aphorism '*The Madman*' on the death of God:

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? (Nietzsche, 1882 [1974], p. 181)

Sacrificial worldviewing is a humanist practice, our way of wiping off the blood from us, of becoming godlike through self-constituted worldviewing. We are indeed sailors of our *own* ship.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I tried to answer the second sub-question: 'How can Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis of the transformation of sacrifice be related to worldviewing?' To do this, I first described the humanist practice of worldviewing as being based on the human capability of reflecting on experience. I showed that a worldview is a coherent collection of concepts and propositions that constitute an image of the world helping the subject to understand itself and its own experiences. This process of worldview-forming is argued to be continuous, dynamic, contextual, and intra- and interpersonal. I then discussed Nancy's concept of the world using the concept of 'transimmanence' to denominate the dynamics of the circulation of meaning wherein a singular-plural being engages. Integrating these two concepts, I argued that the humanist practice of worldviewing is done by the human subject as singular plural, who, in an interrelational world attempts to grasp its experience of the circulation of sense via a continuous dynamic between this experience and reflection. Van Praag's emphasises on the world being inscrutable (hence the need for continuous worldviewing) resembles Nancy's concepts of transimmanence and sense as an opening of signification. This inscrutable

sense that we touch upon is reflected upon to grasp in a more coherent, meaningful whole, that we call a worldview. With this integration, the process of new sacrifice could be understood via the lens of worldviewing.

This took me to understand how worldviewing can be recognized as a sacrificial structure. I explained this as a kind of sacrifice-miming taking place as a negation of the limits of finitude. In the beginning, the worldviewer experiences a sense of incoherence, a lack of self-sustaining meaning. The worldviewer passes from this moment of de-selfing, through transgression, into a moment of re-selfing, of affirmation of its own self-presence in the world. Via the concepts of suicide and natality I argued that the mimesis of pre-axial sacrifice shows that new sacrifice is performatively analogous to the process of worldviewing. With this, I provide a deeper understanding of Nancy's sacrifice and of the humanist practice of worldviewing. This deeper understanding lies in five outcomes: it starts with a disfiguration of the self in an incommensurability of the worldview with the world (1), this sacrificiality may change (2), the subject finds its truth in a coherent worldview (3), knowing this truth to be found, the subject is present as it de-selfes itself (4), the performance so re-affirms the subjective act of worldviewing (5).

I then used the 'light emitted via this lens' to illuminate the practice of worldviewing in relation to humanism and Nancy's sacrifice. I so drew five conclusions: that this description of sacrificial worldviewing is an implicit consequence of Nancy's analysis of sacrifice (1), that it shows that loss and pain are central to the process of worldviewing (2), that the rediscovered meaningfulness as the outcome of the worldviewing is that of the world as a relational place (3), that it is a humanist practice because it reveals the modern humanistic idea of the subject as a rational meaning-maker who relates to the world and the transcendental (4) and because it shows worldviewing to be the contextually-bound humanist adventure of finding meaning in a meaningless world. The whole process is in fact humanistic, because it takes place as a self-affirming construction of man, aiming at understanding the world and the transcendental. In sum, the answer to the sub-question is that Nancy's concept of new sacrifice is the vehicle and underlying structure of a free, humanist worldviewing. The first important outcome of my research thus implies this recognition of the sacrificial structure in modern worldviewing that in modern humanism configures meaning-

making. My research findings in the next chapter will further focus on what this implies for humanism.

3 IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMANISM

This chapter tries to answer our third sub-question: ‘What is Jean-Luc Nancy’s criticism of the transformation of sacrifice and what are the implications for humanism as a practice of worldviewing?’ To answer this question, I will first provide a detailed reading of Nancy’s critique of sacrifice in the last section of ‘The Unsacrificeable’, and then show how this has implications for humanism understood in the sense of ‘sacrificial worldviewing’. I will then try to develop an alternative humanist way of approaching worldviewing that better aligns with Nancy’s thinking. This alternative will be called ‘phenomenological worldflowing’.

3.1 Nancy’s critique

In his last section, Nancy comes to the astonishing claim that ‘existence is unsacrificeable’. His main arguments are these:

“finitude isn’t a ‘moment’ in a process or an economy (...) thought rigorously and in accordance with *Ereignis*; ‘finitude’ means that existence can’t be sacrificed. It can’t be sacrificed, because it’s already, not sacrificed, but offered to the world (...). Finitude corresponds simply to the matrix-formula of the thought of existence (...). And this formula? The ‘essence’ of *Dasein* lies in its existence (...), a being that exists has no essence. It cannot be referred back to the transappropriation of an essence. Rather, it is offered or presented to the existence that it is (...). ‘Nothing’ affirms finitude and this ‘nothing’ immediately leads existence back to itself and nothing else. It de-subjectifies it, removing from it any possibility of its being appropriated by anything other than its own event, its advent. This sense of existence, its sense proper, is Unsacrificeable. (Nancy, 2003, pp. 74-76)

To understand this difficult passage we need to better understand what Nancy means with finitude and *Ereignis*, how this refers to essence, existence, and representation, and what the distinction is between sacrificing and offering.

3.1.1 *Ereignis*

Nancy (2003) doesn’t want existence to be thought in accordance with transappropriation but with another ‘mode of appropriation’, which is the Heideggerian

Ereignis (pp. 74-75). This is the proper way by which Nancy, in contrast to Bataille, wants to think finitude. For Heidegger, when beings are in a process of change, they are anticipating something absent. We anticipate what we get but which is now absent, and this expectation is what defines us. For example, as a master-student, I anticipate my degree, which for now is absent, but this expectation determines my being-a-student. As such, the absence of the degree becomes in fact quasi-present. This is true for all *Dasein*'s being (Sheehan, 1998). *Ereignis* is Heidegger's specific word to denote the idea that *Dasein* is always being-drawn into its own absence. *Ereignis* is a process of being-drawn into what is one's own: as an act of appropriation. It is the appropriating event of existence as such. As *Ereignis*, finitude isn't 'a moment' in an economy that can be appropriated, but rather a process by which *Dasein* appropriates itself: "existence simply aligns itself with its own finitude" (Nancy, 2003, p. 73).

Now we have to try to understand why Nancy wants to use *Ereignis*, and what it means that "existence can't be sacrificed". because it is already "offered to the world". Only then we will understand how this contrasts with 'new sacrifice'.

Let's take up the ideas of the previous chapter on *The Sense of the World*. As I said, we are beings, given to the world, we are born, and already have our sense or initial meaning, not in any mental idea, but by being exposed to what comes. But our existence still misses sense as truly meaningful, though this missing in itself makes sense. Sense is what is always being born and also always dying, it indicates that in finitude, there is no question of a definitive 'end', neither as a goal nor as an accomplishment. There is merely a question of a kind of sense-suspension, of being in-finite. In this sense we are infinitely finite: infinitely exposed to our existence as a non-essence, to the otherness of our own being, and that any pursuit of any last meaning is bound to fail (Nancy, 2013, p. 29).

This, according to Nancy, is symbolized by the death of God, a closure or 'exhaustion' of metaphysics (Nancy, 1991a, p. 128). The west is always catching up to its truth of the world, open to and searching for meaningfulness, leaving the void-of-divinity behind. This catching-up is the process of what Nancy calls 'new sacrifice' (Nancy, 2003, pp. 73-74), and I already have shown that sacrificial worldviewing is in my view a humanist way of dealing with our world void of sense. In sacrificial worldviewing, we performatively transgress our finite existence in order to appropriate meaning coming

from the world and to affirm ourselves by doing so. We thus temporarily ‘close’ our worldview. Sure, we are in a world always open, in a structure of infinite sense, in plurality, but this worldview will inevitably close again, and then we have to start anew, opening it again. This is what Nancy means when he says that we can’t appropriate the world into meaning (p. 74). The process of meaning-making rather resides in the non-appropriation of ‘being’. For Nancy, *Ereignis* is an event of appropriation of existence rather than an appropriated instance of subjectivity.

Nancy’s a-theological interpretation of God’s death brings him to say: “The event of existence, the fact that there is, means that there is *nothing else*” (p. 75). Nancy can be called an a-theological thinker because his atheism is intertwined with theism. The history of philosophy and of monotheism is, according to Nancy, also a history of atheism. He calls this position ‘onto-(a)-theology’. Both theism and atheism need a principle or origin on which they are based and this was first the divine name JHWH or Plato’s *theos*, and later in modern humanism, the principle of humanity appears (Nancy, 2008, pp. 15–23). Everywhere the history of onto-(a)-theology is also that of atheism, already visible in theism. This adherence to principality (divine or human) makes atheism and monotheism complicit. All forms of foundational thinking (including humanism) are thus part of this onto-theological tradition to find the meaning of existence in a transcendent principle:

The death of this God – and it is only this God who is dead, as Nietzsche says – is nothing other than the death of any Reason endowed with the attributes of necessity and of the completeness of the foundation-production of the totality of beings. (Nancy, 2013, p. 32)

We can find an example of what Nancy means in *The creation of the world or globalization* (2007) where he gives a deconstruction of the concept of the *creatio ex nihilo*. Nihil means that there is no foundation or principle. The divine is now nothing, simply the ‘coming forth of the world’ (Nancy, 2000, p. 16, 2007, p. 51, 2008, p. 24). ‘God’, for Nancy, thus always signifies an absent, retreating or ‘last’ God. The word ‘God’ names the empty place of sovereignty, the absence of meaning. The death of God, rather than being a divine revelation simply implies existence as a singular initial offering.

This use of the word ‘offering’ is deliberate. Nancy makes a distinction between

sacrificing and offering in this interpretation of the death of God. Although these terms are similar, and the German (and Dutch) word for them is the same (*Opfer/offer*), they are different. We are a ‘happening: we take place’ (Nancy, 2003, p. 75). This taking place has no ground: being refers to nothing than the being-thrown of existence. The essence of being lies in its existence. This is what Nancy means when he says that ‘existence is offered’ (pp. 74-75). Singular beings are not sacrificed but offered. There is no ‘obscure god’, or Bataille’s ‘nothing’, which he criticizes (p. 75). *Ereignis*, the event of existence, is all there is. There is only the world, just as a singular-plural. Offering refers to a giving motion that never ends. A giving without receiving. This is what being is, an offer, a gift, because there is nothing, no outside. The essence of being lies in it being offered to the existence that it is (Arnould, 1996; Nancy, 2003b, p. 74). That existence is offered is the reason why there is no self-presence to existence. The singular being as offer simply never arrives. It is simply offered as *Ereignis*, as a free movement of finitude. There is nothing initiating the world to which one can sacrifice, therefore, existence is unsacrificeable. Nancy’s notion of the unsacrificeable therefore affirms that finitude can’t be appropriated, evaluated, or sublated into a higher meaning or towards a higher end. It neither can be sublated into a higher meaning (such as worldviewing). Existence “can’t give rise to its meaning with a burst that destroys its finitude” (Nancy, 2003, p. 74). There is only *Ereignis*, an offering coming from nothing and to nothing. Let’s work out what this difficult position of Nancy implies for sacrificial worldviewing and humanism.

3.1.2 Critique on humanism

In traditional humanist philosophy, the subject is thought of as a representant of existence. The person is a meaning-maker. Its essence is grounded in a preceding existence such as in Sartre’s ‘existence precedes essence’. In contrast, Nancy tries to think finitude without any ground and without this essence; always retreating of representation in a subject. Against traditional humanism, Nancy would argue that being

takes place here and now, in an infinite number of ways, without ever being fully present or available (...) thus presentation is presence before any signification (...). Representation, on the contrary, tends to close into itself also what lies outside of its limits: representational thinking strives to give a thing a fixed identity. (Heikkilä, 2015, p. 192)

The ‘coming to presence’ is an always active process, never stable or fixed. This allows a thing to present itself in its own truth, as finitude or *Ereignis*. Translated in terms of worldviewing: it is precisely via sacrificial worldviewing that the subject can posit itself and the world as an object of representation. In fact, this does not only apply to the subject, but also to the ‘world’. Whereas sacrificial worldviewing is an attempt to bring signification to the world, Nancy argues that the world itself has no ‘assignable signification’ (Nancy, 1997, p. 5, 2007).

Following Heidegger who said that ‘the essence of Dasein lies in its existence’ and Bataille who said that ‘sovereignty is NOTHING’, to Nancy the ‘nihil’ is not a negativity that can be put to use (Nancy, 2003, p. 74). There is nothing but existence, and no ‘self’ preceding existence. There is nothing to which existence refers, just singularities and bodies. Sacrifice can therefore not be seen as a turn toward the other (inside myself, the divine, the human). There is no self-presence, existence is continuously offered, *Ereignis*, the never-ending movement of finitude. The difficulty of sacrifice is however that it emphasizes singularity through self-affirmation. It always attempts to posit some being as singular, and not as ‘singular plural’. In the world, according to Nancy presence is always postponed, and self-presence is impossible. Sacrificial worldviewing however always tries to re-appropriate this world, it attempts to re-appropriate infinite truth. The self that humanist philosophy imagines to be, doesn’t really exist, according to Nancy. There is only the ‘singular plural’ and not the human as a ‘singular’. My existence is inseparable from my relations to ‘others’ to which I am exposed, so I am never a ‘singular’ (Nancy, 2013, p. 73). The logic of sacrifice, as a never-ending attempt to become oneself precisely by transgressing oneself which requires loss, pain, suffering, challenge, thus in Nancy’s view doesn’t follow the logic that shows self-presence to be impossible (Nancy, 1988, p. 30). Nancy states by this that we can in fact never become ourselves, not even via sacrifice, because there is no ‘self’, no ‘singular self’.

3.2 A possible humanist response

In this section, I want to respond to Nancy. I first want to address some philosophical difficulties I have in understanding and interpreting the claims he makes that leads him

to say that existence is unsacrificeable. I will then defend humanism from a phenomenological standpoint.

3.2.1 Critique on principality and the term 'offer'

Before responding to his overall criticism, I want to address two points of Nancy's philosophy that I find difficult to understand. Firstly, that he criticizes foundational thinking by not wanting to find the meaning of existence in a transcendent principle. Humanism is one of these ways of thinking as it takes 'man' as its principle. This seems like Nancy reduces humanism to a certain anthropocentrism. I don't understand how 'man' can be a principle, as if the conception of 'man' is a principle. I don't see what Nancy's alternative would be other than a thinking based on sense and finitude, which strikes me as reducing all our lived experiences to the corporal, the animal. If this is the case then I fail to understand how, if 'man' is a principle, 'sense' isn't one. Secondly, this 'building without a fundament' leads Nancy to claim that 'singular beings are not sacrificed, but offered in a giving motion that never ends.' Without this fundament, I don't understand why Nancy does use the word 'offering'. I understand his preference for the Heideggerian *Ereignis*, but when he uses the word 'offer' this implies that it is a gift. This gift, however, is given by no one, nor received. Or perhaps there is a receiver (existence) that never receives. The word 'offer' so seems to work only as a metaphor, but not as a metaphysical concept. In Heidegger, it can be said that there is a deeper 'Being' that gives, but Nancy reduces *Ereignis* to mere movement. Rid of a giver (and possibly also a receiver) we are left with what seems to be nothing more than life itself (corporal, animal). Why use the term offer then? The answers to my misunderstanding perhaps lie in a closer inspection of his other works, but I find it a flaw that I cannot find them in 'The Unsacrificeable' where he makes these claims.

Having mentioned these difficulties, I now want to defend humanism from a phenomenological standpoint.

3.2.2 Phenomenological necessity

Even if we accept Nancy's critique, I want to argue from a phenomenological standpoint that the humanistic practice of sacrificial worldviewing is still a necessity. Both Nancy and humanism hold that the world itself escapes any meaningful signification, it is inscrutable. It is part of the experience of existence that humans ask

for meaning and therefore they can't escape engaging in worldviewing again and again. Discussion can arise about the extent man manages to reach some objective meaningfulness or truth, but the phenomenological structure of man's attitude in life cannot be discarded. Sacrificial worldviewing is a performatively necessary attempt to create and maintain some solid footing in the swamps of existence: A point of immanence, of fixation, no matter how small or temporary. So, whereas the idea that there is 'no outside' leads Nancy to argue that we should get rid of the fascination for sacrifice, I would argue that the lack of an outside is precisely why sacrificial worldviewing as a practice towards subjective truth, or authenticity, as re-creating a 'self', is necessary. In Nancy's philosophy, sacrificial worldviewing seems to be an attempt to ignore the meaninglessness of existence. Even though we have a phenomenological experience of selfhood, Nancy would say that this "is rather the 'effect' of an essential being-toward that can never fully reappropriate within itself what it is toward. The self is what it is only through this inappropriable exteriority" (Morin, 2015a, p. 125). The keywords in this quote are 'never fully'. That selfhood, or my worldview that leads to this, is never fully appropriable doesn't mean that it can be discarded. Especially not since it is a performatively fundamental part of the human experience. Rather, the idea that this truth can never be arrived at, doesn't mean we should forgo any striving for it, even if this is the painful process of sacrificial worldviewing. Phenomenologically speaking, it is in the need for this experience of selfhood that, even though I see the problems Nancy has with sacrifice, I don't think humans can escape the re-appropriation of the self. Sacrificial worldviewing is simply what man does with the capabilities he has and the experience he is in.

In sum, I thus think that Nancy, within his philosophy, did explain why sacrifice is not feasible or desirable metaphysically, but he didn't account for its phenomenological necessity. Nancy and traditional humanism would disagree on Nancy's interpretation of the death of God as the end of metaphysics or philosophy and the futility of having a fundamental principle such as the human as meaning-maker. In 'The Unsacrificeable' he doesn't really detail how to end sacrifice other than to 'think at a distance' from it. Yet, If sacrifice has ingrained itself into the western tradition as much Nancy says, then thinking it as something distant would require an enormous effort. One way, I think, that Nancy attempts to do this, is by calling for an 'ontology to come' (Nancy, 1993, p.

62). The western ontology of substance, order and origin will be replaced with an ontology of the common and of sharing (Nancy, 1992, p. 374; Watkin, 2015, p. 105). Because Nancy, in 'The Unsacrificeable' is not clear how he wants to 'think at a distance', and because understanding what he means with this 'ontology to come' would require much research into his other works, and because my idea for sacrificial worldviewing in which the subject re-appropriates itself would trouble this ontology, I now for the remainder of this thesis want to attempt to find an alternative humanistic approach to worldviewing that will help us in better understanding Nancy and rethink the process of worldviewing less sacrificially.

3.3 An alternative to sacrificial worldviewing

To find such an alternative, I think it is best to return to Heidegger. The first reason for this is that it is from his philosophy that Nancy departs his antihumanist critique on sacrifice. The second reason is that Heidegger (1949), has written a *Letter on Humanism*, which is a response to Jean Beaufret in which he answers several of his questions. Perhaps it is via this letter that we can find an alternative approach to worldviewing that can be called humanistic and that also aligns more with Nancy's thinking.

3.3.1 The primacy of eksistence

One of the questions Beaufret asked which Heidegger answers is 'how to give meaning to the word 'humanism'?' Heidegger argues that the essence of humanism has always been considered metaphysically, which to him means that it has been blocked from the question of being. Rather, he argues that the root word 'humanum' refers to 'humanity', the essence of man. The literal meaning of the word 'humanism' can only be given by determining its essence again. To do this, he claims: "The essence of man lies in its ek-sistence" [my trans.] (Heidegger, 2005, p. 87). Remarkably, this is also what Nancy cites, and which for Nancy means that existence is 'offered'. Nancy writes it as 'existence' but Heidegger purposefully writes 'ek-sistence'. Firstly, to differentiate his philosophy from existentialist philosophy but secondly, because it refers to man as being outside of himself. His concept of world refers to the openness of being, and man is 'outside' in this openness. This entails that the essence of man is not that of a subject relating to an object. Rather, the openness of being frees the 'between' in which this

relation of subject and object can be (pp. 97-99). What this means, is that the represented world by the subject as the outcome of sacrificial worldviewing is only possible by *a more primarily* ek-sisting of man in the openness of the world. With the phrase that ‘The essence of man lies in its ek-sistence’, Heidegger thus means that it is

from being itself, in as far as being brings man as the eksisting to the truth of being as the guardian of truth. ‘Humanism’ now means, if we want to hold on to that word: the essence of man is essential for the truth of being, in such a way that it, therefore, doesn’t solely come down to man as such” [my trans.] (p. 89)

After playing with the question of whether this should still be called ‘humanism’, Heidegger explains what he means in this quote. He argues that criticizing the word ‘humanism’ could

awaken a reflection of which the focus doesn’t only go to man, but to the ‘nature’ of man, not just to the nature, but primarily to the dimension in which the essence of man because of being itself, is at home” [my trans.] (p. 89)

A humanistic alternative to worldviewing that is not sacrificial and that just like Nancy comes from the phrase that the essence of man lies in its eksistence, should thus focus on something more primary than the human subject, perhaps on being itself.

3.3.2 Phenomenological truth

We are thus looking for an alternative that aims at being itself, in which this openness of being is more primarily than the subject-object relation such as in sacrificial worldviewing. Man is so ‘put into play’ by the event of the openness of reality (Bremmers, 2005, p. 145). This alternative must be a worldviewing (if it can still be rightly called ‘worldviewing’, more on that below)⁸ that attempts to ‘view’ from a space more primarily than that of the subject and the world. In traditional humanist philosophy, this space doesn’t seem to exist. Instead of the appropriation inherent to sacrificial worldviewing, this alternative ‘worldviewing’ is not aimed at an outside to sacrifice to, but at this open space of being. It is the space of ek-sistence, outside the subject.

⁸ Below I will argue that the term *worldflowing* is more suited for the alternative I am describing. For now, I will put the word worldviewing in between apostrophes to refer to this nuance.

Whereas the subjective truth that sacrificial worldviewing is aimed at, can be described as a “fixation – the punctual presentation and signification – of an essence, sense existentialises essence, defers and differs from it, while bringing it into being. Sense opens truth onto an infinite de-termination” (Nancy, 1997, pp. 29–33). Nancy’s concept of sense is perhaps aimed at this space. The alternative we seek thus revolves around the truth of being itself, and around sense, which means that it is an experiential embodied practice. The truth of being that we (with Heidegger) are after, is thus not arrived at via the rational subject as the centre of (what I call ‘traditional’) humanism. Heidegger criticises this rational subject since man is primarily or originally *more* than this. Differentiating this from a man who understands himself via subjectivity, Heidegger argues that this ‘more’ relates to man as “the guardian of being (...) he obtains the essential poverty of the guardian, whose dignity lies in having been called to keep its truth by being itself” [my trans.] (Heidegger, 2005, p. 81). Man’s ek-sistence so lies in being the neighbour of being and it is humanism that thinks the humanity of man from this proximity to being. With this experiential focus, not on man, but on being and so going beyond a subject-object relationship, I want to call the alternative we are looking for ‘phenomenological’ (Farina, 2014).

In this phenomenological ‘worldviewing’, our bodily senses are the way we discover meaning, we do this both actively and passively. Whereas sacrificial worldviewing finds a truth that is a fixation or solidification of an essence, the pre-conceptual phenomenological ‘worldviewing’ is aimed at the experienced truth of being. It is from this sense that all worldviewing starts, from a sense of the truth of being in which language is silent (Heidegger, 2005, p. 85). It is with this primarily ‘worldviewing’ that such a thing as sacrificial worldviewing (with its inherent subject-object relationship) is even possible.

3.3.3 Worldflowing

Above, I expressed my difficulty with calling my humanistic alternative ‘worldviewing’. Here, I continue this thought. Heidegger wants to keep the word ‘humanism’ but not in a metaphysical sense in which man ‘ascends’ himself into subjectivity, but rather as a ‘descend’ to a ‘humanitas’ in service of being (2005, p. 103). The aim is thus for man to let his actions not flow from a certain subjectivity, but from being itself. It resembles the humanism of Confucius in which the subject ‘holds

back' or 'withdraws' and lets the dynamic of the things themselves become. The subject is an observer, but not as in sacrificial worldviewing in which the observed is grasped in a more coherent whole, but more as a passive observer. He is rather 'being worldviewed' than the worldviewer itself. The goal then is to let our ordinary life and action coincide with the Tao of things. 'Acting', is an acting that follows this 'flow' of being. There is thus not a subject in the traditional sense, but we can call this humanistic because human actions (or inactions) are still important in the way they follow this flow. I now want to build on this metaphor of 'flow'.

Let's go back to the process of sacrificial worldviewing as the outcome of a dynamic between experience and reflection. It is van Bergen (2006) who also uses these concepts in her model of worldviewing. She doesn't cite van Praag, but rather three other authors to build on, and extend this model of worldviewing. Next to the dynamic between experience and reflection, she adds that experience is preverbal, inexplicable, based on direct perception, and amoral, and that reflection is explicable, normative, and conceptual. There is no clear boundary between these two parts of the dynamic (2006, p. 7). Since worldviewing is a contextually-bound process, she adds to this an important differentiation. She argues that experience is characterized as a liquid-flowing state of sense, a diversity of 'elements' which can be used in the process of worldviewing, and that reflection is characterized as the congealing of these elements into language, into concepts that form the worldview. This congealing of sense is the appropriation of it by the subject into meaning which I have called sacrificial worldviewing. This is an outcome of the contextual nature of worldviewing since it is in this context of power dynamics that this process takes place in what van Bergen calls 'the rhythm of congealing and melting'. For van Bergen, these power dynamics are amoral, simply something present in existence and the way societies function. She does argue for the importance of melting the congealed frames of power so that there is more free space for the self to borrow elements in its worldviewing process.

Above I described the alternative I am seeking as an experiential embodied practice. Being based on direct perception, this phenomenological endeavour thus takes place on the primary level of experience, in which, following Heidegger, language is silent. To reflect this extended model of worldviewing back on Nancy I think that Nancy would disagree with the amorality of those power dynamics (and of the worldviewing itself).

Rather, his writings on the circulation of sense and on the world mirror the concept of experience as 'liquid', perceptible, preverbal, and inexplicable. It is this experience of sense that he argues will always resist signification and its congealing into worldviews, a tension that I think is captured in his concept of transimmanence. Thus, to find an alternative way of worldviewing that aligns with Nancy's thought I think we must envision and build on an aspect of the model of worldviewing. This is the aspect of experience. Leaving aside the sacrificial dynamic between experience and reflection, I now want to envision worldviewing solely taking place on the level of experience. I don't think that this approach to view 'worldviewing' can adequately be called 'worldviewing'. The problem lies in the meaning of 'viewing'. The outcome of the process I have in mind is not the same kind of 'view' of the world such as the one arrived at in sacrificial worldviewing that is a collection of concepts. As argued, the approach to worldviewing I am after here takes place on the level of experience and is as such pre-conceptual. The 'viewing' in sacrificial worldviewing can perhaps be associated with 'having a certain point of view' with 'observing' and 'inspecting'. I view the world 'in a particular light', 'in the way that it coheres with my experience' 'as it appears to me'.⁹ In contrast to this, the phenomenological worldviewing that I am after would be more associated with 'seeing', 'experiencing', 'as it is', 'without instrumentality', 'being attentive'. With the truth of being. In this attempt to view the world 'as it is' it will also never succeed since the worldviewer is attempting the impossible, namely to remove themselves from the view, 'out of the picture'. Seen in this way, it is a humbler or more modest approach to worldviewing. It would approach something of a window looking at the changing world without a spectator in the room. The openness of the world is allowed to remain open, without closure into a signified view. To emphasise these differences, I don't think we should speak of worldviewing. Rather, since Nancy talks of a circulation of sense, and since van Bergen refers to experience as 'liquid', I think that it is better to speak of 'worldflowing'. Phenomenological worldflowing then, is a way to look at worldviewing in which there is only the experience of existence. The world is 'viewed' to the extent that it is seen as flowing. This is a 'descend' to a 'humanitas' in service of being in which the aim is for

⁹ This last description would also apply to my alternative as it is also phenomenological, but the difference is that there is no epoché in sacrificial worldviewing.

man to let his actions not flow from a certain subjectivity, but align it with the experience of being itself.

Thus far, I have already hinted several times how the alternative of phenomenological worldflowing can be called humanistic. Firstly, in following Heidegger's idea of humanism in which the essence of man is essential for the truth of being, in such a way that it, therefore, doesn't solely come down to man as such but which focuses on something more primary than the human subject: being itself. Secondly, because the human as an agent is still important to the extent that he follows the flow of being. I now want to get involved with some more humanistic thought to reflect on the humanistic character of my alternative.

3.3.4 The spiritual humanist practice of phenomenological worldflowing

I described how traditional humanism and worldviewing revolve exclusively around the value of rationality. Spiritual humanism, however, also relates to other sources of meaning such as feelings and experiences of transcendence that fall outside the domain of scientific rationality (Jacobs, 2020). As such, spirituality is a constitutive part of meaning-making and worldviewing, because it denotes a “dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose, and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature, and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions, and practices” (Puchalski et al., 2014, p. 646).

In the spiritual humanism that Jacobs describes, spirituality is aimed at horizontal transcendence. Whereas vertical transcendence refers to a transcendent omnipotence, horizontal transcendence refers to an embodied alterity. Horizontal transcendence is an embodied interaction with the world that is characterised by the experience that we lose and find ourselves in the other, in the world around us. It is an experience of wonder. Spirituality aims for this transcendence and is therefore based on the experience of having an affective connection with the world, moments in which we lose ourselves, in which our self is de-centred (Jacobs, 2020, p. 30). It so leaves behind the subject-orientation of the previously described humanism. Against this rational subject, embodiment is reaffirmed as the heart of existential meaning-making.

I thus think that Nancy's antihumanist thinking uses a small definition of humanism, which poses man as a fundamental principle. Nancy seems to reduce humanism to an anthropocentrism, to the idea of a rational subject, the meaning-maker, the human as the foundation for reason about the world, as the origin of meaning, which Nancy argues to have died with the death of God. He argues, that if humans are the maker of everything of meaning in the world, it will fall apart (Nancy, 1993, p. 20, 25). Following the above remarks on Nancy's always open world and that existence can't be appropriated, we can maybe say that his main problem with sacrifice is that it is futile. Worldviewing as the making of meaning would be futile since meaning (as existence) can't be appropriated. I think this critique on the futility of sacrifice can be softened if we introduce the distinction between meaning and signification. Humanists have often busied themselves with signification (betekenisgeving, zingeving in Dutch); the notion that we can attribute meaning to our lives. Yet, as Ger Groot (1991) argues, this only means that humans have asked a question of meaning and gave their own answer to it. Meaning 'made' in this way does not originate from our relationship with the world. This is true for atheist humanism, and for this, he shows that sacrificial worldviewing is problematic. But I don't see how his criticism stands against a spiritual, inclusive humanism that is aimed at a horizontal or even vertical transcendence.¹⁰ I, therefore, think that sacrificial worldviewing on its own is not enough and should exist secondary to phenomenological worldflowing.

3.3.5 Relation between sacrificial worldviewing and phenomenological worldflowing

I have now described phenomenological worldflowing. In this last section, I want to more clearly explain the difference or dynamic between phenomenological worldflowing and sacrificial worldviewing and how this resembles the difference or dynamic between sense and meaning in Nancy's work.

The difference between the two approaches to 'worldviewing' can be seen as a distinction between the kind of meaning that is central in both practices. In phenomenological worldflowing, the meaning of being (or as being) is simply experienced, non-discursively, in sacrificial worldviewing, meaning is made more

¹⁰ I do wonder whether, In the Heideggerian alternative I am proposing, 'being' would be a fundamental principle that Nancy would also criticize.

determinate via a process of signification and reflection by the rational subject. Nancy would call the first type of meaning ‘sense’ so I will use that distinction in this section. Meaning is what we deal with, sense is where it comes from. In a way, both practices function independently of each other. In another sense, sacrificial worldviewing is engaged in from an incoherence felt in phenomenological worldflowing. It is a performatively necessary dynamic between the two kinds of meaning (meaning and sense).

In section ‘2.2.2. The entrance’, I claimed that sacrificial worldviewing isn’t always necessary because the sacrificiability (experienced incoherence) may change. With our new idea of phenomenological worldflowing I now want to claim that I think this sacrificiability may change when the subject is more oriented towards worldflowing, to the truth of being as it is experienced. Perhaps, engaging in the practice of phenomenological worldflowing and staying more ‘down’ (descended in Heidegger’s terms), the felt incoherence may pass and flow away. An example of this is the humanistic term of *uithouden* (enduring), often used in the context of pastoral care (Jacobs, 2002). Sometimes, people find themselves in circumstances where sacrificial worldviewing isn’t always helping. The process of enduring, which requires both a passive and an active stance of the subject (and chaplain, if present) in which they stay close to the experience, to the truth of being. In this form of worldflowing, the felt incoherence may sometimes dissolve.

If humanists would shift their discourse towards phenomenological worldflowing which means they refer more to the sense of the world rather than its more determinate meaning. With a stronger emphasis on phenomenological worldflowing, the realization could settle in that often, sense is all there is, and needn’t be made immanent, needn’t be signified. This shift in discourse would require a de-centring of the subject in humanist thought. It would require a loss of the subject-object relation to the world. It would stress that meaning or sense is not only ‘made’ or ‘given’ but rather, received. It would activate the senses to be sensitive to sense.

Therefore, phenomenological worldflowing that is more strongly oriented toward sense would less require the sacrificial structure. It would not be a ‘worldviewing’ in which the subject attempts again and again to appropriate meaning and let it signify something. It would rather be a worldflowing that exists primarily to this sacrificial

worldviewing. It would not appropriate sense within a certain view but would rather view sense for what it is. Sense would be experienced, together with, and as others. With this kind of humanistic thinking, it doesn't mean that all things of value such as culture, art, science, human dignity, world, and God are worthless. Rather, Heidegger, for example, inverts this by saying that "precisely by characterizing something as valuable, it is robbed of its value or dignity" [my trans.] (Heidegger, 2005, p. 95). This is because, by doing this, the thing is only seen as 'valuable' by man, rather than what it is in its being. Its being can't be put into an object, valued or not. This act of valuing is a subjectivation that lets being not *be*, but only be valued as an object of this activity of valuing something (p. 97). The original value can thus be found in the sense of phenomenological worldflowing, rather than be made or designated as value in the meaning of sacrificial worldviewing.

Being can only have meaning, or, the world can only be 'viewed' when there is something that escapes this meaning or this view. There must be meaning (sense) that can't be appropriated as meaning. A sense that remains sense. For Nancy, sense can't be given or found, it rather just takes place. Sense can't be grasped, given, discovered or produced. With phenomenological worldflowing, I don't fully follow Nancy in this criticism but maintain that there is a certain space for de-subjectivity in which the subject nonetheless encounters sense and engages (actively and passively) in this encounter. If Nancy argues sense to only 'take place', 'to circulate' then I hold that there is a spiritual humanist position that is attentive to this taking place. It is a plea for a humanism that is more non-discursive. The otherness, or alterity, of the world, is seen, rather than related to. This view 'as is' is primarily what is experienced, but phenomenologically speaking, this experience is instantaneously rendered by the subject and related to the self, it is processed. This happens so instantaneously, that it is only in a philosophical way that I wish to speak of phenomenological worldflowing as primary. We should not forego the traditional humanist views on man as meaning-making, but rather acknowledge its limits.

3.4 Coda: Viewing the great beauty¹¹

A figure who I think understands the importance of both phenomenological worldflowing and sacrificial worldviewing is Jep Gambardella from Paolo Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza* (2013). In the movie, Jep is a journalist who has written a bestselling novel and is now living the Roman high-life. The movie starts with a huge rooftop party in Rome with all the hotshots commemorating Jep's 65th birthday. It is here that we see that Jep somehow alienates from the rest of the crowd. Many of the movie's characters show people clinging on to meaning in an attempt to appropriate it, not realising that meaning is no longer as fixed as they make it out to be. This lack of firm ground is visible in the movie's cinematography, we never see stable images. Jep realizes this lack of ground and in his alienation, he embarks on a search for the great beauty (*la Grande Bellezza*) of life through the ruins of a world that has no sense. Via small views on buildings and people, on worlds of meaning as such, Jep witnesses the broken down structures of age-old meaning as through a keyhole. We see images of religion and art, of hedonism, large sources of meaning, but everything is lacking something. We see small fragments of people (inter)acting, we see how they all resemble a story, are caught in their own worldviewing. The death of God left a hole in the experience that such sources of meaning can no longer fill and the movie is therefore not about any discursive content; most scenes feel as though they are a dream, fleeting images that Jep passes by.

Jep seems to acknowledge the primacy of phenomenological worldflowing. In the famous 'rooftop scene', Jep in a revealing monologue contrasts his own 'worldview' with that of a friend who even explicitly referred to her life as sacrificial. He finishes this monologue by saying: "We're all on the brink of despair, all we can do is look each other in the face, keep each other company, joke a little... Don't you agree?" (2013, 0:52:16). Jep simply refers to the sense of existence as being singular plural. He explicates this in the final scene of the movie, in which he makes the 'descent' that Heidegger describes:

¹¹ I admire the idea of a coda ever since I encountered it in Ten Kate's 'Secularity as Sacrifice', a text that I repeatedly lean on in this thesis. The idea of this coda is to, in different words, experience the overall argument of the thesis and to keep the research open for the new directions it can take.

This is how it always ends. In death. But first there was life. Hidden beneath the blah, blah, blah. Everything's settled to the bottom, beneath all the hubbub and. The silence and the emotion, the excitement and the fear. The fleeting and sporadic flashes of beauty amid the wretched squalor and human misery. All buried beneath the embarrassment of existing in this world, blah blah blah. What lies beyond lies beyond. That is not my concern. Therefore... let this novel begin. After all... it's just a trick. Yes, it's just a trick. (2013, 2:11:47)

It's a very enigmatic quote. How can we talk about this experience without using our everyday language, without the noise? I think this quote captures both ways of worldviewing. Gambardella notices his finitude (it always ends in death), that it is just sense, sentiment, emotion. An experience that makes us feel embarrassed.

Simultaneously, Gambardella affirms that although this meaning lies beyond, he still starts writing a book. He still attempts to appropriate existence even though he knows it is just, a trick.

I think the movie eventually affirms the humanist core values of human dignity and love for specific, finite, and vulnerable human beings. As shown, whether the outside disappears, or the sacred now becomes truth or human dignity or the other in love. Throughout the movie, we see flashbacks of Jep's first love as a teenager. It is suggested that this is the great beauty that he is looking for, this is the meaning of the world that was real, the truth of being. Love is an important yardstick in worldviewing, in meaning-making. The feeling of being in love with life, of being fulfilled, to be inspired shows that something is of meaning to you. I think love is both visible in sacrificial worldviewing as the truth to which my worldviewing is aimed and in phenomenological worldflowing as the love of the other, for being, precisely because it is being.

This great beauty of love is not something that only exists between two humans. Rather it is something that takes place in our worldviewing. I think this is what the 'keyhole-images' in the movie are about. The images, the people, the conversation that we witness via Jep suggest a broader love for all being. They are all examples of being as something vulnerable, extraordinarily beautiful, but also of dramatism, pettiness, or exaggerated selfishness. This broader love for all being, found in the space between

subject and world, in the aesthetic space of phenomenological worldflowing might erode the necessity of sacrificial worldviewing that is aimed at the desire to affirm the self and to be recognized.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter answers the third sub-question: ‘What is Jean-Luc Nancy’s criticism of the transformation of sacrifice and what are the implications for humanism as a practice of worldviewing?’. To do this, I first read Nancy's criticism of sacrifice in the last part of his 'The Unsacrificeable' in the context of his broader philosophy. Nancy's criticism is built on the idea that finitude should be thought of as *Ereignis*, and that this will lead to the understanding that existence can't be sacrificed because it is already offered to the world. There is nothing outside the world to which one can sacrifice, therefore, existence is unsacrificeable. Being refers to nothing other than the being-thrown of existence. The essence of being lies in its existence, which means that *Ereignis*, the event of existence, is all there is. The implication for humanism lies in the critique of sacrificial worldviewing, which is aimed at signification via a representation of the subject and the world *by* the subject. This signification will always fall short since the world can't be appropriated into meaning. Nancy's notion of the unsacrificeable therefore affirms that finitude can't be appropriated, evaluated, or sublated into a higher meaning or towards a higher end. It neither can be sublated into a higher meaning (such as worldviewing).

I then thought these implications through. After explaining my difficulties with Nancy's notion of principality and his use of the word offer I argued for a phenomenological necessity of sacrificial worldviewing. Sacrificial worldviewing is a performatively necessary attempt to create self-sustaining meaning in a meaningless world. I don't think humans can escape this appropriation of the self, sacrificial worldviewing is what man does with the capabilities he has and the experience he is in.

I then sought an alternative humanistic approach to worldviewing which would also help in better understanding Nancy's project of thinking at a distance from sacrifice. I did this in five steps. Firstly, following Heidegger in that the essence of man lies in its existence I argued that we should focus on the truth of being, not on the human subject. Secondly, the alternative should attempt to view from a primary space which is the

space of the truth of being where Nancy's sense also takes place. This means that this alternative is an experiential embodied practice and, with Heidegger, it can rightly be called a humanism that tries to think this proximity to being. Since the alternative is experiential, with meaning being discovered or received via our bodily senses, and since it goes beyond a subject-object relationship it can be called 'phenomenological'. Thirdly, via van Bergen's extended model of worldviewing I argue that a phenomenological alternative that follows a Heideggerian humanism that 'descends' in the service of being and that follows Nancy's thought on sense should envision worldviewing as taking place on the level of experience. This means that it is pre-conceptual, that the world is allowed to remain open and that it is better to speak of 'worldflowing' in which the aim is for man to let his actions flow from the experience of being itself. Fourthly, the alternative thus far already follows Heidegger's humanism and can be called humanistic because the human agent is still important, but I also argue that it is humanistic because it can be placed under the banner of a spiritual humanism that aims at horizontal transcendence, which refers to an experience of wonder via an embodied interaction with the world. Embodiment is so in the centre of meaning-making and phenomenological worldflowing. Nancy's antihumanist thinking seems mostly applicable to sacrificial worldviewing, but not to phenomenological worldflowing, so the latter must be more primary than the former. Fifthly and finally, via arguing that both approaches to 'worldviewing' deal with another kind of meaning I claim that in one way, sacrificial worldviewing is the dynamic between these two kinds of meaning, engaged by an experienced incoherence in phenomenological worldflowing, but that in another way, countering this tendency to sacrificial worldviewing and shifting to more phenomenological worldflowing would perhaps help in thinking at a distance from sacrifice. It would stress that meaning or sense is not only made or given but also received. Phenomenological worldflowing thus has its own value and should perhaps exist primary to sacrificial worldviewing. I so partly follow Nancy in acknowledging the limits of the traditional humanist sacrificial worldviewing and pleading for a spiritual humanist phenomenological worldflowing that is attentive to the circulation of sense.

4 CONCLUSION

This thesis answers the research question: 'What is the implication of Jean-Luc Nancy's critical analysis of the transformation of sacrifice for a humanistic concept of worldviewing?'

In the first chapter, I described the transformation of pre-axial sacrifice via Nancy's 'The Unsacrificeable' by tracing the five elements of sacrifice that I called 'the actor', 'effectivity', 'the outside', 'negativity', and 'visibility'. I concluded that new sacrifice is an ontotheological appropriation of the self by means of transgression, a process by which the subject infinitely loses itself to better come back to itself in a mimed passage through negativity. In the second chapter I related this new sacrifice to the practice of worldviewing. I so sketched an image of sacrificial worldviewing in which sacrifice was the performative structure of this traditional humanist practice by which the subject as rational meaning-maker finds its truth and so affirms self-presence in the world. In the third chapter I described the implications of Nancy's criticism of sacrifice for humanism. Next to sacrificial worldviewing having a phenomenological necessity, I develop another approach that is spiritual humanist and that I call phenomenological worldflowing. I argue that the latter is more in line with Nancy's thinking at a distance from sacrifice, yet can also be called humanistic and should be more primary than sacrificial worldviewing.

This thesis so reached three goals: Firstly, it describes a crucial part of Nancy's 'The Unsacrificeable' in more detail and context than I could find in the current literature. Secondly, it relates this to the humanist practice of worldviewing and so highlights the sacrificial performative structure underneath it. The benefit of this lies in a better understanding of the process of worldviewing, its inherent loss and pain, its effective continuity, and its religious roots. Thirdly, it delineated a humanist perspective based on Nancy's criticism. The alternative way of understanding worldviewing as phenomenological worldflowing, from a spiritual humanist perspective, and the argument for its primacy could perhaps convince other humanists to shift the discourse of their everyday experience and reflection to a more phenomenological experiential way of being-with in the world.

With its focus on only a small part of Nancy's text, there are some shortcomings of this

thesis, and I here want to mention a few topics and questions that I left unaddressed due to the scope of this research and my understanding of them. These topics can be addressed in further research.

Firstly, the role of the sacred in sacrifice is hardly discussed. It is simplified and reduced to 'the outside' or the transcendent to better understand Nancy's general description and criticism of sacrifice but these are quite different concepts. More research would thus sharper define the sacred and trace it at least from Bataille's thought onwards and see its relation to sacrifice. Secondly, I left the question of community outside of this thesis, even though this very much touches Nancy's writings on sacrifice. This also resulted in quite an individualist notion of sacrificial worldviewing. More research would thus bring this question into play and ask how worldviewing translates to the workings (or inoperativity) of community. Thirdly, next to the sacred, the role of the transcendent is also not much discussed, as well as the transcendent in the humanist project. I am curious about the (spiritual) humanist concept of transcendence concerning Nancy's 'transimmanence'. As I hinted at in a short remark, an entry point for such research could lie in a comparison with Spinoza's philosophy. Fourthly, with my description of sacrificial worldviewing, and in its distinction with phenomenological worldflowing, I speculated on their function for the subject to be recognized. As such, this thesis also touches upon theories of recognition, and it would thus be interesting to see if my speculation could be thought through. Fifthly, the two approaches to worldviewing can also be seen as two methods or techniques of pastoral care; sacrificial worldviewing follows a hierarchical Socratic dialogue and phenomenological worldflowing is done via exploring and connecting with the lived experience. Further research would investigate the claims I make concerning the two approaches in the field itself. Sixth, I have only described sacrificial worldviewing as performatively or formally humanistic, further research would investigate whether its content can be called humanistic, such as whether it resembles humanist values of human dignity and freedom. Seventh, in arguing for the primacy of phenomenological worldflowing I risk throwing away a lot of humanist values and as such its normative and critical character. Further research would investigate how this primacy would not 'throw the baby away with the bathwater'. Eighth, and finally, the enormous question that haunts the humanist project, 'can humanism escape the process of the decomposition of western metaphysics brought

about by Christianity?' is only touched upon with this thesis. Nancy, in other works, provides some alternatives but it remains to be seen what metaphysics and ontology this will eventually entail. With this thesis, I hope to have provided a small contribution to this project.

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