

International Conference

3 – 4 May
2013

In English and German



The financial crisis is both a crisis of confidence and of future. Public debts have exhausted the future of entire generations. In this situation, optimism appears deceptive, even “cruel” (Lauren Berlant). A new “no future” generation has become visible, one which feels deprived by others of its own future. In turn, by rejecting any attempt to formulate alternatives for a better future, new forms of social protest reply with a non-dialectical, general, undetermined, radical no!

Against this background, anarchism and the notion of nihilism not only appear renewed and increasingly present, but also the importance of related concepts like nothingness, split, void, emptiness, fracture, interruption, death drive etc. in contemporary theory have become more visible in queer studies (Lee Edelman) as well as in political theory (Roberto Esposito), and philosophy (Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, Ray Brassier).

The ICI conference The Fracture of Nothing. “On the Return of Nihilism” is interested in nihilism and related notions. While the previous Van Leer conference “The Concept of Nihilism and the Limits of Political Critique,” (which took place in Jerusalem in June 2012), focused more on political questions, the ICI conference invites scholars and artists from different contexts to discuss the notions of nothingness and nihilism in the fields of literature, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, and to explore their specific instability and ambiguity. Possible questions include:

In what sense can nihilism and the notion of nothingness be conceived as productive and positive? How are anarchic forms of political activism and radical opposition related to nihilism? Is nihilism related to a specific cultural and religious tradition or can one distinguish different nihilisms?

With

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The Fracture of Nothing

On the Return of Nihilism

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