

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR

18 SEPTEMBER at 12:30pm, ARTS 628

BEYOND PREDICTION

On the Limits of AI, Spontaneity, and the Ontological Demand in Kant, Heidegger, and Nancy

Dr Schalk Gerber is a postdoctoral fellow at Stellenbosch University. He completed his PhD as a joint-degree through Stellenbosch University and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, focusing on the work of Achille Mbembe and Jean-Luc Nancy. His current research project is entitled: Beyond the violence of metaphysics: Ethics and globalisation at the intersection of decolonial and post-structural philosophy.

Abstract: In this talk, I explore the ethical limits and ontological implications of large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT through a philosophical trajectory from Kant to Heidegger and Jean-Luc Nancy. While AI was not a concern for Kant, his account of reason, spontaneity, and the classification of knowledge offers a critical lens for examining how AI models process and predict language. Heidegger's critique of Kant highlights the temporal and finite conditions of understanding, pointing to the limits of calculative thought. Building on this, Nancy's ontology of being-with focuses on the irreducible plurality and unpredictability of human existence, contrasting sharply with the predictive logic of AI. I argue that Nancy's emphasis on relationality and spontaneity offers a vital resource for rethinking ethical responsibility beyond algorithmic determination.