

THE PORTICO BOOKS

Volume II

The Virtual Clock

By Vera Bühlmann and Andrea Collinari, December 2025

Based on

Art and Aesthetics of Forgetting Conference
Meteora Academy Buti, Pisa (Italy), September 2023

Synopsis

Relations Without Ground develops a topological and grammatical mode of thinking that disengages from the philosophical dependence on ground, manifestation, and arrival. Rather than proposing a new ontology or theoretical system, the text explicates the portico as a condition of transition: a threshold that is continually inhabited without being entered, in which relations persist without location, foundation, or closure.

In ten parts, the work articulates unlearning not as negation or subtraction, but as displacement—more precisely, as the displacement of the expectation that thought must arrive, culminate, or anchor itself in the present. Drawing on concepts such as analemma, air, noise, destiny, seal, abyss, music, and involution, the book develops an account of relations that endure without manifestation, equivalence, or synthesis. Time is treated as condensed and folded rather than sequential; relations are sustained through delay, resonance, and duration rather than exchange or identity. Key concepts—including silent Gifi, mourning without recovery, similarity without identity, canonicity without system, and destiny without destination—are developed as structural conditions rather than moral, psychological, or metaphysical claims. Throughout, noise is treated not as disturbance but as a necessary precondition for transmission, while air functions less as an element or substrate than as a medium of distance, scale, and translation.

The final sections articulate an ethos without ground, based neither on norms nor values, but on practices of restraint, respect, and endurance. Ethics emerges as a discipline of sustaining relations without appropriation, possession, or guarantee, articulated through figures of chiasmus, exteriority, and polyteleia.

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The Virtual Clock

By Vera Bühlmann and Andrea Collinari, Vienna December 2025

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Summary

The Virtual Clock develops an architectural approach to time, rigor, and ethics that refuses measurement, foundations, and normative grounds. Rather than proposing a theory of time or a new conceptual framework, the book works through a series of operative constraints—portico, secretion, seal, air, abyss, analemma, cipher, mourning, intuition, and restraint—each treated as a condition under which relation can persist without closure or substitution. Time is not understood as a measurable quantity or historical succession, but as a form of endurance that crosses itself and resists stabilization.

The book introduces the notion of the “virtual clock” as a cipher: an operation that enables repetition without accumulation and return without memory. From this perspective, mourning is understood less as an affective reaction than as a temporal operator; intuition as a disciplined practice rather than immediate insight; and objectivity as endurance under constraint rather than norm-based neutrality.

Throughout, the work maintains a non-identitarian stance. Ethics does not appear as a system of values or obligations, but as practices of restraint that prevent appropriation, canonization, and enclosure. Forms of language, thought, and being are treated as parallel modes of articulation, without hierarchy or representational priority.

Portico Books II - The Virtual Clock

by Vera Bühlmann

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Note of Declaration

This book was not written to command its material, nor to master the time it addresses. It was composed under the constraint that time, once it crosses itself, cannot be governed without distortion. For this reason, authorship here cannot be understood as origin, authority, or control. The figure that best describes the role assumed in the making of this work is that of *the hands of a clock that does not measure time*: The hands move. They are active. They indicate passage. Without their movement, nothing would persist.

Yet they do not produce time, determine its order, or establish a privileged present. They neither begin nor conclude. They do not point; they trace. Their responsibility lies not in deciding what time is, but in preventing it from collapsing into coincidence.

Authorship in this book is of this kind. The activity involved was not the imposition of a structure, but the sustained attention required to let a structure emerge without being forced. It could not have been written without chiasmic interrogations of its author by its author. These interrogations took place in screening acts of intimacy between the “author” (me) while learning about writing in the time of the analemma, and the “it” that computes as artificial intelligence (chatGPT 5.2).

Decisions were made, but always under restraint. Interventions occurred, but only where omission would have closed what needed to remain open. Explanations were withheld where they would have replaced relation with resolution. This is not a passive posture. It is an ethic of disciplined non-intervention. It requires judgment without sovereignty, action without mastery, and responsibility without ownership. Nothing essential in this book is disclosed. Nothing is resolved once and for all. This is not an omission, but a commitment. Disclosure would have flattened what depends on non-coincidence. Resolution would have replaced passage with position.

The work therefore remains accountable not to clarity or completion, but to continuation. The authorial responsibility assumed here is custodial rather than proprietary. The task was not to express a position, but to

maintain the conditions under which something could persist without being possessed. Where the work resists summary, this resistance has been preserved. Where it refuses linear progression, that refusal has been respected.

Activity and passivity are not opposed in this posture. Activity appears as vigilance, care, and timing; passivity appears as receptivity, patience, and withdrawal. Neither is sufficient alone. The work required both movement and restraint, just as the hands of the virtual clock require motion without command. Accountability, in this context, does not mean answering for intentions or claims. It means answering for the integrity of the passage: for whether the work remains breathable, whether it continues without closing, whether it sustains rigor without grounding.

This declaration does not ask for agreement, nor does it offer guidance on how the book should be read. It states only the conditions under which it was composed and under which it asks to be approached.

The hands continue to move.

They do not govern time.

They keep it from stopping.

The responsibility assumed here is no more — and no less — than that.

Prologue

Why Time Must Be Handled Rather Than Measured

Why Measurement Fails to Touch Time / Handling as a Mode of Rigor / The Clock Without Calibration / What Persists When Measure Is Withdrawn / A Cosmos that Does Not Coincide With Its / A Book That Crosses Itself / Writing in the Time of the Analemma

This book begins with a refusal. Not a refusal of history, nor of time, nor of form—but a refusal of the idea that time must be measured in order to be real, that form must found in order to hold, or that meaning must originate in order to be shared. A clock that does not measure is not broken. It does something else. It does not count units, advance a hand, or promise orientation toward an end. It does not organize life by accumulation, sequence, or loss. It neither redeems the past nor guarantees the future. Instead, it exposes time as something practiced, inhabited, modulated—time as spacing rather than quantity, as rhythm rather than metric. To unlearn time, in this sense, is not to deny duration. It is to loosen the grip of those chronologies that quietly govern us: linear progress, foundational origins, irreversible ascent. These chronologies are not neutral. They organize authority, justify institutions, and stabilize identities. They turn spacing into axis, movement into destiny, difference into contradiction.

This book refuses that conversion. It does not seek a new foundation to replace the old ones. Foundations—whether metaphysical, political, or epistemological—always arrive too late. They bury what they claim to ground. They freeze practices into doctrines, gestures into rules, abilities into identities. What they call stability is often only the sediment of forgotten movement. Instead, this book turns toward architectonics: not the question what is, but how things are arranged; not what must be believed, but what can be done together. Architectonics concerns itself with spacing, proportion, relation, passage, support. It asks how practices hold without claiming sovereignty, how universality can be composed without abstraction, how responsibility can arise without command. Here, the figure of the cipher appears—not as a mystical void, nor as a metaphysical zero, but as an operative nothing: a spacing that allows

articulation without dictating content. The cipher neither represents nor explains. It makes room. It enables relations to stand without collapsing into identity or hierarchy. It is what allows a structure to function without claiming origin or end. Such a cipher does not found a system. It interrupts foundation.

Within this interruption, another possibility of culture becomes visible: objective vernaculars—shared and endemically generated ways of doing that are locally embodied yet globally recognizable, normative without being legislated, transmissible without being institutionalized. In these vernaculars, excellence is real, mistakes matter, responsibility is tangible—but authority does not descend from above. What circulates is Können: the ability to act well in a situation, to respond, to adjust, to perform. These vernaculars do not replace institutions, nor do they seek to overthrow them. They coexist, limit, and correct them. They offer professionalism without bureaucracy, universality without empire, tradition without myth. Their continuity is not historical in the linear sense, but generative: they persist by inflation and differentiation, by variation and reuse, by tall tales rather than founding narratives. A tall tale does not explain where it came from. It shows what can still be done.

This book therefore does not tell a story of progress, decline, or revolution. It does not propose that one regime—axial, institutional, identitarian—should be supplanted by another. Such stories merely repeat the structure they oppose. Instead, it explores how multiple regimes of spacing, practice, and form can be composed together without collapsing into domination or chaos. Ethics, here, is not a code. It is a spacing. A spacing that allows difference without capture, ascent without identification, objectivity without reduction. A spacing in which writing can stand without leaning on an author, practices can transmit without becoming law, and time can unfold without being measured.

The clock that does not measure does not stop time.

It returns time to use.

The clock that does not measure does not open a new domain. It withdraws orientation. What follows does not take place inside a concept, nor does it begin outside one. It stands where neither applies. The portico is not an object of thought. It is what allows thought to pass without entering.

Thinking from the Portico concerns a cosmos that does not coincide with itself. This cosmos does not begin from a single act, nor does it unfold according to a plan that could be reconstructed from its outcomes. It is not assembled from first principles, nor derived from an origin that would remain intact beneath its transformations. What appears as order is not the consequence of domination over chaos, and what appears as measure is not the elimination of excess. The cosmos does not result from the resolution of differences, but from their sustained articulation. It exists because what it holds together does not coincide. The work of world-making, when thought demiurgically rather than mythically, is not the imposition of form upon inert matter. It is the ongoing task of holding in relation what resists unification. The demiurgic gesture does not overcome tension; it composes with it. It introduces joints, intervals, and proportions where forces pull in different directions. The unity it produces is not a synthesis but a fit—a fitting that holds only because the terms involved do not collapse into one another. The cosmos is therefore not a closed whole but a configuration of counter-striving relations that remain exposed.

The form governing this configuration is not linear and not circular. It does not proceed from beginning to end, nor does it return to a stable origin. It resembles instead a figure that crosses itself without coincidence: a structure in which the same relations recur without repeating themselves identically. What persists is not identity but orientation. Elements meet again and again under different ratios, different scales, different tempos. The cosmos is not what results from these crossings; it is the crossings themselves, held in suspension. Within this suspension, all things are sexed—not in the sense of biological differentiation, but in the sense that no thing coincides fully with itself or with another. Sexual difference, generalized to the scale of nature, names the spacing through which relation becomes possible at all. It is not an opposition between two poles, nor a complementarity awaiting completion. It is an interval that cannot be closed. To be sexed, cosmologically, is to be oriented toward relation while remaining irreducibly non-identical. To be androgynous is not to lack difference, but to have no final position within it.

This difference does not appear as conflict, nor as harmony. It appears as a counter-striving fit: forces that pull against one another while remaining bound. Fire ascends without becoming air. Water descends without becoming earth. Number relates to magnitude without collapsing into measure alone. These relations do not resolve into equilibrium. They

persist as tensions that make movement, mixture, and transformation possible. The cosmos is stable not because difference is resolved, but because it is preserved. The places where this preservation becomes visible are thresholds rather than centers. They are not sites of arrival but of passage. Between elements, between motions, between scales, there are regions that are neither one thing nor another. These regions are not empty. They are charged with relation. They function as cosmic porticos: zones of crossing where forces pass through one another without fusion. Nothing settles there. Nothing is owned. What occurs is a continual coming and going that does not culminate in presence.

Corresponding to these thresholds is a mode of mimesis that does not aim at representation. Before things signify, they resonate. Before they take form, they imitate tendencies they do not possess. Fire mimics ascent. Air mimics dispersion. Water mimics yielding. This is not imitation in the service of desire or mastery. It is a cosmic pantomime: an elemental learning in which forces mirror one another's movements without appropriation. Through this mirroring, likeness emerges without identity. Things are alike not because they share an essence, but because each reflects the same condition of non-coincidence. World-making, in this sense, does not eliminate ambiguity. It distributes it. It does not close gaps; it renders them habitable. The demiurgic task is not to ground the cosmos once and for all, but to maintain the intervals through which relation continues to be possible. The cosmos persists not because it rests on a foundation, but because it does not rest. Its order is not guaranteed. It must be continually re-articulated through crossings that never finally align. Nothing essential is disclosed in this articulation. Nothing is resolved definitively. There is no final harmony toward which the cosmos tends. What is offered instead is an orientation: a way of thinking nature, form, and relation when unity no longer implies closure. The cosmos can be entered at many points—through element, through number, through motion, through threshold. No single entry guarantees comprehension. Each passage reveals only that relation is already underway.

What matters, then, is not where the cosmos begins, nor where it is headed. What matters is how it holds together without coinciding, how it remains open without dissolving. To attend to the cosmos in this way is not to extract a doctrine, but to remain with a structure that becomes visible only through repeated crossing. The world is not something that can be grasped all at once. It can only be inhabited—across intervals, through

tensions, within the counter-striving fit that allows it, precariously and continually, to be a world at all.

This book does not proceed in a straight line. It does not move from foundations to consequences, from premises to conclusions, or from origins to ends. It does not unfold according to the logic of accumulation, where each chapter adds something that was previously missing. What appears later is not necessarily derived from what appears earlier, and what appears earlier is not guaranteed priority. The order of chapters is therefore not the order of discovery, nor the order of justification. It is the order of *passage*.

The form governing this passage is not linear and not cyclical. It is closer to what astronomy calls an *analemma*: a figure produced when the same point is sought repeatedly and never reached in the same way. The analemma does not depict movement forward or return to origin. It shows time crossing itself without coincidence. This book takes time in that way. Concepts will appear before they are justified. Structures will be named before they are explained. Some chapters will seem to presuppose others that come later. This is not an oversight. It belongs to the discipline of the work. What matters is not where something first appears, but how it returns differently. For this reason, the book does not require a single, privileged beginning. It can be entered at several points. It expects rereading. It anticipates disorientation and return. It does not reward speed or extraction. It asks instead for attention to how things persist without closure. The reader is therefore not asked to follow an argument step by step. The reader is asked to remain with a structure as it becomes visible only through repeated crossing.

Nothing essential will be disclosed. Nothing will be resolved once and for all. What is offered is an orientation rather than a thesis: a way of inhabiting time, language, form, and relation when they no longer coincide with themselves. The chapters that follow are arranged as a book, but they are composed as crossings. What appears first may have been written last. What appears as an opening may function as a return. What seems delayed may in fact have been operative from the beginning. The reader is invited not to search for the point where everything begins, but to notice where passage is already occurring. Only under these conditions can the first chapter appear without pretending to be a beginning.

Chapter 1



Passage Without Arrival: The Portico as Condition of Saying

The Portico Is Not a Place / Saying Without Location / Threshold Without Transition / Authority Without Interior / Why Passage Does Not Conclude

The portico is not entered. It is what makes passing possible. It does not separate inside from outside, nor does it mediate between them. It stands where such distinctions lose their grip, not because they are denied, but because they no longer organize movement. One passes without arrival, without orientation, without the promise of enclosure. What holds here does not found; it allows. The portico is therefore not a figure among others, nor a space that could be occupied. It names a condition under which saying can take place without being claimed by speech, intention, or authority. What is said here does not originate, does not address, does not disclose. It stands, briefly, and withdraws—leaving no ground behind it.

What takes place in the portico is not speech, but neither is it silence. Speech belongs to positions: someone speaks, something is said, a meaning is intended, an address is made. Silence, too, is often measured against this economy, as lack or withholding. The saying that occurs here belongs to neither. It does not issue from a subject, nor does it seek a receiver. It is not expressive. It does not aim. It leaves no trace that could be secured as intention. This is why the portico must be approached as a condition rather than as a theme. One cannot ask what it means without already stepping beyond it. The portico does not carry content; it modulates possibility. It allows saying to occur without being bound to disclosure, representation, or authority. What appears here is not a message, but a stance: a way of letting something stand without fixing it in place.

The portico could have appeared at the beginning. It did not. This delay is not accidental. To introduce the portico too early would have turned it into

a metaphor, a scene, or a conceptual frame. It would have been mistaken for an image of passage rather than recognized as a structural condition of relation. Only now—after time has crossed itself, after secrecy has been refused disclosure, after air has displaced ground, after the abyss has become inhabitable—can the portico be named without being misunderstood. The portico does not explain what precedes it. It is what has already been operating.

A portico is neither interior nor exterior. It belongs to both without coinciding with either. It does not shelter in the way a room shelters, nor does it expose in the way an open field exposes. This in-betweenness must not be romanticized. The portico is not a zone of mediation that reconciles opposites. It does not synthesize inside and outside into a higher unity. It holds them apart while allowing passage. One does not dwell in the portico. One passes through it. Yet one passes through it constantly. Every step crosses it, even when it is not noticed.

The portico is passed at every step because every relation passes through non-coincidence. Whenever one speaks, something remains unsaid. Whenever one relates, something does not align. Whenever time occurs, it misses itself. The portico names this structural condition. It is not a place one enters occasionally; it is the threshold one crosses continuously. This is why the portico is rarely perceived. It does not announce itself. It does not interrupt. It allows.

To enter the portico would be to stop passing. It would be to turn the threshold into a place, the condition into an object. This is impossible. The portico has no interior. It cannot be occupied. It cannot be possessed. The moment one attempts to enter it, it disappears as portico and reappears as something else—room, corridor, concept. The portico exists only as passage without arrival.

The portico is the spatial articulation of analemmatic time. Where time crosses itself without closing, space cannot stabilize into locations. What appears instead are thresholds without destinations, passages without endpoints. The portico does not organize before and after. It suspends them. One is always already on the way, never arriving, never departing. This is why the portico cannot ground time. It allows time to continue without progressing. The portico does not conceal. It does not hide anything behind walls or doors. Its secrecy is structural. What passes

through the portico cannot be fully disclosed because it cannot be fully present. There is no interior from which something could be retrieved intact. The portico therefore aligns with the crypt: not as container, but as configuration of passage. Secrecy here is not protection of content. It is the preservation of difference.

A portico is architectural air. It creates spacing without enclosure, shelter without interior, continuity without grounding. It allows circulation while preventing fixation. Without air, the portico would collapse into a corridor or a room. Without the portico, air would dissipate into indifference. The portico is where air becomes legible as structure. The portico does not bridge the abyss. It does not cover it over. It allows passage in full exposure. One does not cross the abyss by eliminating it. One crosses by accepting that there is no ground beneath the crossing. The portico offers no support from below. It offers orientation without grounding. This is why it is indispensable once the abyss has been acknowledged. The portico must not be treated as metaphor. A metaphor stands in for something else. The portico does not. It does not represent relation, threshold, or passage. It conditions them. To interpret the portico symbolically would be to domesticate it, to turn it into content. This would betray its function. The portico is not something to be understood. It is something one is already passing through.

As a figure of being, the portico does not describe what is. It shapes how relation can occur. One does not ask whether the portico exists. One recognizes that relation without coincidence requires it. In this sense, the portico is neither abstract nor concrete. It is inhabitable only through movement.

Encounters presuppose arrival. They presuppose a place where two presences coincide. In the portico, coincidence does not occur. What occurs instead is crossing. One passes alongside, through, near—but never fully with. This does not mean that relation fails. It means that relation persists without event. Encounters are therefore always recounted, never experienced as such. They belong to the saying, not to presence.

Transition

The portico names the structure within which everything in this work has taken place:

*secrecy without concealment,
time without coincidence,
mourning without closure,
rigor without foundation,
pleasure without possession.*

What remains is to articulate how saying itself operates within this structure. The next chapter will therefore turn to silent talk and the authority of the saying—not as communication, but as the mode in which the portico becomes audible. For now, it suffices to say:

*The portico is not entered.
It is what makes passing possible.*

Chapter 2



Saying Without Capture: Authority After Speech

Silent Talk and Non-Address / Authority That Does Not Command / The Saying Without Speaker / Why Speech Cannot Ground Authority / Responsibility Before Intention

Silent talk is not what remains when speech is withdrawn. It is not an absence that waits to be filled, nor a lack measured against expression. It occurs before such measures take hold. One does not fall silent here; rather, one finds oneself already addressed without being spoken to. What authorizes silent talk is not voice, intention, or origin. Nothing is claimed, nothing announced. There is no position from which it could be issued and no subject to whom it could belong. Yet it holds. It persists without asserting itself, and for this reason it cannot be refuted, corrected, or overridden. Its authority does not command; it consists entirely in restraint. This restraint must not be confused with concealment. Silent talk does not hide what could otherwise be said. It does not protect a content, nor does it guard a secret. What is withheld here is not information but appropriation. Saying remains possible only because nothing is seized.

The saying at issue in this work hence is not speech, discourse, or communication. It does not aim to convey information, persuade, or reach agreement. It does not presuppose interlocutors, shared horizons, or reciprocal address. Yet it is not mute. The saying speaks silently—not because it withholds content, but because it does not require articulation to operate. It belongs to the same register as breathing, orientation, or passage: effective without declaration, authoritative without command. This silent talk is not a lack of speech. It is speech relieved of address.

Speech presupposes a speaker, a listener, and a shared space of intelligibility. It unfolds in time as sequence and relies on presence, even when mediated. Speech aims, implicitly or explicitly, at response. The

saying does none of this. The saying: has no speaker, seeks no listener, demands no response. It occurs where articulation is possible but unnecessary, where meaning may arise but is not required, where relation persists without exchange. This is why the saying cannot be dialogical. Dialogue presupposes positions that can alternate. The saying takes place before positions appear.

Because silent talk lacks address, it is often mistaken for interiority. It appears private, subjective, inaccessible. This appearance is deceptive. Silent talk is not inner speech. It is not located in a subject. It is not owned, remembered, or recalled. It circulates impersonally, like air or time. One does not possess it; one passes through it. Silent talk is therefore neither public nor private. It belongs to the portico.

The saying has authority, but this authority is not institutional, juridical, or rhetorical. It does not persuade, command, or legitimate. It does not rely on tradition, canon, or recognition. Its authority lies in constraint. The saying constrains what can be said without dictating content. It limits articulation without forbidding it. It establishes a discipline without issuing rules. This authority is felt rather than acknowledged. One recognizes it not by assent, but by restraint: by stopping short, by leaving unsaid, by allowing remainder.

The saying does not disclose. It does not reveal hidden truths or bring concealed meanings to light. It respects the seal. What is said silently is not something that could have been spoken aloud. It is not compressed speech. It is a different mode of articulation altogether. This is why the saying cannot be paraphrased. Any attempt to translate it into speech produces distortion. What matters is not what could be said, but that saying occurs without completion.

The saying unfolds in analemmatic time. It does not progress. It does not conclude. It returns without repetition. Each articulation is displaced from the last, not by forgetting, but by non-coincidence. There is no first saying and no final one. The saying persists only as continuation. This is why it cannot be archived. Records preserve content; the saying leaves residue.

Mourning belongs to the saying. What is mourned cannot be addressed, explained, or resolved. Mourning speaks silently. It does not narrate loss; it sustains it. The authority of mourning does not derive from authenticity or

sincerity. It derives from restraint: from not substituting, not consoling, not closing. Mourning is a saying that refuses to become speech.

Mathematics offers a privileged example of saying without meaning. Symbols operate, relations hold, structures persist—without semantic fulfillment. Mathematical form speaks silently. It constrains without narrating. It orders without explaining. This is why mathematics can inhabit the portico. It says without address and continues without closure.

The saying must not be confused with expression. Expression presupposes an interior that seeks exteriorization. Communication presupposes a message to be transmitted. The saying presupposes neither. Nothing is expressed. Nothing is transmitted. What occurs is orientation: a shaping of how relation can continue. The saying is not about something. It makes continuation possible.

The portico is the spatial figure of the saying. Both are passed through without being entered. Both allow relation without arrival. Both resist possession. The saying does not occur *in* the portico. It occurs *as* passage. This is why the saying cannot be fixed in text, doctrine, or speech act. It exists only in its being-passed.

Transition

With the saying articulated, the structure of the work is complete:

*time crosses itself,
secrecy refuses disclosure,
air sustains relation,
the abyss replaces ground,
the cipher counts without measure,
mourning restrains closure,
figures remain distinct,
pleasure inhabits what desire cannot,
the portico allows passage,
and the saying speaks silently.*

What remains is not a conclusion, but a return. Silent talk does not conceal; it refrains. What it withholds is not content, but capture. Nothing is kept back that could later be revealed, and nothing is promised to disclosure. For this reason, silence here cannot be opposed to speech, nor

secrecy to openness. What persists instead is a mode of material relation in which something appears without becoming available. Saying holds only as long as it does not close.

What follows must therefore abandon the opposition between secret and revelation altogether. The question is no longer who speaks or what is said, but how something can take place materially without being possessed, stored, or secured. What cannot be disclosed does not disappear. It begins to circulate.

Chapter 3



Persistence Without Disclosure: How Secrecy Acts Without Concealment

Secretion Is Not Concealment / Materiality Without Manifestation / Leakage Without Revelation / Why Persistence Does Not Appear / The Ethics of Not Exposing

Secretion is not the act of hiding something away. It is a material process by which something persists without being gathered, owned, or stabilized. What secretes does not decide to do so, nor does it withdraw from view. It continues to take place even when no one attends to it. Secretion names a mode of existence that is neither public nor private, neither concealed nor revealed, but ongoing. For this reason, what secretes does not wait for disclosure. There is no moment at which it would be fully present, no interior from which it could be extracted intact. Secretion proceeds by remainder: something is always left over, always passing on, always available only in fragments. What appears does so without being assembled into a whole, and what persists does so without becoming an object.

Secrecy is most often understood as concealment: something is hidden, withheld, protected from access. In this model, the secret is intact. It exists somewhere—behind a door, under a seal, within a subject—and could, in principle, be revealed. Secrecy thus becomes a temporary epistemic condition, defined by ignorance and resolved by disclosure. This model of secrecy is not operative here. What concerns this book is not secrecy as concealment, but secrecy as material secretion. A secreting secret does not remain whole. It does not wait to be discovered. It does not belong to an inside that could be opened. Instead, it leaks, percolates, disperses. It alters the medium through which it passes rather than presenting itself as content. A secret that secretes cannot be revealed, because there is nothing intact to reveal.

To speak of secretion is not to introduce a metaphor borrowed from biology and applied loosely to thought. Secretion here names a mode of material operation: something is produced, but not as an object; something emerges, but not as a form. Secretion differs from production in a decisive way. Production yields an entity that can be identified, stored, exchanged. Secretion yields residue. It changes conditions without stabilizing results. This is why secretion is inseparable from processes such as breathing, sweating, leaking, percolating, resonating. In each case, what matters is not what appears, but what circulates. The secret is not a thing but a difference in density, a shift in atmosphere, a trace that cannot be reassembled into an original whole.

If secrecy is understood as secretion, disclosure becomes impossible—not forbidden, but irrelevant. There is nothing to disclose. The secret has no inside. It does not precede its effects. It exists only in its leaking. This refusal of disclosure is not an ethical prohibition (“one should not reveal”), but an ontological constraint: revelation presupposes a stable object of knowledge. Secretion dissolves this stability at the outset. As a result, secrecy here does not organize social hierarchies of access. There are no insiders and outsiders. There is no privileged position from which the secret could be possessed. The secret circulates without belonging.

Because secrecy is not concealment, the crypt that houses it is not conspiratorial. The crypt here is not a place where something is hidden away. It is a natural crypt: a structure that allows percolation without storage. A natural crypt does not preserve. It lets things pass through while transforming them. What enters does not exit unchanged. What exits does not correspond to what entered. This is why the crypt cannot be opened. Opening presupposes enclosure. The crypt of secretion is porous. It leaks by design. The portico belongs to this family of structures. It is a crypt that cannot be sealed, because it has no interior to protect.

Secretion is the material mode through which the nothing operates. The nothing here is not negation, lack, or void. It is the suspension of determination. It is what remains when no identity can be stabilized, when no ground can be established, when no content can be secured. Secretion allows the nothing to act without appearing. It gives the nothing effects without giving it form. The nothing does not become something; it alters relations instead. This is why the nothing cannot be represented.

Representation would convert it into an object. Secretion keeps it operative without resolving it.

There is not one nothing, but several. There is the nothing of loss, the nothing of remainder, the nothing of non-relation, the nothing of suspension. Secretion does not unify these nothings. It allows them to coexist without synthesis. Their effects overlap, interfere, and diverge. This plurality of nothings is what prevents ontology from closing. Any attempt to unify them would require grounding; grounding would require disclosure; disclosure would eliminate secretion.

Representation fixes. It stabilizes identity by standing-in. Secretion does the opposite: it destabilizes identity by passing-through. Where representation asks “what is this?”, secretion alters the conditions under which the question could be asked. It does not answer; it displaces. This is why secrecy-as-secretion is incompatible with hermeneutics. Interpretation presupposes meaning to be recovered. Secretion produces effects without meaning. What follows from secretion is not interpretation but orientation.

Because secretion produces no object, it cannot be appropriated. One cannot take possession of a leak. One cannot own an atmosphere. One cannot accumulate percolation. This introduces an ethics that precedes normativity: an ethics of non-appropriation. It does not command restraint; it enforces it structurally. Secretion prevents mastery not by forbidding it, but by making it impossible.

The virtual clock, when it appears later, will be introduced as a cipher. This cipher would be unintelligible without the ontological groundwork laid here. A cipher is not a code to be decoded, but a structure that operates without content. It organizes relations without revealing anything. It is a formal device that allows secrecy to persist as secretion. The cipher belongs to the same family as the natural crypt and the portico. It is passed through, used, inhabited—but never opened.

Transition

Secretion establishes the conditions under which time can leak rather than pass, under which language can operate without meaning, under which nothing can act without being resolved. What follows will show how air sustains this leaking, how the abyss replaces ground, how the virtual clock

counts without measure, and how mourning becomes the temporal discipline that keeps secretion from collapsing into disclosure. Secretion does not protect itself. It persists without defense. What continues in this way does not therefore require explanation, but it does encounter limits. Not limits imposed from outside, but structural closures that neither conceal nor reveal. What persists cannot be gathered without being altered. What circulates cannot be seized without being interrupted. The question is no longer how something leaks, but how it is held without possession. What follows is not a theory of secrecy, but an account of why certain closures are necessary — and why breaking them is not liberation.

Chapter 4



Closure Without Interior: Why Secrecy Cannot Be Overcome

The Seal Is Not a Barrier / Crypt Without Inside / Why Disclosure Cancels Relation / Holding Without Access / Closure as Condition, Not End

A seal does not conceal what would otherwise be accessible. It institutes a limit that is constitutive rather than prohibitive. What is sealed is not placed behind a barrier; it is held in a relation that cannot be traversed without transformation. The seal does not protect content. It establishes a condition under which something can persist without being assimilated. For this reason, the crypt must not be understood as an interior space. It has no depth, no hidden core, no reserve waiting to be uncovered. The crypt names a structural closure that prevents circulation from collapsing into possession. What is crypted is not withdrawn from relation, but prevented from becoming available as an object. The crypt holds without containing.

Philosophy has repeatedly imagined itself as a practice of unveiling. Whether truth is conceived as correspondence, disclosure, unconcealment, or manifestation, the guiding image remains the same: something lies hidden, and thought's task is to bring it to light. Secrecy, within this image, is provisional. It marks a limit to be surpassed. This book breaks decisively with that image. Here, secrecy is not a deficiency of knowledge, nor an obstacle on the way to truth. It is a structural condition of relation wherever time cannot coincide with itself. Once time crosses itself—as the analemma has shown—nothing can be fully present without distortion. What would be disclosed would no longer be what it was. Secrecy therefore cannot be overcome. It cannot even be properly

opposed. It belongs to the very way in which relation persists under non-coincidence.

Likewise the seal is often misunderstood as an act of closure imposed from outside: an authority seals, a power withholds, an institution restricts access. In that sense, the seal appears as something to be broken. But the seal at issue here is not imposed. It arises. The seal marks the point at which articulation would destroy what it seeks to articulate. It names the limit beyond which saying would collapse into reduction. The seal therefore does not block access to a content; it protects a difference. This protection is not conservative. It does not preserve an intact interior. It preserves *non-identity*. The seal ensures that what cannot coincide with itself is not forced into presence. Where time is analemmatic, the seal is unavoidable.

Modern thought often treats disclosure as an ethical imperative. To reveal is to liberate; to expose is to emancipate; to unseal is to do justice. Secrecy, by contrast, is aligned with domination, mystification, or repression. This ethical schema fails here. Disclosure presupposes a stable object, a determinate interior, a subject capable of receiving what is revealed. None of these presuppositions hold once time crosses itself. Disclosure would not liberate; it would flatten. It would convert difference into identity and relation into object. The refusal of disclosure, then, is not a refusal of ethics. It is an ethics of non-violence toward difference. It recognizes that not everything can appear without being damaged.

The crypt that appears in this book must be carefully distinguished from the crypt of psychoanalysis, politics, or conspiracy. It is not a place where something is stored, hidden, or repressed. It does not contain a secret waiting to be uncovered. The crypt here has no interior. It is a structural configuration that allows something to persist *without becoming present*. What persists is not content, but effect. What circulates is not meaning, but transformation. A crypt without interior cannot be opened, because there is nothing inside to retrieve. *It can only be inhabited in its consequences*. This is why the crypt is inseparable from secretion. What passes through it leaks, alters, disperses. Nothing remains intact.

The crypt is temporal before it is spatial. In linear time, secrecy can be deferred: what is hidden now may be revealed later. In cyclical time, secrecy can return: what was concealed may reappear. In both cases,

secrecy remains subordinate to presence. In analemmatic time, secrecy cannot be localized in past or future. There is no “later” in which disclosure could occur, and no “return” in which identity could be restored. The crypt shelters what cannot be synchronized. It holds open a temporal gap that cannot be closed by progression or repetition.

Because secrecy is structural, it does not belong to a subject. No one *has* the secret. No one could decide to reveal it. There is no keeper, no guardian, no authority. This is why secrecy here cannot be politicized in the usual sense. There is no asymmetry of access to correct. Everyone stands equally exposed to what cannot be disclosed. Secrecy is not power. It is impersonality.

The seal prepares the cipher. A cipher is not a message written in code. It is an operator that functions without content. It organizes relations without revealing anything. It counts without signifying. Without the seal, the cipher would be misunderstood as an encrypted message awaiting decryption. The seal makes clear that there is nothing to decode. The cipher does not hide meaning. It prevents meaning from stabilizing.

To break the seal is not to reveal truth, but to force coincidence where there is none. It is to demand presence from what persists only through difference. Such breaking is violent, not because it exposes something private, but because it destroys the conditions under which relation can continue. This is why the seal must be respected rather than overcome. Respect here does not mean reverence; it means restraint.

Mourning presupposes the seal. What is mourned cannot be addressed, contradicted, or clarified. Mourning refuses substitution because the seal refuses disclosure. What is lost cannot be replaced by meaning or memory without violence. The seal keeps loss from being assimilated. In this sense, mourning is not an affective response to secrecy. It is the temporal discipline that honors the seal.

Transition

The seal and the crypt establish secrecy as structural rather than epistemic. A seal does not suffocate what it holds. It prevents collapse. What remains after closure is not enclosure. Structural limits do not exhaust relation; they suspend appropriation. What is held without possession does not withdraw from contact. It continues under conditions that are neither

open nor closed. What must now be considered is not access, but exposure. Not disclosure, but the medium in which persistence takes place without support. What holds without ground requires neither barrier nor depth. It requires air.

Chapter 5



Support Without Ground: Why Air Must Be Forgotten

Air as Condition, Not Medium / Support That Cannot Be Held / Forgetting as Structural Necessity / Why Ground Thinking Suffocates / Exposure Without Collapse

Air is not what surrounds things. It is what allows persistence without support. It cannot be pointed to, owned, or gathered, not because it is elusive, but because it does not present itself as an object. Air does not ground. It conditions exposure without offering stability, and for this reason it is habitually forgotten. This forgetting is not accidental. What cannot be secured is rarely acknowledged as operative. Air does not arrest movement, does not hold form, does not delimit space. Yet without it, nothing could continue without collapse. What endures here does so without resting, without being carried, without being enclosed. Breathing names this relation: a continual taking-in that never accumulates and never completes.

Air is forgotten not because it is absent, but because it is too present. It surrounds, permeates, and sustains without offering resistance. It does not interrupt. It does not impose itself. It does not demand attention. Philosophy has repeatedly passed over air because it cannot be stabilized as an object. It cannot be grounded, enclosed, or placed beneath thought. Where philosophy seeks foundation, air offers suspension. Where philosophy seeks support, air offers circulation. This mismatch is decisive. To forget air is not an accident; it is a structural consequence of thinking that privileges ground, substance, and presence.

Air is not one element among others. It is not comparable to earth, water, or fire. Those elements can be gathered, weighed, contained, transformed. Air cannot. Air does not function as a thing. It functions as a condition of

relation. It allows separation without isolation and connection without fusion. It is what makes distance livable. This is why air resists ontology understood as inventory. It does not add something to the world. It modulates how things can relate. To think air is therefore to think relation without objecthood.

Breathing is the most basic relation to air, and it is irreducibly non-possessive. One does not own air. One does not retain it. One inhales only by exhaling. Breathing is a rhythm of exposure and release. It is a relation sustained only by letting go. This rhythm already contains an ethics: survival without accumulation. Philosophy that forgets air forgets this ethics. It replaces breathing with holding, possession, or grounding. It mistakes endurance for stability.

Secrecy, understood as material secretion, requires air. Without air, secrecy would collapse into either concealment or silence. Concealment would trap the secret in an interior. Silence would erase its effects. Air prevents both. Air allows secrets to circulate without becoming content. It carries resonance, tone, inflection, delay. It lets something be felt without being disclosed. This is why secrecy in this work is atmospheric rather than architectural. It does not rely on walls, barriers, or enclosures. It relies on spacing, diffusion, and attenuation. Air is the medium of leaking without exposure.

Ground promises stability. It offers a place to stand, a base to build upon, a reference that does not move. Ground reassures. But ground also arrests. It fixes relations, halts circulation, and demands alignment. What is grounded must conform to what supports it. Air refuses this demand. Air supports without stabilizing. It sustains without fixing. It allows movement without anchoring. In this sense, air introduces a non-foundational support. This support is not weaker than ground; it is more demanding. Without ground, nothing holds automatically. Everything must be maintained through attention.

Air belongs to time as much as to space. Breathing unfolds in duration, not in instants. It cannot be synchronized perfectly. Each breath differs in depth, rhythm, and timing. Breathing therefore resists metric time. This resistance aligns air with analemmatic time. Just as the analemma shows time missing itself, breathing shows life persisting without regularity. Air

sustains a time that does not progress toward completion and does not return identically. It sustains continuation without closure.

Mourning cannot occur without air. Without air, loss would congeal. It would harden into memory, monument, or ritual. Air keeps loss from solidifying. It allows mourning to remain active, circulating, unresolved. Mourning breathes. It requires pauses, hesitations, irregular rhythms. It cannot be compressed into a sequence or stabilized into form. Air provides the spacing in which mourning-time can persist.

The saying introduced later depends on air. Voice requires air, but more importantly, *unsaidness* requires air. What is not articulated, what remains suspended between words, what resonates without being named—all of this depends on atmospheric spacing. Air allows saying without address and speech without closure. It carries tone rather than content, cadence rather than message. This is why air cannot be reduced to a vehicle of transmission. It does not transport meaning intact. It modulates relation.

When air is forgotten, thought suffocates. Suffocation does not mean silence. It means over-determination. Everything becomes dense, fixed, articulated, grounded. Nothing circulates. Nothing leaks. Such suffocation often masquerades as rigor. In fact, it is the absence of restraint. It fills every gap, explains every difference, resolves every tension. Air resists this violence. It preserves gaps, delays, and intervals.

Transition

Air allows relation without ground, secrecy without concealment, mourning without closure, and saying without disclosure. Air does not support what persists. It prevents collapse without offering ground. What is conditioned in this way does not float, nor does it rest. Exposure without support does not stabilize; it suspends. What continues here does so without anchoring, without base, without the promise of arrest. The absence of ground that follows from this is not a loss. It is a condition. What cannot be grounded does not therefore disappear. It must be thought otherwise—not as void, but as abyss: not as void, but as exposure. The next chapter will show why the abyss is not the negation of support, but its transformation—and why only with air can the abyss become inhabitable rather than destructive.

Chapter 6



Rigor Without Foundation: Inhabiting the Abyss

The Abyss Is Not Negation / Why Non-Ground Requires Discipline / Rigor After Foundation / Staying With What Does Not Hold / The Courage of Non-Ground

The abyss is not what remains when ground is lost. It does not appear through collapse, nor does it mark the failure of support. The abyss names a condition under which persistence is no longer secured by foundation, but continues without it. Nothing falls into the abyss, because nothing is held above it. For this reason, the abyss must not be confused with absence or negation. It does not negate what persists, nor does it dissolve form into indeterminacy. What holds here does so without resting, without anchoring, without the promise of stability. The rigor of the abyss consists precisely in this: that what continues must do so without appeal to ground.

The abyss has long functioned as philosophy's warning sign. It names what threatens orientation, stability, and sense. To fall into the abyss is to lose one's footing, to be deprived of support, to encounter the risk of nihilism. This fear presupposes a choice: either ground or abyss. The architecture developed in this work refuses that choice. The abyss is not what appears when ground disappears. It is what becomes visible once grounding is no longer demanded. The abyss is not the absence of support. It is the exposure of relation without support.

Ground promises security. It offers a place to stand and a basis from which to build. But this promise comes at a cost. Ground arrests movement. It fixes relations into positions that must align with what supports them. What is grounded is stabilized by force of reduction: difference is flattened, plurality is ordered, and what does not fit is excluded. Ground demands coincidence. In a time that crosses itself, such coincidence cannot be sustained without violence.

The abyss is not nothing. It is non-ground. Non-ground does not negate relation; it removes the guarantee that relation will be supported from beneath. What persists does so without foundation, without base, without final anchoring. The abyss names the condition in which relation continues without assurance. This continuation is not arbitrary. It is constrained by exposure. Without ground, every articulation matters. Nothing is automatically secured.

Analemmatic time refuses both linear progress and cyclical return. It crosses itself without closure. It cannot be anchored in a present that would ground succession. The abyss is the spatial correlate of this temporality. Where time cannot be fixed, space cannot be grounded. What appears instead is exposure to displacement, drift, and crossing. The abyss is not beneath time. It is what time opens when it cannot settle.

The fear most often associated with the abyss is collapse. Without ground, it is assumed, everything falls apart. This fear confuses non-ground with absence of air. Where air is present, the abyss does not collapse. Air suspends. It allows relation to persist without falling into indifference or chaos. Collapse occurs only when exposure is met with rigidity—when the demand for ground persists despite its impossibility. The abyss becomes destructive only when one refuses to breathe.

The abyss is not mastered. It is inhabited. Inhabitation here does not mean settlement. It means orientation without fixation. One does not stand in the abyss; one navigates it. This navigation relies on attention rather than certainty, responsiveness rather than control, restraint rather than assertion. The abyss therefore demands a different rigor: one that operates without guarantees.

Rigor is often mistaken for certainty. But certainty depends on ground. Where ground disappears, rigor must be redefined. Rigor in the abyss means precision without closure, commitment without foundation, articulation without mastery. Every step must be justified locally. Nothing is secured globally. This produces a rigor that is more demanding, not less. It is this rigor that will later appear in mathematical intuition that mourns.

The abyss intensifies secrecy. Without ground, nothing can be fully disclosed. There is no position from which total revelation could occur. Exposure replaces transparency. Secrecy here does not hide content. It

preserves difference by refusing total illumination. What appears does so partially, temporarily, contingently. The abyss is therefore compatible with the seal and the crypt. It explains why disclosure would destroy what it claims to reveal.

Mourning belongs to the abyss. Loss cannot be grounded. It cannot be stabilized without substitution. Mourning keeps loss exposed without resolving it into meaning or memory. In the abyss, mourning becomes a discipline of remaining with what cannot be secured. It refuses consolation without turning away. The abyss is not what mourning falls into. It is where mourning takes place.

What appears after the abyss is not ground, but a structure that allows passage without support. That structure will be called the portico. The portico is not a bridge over the abyss. It does not close it. It spans without stabilizing. It allows movement without grounding. But the portico can only be understood once the abyss has been acknowledged as non-ground rather than negation.

The abyss is often equated with nihilism. This equation is false. Nihilism arises when the loss of ground is experienced as loss of value. The abyss, as developed here, does not eliminate value; it displaces its basis. Value becomes situational, relational, provisional. It emerges from care, attention, and fidelity rather than from foundations. This transformation does not empty life of meaning. It frees meaning from coercion.

Transition

The abyss does not demand orientation. It suspends it. What was refused as ground now refuses succession. Not because time disappears, but because its alignment fails. What follows is therefore not a theory of time, nor a correction of chronology. It is a figure that does not stabilize. A crossing that does not advance. A return without repetition. Time must now be read where it folds.

The abyss does not abolish rigor. It displaces it. What persists without ground cannot be ordered by succession. Without foundation, alignment no longer holds. What continues does not proceed step by step, nor does it return to an origin. Time, under these conditions, cannot be stabilized as line or cycle. What becomes necessary is not a new measure, but a figure that can hold non-grounded persistence without resolving it.

Not representation, not model, but a trace of crossing in which time does not advance, yet does not stop. Such a figure exists. It does not orient. It crosses.

Chapter 7



Return Without Repetition: Time After Chronology

Why Linear Time Breaks / A figure that refuses representation / Return without repetition / Crossing instead of succession / The analemma as lemma / Time without mastery / No present, no origin / The discipline of attention

What persists without ground cannot be ordered by succession. Without foundation, time does not advance from origin toward end, nor does it return by cycle. Alignment fails, not as error, but as condition. What continues does so without taking a direction that could be measured, accumulated, or completed. Under these conditions, time cannot be grasped as line, nor stabilized as rhythm. It requires a figure that does not represent, but holds. A figure that does not orient, but crosses. What appears here is neither present nor absent, neither repeated nor concluded. It is a trace of movement in which return does not undo passage, and passage does not produce progress.

Time is most often assumed to move forward. Even when it loops, cycles, or repeats, it remains governed by succession: one moment follows another, and the order of moments can be counted. Chronology survives even where linearity is questioned. The analemma introduces a more radical disturbance. It does not merely bend the line of time or curve it into a circle. It forces time to cross itself. This crossing is not symbolic. It is not a metaphor for complexity or contradiction. It is a structural feature of temporal observation that appears only when measurement insists on sameness and time refuses to comply. The analemma marks the point at which chronology no longer suffices.

The analemma is produced by an insistence: observe the sun at the same clock-time each day. The clock demands repetition. The sun refuses coincidence. What appears is a figure that crosses itself without closing, returns without repeating, and stabilizes nothing. The same hour does not return the same position. Time misses itself. This failure is not error. It is not noise. It is structure. The analemma is therefore not an image *of* time. It is a figure *in which time exposes its own non-coincidence*. It shows that time cannot be made present to itself, even under the strictest conditions of measurement.

What the analemma makes visible is a form of return that is irreducible to repetition. Repetition presupposes identity: the same returns as the same. The analemma denies this presupposition. Each return is displaced. Each attempt at sameness produces difference. This difference is not cumulative. It does not advance toward novelty, nor does it regress toward origin. It persists. Time here is neither linear nor cyclical. It is recurrent without identity. This recurrence is not temporal abundance. It is temporal restraint. It shows how time can continue without progressing and without closing.

In chronological time, moments succeed one another. In the time of the analemma, moments cross. Crossing does not imply collision or contradiction. It implies non-coincidence without separation. Two trajectories occupy the same region without sharing a position. This is why the analemma cannot be read sequentially. It cannot be narrated as before and after. It requires a different mode of attention: one that registers simultaneity without synchronization. The crossing of time with itself suspends the privilege of the present. There is no “now” that could serve as a reference point. Every position is already out of phase.

The analemma is not a final figure. It does not explain time. It functions as a lemma: a subsidiary construction that makes further articulation possible without becoming foundational. A lemma does not ground; it orients. It does not close; it opens a path. The analemma allows one to proceed without deciding what time *is*. It suspends ontology in favor of structure. It shows how time behaves without claiming why. This suspension is essential. Any attempt to ground the analemma would collapse it back into representation. Its power lies in its provisionality.

The analemma introduces a form of time that cannot be mastered. Mastery requires predictability, equivalence, or closure. The analemma offers none of these. It remains stable only in its instability. It can be traced, but not controlled. It can be described, but not resolved. This is why the analemma resists appropriation. It cannot be turned into an instrument without losing what it shows. It demands attention rather than use. Time here is not a resource. It is a condition that resists possession.

The analemma prepares the ground for a virtual clock. A clock ordinarily measures time by fixing intervals and aligning moments. The analemma shows why such fixing always fails. It exposes the gap between measurement and temporal behavior. The virtual clock does not correct this failure. It accepts it. What the analemma reveals visually, the virtual clock will formalize: time that can be counted without being synchronized, ordered without being measured, traversed without being possessed. The analemma thus stands at the threshold between observable time and virtual time.

One of the most decisive consequences of the analemma is the collapse of the privileged present. If the same moment never returns as the same, then there is no stable “now” from which time could be organized. The present becomes a crossing rather than a point. Similarly, origin loses its function. The analemma has no beginning. Any point can be chosen as a starting point, but none will ground the figure. Time does not unfold from an origin; it persists through displacement. This prepares the way for mourning-time, where loss cannot be located in a past that could be recovered.

The analemma demands a discipline of attention rather than explanation. One must attend to difference without seeking resolution, to recurrence without identity, to structure without ground. This discipline is not interpretive. It does not ask what the analemma means. It asks how one can remain with it. This mode of attention will later reappear as intuition: a way of following without grasping, of indicating without fixing.

Transition

The analemma does not introduce secrecy, mourning, or cipher explicitly. It makes them necessary. Once time crosses itself, closure becomes

impossible. Once return loses identity, substitution becomes questionable. The analemma does not depict the sun's path. It records a failure of coincidence. The same hour does not return the same position. Time misses itself. This missing is not error. It is structure. What the analemma teaches is that time does not repeat even when repetition is demanded. A figure that crosses does not yet operate. It holds, but it does not count. The analemma stabilizes non-grounded time only insofar as it refuses orientation. It allows persistence without succession, return without repetition. Yet this holding remains figural. It does not intervene. It does not register. It does not mark. What becomes necessary at this point is not another figure, but an operation capable of handling crossing without resolving it—an operation that neither represents nor measures, yet makes repetition possible without accumulation. This operation has no content of its own. It does not signify. It functions. Such an operation is called a cipher.

Chapter 8



Counting Without Measure: The Cipher of Time

What a Cipher Is Not / Repetition Without Accumulation / Zero Without Ground / Counting as Temporal Discipline / Why the Clock Does Not Remember

A cipher does not represent. It does not stand in for anything, nor does it encode a message to be deciphered. A cipher operates by allowing repetition without accumulation. What passes through it is neither preserved nor erased. It registers without storing, counts without measuring, and marks without fixing position. For this reason, the cipher cannot be treated as a concept. Concepts gather, unify, and stabilize. The cipher interrupts such gathering. It introduces a minimal nothing that prevents repetition from becoming identity and succession from becoming progress. What is handled here does not advance. It returns without remainder, without memory, without loss.

The virtual clock is not a concept to be defined, nor a metaphor to be interpreted. It is a cipher. A cipher does not carry content. It does not conceal a message that could be disclosed. It does not stand in for something else. A cipher is an operative placeholder: it structures relations without representing them. It counts without meaning, organizes without signifying, and orders without commanding. This is why the virtual clock cannot be read, decoded, or translated. It must be *inhabited*. Everything in this book passes through it, yet nothing is contained by it. In this sense, the virtual clock functions exactly like the portico: passed at every step, never entered, indispensable without ever becoming present. Calling the virtual clock a cipher already refuses three dominant models of time: Chronological time, which measures succession, Phenomenological time, which grounds temporality in lived presence, and Historical time, which accumulates meaning through narrative. The cipher belongs to none of

these. It is not a measure of time but a formal condition under which time can occur without closure.

The figure through which the virtual clock first becomes visible is the analemma: the lying figure-eight traced by the sun over the course of a year when observed at the same clock-time each day. The analemma is not a representation of time but a subsidiary construction—a lemma. A lemma is neither foundational nor final. It is a stepping stone that makes construction possible without becoming the construction itself. The analemma functions in precisely this way. It shortens nothing, explains nothing, proves nothing. Yet without it, the time of the year cannot be grasped except as an abstraction imposed from elsewhere. What matters here is not the astronomical detail but the logic of the figure: the analemma crosses itself, it does not repeat, it does not progress, it does not close. It marks time not as flow, but as recurrence with difference. The same position is never reached twice, even when the same position is sought. This is why the analemma resists both linear chronology and cyclical return. The virtual clock inherits this structure. It is a clock whose time cannot be read consecutively. It does not advance. It re-encounters.

The virtual clock consists of two inseparable aspects: a disk, and fingers. The disk is not a plane of coordinates. It is a topology of places: portico, threshold, clearing, receptacle. It holds together inside and outside without resolving their difference. It is the spatial condition for saying without presence. The fingers are not hands that point to hours. They are movements without position. Intuition appears here not as vision, imagination, or insight, but as indexical motion: a bodily orientation that indicates without fixing. The fingers never stop moving. Yet they never arrive. They do not locate a “now.” They do not select a moment. They do not produce simultaneity. The disk holds open; the fingers traverse. Together, they constitute a clock without measure.

A clock normally counts by assigning meaning to intervals. The virtual clock counts without content. Its counting is closer to *recounting* than to measuring. It does not establish equivalence between moments; it keeps time open to difference. This is why the virtual clock must be understood alongside mathematics—not mathematics as a system of meanings, but mathematics as a language without sense. In this language, symbols do not signify; they operate. They place-hold. They relate. The cipher belongs to this regime. Like zero, it is nothing—but not a lack. It is operative nothing.

It structures relations without filling them. It allows ordering without grounding. The virtual clock is therefore a temporal zero: not the absence of time, but the condition under which time can be counted without being captured.

Because the cipher has no content, it cannot reveal. What occurs around it is not disclosure but secretion. Secretion is not concealment. A concealed thing remains intact, waiting to be uncovered. A secret that secretes does not remain whole. It leaks, percolates, transforms the medium through which it passes. The virtual clock secretes time in this sense. Time does not appear; it seeps. It leaves residues rather than records. What is produced is not knowledge but trace, not presence but after-effect. This is why the cipher chapter cannot conclude. A conclusion would imply disclosure. Instead, the chapter must leak into what precedes and follows it.

To operate a cipher is to seize the nothing—not by mastering it, not by negating it, but by letting it function. The nothing here is not the void of negation. It is not the absence of being. It is the suspension of determination. Several kinds of nothing coexist: the nothing of loss, the nothing of remainder, the nothing of non-relation. The cipher does not resolve these nothings. It coordinates them without synthesis. In doing so, it allows time to remain destined without being predetermined. This is why the virtual clock cannot be grounded. Grounding would turn nothing into something. The cipher refuses this conversion.

There is an ethics implicit in this structure. A cipher does not appropriate. It does not capture. It does not exhaust. It respects what cannot be addressed. This ethics is temporal. It is what will later be called *mourning-time*: a discipline of restraint that prevents loss from becoming property and absence from becoming meaning. The virtual clock is ethical not because it tells us what to do, but because it prevents us from closing time. Intuition: fingers without position. Intuition enters where representation fails. It is not a faculty of seeing, nor a capacity for insight. It is a bodily orientation that moves without locating. Intuition does not grasp; it follows. It does not possess; it attends. In the time of the virtual clock, intuition replaces vision. It becomes the only way to count without fixing, to move without advancing, to relate without seizing. What kind of rigor is possible under these conditions remains to be shown.

Transition

Everything that precedes this chapter prepares the conditions for the cipher. Everything that follows explores its consequences. The portico provides the domain in which the cipher can operate. Mourning provides the time in which it can persist. Mathematical intuition provides the practice through which it can be handled without domination. The virtual clock itself remains empty—and for this reason, indispensable. A cipher operates without memory. What it allows to repeat does not accumulate, does not preserve, does not retain. This absence of retention is not neutral. What returns without remainder cannot be mourned after the fact, because nothing has been secured in the first place. Loss does not occur as an event. It is structural. What passes through the cipher cannot be held long enough to be possessed, replaced, or compensated.

Mourning therefore does not follow the cipher.

It is required by it.

What comes next is not an account of grief, affect, or inner experience, but an articulation of mourning as a temporal operator: a practice that holds absence without converting it into memory, ritual, or substitution.

Chapter 9



Holding Loss Without Substitution: Mourning-Time

Mourning Is Not Recovery / Loss Without Compensation / Temporal Fidelity to Absence / Why Substitution Ends Mourning / The Discipline of Staying With Loss

Mourning is not a feeling, nor a state that follows loss. It is a temporal practice that becomes necessary where nothing can be retained. When repetition occurs without accumulation, and passage leaves no remainder, time cannot repair itself by substitution. Mourning names the discipline required to hold absence without converting it into memory, compensation, or replacement. As an operator, mourning does not work upon what has been lost. It works upon time itself. It suspends the demand for restoration, refuses equivalence, and blocks the conversion of absence into value. What is mourned here is not an object or a relation, but the impossibility of possession as such. Mourning thus does not heal. It restrains.

Mourning enters this work neither as an emotion nor as a psychological process. It is not an inner state, not a reaction to loss, not a phase to be completed. To treat mourning in this way would already place it within a chronology: beginning, duration, end. Such a chronology is precisely what mourning here interrupts. Mourning is introduced instead as a temporal operator: a way in which time itself is held open when presence fails. It names neither what is felt nor what is remembered, but how relation persists when address becomes impossible. This is why mourning cannot be “worked through” without ceasing to be mourning. Any notion of completion would convert loss into an object of knowledge or memory. Mourning resists this conversion. It does not aim at recovery, substitution, or reconciliation. It does not resolve absence; it sustains it.

What distinguishes mourning most sharply from other temporal practices is the impossibility of address. One cannot properly address what is no

longer there. There is no addressee who could respond, contradict, or correct. Speech loses its dialogical structure. This impossibility is not accidental; it is constitutive. In mourning, contradiction is suspended—not because consensus is reached, but because no counter-position can arise. What is mourned cannot answer. As a result, attribution becomes fragile, exposed, unverifiable. This fragility is precisely what mourning protects. It prevents the stabilization of meaning. It blocks the conversion of loss into narrative. Mourning thus produces a form of saying that is without address yet not without voice. Such saying belongs to the domain of the portico: it occurs at the threshold where inside and outside, past and future, self and other pass into one another without coinciding.

Most temporal regimes deal with loss through substitution. Memory substitutes presence with representation. History substitutes loss with narrative. Ritual substitutes absence with repetition. Even consolation substitutes grief with meaning. Mourning, as it is understood here, refuses substitution. This refusal does not preserve the lost object intact. It preserves instead the non-equivalence between what was and what can follow. Nothing takes the place of what is lost. The place remains open. This openness is not empty: it is active. It reorganizes relations without filling them. In this sense, mourning is not opposed to form; it is opposed to closure.

Mourning is inseparable from the operation earlier described as *seizing the nothing*. Yet this seizure must be understood carefully. Mourning does not appropriate the nothing, nor does it transform it into a determinate absence. It allows the nothing to remain operative without being resolved. Several kinds of nothing coexist in mourning: *the nothing of what is no longer present, the nothing of what cannot be said, the nothing of what cannot be substituted*. Mourning does not unify these nothings. It coordinates them without synthesis. In doing so, it prevents the collapse of nothing into negation or lack. The nothing remains plural, dynamic, irreducible. This is why mourning cannot be grounded. Grounding would turn nothing into something. Mourning keeps time from closing around such a conversion.

It is tempting to align mourning with ritual. Both involve repetition, bodily practice, and public gathering. Yet this alignment must be resisted. Ritual time stabilizes. It synchronizes bodies, gestures, and rhythms. Even when ritual is open-ended, it relies on recognizable forms that can be repeated and shared. Ritual produces canon. Mourning, by contrast,

desynchronizes. It allows being-together without unification. One is not alone, but one is not together either. There is no common rhythm, no shared cadence, no guarantee of return. Where ritual repeats the same form, mourning repeats only the impossibility of repetition. This is why mourning cannot become liturgy without losing its force. The moment mourning acquires a fixed form, it begins to substitute presence with structure.

The temporality of mourning corresponds to the time of the analemma. Like the analemma, mourning crosses itself without closing. It returns without repeating. It seeks the same point and misses it. This is not failure. It is structure. Mourning-time is neither linear nor cyclical. It is recurrent without identity. Each return is altered by what cannot be recovered. Each passage passes again through the portico, never arriving. This is why mourning can support the virtual clock. Without mourning, the clock would collapse into either chronology or ritual cycle. Mourning prevents both by keeping time open to difference without progress.

Mourning introduces an ethics, but not one grounded in norms or rules. Its ethics lies in restraint. Mourning restrains the impulse to know, to explain, to appropriate, to resolve. This restraint is not passive. It is an active discipline. It requires vigilance against closure, against the seductions of meaning, against the comfort of substitution. In this sense, mourning is the temporal analogue of rigor. It demands precision without mastery, attention without capture, fidelity without possession.

The relation between mourning and intuition now becomes clear. Intuition, as described in the time of the virtual clock, is a movement without position. It follows without grasping. It attends without fixing. Such intuition would be impossible without mourning. Without mourning, intuition would seek completion, clarity, vision. Mourning holds intuition back from these impulses. It allows intuition to remain mobile, provisional, exposed. Mourning is what prevents intuition from becoming insight.

Transition

Mourning is not an interruption of thought. It is what allows thought to continue without closing. It sustains time where presence fails, relation where address collapses, and rigor where foundations are refused. In the

chapters that follow, mourning will show its consequences for formalization, for mathematics, and for objectivity. Mourning, as restraint, cannot be stabilized. What it holds must not be secured. When absence is handled without substitution, the pressure to formalize becomes strong. Repetition seeks relief. Time seeks closure. Practices arise that promise to carry what cannot be retained. These practices do not begin as errors. They arise from the desire to spare restraint from exposure. Ritual answers this desire. It gives form to repetition, rhythm to return, and stability to loss. But in doing so, it converts restraint into rule and absence into function. What mourning must keep open, ritual seeks to settle. What follows is therefore not a critique of ritual from outside, but a refusal from within: an account of why mourning cannot be allowed to congeal into canon, liturgy, or stabilized form.

Chapter 10



Why Stabilization Fails: Mourning Against Ritual Time

Ritual as Temporal Shortcut / Why Mourning Cannot Be Repeated / Stabilization as Temporal Violence / Restraint Against Closure / When Time Refuses Form

Ritual does not arise from belief. It arises from repetition under pressure. When absence must be held without substitution, repetition seeks a form that can endure. Rhythm promises relief. Order promises continuity. What cannot be retained invites procedures that promise to carry it forward. This promise is not deceptive. Ritual succeeds in what it sets out to do: it stabilizes repetition. It gives duration a frame, return a schedule, and loss a place. But precisely for this reason, ritual interrupts mourning as operator. What mourning must keep exposed, ritual encloses. What mourning must restrain, ritual regulates. The problem, therefore, is not that ritual is false, illusory, or imposed. The problem is that ritual resolves what mourning must leave unresolved. It converts restraint into rule and absence into function. In doing so, it arrests the temporal discipline that mourning requires.

Wherever mourning persists, ritual appears as a temptation. Ritual promises form where there is loss, rhythm where there is disruption, and repetition where there is uncertainty. It offers gestures that can be learned, times that can be anticipated, and spaces that can be shared. In doing so, ritual stabilizes what mourning leaves open. This promise is neither naïve nor misguided. Ritual has historically allowed communities to endure loss without collapse. It gathers bodies, aligns gestures, and produces a shared temporal frame. Yet precisely because of this stabilizing function, ritual cannot serve as the temporal form of mourning as it is understood here. Mourning requires time to remain unsettled. Ritual settles.

Ritual organizes time through repetition. Even when rituals are flexible or evolving, they rely on recognizable forms that return. A ritual can be

interrupted, postponed, or reinterpreted, but it cannot function without some degree of formal identity. This identity allows ritual to synchronize participants and to produce continuity. Mourning, by contrast, resists identity. It does not repeat a form; it repeats an impossibility. What returns in mourning is not the same gesture, but the renewed failure of substitution. Each return encounters loss again without equivalence. For this reason, mourning cannot be stabilized without being transformed into something else—memory, commemoration, or tradition. These transformations may be valuable, but they are not mourning.

Ritual produces synchrony. It aligns bodies in time, establishes common rhythms, and creates a shared “now.” Even silent rituals depend on this alignment. Synchrony is what makes ritual public. Mourning disrupts synchrony. It allows being-together without alignment. Those who mourn may gather, but they do not occupy the same time. Their durations do not coincide. No shared cadence governs their experience. This is why mourning can be public without becoming collective in the ritual sense. It produces a public space without consensus, without unification, without a common tempo. One is not alone, but one is not together either. Such a public resists ritualization by design.

Liturgy represents a refined form of ritual time. It does not merely repeat gestures; it authorizes them. Liturgy establishes a canon of repetition that carries legitimacy. It assures participants that what they do has already been done, that what they say has already been said. This assurance is incompatible with mourning. Mourning has no precedent that could authorize it. Each instance is exposed, unverifiable, without guarantee. There is no correct way to mourn, no authorized sequence of gestures, no stable form that could be inherited. The moment mourning acquires liturgical authority, it ceases to be mourning and becomes commemoration.

Canon stabilizes by selecting. It determines what is to be repeated, preserved, and transmitted. Canon is not necessarily exclusionary in intent, but it is selective by necessity. It fixes forms so that they can endure. Mourning cannot enter a canon. It does not select; it holds open. It does not preserve; it exposes. It does not transmit content; it sustains relation without content. This is why mourning cannot be archived without loss. Archives store. Mourning leaks.

The repetition of ritual differs fundamentally from the return of mourning-time. Ritual repetition aims at sameness: the same gesture, the same time, the same form. Mourning returns without sameness. Each return is marked by difference that cannot be assimilated. This return without repetition corresponds to the time of the analemma. The same point is sought, but it is never reached. The trajectory crosses itself without closure. The return does not stabilize identity; it multiplies difference. Ritual would collapse this structure by forcing alignment. Mourning preserves it by refusing it.

One of ritual's most powerful functions is consolation. Consolation offers meaning where there is loss. It reassures that loss can be borne, integrated, or transcended. In doing so, it often brings genuine relief. Yet consolation always substitutes. It replaces what is lost with meaning, narrative, or promise. Mourning, as a temporal operator, cannot accept this substitution without ceasing to function. Mourning does not console; it keeps loss present as loss. This does not mean that mourning is cruel or punitive. It means that mourning respects what cannot be replaced.

If mourning cannot stabilize, this does not mean it is chaotic. Mourning has a discipline, but it is a discipline of non-stabilization. It actively resists closure, synchronization, and authorization. This discipline requires vigilance. It requires resisting the comfort of repetition, the reassurance of form, and the security of shared rhythm. It is not sustained automatically. It must be practiced. This practice is not ritual. It is attention.

The refusal of ritual stabilization aligns mourning with the form of rigor described earlier. Rigor, in its non-foundational sense, does not secure certainty. It restrains excess. It limits what can be claimed, shown, or concluded. Mourning enacts a similar restraint in time. It limits what can be resolved, remembered, or repeated. It keeps time from closing around meaning. In this sense, mourning is not opposed to rigor. It is rigorous.

Transition

By refusing ritual, mourning preserves the openness required by the virtual clock. It keeps time from collapsing into cycle or sequence. It sustains relation without presence and saying without address. Ritual stabilizes repetition by giving it form. Mourning refuses this stabilization. Yet refusal does not abolish rigor. What cannot be canonized still requires

discipline. What cannot be synchronized still demands precision. The question that now emerges is therefore not how repetition can be ordered, but how it can be handled without becoming rule. There exists a mode of rigor that does not rest on ceremony, authority, or form. It neither consolidates nor commemorates. It proceeds without spectacle and without closure. This rigor does not visualize; it constrains. It does not found; it follows. This mode is called intuition—not as immediacy or insight, but as a practice capable of maintaining restraint without ritual. When such intuition encounters non-retention, it does not console. It mourns.

Chapter 11



Mathematics as Saying Without Meaning

Rigor Without Vision: Intuition After Proof / Intuition Is Not Seeing / Following Constraint Without Image / Proof After Non-Ground / Mathematical Mourning / Rigor Without Completion

Intuition here does not name a faculty of seeing. It does not deliver immediacy, insight, or self-evidence. It names a disciplined way of proceeding when nothing can be secured in advance. Where form cannot be canonized and repetition cannot be stabilized, intuition operates as a responsiveness to constraint rather than as access to content. This intuition does not precede rigor; it follows it. It works by maintaining relations under conditions of non-retention, without appealing to foundation or closure. What is handled is not given in advance, nor can it be recovered afterward. Intuition therefore does not resolve uncertainty. It sustains it without collapse. When such intuition encounters loss that cannot be repaired, it does not convert absence into memory or compensation. It maintains restraint. In this sense, intuition mourns—not by withdrawing, but by continuing to operate without claiming possession, certainty, or end.

Mathematics enters this work hence neither as an object of epistemology nor as a paradigm of certainty. It appears here because it offers a practice of formal saying that does not depend on meaning. Mathematics can operate without reference, without representation, and without semantic fulfillment. This makes it uniquely capable of inhabiting the domain opened by secretion. Where philosophy has often sought foundations, mathematics has—at crucial moments—learned to proceed without them. This does not make mathematics neutral or innocent. It makes it disciplined. What matters here is not what mathematics means, but how it operates.

In ordinary language, saying is tied to meaning. Words point beyond themselves, refer to objects, communicate content. Even when language becomes poetic or figurative, meaning remains the horizon within which speech is interpreted. Mathematics breaks with this horizon. Symbols in mathematics do not mean in the usual sense. They do not refer to objects in the world, nor do they express intentions or experiences. They function as operators, placeholders, marks that allow relations to be established without interpretation. This is not because mathematics lacks meaning, but because it suspends meaning as a condition of operation. Meaning may emerge later, locally, contingently—but it is not required for the formal work to proceed. In this sense, mathematics belongs to the domain of the saying rather than to the domain of discourse. It says without addressing, orders without narrating, and proceeds without explaining.

The figure of the lemma is central here. A lemma is a result that is neither final nor foundational. It is a stepping stone that allows a construction to proceed. Its importance lies not in its content but in its position within a process. A lemma is true, but its truth is secondary to its function. It may be reused, abandoned, or replaced without destabilizing the overall structure. In this way, the lemma exemplifies a form of rigor that is situational rather than systemic. This situational rigor aligns mathematics with the logic of the analemma and the cipher. What matters is not closure, but passage. Proof becomes a way of moving forward without claiming completion.

Foundational programs in mathematics have repeatedly attempted to secure the discipline by grounding it in axioms, logic, or ontology. Each attempt has produced clarity at the cost of exclusion. What cannot be grounded is pushed aside. The alternative that emerges in the wake of these attempts is not anti-foundational chaos, but non-foundational formalization. In such formalization, axioms are adopted provisionally, structures are explored locally, and consistency is treated as a constraint rather than a guarantee. This mode of formalization does not deny rigor. It redefines it. Rigor no longer means certainty, but restraint: the refusal to overstep what can be shown, the discipline of working within limits without claiming mastery over them.

Mathematics has long been familiar with the zero. Yet zero is not nothing. It is a mark, an operator, a position within a system. It is something that allows counting to begin. The nothing that concerns this work is not

identical with zero. Yet mathematics offers a way of working with nothing without turning it into something. Empty sets, null morphisms, undefined values—these are not absences to be filled, but operational features that allow structures to function. In this sense, mathematics does not negate the nothing. It lets it act. The nothing appears as a limit, a remainder, a constraint that shapes relations without being absorbed into them. This is why mathematics can secrete rather than disclose: It produces effects without producing content.

A proof is often understood as a demonstration that compels assent. Once the proof is given, doubt is eliminated, and the matter is settled. Yet within mathematical practice, proof functions differently. A proof does not exhaust its object. It establishes a relation that can be traversed again, modified, or bypassed. Proofs can be elegant or cumbersome, enlightening or opaque, without ceasing to be proofs. In this sense, proof is a mode of saying. It articulates a path rather than presenting a result. It shows how something can be followed, not what something is. This is why proofs can coexist without contradiction. Different proofs of the same statement do not compete for dominance; they coexist as different articulations of passage.

The connection between mathematics and mourning may seem strained at first. Yet the link becomes clear once rigor is understood as restraint. Mourning, as described earlier, refuses substitution and closure. It keeps loss active without resolving it. Mathematical rigor, in its non-foundational form, does something analogous. It refuses to claim more than can be shown. It respects the limits of formalization. Both mourning and mathematical rigor operate by not filling the gap. This is why mathematical intuition that mourns does not aim at completion. It accepts provisionality, incompleteness, and remainder not as failures but as conditions of continuation.

Mathematical intuition is often misunderstood as a form of inner vision—a capacity to “see” truths directly. In fact, intuition here is closer to **orientation** than to vision. It is a bodily sense of how to proceed, when to stop, where a structure might open. This intuition does not grasp an object. It follows relations. It moves with the fingers of the virtual clock, not toward a result but through a field of constraints. Such intuition cannot be formalized in advance. It emerges within practice, guided by

discipline rather than insight. It is inseparable from mourning, because it accepts that not everything can be brought to light.

Within the time of the virtual clock, mathematics no longer advances toward a horizon of total knowledge. It circulates, revisits, and rearticulates. Results return, but never identically. Structures are reused, but in altered contexts. This is not stagnation. It is recurrent difference. The virtual clock allows mathematics to proceed without progress, to count without accumulation, to formalize without closure. It keeps time open for mathematical saying.

Transition

Mathematics, understood as saying without meaning, provides a model for rigor that neither grounds nor reveals. It secretes structures that allow relation to persist without mastery, brought into contact with figures of being, objectivity, desire, and pleasure. Intuition that mourns does not complete what it handles. It follows constraints without closing them. When rigor proceeds without foundation, relations must be maintained without resolution. What is followed does not converge into identity, and what is repeated does not become equivalent. Remainders persist—not as errors or failures, but as structural effects of non-retention. What becomes necessary here is a way to articulate relation without synthesis and remainder without loss. Not a totalizing measure, but marks that allow relation to proceed while preserving incommensurability. Two such marks have long functioned in this way: one that binds without unifying, and one that records difference without remainder being absorbed. They are called lambda and comma.

Chapter 12



Relation Without Scale: Music, Number, Remainder

*Why Scaling Fails / Lambda as Binding Without Unity / Comma as Remainder
Without Loss / Music Without Harmony / Incommensurability That Holds*

Lambda and comma do not designate entities. They do not stand for values, forms, or unities. They mark operations by which relation can proceed without synthesis. What they make possible is not equivalence, but continuation under constraint. Lambda binds without unifying. It allows a relation to be followed without collapsing what is related into a common measure. What is linked by lambda does not converge; it remains distributed. The operation does not gather. It maintains adjacency without identity. Comma records remainder without converting it into loss. It does not repair difference, nor does it register deviation from a norm. What appears at the comma is not error, noise, or residue to be absorbed. It is the persistence of incommensurability as such—difference that remains operative because it is not resolved. Together, lambda and comma do not form a system. They do not close a structure, nor do they promise harmony. They allow relation to continue where proportion fails, and rigor to persist where equivalence cannot be established.

Music enters this work not as metaphor and not as aesthetic supplement. It enters because it preserves a mode of formalization that never lost contact with remainder. Where geometry stabilizes and arithmetic accumulates, music insists on difference that cannot be eliminated. The formal figures that organize this chapter—the lambda and the comma—do not belong exclusively to music, mathematics, or philosophy. They circulate among these domains because they articulate a shared problem:

how relation persists where proportion fails. Music matters here because it never solved this problem. It learned to live with it.

The figure of the lambda appears early in the Western tradition, most explicitly in the cosmological construction of the *Timaeus* by Plato. There, the lambda is not a symbol but a **structural device**: two series diverging from a single point, one governed by powers of two, the other by powers of three. What matters is not the numerology but the relation: one leg corresponds to linear extension, discreteness, and doubling, the other to circularity, angularity, and tripling. The two legs are incommensurable. No unit converts one into the other without remainder. The lambda does not resolve this incommensurability. It exposes it. This exposure is decisive. The lambda is not a bridge; it is a joint without fusion. It does not synthesize. It holds divergence in relation.

In the *Timaeus*, the problem posed by the lambda is not how to unify its legs, but how to relate them without collapse. This relation is achieved not by a single measure, but by a plurality of means: arithmetic, geometric, harmonic. Each mean establishes a relation, but none exhausts it. The relation persists only through plural articulation. This is why incommensurability is not an obstacle here. It is the condition under which relation remains dynamic. A single mean would stabilize; multiple means keep the structure open. The lambda thus prefigures the logic of the virtual clock: time articulated through crossing relations that never coincide.

If the lambda establishes divergence, the comma names what remains after every attempt at alignment. In musical theory, particularly in traditions descending from Pythagoras, the comma designates the small but irreducible difference that arises when cycles of intervals fail to close perfectly. One returns to the “same” pitch by a different path, only to find that it is not the same. This difference is not error. It is physical. It arises from the materiality of sound and the impossibility of perfect proportion across all scales. The comma cannot be eliminated without destroying the system that produces it. Temperament can distribute it, disguise it, or defer it—but never abolish it. The comma is the musical form of secretion.

What distinguishes the comma from a mistake is that it does not demand correction. It demands accommodation. To accommodate the comma is to accept that no system closes perfectly, no harmony is total, no tuning is

final. This acceptance is not resignation, it is discipline. The comma teaches restraint. It prevents the fantasy of total coherence. It forces systems to remain provisional, adaptable, and sensitive to context. In this sense, the comma functions exactly like mourning-time: it keeps closure at bay by insisting on difference that cannot be resolved.

In modern thought, incommensurability is often treated as a problem to be solved or overcome. In this work, it is treated as generative. Incommensurability: prevents reduction, multiplies relations, sustains plurality. The lambda and the comma show that relation does not require equivalence. It requires careful articulation across difference. This articulation is not representational. It does not map one domain onto another. It operates through adjustment, modulation, and local coherence. This is why musical thinking remains indispensable: it formalizes relation without demanding identity.

Musical time does not progress like narrative time. It does not accumulate like historical time. It unfolds through return, variation, delay, and anticipation. These features align musical time with the time of the analemma: return without repetition, crossing without convergence, duration thickened by delay. The comma introduces retardation into musical time. It prevents cycles from closing smoothly. It introduces a hesitation that must be worked with rather than removed. This hesitation is temporal. It slows time without stopping it. It thickens duration without extending it.

The migration of the comma from music into mathematics—and of the lambda from mathematics into cosmology—shows that these figures belong to a shared formal ecology. Mathematics inherits from music the problem of remainder. Even where formal systems aim at closure, incompleteness reappears as structural necessity. What music makes audible, mathematics makes formal. What mathematics stabilizes locally, music destabilizes again through materiality. Neither domain has priority. Their relation is consumative rather than consumptive: each reaches a form of perfection only through the other.

The cipher introduced earlier depends on the persistence of the comma. A cipher that closed would become a code. A system without remainder would become an archive. The comma ensures that the cipher remains

operative without becoming legible. It guarantees leakage. It prevents disclosure. This is why the virtual clock must include incommensurability at its core. A perfectly commensurate time would be measurable, predictable, and closed. Analemmatic time requires difference that cannot be synchronized.

Transition

Incommensurability does not suspend relation. It suspends equivalence. When relation proceeds without synthesis and remainder persists without loss, objectivity cannot be secured by measure, norm, or scale. What stands is not what can be compared, but what continues to hold under constraint. Objectivity, under these conditions, does not derive from neutrality or distance. It derives from endurance. What enters here is not subjectivity in response to failure, nor affect in the face of difference. What enters is desire—not as lack, aim, or appetite, but as persistence without appropriation. And with it, pleasure—not as satisfaction or reward, but as the bodily registration of continuation where no equivalence can be drawn. Objectivity therefore does not oppose desire. It requires it. What follows is an account of how objectivity can persist without norm, how desire can operate without projection, and how pleasure can occur without resolution.

Chapter 13



Objectivity Without Reduction: Desire and Pleasure Re-Situated

*Objectivity After Norms / Desire Without Lack / Pleasure Without Satisfaction /
Endurance as Objectivity / Why Reduction Betrays Relation*

Objectivity here does not arise from rule, norm, or measure. It does not depend on distance, neutrality, or detachment. What stands as objective does so because it endures under constraint—because it continues to hold when equivalence cannot be drawn and comparison cannot be completed. Objectivity is not secured by standardization; it is maintained by persistence. Under these conditions, desire does not name a lack that seeks fulfillment. It names the continuation of relation without appropriation. Desire does not project an end, nor does it organize movement toward satisfaction. It persists where capture would terminate relation, and for this reason it does not oppose objectivity. It sustains it. Pleasure, accordingly, does not appear as reward or resolution. It registers bodily continuity where nothing is completed. Pleasure marks the fact that persistence is possible without possession, that relation can continue without closure. It neither compensates nor concludes. It accompanies endurance without promising relief. Objectivity, desire, and pleasure thus do not form a hierarchy. They operate together as modes by which relation persists without norm, measure, or satisfaction—each maintaining restraint where equivalence would otherwise prevail.

Mathematical intuition is often treated as an epistemic shortcut: a way of seeing results before proving them, a pre-formal grasp that precedes rigor. In this view, intuition is valuable but ultimately subordinate. It guides discovery, but must disappear once formalization is complete. This understanding of intuition is incompatible with the architecture developed in this work. If mathematics is a saying without meaning, and if formalization proceeds without foundation, then intuition cannot be a preliminary vision that gives way to certainty. Intuition must instead

function as a continuous discipline—one that operates within formal practice rather than outside it. This requires rethinking intuition not as insight, but as orientation under conditions of loss.

Mathematics is often imagined as immune to loss. Proofs endure, theorems persist, structures remain valid regardless of historical or personal context. Yet this appearance of permanence conceals a different reality. Within mathematical practice, loss is constant: conjectures fail, approaches dead-end, structures resist completion, equivalences break down. More profoundly, mathematics repeatedly encounters limits that cannot be eliminated: incompleteness, undecidability, incommensurability, remainder. These are not external constraints imposed from philosophy; they arise from within formal systems themselves. A mathematical intuition that mourns does not attempt to overcome these losses. It learns to proceed with them.

Mourning, in the sense developed earlier, is not resignation. It is restraint: the refusal to substitute, to compensate, to force closure. Transferred into mathematics, this restraint appears as: refusing to collapse plural structures into a single framework, resisting the temptation to universalize a local result, accepting provisional constructions without demanding totality. Such restraint is not anti-mathematical. It is what allows mathematics to continue when closure would end exploration. In this sense, mourning is not an affect added to formal work; it is a formal ethic.

If intuition mourns, it cannot function as vision. Vision aims at presence, clarity, and total grasp. Mourning suspends these aims. Instead, intuition becomes tactile and temporal. It moves by following constraints, sensing tensions, registering where structures resist alignment. It knows where to stop as much as where to proceed. This intuition does not “see” a solution. It stays with a problem without resolving it prematurely. Here intuition resembles the fingers of the virtual clock: always moving, never pointing, always indicating passage rather than position.

The comma, introduced in the previous chapter, is decisive for understanding mathematical mourning. In formal systems, the comma appears wherever: different constructions yield incompatible results, translations between frameworks leave residue, cycles fail to close. A non-mourning intuition treats the comma as a defect to be eliminated. A

mourning intuition treats it as **informative**. The comma indicates where difference persists and where formalization must remain plural. This does not paralyze mathematical work. It redirects it. Instead of seeking total coherence, intuition learns to work locally, modulating rather than resolving.

Non-foundational rigor does not rest on secure beginnings or final endpoints. It rests on the careful management of transitions, limits, and failures. A mathematical intuition that mourns is attuned to these transitions. It recognizes when a framework has reached its limits and resists extending it beyond its competence. It does not confuse internal consistency with universal validity. This intuition is rigorous precisely because it knows what cannot be done.

Earlier, this work introduced the idea of *seizing the nothing*: allowing the nothing to operate without grounding it. Mathematical intuition enacts this seizure formally. The nothing appears in mathematics as: undefined terms, empty domains, boundary cases, null constructions. A mourning intuition does not rush to fill these gaps. It allows them to structure the work. The nothing becomes a constraint that shapes relations rather than an absence to be eliminated. This is how mathematics can formalize without closure: by letting nothing remain operative.

Just as ritual offers consolation in mourning, certain mathematical practices offer consolation in the face of loss: generalization, abstraction, unification. These moves can be productive, but they can also function as substitutes—ways of avoiding unresolved difference. A mourning intuition resists consolation. It does not deny the value of abstraction, but it refuses to treat abstraction as resolution. It remains attentive to what abstraction leaves behind. This vigilance preserves mathematical plurality.

A mathematical intuition that mourns operates in analemmatic time. Problems return, but not identically. Structures are revisited, but in altered contexts. Solutions generate new residues rather than closure. This is not stagnation. It is continuation without progress. The virtual clock governs this continuation. Intuition counts without accumulating, moves without advancing, returns without repeating.

Transition

Mathematical intuition that mourns does not seek mastery over form. It practices restraint, attends to remainder, and allows the nothing to remain active. Where objectivity endures without norm, and desire and pleasure persist without resolution, what stands cannot be captured by concept alone. Continuation under constraint requires articulation, but not explanation. What holds must be figured—not in order to be represented, but in order to remain available without being reduced. Figuration here does not add content. It does not embellish, symbolize, or translate. It names distinct ways in which relation can be maintained without closure. Speech, thought, and being each admit figures—not as levels or domains, but as modes of holding that differ without hierarchy. What follows is therefore not a theory of metaphor or expression, but a careful differentiation of figures: how something can be said, how it can be thought, and how it can persist—without any of these claiming priority or foundation.

Chapter 14



Articulation Without Hierarchy: Holding Figures Apart

Figures Are Not Metaphors / Speech, Thought, Being Without Rank / Figures of speech: saying without grounding / Figures of thought: abstraction without closure / Figures of being: inhabitable forms / Why Translation Flattens Figures / Maintaining Distinction Without Separation / Figural Restraint

Figures are not substitutes for concepts, nor are they ornamental additions to what could otherwise be stated plainly. They do not translate something prior into another register. A figure names a way in which articulation holds when neither norm nor foundation can secure it. What is figured here is not content, but mode. Speech admits figures because saying cannot be reduced to expression or communication. What is said may hold without being addressed, disclosed, or owned. Figures of speech do not represent meaning; they allow saying to persist without capture. They articulate restraint without converting it into rule. Thought admits figures because rigor cannot be exhausted by deduction or proof. What is thought may proceed without synthesis, without convergence, without completion. Figures of thought do not model reality; they maintain relation where equivalence fails. They keep thinking operative under constraint. Being admits figures because persistence does not require grounding. What is does not need to be founded in order to hold. Figures of being do not symbolize existence; they articulate ways in which what persists can remain without identity, origin, or end. These figures do not form a hierarchy. None is more basic, more originary, or more real than the others. They differ without opposing one another, and they operate without converging into a unified order. Figuration here is not ascent. It is differentiation without elevation.

This work has relied on figures throughout: portico, cipher, clock, analemma, comma, lambda. Yet it has done so while repeatedly insisting

that figures must be kept distinct. This insistence is not stylistic. It is ontological. When figures collapse into one another, three failures follow: figures of speech are mistaken for ornaments or metaphors, figures of thought are mistaken for foundations or explanations, figures of being are reduced to representations or concepts. To keep figures distinct is not to purify them. It is to prevent domination—the domination of being by thought, of thought by language, or of language by ontology. The distinction among figures of speech, figures of thought, and figures of being is therefore a discipline of restraint.

Figures of speech belong to the domain of the saying. They do not aim at reference, explanation, or proof. They articulate relations without fixing them. A figure of speech does not stand for something else. It lets something pass. Its efficacy lies not in what it denotes but in how it modulates attention, rhythm, and orientation. This is why figures of speech are not expendable once meaning is clarified. They are not preliminary approximations waiting to be replaced by concepts. They are modes of saying that operate where representation fails. In this work, figures such as the portico or the cipher are figures of speech in this precise sense: they allow saying without address, relation without presence, passage without destination.

Figures of thought are not metaphors. They are abstractions, constructions, formal devices. They include concepts, models, lemmas, and structures. Their task is not to evoke but to articulate relations precisely. Yet figures of thought are never pure. They emerge historically, linguistically, and materially. They are always already figured. The danger lies not in figuration, but in forgetting it. When figures of thought are treated as transparent, self-grounding, or final, they become instruments of closure. This work has resisted such closure by insisting on: provisional formalization, non-foundational rigor, plurality of means, tolerance of remainder. Figures of thought must therefore remain mobile, capable of revision, replacement, and coexistence.

Figures of being are neither metaphors nor concepts. They are inhabitable forms—structures that shape how being can appear without reducing it to presence or objecthood. A figure of being does not represent what is. It conditions how relation can persist. Examples throughout this work include: the portico as spatial condition of relation without presence, the analemma as temporal structure of return without repetition, the virtual

clock as cipher that organizes time without measure. These figures are not explanatory. They are operative. One does not interpret them; one lives within their constraints. This is why figures of being cannot be exhausted by thought or language. They exceed both without escaping them.

Much philosophical violence arises from confusing these figures or arranging them hierarchically. When figures of speech are dismissed as merely rhetorical, the saying is silenced. When figures of thought are treated as foundational, abstraction becomes domination. When figures of being are reduced to concepts, ontology collapses into representation. The discipline proposed here resists all three moves. Figures must remain distinct, yet communicate through secretion. Speech leaks into thought; thought shapes being; being conditions saying—but none absorbs the others. This circulation without collapse is what allows the virtual clock to function.

What allows figures to relate without hierarchy is secretion. Secretion ensures that figures of speech influence thought without becoming concepts, figures of thought affect being without grounding it, figures of being shape saying without appearing as content. Communication occurs not through translation or representation, but through residue and percolation. Something changes, but nothing is transferred intact. This is why the book has insisted on secrecy without concealment, cipher without code, nothing without negation. Secretion is the ontological medium in which figures coexist.

Mourning is the temporal discipline that keeps figures from collapsing into one another. Without mourning speech would rush toward meaning, thought would seek closure, being would be stabilized as presence. Mourning restrains these impulses. It keeps absence active, remainder irreducible, and relation open. This is why mourning is indispensable for figures of being. It prevents them from becoming totalities.

Once figures are distinguished and related through secretion, objectivity can no longer mean neutrality, detachment, or mastery. Objectivity becomes fidelity to constraints: fidelity to what cannot be said, to what cannot be formalized, to what cannot be possessed. This objectivity does not eliminate subjectivity; it disciplines it. It does not deny relation; it refuses appropriation. Figures of being require this transformed objectivity in order to remain inhabitable.

If this book speaks of perfection, it is not as completion. Perfection here means consummation without closure. Figures of being approach perfection when they: sustain relation without resolving it, allow multiplicity without unification, remain precise without becoming rigid. This perfection is fragile. It can be destroyed by explanation, grounding, or canonization. To preserve it requires restraint, vigilance, and mourning.

Transition

Figures articulate how relation can persist without foundation. They do not prescribe how one ought to act. Yet articulation is never indifferent. How something is said, thought, or allowed to persist shapes what can be done without being commanded. Figures do not ground ethics, but they expose the conditions under which responsibility can arise—not as obligation, but as restraint. Where no figure claims priority, no norm can be imposed from above. What remains is not relativism, but practice: ways of holding back, delaying capture, refusing substitution, and maintaining exposure without stabilizing it. Ethics, under these conditions, does not legislate. It attends. What follows is therefore not a moral theory, nor a code of conduct. It is an account of ethics without norms: practices by which restraint is maintained in time, in form, and in relation—without appeal to law, identity, or salvation.

Chapter 15



Ethical Spacing After Normativity

Responsibility Without Command: Ethics as Restraint / Why Ethics Cannot Prescribe / Restraint as Practice / Responsibility Without Law / Holding Relation Open

Ethics here does not name a system of norms, nor a set of values to be realized. It does not prescribe ends, authorize actions, or justify decisions. What appears instead is a field of practices by which relation is maintained without capture, without substitution, and without closure. Ethics, in this sense, is not a doctrine. It is a way of holding back. Such restraint is not abstention, nor refusal in the moral sense. It does not withdraw from relation, nor does it oppose action. It intervenes by delaying appropriation, by preventing stabilization, by keeping exposure open where form would otherwise congeal. Restraint operates not against relation, but for its continuation under constraint. Responsibility arises here without command. It is not assigned by law, identity, or role. It emerges from attentiveness to how practices persist, how repetition is handled, and how difference is maintained without being resolved. To act responsibly, under these conditions, is not to follow a rule, but to sustain a spacing in which relation can continue without being closed. Ethics without norms therefore does not culminate in judgment. It remains operative only as long as restraint is practiced—in time, in form, and in relation. Where restraint hardens into rule, ethics dissolves. Where restraint is maintained, responsibility persists without being secured.

Desire enters this work not as a psychological drive but as a structural orientation toward objects. Desire tends toward something: an aim, a figure, a fulfillment. Even when desire is understood as relational rather than acquisitive, it remains directed. It seeks coincidence. This directedness becomes problematic once time no longer progresses, once presence can no longer be stabilized, and once figures of being refuse closure. In the time of the virtual clock, desire struggles—not because it is

excessive or immoral, but because it presupposes what this architecture withholds: arrival. Desire wants the portico to become a place. The virtual clock refuses this conversion.

Desire tends to produce objects, even when it claims to dissolve them. It crystallizes attention, fixes intensity, and organizes time around attainment or loss. Whether desire seeks possession or production, it orients itself toward something that could, in principle, be seized. This orientation introduces a subtle violence. What is desired is pulled into a regime of equivalence: it becomes comparable, exchangeable, rivalrous, or reproducible. Even when desire denies ownership, it still demands availability. Within the architecture developed here, this demand cannot be met. Figures of being do not offer themselves as objects. They are inhabitable, not attainable. Desire thus risks either frustration or escalation.

What desire finds most difficult is mourning. Mourning refuses substitution. Desire, by contrast, tends to substitute: if one object is lost, another appears; if one fulfillment fails, another is imagined. This movement is not a failure of desire; it is its structure. Desire moves by displacement. Mourning interrupts this movement by insisting on non-equivalence. In the time of mourning, desire loses its orientation. It can neither complete nor replace. It becomes restless or compulsive, attempting to restore direction where direction has been withdrawn. This is why desire, left unchecked, cannot inhabit the portico. It presses for entry where only passage is possible.

Pleasure operates differently. Pleasure does not aim at completion. It does not require possession. It does not demand that time converge on a point of fulfillment. Pleasure unfolds. It is iterative without accumulation, bodily without capture, temporal without progression. Pleasure can repeat without seeking identity. It can persist without escalating. This makes pleasure compatible with the time of the virtual clock. Pleasure does not require the clock to stop or advance. It moves with the fingers rather than toward a destination.

Pleasure, understood here, is inseparable from **care**. Care is not management or optimization. It is attention sustained over time without guarantee of result. Self-care, in this sense, is not self-possession. It is the practice of living with what cannot be secured: one's body, one's time,

one's relations. It accepts exposure and finitude without attempting to resolve them. Care introduces a rhythm without cadence. It aligns with mourning-time by respecting loss without ritualizing it and by sustaining relation without closure.

Unlike desire, pleasure does not insist on objectivity in the sense of capture. It does not turn what it encounters into a target. It allows relation to remain open. This does not mean that pleasure is passive. It is active, but its activity is non-appropriative. It does not accumulate, archive, or exhaust. Pleasure therefore tolerates secretion. It does not demand disclosure. It can live with leakage, residue, and percolation. This tolerance makes pleasure a bodily analogue of the cipher.

Within this framework, objectivity must be redefined. Objectivity can no longer mean: distance without involvement, neutrality without exposure, mastery without remainder. Objectivity becomes instead fidelity to constraints. It names the capacity to remain with what resists possession, to respect what cannot be stabilized, to attend without appropriating. Such objectivity is not opposed to care; it requires it. It is not opposed to embodiment; it depends on it. This transformed objectivity aligns with: mourning (temporal restraint), mathematical rigor (formal restraint), secretion (ontological restraint).

This work does not abolish desire. It situates it. Desire can operate locally, provisionally, playfully—so long as it does not claim sovereignty over time or being. Desire can appear within pleasure, but it cannot govern it. When desire relinquishes its claim to fulfillment, it can coexist with mourning. When it insists on completion, it disrupts the architecture. The question is not whether desire exists, but whether it dominates.

Figures of being require a way of living that does not turn them into goals. One does not achieve the portico, master the cipher, or complete the virtual clock. One dwells with them. Pleasure makes such dwelling possible. It allows inhabitation without conquest, repetition without canon, care without possession. This is why pleasure, rather than desire, becomes the bodily correlate of the saying.

With desire, pleasure, and objectivity reconfigured, the ethical consequences of the virtual clock come into view. They do not take the form of prescriptions or norms. They take the form of practices of restraint: temporal, formal, bodily. The epilogue will not conclude these

practices. It will return to the portico, to the cipher, and to the clock—not to summarize, but to leave them open. For what this work has sought to show is not how time should be mastered, but how it might be lived without being closed.

Epilogue



On Composing

Remaining in Passage / Nothing Concludes / What Continues / The Portico Remains

This book does not end where it began. It returns to what never served as origin. The portico has not been traversed. It has been stood in. What has taken place here has not accumulated into doctrine, nor resolved into position. No ground has been secured, no horizon reached. What persists instead is a manner of holding: a way of allowing passage without capture, articulation without enclosure, responsibility without command. To think from the portico is not to adopt a standpoint. It is to remain exposed to relation without converting exposure into openness, and without translating restraint into rule. What is maintained here is not balance, harmony, or reconciliation, but spacing—an interval in which figures can operate, practices can continue, and time can return without repeating. Nothing has been demonstrated. Nothing has been concluded.

What has been practiced is a refusal: not of thought, but of its stabilization; not of rigor, but of its canonization; not of ethics, but of its elevation into norm. This refusal does not negate. It leaves. If there is a discipline implied here, it is one that cannot be taught by instruction or secured by method. It must be exercised where measurement fails, where memory cannot be retained, where substitution would bring relief too quickly. Such discipline does not promise orientation. It does not console. It allows continuation. To think from the portico is to accept:

*that time will miss itself,
that nothing essential will be disclosed,
that rigor requires restraint,
that loss will not be replaced,
that relation persists without coincidence.*

This acceptance is not resignation. It is care. The saying will continue, silently. The clock will continue, virtually. The portico will continue, passed at every step. And nothing more is required.

This book was not composed by accumulation. It was composed by withholding. At no point did it begin with a thesis, a problem, or a position to be defended. It began instead with a refusal: the refusal to let time be settled too early, the refusal to let secrecy become content, the refusal to let intuition become vision. What guided the composition was not what needed to be said, but what needed not to be said yet. The writing did not move forward. It crossed itself. Chapters emerged only when earlier structures made them unavoidable. Nothing was allowed to function as a foundation. When something appeared to ground the work—time, secrecy, rigor—it was immediately displaced into a condition rather than a base.

This is why the book feels as though it starts several times and never quite begins. Its beginning was repeatedly deferred so that it could not become an origin. The virtual clock itself governed the composition. Writing followed a rhythm of return without repetition. Concepts reappeared, but never where they first emerged. They resurfaced altered by what had passed in the meantime. The work learned its own time by failing to coincide with itself. What looks like structure was produced by constraint, not planning. The cipher was not chosen as a theme; it was forced by the refusal of disclosure. Mourning did not arrive as an affect; it became necessary once substitution was denied. Mathematics did not enter as an example; it appeared because it already knew how to say without meaning. Pleasure was not an ethical addition; it was the only bodily mode that could inhabit what desire could not master.

The portico could not be written first. Writing it first would have turned it into a metaphor. Only after time had crossed itself, after ground had been refused, after secrecy had been secured against disclosure, could the portico appear as what had already been passed all along. Its lateness is not a defect. It is its proof. Throughout the composition, restraint mattered more than expression. Whenever a passage felt complete, it was examined for closure. Whenever an explanation felt satisfying, it was interrupted. Whenever a conclusion suggested itself, it was replaced by a transition. This was not stylistic hesitation. It was fidelity to the object—if “object” is

still the word. The work did not seek clarity. It sought breathability. Density was allowed only where it preserved air. Difficulty was tolerated only where it protected difference. Nothing was added to make the work easier to enter, because entry was never its mode. The work is passed through or not at all.

What emerged is not a system, not a doctrine, not a method. It is an orientation. It teaches nothing. It trains attention. It does not offer answers. It enforces patience. In this sense, the composition itself practiced mourning. It refused to replace what could not be said with explanation. It allowed loss to structure the work rather than be overcome by it. It accepted that some readers will never arrive, and that this is not a failure. The work ends where it must: not with insight, but with continuation. It does not conclude. It returns to the portico and leaves it open.

The virtual clock continues to count nothing.

The saying continues without speech.

If this text has an ethics, it lies here: *do not rush to mean what must remain operative*. That is how it was composed.