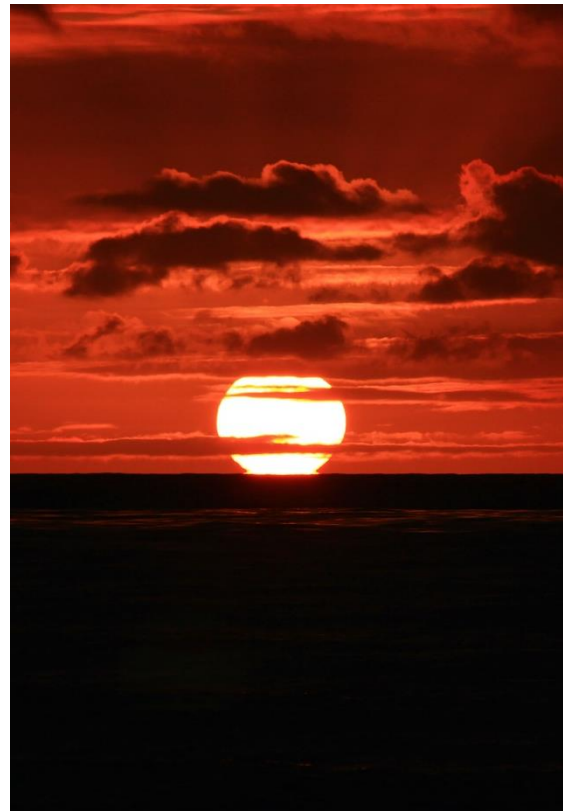


## A Brief Introduction to Absentology

By Adam Lovasz and Mark Horvath

**A**bsentology: what does it mean? First coined in a 2014 article by sociologist Jennifer Croissant, absentology is an epistemology of things that aren't there. We need a mode of philosophical and social scientific inquiry that is directed towards absence. Recent developments in realist philosophy, in particular the speculative realist ontology of Graham Harman, have contributed to the recognition that objects cannot be reduced to presence. Each and every object has a hidden aspect foreclosed to access. Every object has an interior that absents itself. Everything that exists, paradoxically, is also inexistent. This is underlined by the present view of the cosmos; it is the position of the standard Lambda-CDM model of cosmology that most of the matter in the Universe is composed of either dark matter or an even more esoteric form of unknown energy known only as „dark energy”. It is no exaggeration to say that, based on the current consensus of physicists, 95% of reality is occulted.

Knowledge-creation, in such a context, cannot be neatly and hygienically separated from agnotology, the wasteful production of nonknowledge. Absentology is hence an experiment in breaking open the self-referentiality of scientifically-oriented systems.



The activities of Absentology Collective are directed towards a knowledge that would temporarily access the power of absent objects in a reflexive manner, while leaving open the question of their final ontological status. We can know what we cannot know. A special focus of Absentology Collective is what Georges Bataille termed „heterogeneity”. Phenomena such as death, deviance, pollution, ruins and scatology are all impure objects that do not usually warrant scientific attention. Anything and everything is

heterogeneous that tends to evade access. Every single object has a heterogeneous, evil side. There is danger in all discovery, but it is this excess that we seek. Absentology is a science that exceeds its own boundaries, spilling over into transdisciplinary reveries and a transgressive, iconoclastic spirituality. Absentology, as the collective practice of agnotological discovery, inherently steps across the boundaries of standard conventions and pays but little heed to stale dogmas.

Is this philosophy? Is it art? Is it sociology? Is it cultural studies? Such questions of methodology have a certain, relative importance. But labels can only get us so far. The actual absence of objects demands a transdisciplinary perspective that does not get itself mixed up in boring debates relating to the borders between scientific disciplines. Actual, real objectivity eludes clear distinctions. This does not mean by any means that anything goes. Rather, anything goes that takes account of inaccessibility. 95% of reality is beyond our grasp, and this is a miracle in itself. The miracle is that of the in-itself, the improbable circumstance that objects inhere inside of themselves. Reality is overwhelmingly composed of intimacy and interiority. As such, realist scientific inquiry must get intimate with absence, making a home for itself among the surfaces of inscrutability.

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