Non-Conceptual Negativity: Damaged Reflections on Turkey

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In his “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” Deleuze draws attention to the essential element of structuralism: the arising of a new order which will function as the transcendental topology of the parts and their positions. In this order that we have inherited from Saussure, language will be a system comprised of differences without positive terms—that is, a structure where elements will determine each other only relationally. In this structure there is one special element traceable by transcendental topology, which Deleuze calls the paradoxical element: both lacking from the structure and in excess of it, the paradoxical element mobilizing the structure. This empty square, or “the occupant without a place” as he calls it in The Logic of Sense, can produce multiple forms without being localizable within the structure:

The only place that cannot and must not be filled, were it even by a symbolic element. It must retain the perfection of its emptiness in order to be displaced in relation to itself, and in order to circulate throughout the elements and the variety of relations.²

According to speculative realists such as Benjamin Noys,³ at the outset, Deleuze, by means of the creation of a negativity (a non-

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2 Ibid., 189.
dialectical negativity) with this paradoxical element, invited a certain subject onto the scene of history, yet later rejecting this negativity, constructed his whole philosophy on the basis of pure affirmation. In my account, if this void, the occupant without a place, is to be taken as negativity, it can be taken thus only insofar as it is conceived neither in oppositional nor in conflictual terms; moreover, the fundamental issue at this juncture was what this subjectless subjectivity, awaited without being waited for, would do in the face of this non-dialectical negativity.