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I. POLITICS

Distributing Potentiality. Post-capitalist Economies and the Generative Time Regime

|Davor Löffler

Bionote

Davor Löffler earned his PhD in Sociology from Free University of Berlin with an interdisciplinary thesis on the shift of social structures, cognition and temporality in the Technological Civilization. He worked as lecturer in Sociology and Philosophy at the BTK University of Art and Design, Berlin, Germany, and collaborated in various interdisciplinary working groups such as Mind Machine Project at the MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, the Interacting Minds Center, Aarhus, Denmark, the Role of Culture in Early Expansions of Humans Group at the Institute of Prehistory, Tübingen, Germany, and The New Center for Research and Practice. He is author and editor in the field of cultural theory and philosophical anthropology and co-founder of the journal *Plateau. Zeitschrift für experimentelle Kulturanthropologie*.

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1. Introduction. Deep Futurology: Post-capitalism in Cultural Evolution

Institutionally, economically, normatively and metaphysically, humanity is imprisoned by the assumption of unlimited growth, the notion in which the cultural hallmarks of Modernity progress, technologization, capital

ism and the linear time regime are converging. How could a civilizational time leap into a society in which growth is redefined, a leap into a post-capitalistic economy and a post-linear time regime, a leap into a new structure of the “societal metabolism”¹ connecting culture and nature be undertaken? Deciding about the direction of such a leap demands to answer two related questions. Is there a way to know what type of economy could emerge out of capitalism? Is there a way to know what form of time could emerge out of linearity? This article² seeks to answer these questions through an extrapolation of the developmental trajectory of cultural evolution and civilizational history.³ It will be shown that the contemporary knowledge about human, cultural and social evolution allows for an embedding of capitalism into macro-evolutionary processes and trajectories. Thus,

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, trans. by Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach (New York: Vintage, 1981), 949.

² The article is based on chapters from the author’s doctoral dissertation which will be published under the title *Generative Realitäten. Zur Zeitform und Metaphysik der Technologischen Zivilisation* (English title: *Generative Realities. On the Temporality and Metaphysics of the Technological Civilization*), forthcoming in 2018. The author thanks Nathan Clendenin, Jacob Vangeest and Stanimir Panayotov for the valuable comments and corrections of his own translation.

³ In the following pages, *cultural evolution* designates the period between 3 Ma until approximately 50 ka, while the term *civilizational history* designates the time onwards up to today.

this article offers the first posthumanist⁴ and cultural evolutionary conceptualization of Modernity and capitalism. It develops a *deep futurology* which allows to extrapolate the currently observable developments based on general cultural evolutionary tendencies,⁵ enabling to derive potential future civilizational states emerging out of Modernity. This approach provides insights into the chances for and constraints on a general system transition.

⁴ "Posthumanism," as Philbeck defines it, "asserts that the missing ingredient in Enlightenment humanism's recipe for the 'human' is technology itself. The claim is that the 'human' is not separable from technology. [...] the constitution of the human is a technological constitution. A clear example of this constitution is the archeological classification of human history through the presence of artifacts. It is only through the presence of such technological engagement with the world that we recognize ourselves, or our ancient ancestors. [...] posthumanism attempts to critique the concept of the 'human' and it's taken-for-granted constitution. For posthumanism, technology must become part of the first principles that constitute the 'human,' meaning that the immaterial subject and material world can no longer be fundamentally distinct." Thomas D. Philbeck, "Ontology," in *Post- and Transhumanism. An Introduction*, ed. by Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2014), 173-84, 178.

⁵ The history of the paradigms in social evolution theory shows an oscillatory pattern of conjunctures of universalism/progressivism and contingency/relativism. Cf. Stephen Sanderson, "Evolutionism and its Critics," *Journal of World-Systems Research*, No. 3 (1997), 94-114, 105-6. Currently there is another paradigm shift away from relativism to a "neo-synthetical" progressivism that takes particularism into account but also provides a measure for vertical differences of societies or developmental stages. This development is synchronous and analogous to the replacement of postmodernity's relativisms by new realisms.

The argument comprises three steps. In the first part (para. 2-5) the cultural evolutionary framework is laid out. It is shown that stages of cultural evolution and civilizational history can be discerned by the depths of operational chains of technologies, starting with the first use of stone tools three million years ago leading up to information technology. Furthermore, it is argued that the depths of operational chains are directly correlated to types of economies and ontologies of time. In the second part (para. 6-7) the hallmarks of three successive stages of history leading up to globalization and the "world-society"⁶ are briefly sketched out based on Arno Bammé's theory of axial caesura. After the Axial Age in Greece, in which the coin was introduced, Modernity follows as another axial shift in which capital emerges, leading to the Technological Civilization, a transition which we are currently witnessing. In this part the axial stages are interpreted with the cultural evolutionary framework which shows that the principles and patterns of early cultural evolution can be applied to the axial caesura and that

⁶ For an overview of the theories of the "world-society," see Jens Greve and Bettina Heintz, "Die 'Entdeckung' der Weltgesellschaft. Entstehung und Grenzen der Weltgesellschaftstheorie," in *Weltgesellschaft. Theoretische Zugänge und empirische Problemlagen. Sonderband der Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, ed. by Bettina Heintz, Richard Münch and Hartmann Tyrell (Stuttgart: Lucius und Lucius, 2005), 89-119.

each axial shift brings forth a new ontology of time. In the third part (para. 8-11) the emergence of types of economy and temporal ontologies is correlated with the structure of the technologies characterizing each of the axial shifts. This allows for an extrapolation of a post-capitalist economy and a post-linear time concept emerging out of the technological structure characteristic of the Technological Civilization. It is argued that information technology represents a qualitative deepening of operational chains which will lead to the erosion of Modernity's institutions and the capitalist class structure, since they cannot reduce the complexities of interdependencies and map the temporal relations growing out of these technologies.

2. Cultural Evolution, Operational Chains and Economy

Cultural and social evolution can be characterized as the increase of technological complexity and the increase of the interdependency of cooperation and coupled actions. Therefore, it can be described as a continuous extension of "operational chains."⁷ Early humans were limited to the production and use of stone tools, while early civilizations such as

⁷ André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. by Anna Bostock Berger, intro. by Randal White (Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press, 1993).

the "hydraulic empires"⁸ already mastered watering systems, demonstrating the increase of the depths of operational chains mediated by the increase in the complexity of technology and social organization. Today, the operational chains extend not only to extraplanetary space, notably in Mars explorations, but also down to the microcosm, as in biogenetics and quantum devices, or into intrapsychic dimensions, as in psychotherapy and cognitive enhancement.

The extension of operational chains and of the integration of cultural units into higher-ordered action sequences is a classical *topos* in sociology. Economy received special emphasis since it naturally plays a central role for coupling of actions. Georg Simmel considers money as the "means of means" which enables the flexible connection of "practical, purpose, or teleological sequences";⁹ for Emil Durkheim moral values and the form of division of labor as the organization of operational chains are intrinsically linked;¹⁰ Norbert Elias conceives the "civilizing process" as an extension of "chains of interdependency;"¹¹ Anthony Giddens

⁸ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism. A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Random House, 1951).

⁹ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby from a first draft by Kaethe Mengellberg (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. by W.D. Halls, intro. by Lewis A. Coser (New York: Free Press, 1997).

¹¹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (originally in two volumes: Vol. 1, *The History of*

observes a historical tendency of the expansion of space-time bindings in means of action and interaction which, with the rise of European Modernity, extends across the globe.¹² While these sociological approaches provide general theories about the relation of the types of economies to the social order and the cooperative interdependencies, they do not offer a formal or non-empirical account of the shifts from one type of economy or organizational structure to another, or even a formal pattern of these shifts. This correlation will be elaborated in the following chapters.

3. Stages of Noo- and Technogenesis: Cultural Capacities

The paleoanthropological "Model of the Expansion of Cultural Capacities"¹³ developed by the cognitive archeologist Miriam Haidle allows to identify discrete stages in cognitive and cultural evolution. In this model the "problem-solution-distances"¹⁴ or depths of "operational chains"¹⁵ derived from archeological artefacts,

Manners; Vol. 2, *State Formation and Civilization*), trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

¹² Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990).

¹³ Miriam N. Haidle, Michael Bolus, Mark Collard et al., "The Nature of Culture: An Eight-Grade Model for the Evolution and Expansion of Cultural Capacities in Hominins and other Animals," *Journal of Anthropological Sciences*, No. 93 (2015), 43-70.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Köhler, *The Mentality of Apes*, trans. by Ella Winter (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925).

¹⁵ For the history of this concept in cognitive

such as stone tools or needles, are analyzed and compared, showing that the evolution of hominin species spreads over four general evolutionary stages. The axiomatic assumption is that tools, cognition and culture co-evolve, thus rendering this model a posthuman approach.¹⁶

The four distinct cultural evolutionary stages identified by Haidle et al. are termed "cultural capacities." Each grade of cultural capacity is marked by new types of technologies that display a discrete extension of the depths of the involved operational chains. Each evolutionary level also marks the emergence of distinct cognitive and organizational capacities.¹⁷

Modular Cultural Capacity (<2.6 Ma)

The first distinctly hominin stage is characterized by the appearance of secondary tool use, in which one tool is produced and used to produce another tool. Tools of this stage such as knapped stone hammers or scrapers comprise a set of independent, cultural, learned units as behavioral modules, which are combined in different ways and form different operational chains. The term "modular" denotes that these

archeology, see Miriam N. Haidle, "Archaeological Approaches to Cognitive Evolution," in *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology*, ed. by David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bennardo, Victor C. de Munck and Michael D. Fischer (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 450-67.

¹⁶ Cf. Philbeck, "Ontology," 138.

¹⁷ Cf. Haidle et al., "The Nature of Culture," 56-60.

tools are acting on or modifying each other and, furthermore, that they are applicable in various contexts.

Composite Cultural Capacity (<500 ka)

Building up on the modular stage, in the composite stage of development tools appear which consist of several modules fused into a composite unit, such as a spear with a hafted tip or a hammer stone with a grip, attached with a compound adhesive. In these tools new materials and qualities are produced and operationalized (for example glue), while their elements are gathered from spatiotemporally separated locations.

Complementary Cultural Capacity (<100 ka)

The following step in the cumulative cultural evolution is marked by the emergence of complementary tools, such as bow-and-arrow, needle-and-thread, or ornamental devices such as necklaces. Complementary tools consist of a module that serves as an acting entity (for example bow or needle) and takes effect on an interdependent exchangeable part (arrow or thread).

Notional Cultural Capacity (<70 ka)

The phylogenetic period of early cultural evolution ends with the stage of the notional cultural capacity, in which the human organ-

ism ideal-typically has reached “behavioral modernity.”¹⁸ This phase has also been called the “creative revolution”¹⁹ and marks the beginning of civilizational history. It is defined by the emergence of notional tools such as music instruments, figurines, cave paintings and traps. These are tools for cognitive engineering, in which the psyche of the observers is affected. In this phase, sets of symbols, aesthetical codes and semantical rules are developed.

¹⁸ Behavioral modernity is an ideal measure which asserts that a hominin species displays all the features and capacities that are contemporarily present in humans. It is closely related to the notion of “human universals,” which are human features such as music, core family, humor, communication through conventional signs or abstract social organization that are found in every culture. See April Nowell, “Defining Behavioral Modernity in the Context of Neandertal and Anatomically Modern Human Populations,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 39 (2010), 437-52; Donald Brown, *Human Universals* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1991).

¹⁹ Steven Mithen, “A Creative Explosion? Theory of Mind, Language and the Disembodiment of the Upper Paleolithic,” in *Creativity in Human Evolution and Prehistory*, ed. by Steven Mithen (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 165-91.

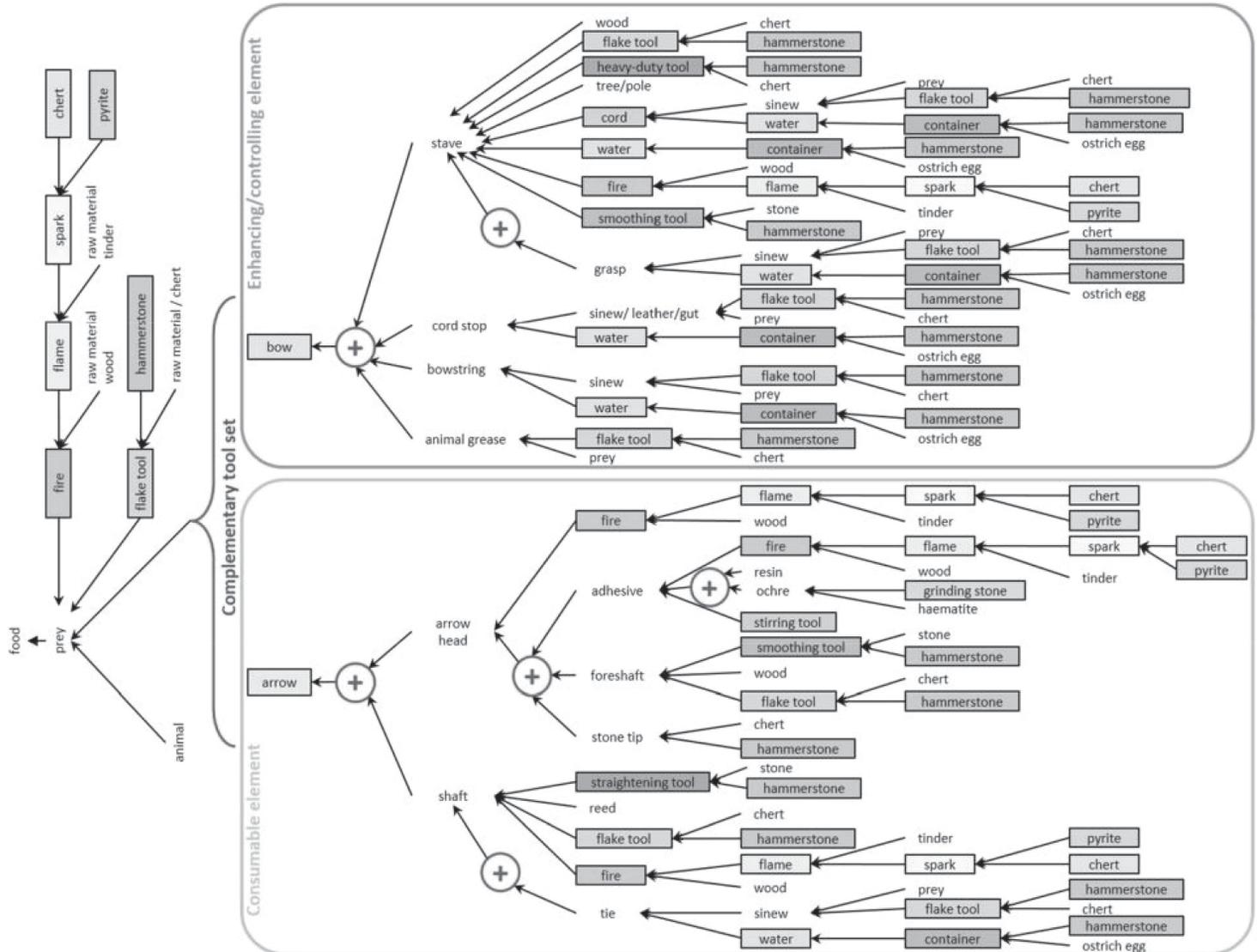


Figure 1. Effective chain of production and hunting with a bow and arrow.

Source: Marlize Lombard and Miriam N. Haidle, "Thinking a Bow-and-Arrow Set: Cognitive Implications of Middle Stone Age Bow and Stone-Tipped Arrow Technology," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, No. 22 (2012), 237-264, 257.

The axiomatic assumption of this approach is that the sequence of capacities follows the principle of cumulative cultural evolution or the “ratchet-effect,” which Tennie et al. defined as a process “in which modifications and improvements stay in a population fairly readily (with relatively little loss or backward slippage) until further changes ratchet things up again.”²⁰ Every new capacity grade is cumulatively built upon the previous capacity.²¹

Evidently, the cultural evolutionary tendency of the cumulative increase of operational chains and problem-solution-distances continues in and as civilizational history. A formalization of the general principles and patterns of the expansion of cultural capacities thus could enable to identify later stages of social evolution as such discrete capacity shifts, allowing to determine whether humanity is currently facing such a transition, preparing it for its consequences.

4. Formalizing Noo- and Technogenesis

At least eighteen formal developmental principles and patterns can be isolated in the

²⁰ Claudio Tennie, Josep Call and Michael Tomasello, “Ratcheting Up the Ratchet: On the Evolution of Cumulative Culture,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, Vol. 364, No. 1528 (2009), 2405-15, 2405.

²¹ For a formal definition, see Alexander Riegler, “The Cognitive Ratchet: The Ratchet Effect as a Fundamental Principle in Evolution and Cognition,” *Cybernetics and Systems*, Vol. 32, No. 3-4 (2001), 411-27.

stages of the expansion of cultural capacities.²² To prepare the reframing of the history of economies in terms of cultural evolution theory, the argumentation of this article is restricted to the explication of only three essential principles: the correlation between the range of domesticated space, agency externalization and agency emulation; the principle of the deepening of temporal horizons as modulation of temporal ontology; and the pattern of recursion and hierarchical integration.

Expansion of spacetime domestication

Leroi-Gourhan stated that the earliest technologies are characterized by the emulation of mechanical actions which as a principle propels the history of technology up to the late industrial production.²³ But a close examination of the cumulative sequence of the instruments defining cultural capacities shows a somewhat different principle of progress. Each new capacity level is based on the successive *externalization of agency*.

The performances of the modular capacity as the first stage of cultural development such as knapped stone tools resemble mechanical action patterns by simulating and enhancing the possible interactions of a phenotype with

²² For a detailed analysis, see Chapters 4 and 5 and, for a summary, see Chapter 8.3 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

²³ Cf. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 237-56.

its environment, for example “[c]utting, molding, scraping, and digging.”²⁴ While in the first stage the events and processes that claws or teeth can realize are materially emulated and externalized into the instrumental object, the tools of the next technological stage do not refer any longer to the mere organic capabilities and functional interactions, but to the capabilities that the *whole previous technological assemblage* displayed. They extend the range of actions based on the previously established range: a thrown spear or a hammer stone with a grip attached realize events located *beyond the organic spatiotemporal radius of action*, and simultaneously realize events that are *beyond any phenotype-related concept of action*. The events produced by a spear or a hammer are unprecedented in the history of life, for they are *artificial* or *noospherical* events, unfolding within the relational strata of technology or *noos* itself.

The principle of agency externalization is evidently also present in the bow-and-arrow-assemblage (complementary cultural performance), which represents a second order externalization, in which the acting arm is externalized into the bow and the spear into the arrow. The emulation of the action and concept scheme of spear throwing (composite cultural performance), which itself was already

distanced from the organic range of actions by one grade, is externalized into the materiality of the bow-and-arrow. The trap (notional cultural capacity) is the most evident example of the principle of externalization of agency, since it instrumentally emulates the presence of a hunting group.

In every new cultural capacity, the point of action is shifted further away from the body. The successive externalization of agency through instrumental mediation results in the expansion of the domesticated space or niche: every new range of externalization establishes a wider continuum of resource retrieval, ordered states and secured spaces. Each capacity grade as a qualitative increase of the depths of operational chains therefore results in an expansion of the “specific functional environment”²⁵ or the “membrane”²⁶ between culture and nature. Since economies are mediating the organization of operational chains, the historical sequence of economies can be conceptualized as an expression of the constant cumulative expansion of domesticated spaces starting in early cultural evolution up to today.

²⁴ Ibid., 242.

²⁵ Haidle et al., “The Nature of Culture,” 51.

²⁶ André Leroi-Gourhan, *Milieu et Techniques* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1945).

*Extension of operational temporality
and modification of temporal ontology*

Each grade of externalization as grade of cultural capacity also entails a deepening of the operational temporality, regarding the depth of planning time and the expansion of the temporal continua of possible addressable or instantiable events.

There are three types of *quantifiable* temporal expansions:

- The problem-solution-distances in the use and production of instruments are increasing, resulting in a deepening of planning time and the increase and differentiation of modularized sequences of causality (*internal temporal scaffold*).

- The externalization of agency extends the temporal depth by compressing spacetime²⁷ by technologically extending the continuum of causally linked events and ordered states further into the future (*external temporal scaffold*).

²⁷ For later stages of social evolution this has been elaborated, for example, by McLuhan as media transgressing space, by Giddens as binding of spacetime, by Virilio in the notion of acceleration and by Luhmann as expansion of medial experience space. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*; Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, trans. by Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1977); Niklas Luhmann, *The Reality of Mass Media*, trans. by Kathleen Cross (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

- Domesticated spacetime is expanding, since new technologies such as clothes or weapons allow for securing resources, minimizing threats and stressors, reducing contingencies, normalizing eventualities, mitigating risk and formatting the unforeseen, establishing what can be called "zones of preemption" (*potential temporal scaffold*).

This *quantifiable* expansion of operational temporal horizons is accompanied by a *qualitative* alteration of the *temporal ontology*. The "content" of time, that which provides the temporal continuum with consistency such as forces, relations, causalities, qualities or intentionalities, is changing with each layer of extension.²⁸ When, for example, in the composite cultural capacity adhesives are manufactured, the continuum of relations compared to the previous modular capacity is lined with new qualities, agencies and processes, resulting in a new type of consistency or ontology of time. The complementary tool needle-and-thread already displays a complex or recursive "object grammar," which implies the abstraction of time sequences as nested layers of operationality and the structuration of instrumental spatio-

²⁸ The current state of knowledge about the general co-evolutionary relation between cognition, cooperation, tool use and temporality, particularly with regards to the human feature of "mental time travel," is summarized in Michael C. Corballis, *The Recursive Mind. The Origins of Human Language, Thought, and Civilization* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 81-127.

temporal part-whole relations.²⁹ The function of a trap as a performance of the notional cultural capacity is based on the capability to anticipate the attention, intention, processing and decision time *within* the mind of prey organisms; it operates with stochastic probabilities.

Each capacity stage in early cultural and the following social evolution is characterized and therefore *formally identifiable* by a new ontology of temporality. Inversely, every type of temporal ontology must be correlated with a capacity stage. Stages in civilizational history as defined by discrete increases of the operation chains therefore can be identified and distinguished by *differences in the culturally dominant conception of time* which again must be correlated with the type of economy.

*Levels of hierarchical integration
and the pattern of recursion*

The sequence of expansions of cultural capacities reveals a universal developmental pattern in human and cultural evolution, which - as will be shown in the following sections - is also seen in social evolution up to the current civilizational shift. It comprises two functional mechanisms: the cumulative hierar-

²⁹ For the general concept of nested layers of functional integration in technologies, see W. Brian Arthur, *The Nature of Technology. What It Is and How It Evolves* (New York: Simon and Schuster/Free Press, 2009), 39-44.

chical integration of complexities and the recursion of abstractified performances.

The increase in the depths of operational chains in a new cultural capacity is based on the operational implementation of previously established performances. The former range of operations within a performance or assemblage is objectified as a single unit and transferred into a higher order effective chain as a *modular element*. The production of the hammer stone with a hafted grip, within the composite cultural capacity, requires the production of the stone tool as in the previous modular capacity and *in addition to that* the crafting of the grip and adhesive material. In this way, every new cultural capacity can be formally defined as an *emergent layer of integration* for previously established modules. The expansions of cultural capacities are basically increases in the "complexity of hierarchical integration"³⁰ of processes. This suggests that stages in cultural and social evolution can be formally defined and identified by the number of layers of hierarchical integration of performances.

The second principle, *the pattern of recursion*, shows that the increase of the range of integration is not gradual or continuous,

³⁰ This notion was elaborated in detail by the developmental psychologist Commons. See Michael Lamport Commons, "Introduction to the Model of Hierarchical Complexity and its Relationship to Postformal Action," *World Future: The Journal of New Paradigm Research*, Vol. 64, No. 5-7 (2008), 305-20.

but discrete and discontinuous. This finding is essential, since it allows to connect the formal measure for development - the level of hierarchical integration - with empirical data.

As mentioned above, the emulation of a cultural performance such as hammering does not mean the externalization of the mere mechanical process into materiality, but the material emulation of the *whole functioning* of the entire assemblage. For example, when a grip is attached to a stone tool, two functional aspects are implemented which firstly emerged in the process of hammering. The grip allows the application of higher forces and better control as a functional enhancement of the existing artificial process, but simultaneously it protects the acting hand and arm from injuries during the practice as a practical enhancement of the artificial process. The grip as a device *recursively* refers to the knowledge derived from previous technological actions. In this way, every new tool contains the abstraction of already instrumentally discretized processes. This process of the abstraction of a previously present functional process and its *re-entry* into operational chains as a single, materialized module can be termed *process-emulative recursion*.³¹ For example, in grip tool

technology the whole previous tool-agent assemblage including its functional and affordance environment is *recursively* implemented into the grip. Accordingly, the composite cultural capacity represents a recursion of the previously established modular cultural capacity.

The principle of *process-emulative recursion* is also explicated in the following capacity transitions. The bow-and-arrow emulates the entire spear-thrower assemblage. The bow-and-arrow thus, in its material composition, *recursively* contains and addresses the *whole* purpose and context of the previous performance as an abstraction. Most strikingly, the principle of process-emulative recursion is illustrated in the trap as a performance of the latest stage, the notional capacity. Traps are emulating the presence of a whole hunting assemblage, they are recursive materializations of the entire hunting process: the trap contains all the historically accumulated knowledge not only about the technical and strategic aspects of hunting, but also of the limits of the prey's cognition, which have been revealed over time in the experiences of hunting assemblages. Simultaneously, its fully automated

organizational-syntactical recursion in theories of cognition (cf. Corballis, *The Recursive Mind*) or the operative-functional recursion in theories of technology (cf. Arthur, *The Nature of Technology*, 39-44). For a detailed introduction of this new understanding of recursion, see Chapter 4.2.4 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

³¹ Process-emulative recursion is to be distinguished from other types, such as the linear-iterative recursion in mathematics and computer science, the generative-hierarchical recursion in linguistics, the

snapping mechanism as a functional principle is a recursive abstraction of the previously developed half-automated snapping mechanism of bows. Each cultural capacity can therefore be formally defined as discrete level of hierarchical integration of the previous extent of operational chains through the *recursive implementation* of its concept as a single module. Thus, grades of cultural capacity can formally be understood as discrete levels of recursion.

Transferred to economies, their types must also be related to the depth of hierarchical integration of operational chains, wherein each of the lower order economic performances are *nested* in higher order economic performances, such as coin exchange is *nested* within capital exchange. In this way, types of economies can be localized within the developmental grading of cultural and social evolution by their depth of recursivity.

5. The Extension of Agent Coupling in and as Civilizational History

In the following step of the argument, the model of cultural capacities is sociologically reformatted to enable the application of cultural evolutionary principles and patterns isolated from early capacity expansion to later history. What is needed is an understanding of the mode and means by which operational chains are being continuously ex-

tended beyond mere tool use. For a theoretical conceptualization of this process, the notion “civilizational capacity”³² has been proposed. Civilizational capacities demarcate the ideal ranges of commensurabilization and coupling of abstract agents such as individuals, groups, collectives or any other regular entity. It shows that operational chains are expanding beyond the instrumental and productive aspects of early cultural performances, by the integration of abstract agent units into higher order operational chains.

Performances such as those displayed in the production of figurines, cave paintings or music instruments, which appeared in the notional cultural capacity stage approximately 70.000 years ago, are a type of tool whose purpose was not to create events in physical nature but in the mind. This capacity is evidence of “behavioral modernity” in which the biological evolution of mankind is ideal-typically completed. It marks the beginning of civilizational history.

Haidle et al. define the functional scope of notional performances in the following way:

Notional concepts are mentally constructed and socially shared entities and relationships that can be represented in a)

³² For a detailed elaboration of the concept, see Chapter 5 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

the signification of objects/signs (e.g., cross, crescent and Star of David as symbols of religions); b) systems of ideas (e.g., myths, religious beliefs, philosophical questions, constitutions of states); c) normative definitions (e.g., metric and value systems); or d) virtual beings (e.g., angels) and characters (e.g., protecting capacities of an amulet). The socially transmitted information exceeds that of all former capacities. It is now based on non-physical concepts, which can be manipulated only in the mind or through imagination, and their effects on real or other notional modules.³³

As devices for “cognitive engineering,” notional tools are addressing the minds of others (cave painting) or of the self (music instrument). They contain elements within the production sequence that are purely conceptual, such as certain semantically laden color schemes, affecting tones, or magical materials. In these performances, the mind, psyche or anima is revealed or isolated (*freigestellt*) as an object. The notional stage in which the mind as an invisible unit is revealed and addressed technically marks the beginning of the *operationalization of abstractions of concrete agents*.

³³ Haidle et al., “The Nature of Culture,” 59.

Notional performances inherently relate to sociality and to the continuum of the “generalized other.”³⁴ Notional tools allow for the operational formatting of abstracted agents (any agential or seemingly intentional entity such as individuals, groups, collectives, animals, spirits, natural phenomena or technological assemblages) and their implementation into potential action sequences through a symbolic, semantic and informationally commensurating matrix. They enable to convey information horizontally and vertically to any recipient and to extend the operational chains and cooperation beyond the immediate present and locality. In short, the notional cultural capacity is the period in human evolution in which media emerge as the central relays and relational structure of practices. Media are material externalizations of mental contents, or, in Merlin Donald’s terms, “external symbolic storages” or “exograms.”³⁵

The appearance of exograms establishes a new type of evolutionary capacity: the *civilizational capacity*. Civilizational capacities are performances and technologies that enable the coupling of autonomous agents. Exograms or

³⁴ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

³⁵ Cf. Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind. Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 314-19.

notional tools are the basis of the *cumulation of knowledge, practices and social organization*, and thus of history. Just as each grade of cultural capacities can be formally defined and identified by the recursion of a lower grade capacity into a higher level of hierarchical complexity in the new capacity, discrete stages in civilizational history can be identified by the expansion, recursion and integration of civilizational capacities.

As Haidle et al. note, currencies such as money are also a notional tool or external symbolic storage.³⁶ Their function as a civilizational performance was highlighted early on by Simmel, who states that money as *means for means* significantly expands cooperation and operational chains. Different types of economies therefore must be understood as realizations of different civilizational capacities.

6. Three Caesurae in Civilizational History: Greek Axial Age, Modernity, Technological Civilization

Modernity, as the onset of capitalism, globalization, civil societies, scientification, technologization, the ideology of progress and the linear time regime, is considered a caesura in human history throughout all theories of social evolution. It is rooted in ancient Greek culture, another historical caesura, and

it leads to another caesura, the Technological Civilization. These three caesurae are the topic of Arno Bammé's book *Homo Occidentalis*,³⁷ a detailed reconstruction of the historical development of Western thought and metaphysics. In a synthetic approach, Bammé shows that forms of consciousness and rationality developed in European history are entangled with economic structures as the organization of the metabolism connecting nature and culture.

Bammé calls these stages of social evolution "axial caesurae," referring to the concept of the "Axial Age" introduced by Karl Jaspers in 1949.³⁸ Jaspers famously stated that between 800-200 BCE, a shift in the worldviews took place simultaneously in Greece, the Levant, Persia, China and India, which is characterized by the emergence of transcendentalism and individuation, a renunciation of myth and personalized divine forces, and a turn towards abstract metaphysical concepts as in Greek philosophy, the prophetic religions, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The question whether the Technological Civilization marks

³⁷ Arno Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis. Von der Anschauung zur Bemächtigung der Welt. Zäsuren abendländischer Epistemologie* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2011).

³⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History*, trans. by Michael Bullock (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955). For the current state of the "Axial Age Debate," see Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas (Eds.), *The Axial Age and its Consequences* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³⁶ Haidle et al., "The Nature of Culture," 59.

another such axial transition is left open by Jaspers.³⁹

Exactly this question is the starting point of Bammé's inquiry. He asserts that Modernity and the Technological Civilization display characteristics of an axial shift, since, in these stages, new forms of consciousness and metaphysics, as well as a new type of social synthesis mediated by new structures of economy, occur. For the scope of this article the main hallmarks of the axial caesurae are sketched out in order to lay out the material for the cultural evolutionary interpretation in the following sections.

Greek Axial Age

In the Greek Axial Age culture, a new relationship to transcendence, the absolute truth and the *logos* is established, enabled through the spread of rational reflection or "second order thinking."⁴⁰ The relation of individuals to society and world for the first time in history becomes broadly founded on rationality.

³⁹ Jaspers in his time could not conceive of a co-evolution between technology and metaphysics. This prevented him from recognizing that new technologies themselves can be and indeed were the cause of axial shifts. As Bammé shows, these shifts are also directly related to changes of the economic structure.

⁴⁰ Cf. Yehuda Elkana, "Die Entstehung des Denkens zweiter Ordnung im antiken Griechenland," in *Kulturen der Achsenzeit. Ihre Ursprünge und ihre Vielfalt*. Teil 1: *Griechenland, Israel, Mesopotamien*, ed. by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), 52-8.

Bammé explains this metaphysical and cognitive novelty through Sohn-Rethel's materialist epistemology, which states that the use of the coin - which was introduced in the Mediterranean space between 800-650 BCE - leads to "real abstraction,"⁴¹ which grounds an artificial socialization or "social synthesis" that does not rely on synthesizing relations through direct barter or use value, but through the abstraction of use value in the numerical exchange value, causing the institutionalization of abstract and conceptual framings of the concrete.⁴² An analogical increase in abstraction can be found in the synchronically developed alphabetical writing system, since the alphabet allows a reflective distancing from language and thinking.⁴³ The Greek polis structure has proto-democratic institutions, which are bound by the *nomos* as an abstraction and formaliza-

⁴¹ Cf. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology*, trans. by Martin Sohn-Rethel (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1977), 35-56.

⁴² See also Rudolf Wolfgang Müller, *Geld und Geist. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Identitätsbewußtsein und Rationalität seit der Antike* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus, 1981); Richard Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind. Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Here Bammé refers, among others, to the two classical works of Havelock and Ong. See Eric A. Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

tion of traditional societal systems.⁴⁴ Here early forms of civil societies and bourgeoisie emerge.⁴⁵ Since a full market-based society had not developed in Antiquity, production was still based on slaves, and wealth was not re-invested but retained, resulting in a social synthesis that did not become fully artificial and prevented the full development of formal thinking. Therefore, even Greek metaphysics, although within philosophy the relatedness to the universal is institutionalized, remains attached to a realism and to the concrete.

Expressed formulaically, the historical shift in the Greek Axial Age can be characterized as the *transition from myth to logos, from magic to substance, from community to society.*

Modernity

Bammé shows that Modernity can be understood as another axial caesura in which the formal and rational relationship to the world was completely developed. The commercial revolution during the end of the Middle Ages, the formation of the inner market, the commodification of work force, and the conversion of the economy towards surplus production lead to a new type of social synthesis. The entirely formal

and abstract equivalent exchange within anonymous markets results in an increased artificiality of social relations. It is characterized, in Sohn-Rethel's term, by "conceptual abstraction," which is the basis of the dualistic, scientific and calculative world-relationship (*Weltverhältnis*) characteristic of Modernity. Nature turns into an operational continuum and becomes rationalized, leading up to the metaphysical concept of the dualism of mind and matter. Natural science is institutionalized and supports the ubiquitousization of abstract thought and "formal-operational" cognition in Piaget's term. The formal relation to the world is furthermore supported by urbanization, the empowerment of the merchant class, reformation and secularization, book print, firearms and metallurgy, new sailing technologies, colonization, engineering, and mathematization. It finally becomes institutionalized with Newton's force equations, which enable the transfer of scientific knowledge into the sphere of production, resulting in industrialization. The modern individual and the rational Kantian transcendental subject as social forms are rooted in the reciprocity of equivalence exchange in capitalist markets and the contractual relationships in constitutional states.

This cognitive and social historical period can be characterized as the *transition from logos to ratio, from substance to matter, from society to nature.*

⁴⁴ Cf. Christian Meier, *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980).

⁴⁵ Cf. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Einleitung. Der Durchbruch der Achsenzeit im antiken Griechenland," in *Kulturen der Achsenzeit*, 43-51.

Technological Civilization

Following the sequence of transformations based on changes in economic relations and social synthesis, Bammé identifies the Technological Civilization as another axial caesura. It starts around 1880 with the fusion of science, industry and capital.⁴⁶ In the Technological Civilization sociality is not constituted by relations mediated by the anonymous market, but is based on a new type of synthesis: in the “synthesis through technology,”⁴⁷ humans are connected by the possibilities of interactions provided by continuously progressing technology. The hybridization of science and production results in the “amalgamation of nature and society”⁴⁸ and dissolves Modernity’s dualism. The virtualization of currency erodes the equivalence relation as the basis of reciprocity and undermines subject-bound rationality as the basis of social interactions. Cybernetics, as the externalization of ratio into information technologies, leads to a replacement of the Aristotelian two-valued logic by a many-valued, “polycontextural”⁴⁹ logic, which results in the formation of yet another form of consciousness, which Gotthard Günther termed the trans-

classical “consciousness of the machines.”⁵⁰ Globalization leads to an erosion of territorially defined states, and medialization turns the modern, rational and civil subject into an avatar. Metaphysically, the dualism of mind and matter dissolves and the rendering of the world through the category information leads to the category of the *process* taking up ontological primacy.

Condensed in a formula, the Technological Civilization can be characterized as the *transition from ratio to generativity, from matter to process, from nature to the hybrid*.

While Arno Bammé’s historical reconstruction convincingly proves that the Technological Civilization can be understood as another axial shift, it does not provide a detailed description of any associated upcoming institutions, economy, metaphysics or cognitive structure. By applying the formal criteria for capacity shifts as detailed above, the sequence of the axial caesurae can be understood as the continuation of the same developmental principles and patterns that are determining early cultural and human evolution. Each axial caesura represents a level of hierarchical integration in which the civilizational performances of the previous caesura are abstracted, condensed into operational modules, and recursively imple-

⁴⁶ Cf. Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis*, 237.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 741-52.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 817.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gotthard Günther, “Life as Polycontexturality,” in Gotthard Günther, *Beiträge zu einer operationsfähigen Dialektik*, Band 2 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1979), 283-306.

⁵⁰ Gotthard Günther, *Das Bewusstsein der Maschinen. Eine Metaphysik der Kybernetik* (Baden-Baden and Krefeld: Agis, 1963).

mented into higher order operational chains.⁵¹ The Greek Axial Age is the *“human assemblage-integrative civilizational capacity”* in which performances form a new level of hierarchical integration, which allows differently constituted human groups to connect into operational chains. These performances are recursively implemented in the *“machine-integrative civilizational capacity”* of Modernity by a new level of hierarchical integration which connects all kinds of formal units and machines into operational chains. This is followed by another recursion in the *“process-integrative civilizational capacity,”* which characterizes the Technological Civilization in which another level of hierarchical integration implements all kinds of informationally rendered systems and processes into operational chains. An extrapolation of the pattern of recursion allows for a *deep futurological* deduction of the constitution of a civilizational stage after Modernity.

7. Stages in Civilizational History as Types of Temporality Domestication

Historians and sociologists of culture have found five historical “time Gestalts”⁵² or

“time regimes”⁵³ that correlate to different levels of social complexity:⁵⁴ “Cyclical” and “oscillatory” time concepts characterize early centralistic cultures such as the Mesopotamian, Egyptian or Maya; an “absolute” time *Gestalt* develops in Axial Age Greece and simultaneously an “eschatological” one appears in the Axial Age monotheistic cultures, followed by the “linear-progressive” time *Gestalt* of Modernity.

Each *Gestalt* of time is characteristic of a certain mode of collective domestication of spacetime since it mediates, binds and commensurabilizes the instrumental and cooperative actions aligned in trans-temporal operational chains.⁵⁵ The *Gestalt* of time or culturally dominant time regime therefore can be understood as a fingerprint of the reproductive and genera-

⁵³ Cf. Aleida Assmann, *Zeit aus den Fugen. Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitregimes der Moderne* (München: Hanser, 2013).

⁵⁴ The following summary is based on Gloy, *Zeit*, 119-43; Rudolf Wendorff, *Zeit und Kultur. Geschichte des Zeitbewußtseins in Europa* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985); Werner Bergmann, “Das Problem der Zeit in der Soziologie. Ein Literaturüberblick zum Stand der ‘zeitsoziologischen’ Theorie und Forschung,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Vol. 32 (1982), 462-504; Armin Nassehi, *Die Zeit der Gesellschaft. Auf dem Weg zu einer soziologischen Theorie der Zeit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993); Assmann, *Zeit aus den Fugen*, 131-207.

⁵⁵ An elaboration of the fundamental relation between institutional complexity, metaphysics and temporality can be found in Günter Dux, *Die Zeit in der Geschichte. Ihre Entwicklungslogik vom Mythos zur Weltzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992).

⁵¹ For a detailed elaboration, see Chapters 8.4-8.6 and 10.4 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

⁵² Cf. Karen Gloy, *Zeit. Eine Morphologie* (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 2006).

tive capacities of a culture. More precisely, it is the metaphysical expression of the capacity of each civilizational stage *to domesticate events in time*. It can be derived that with the emergence of another civilizational capacity after Modernity, which is based on a new type of technology, a new concept of time will emerge.

8. Simple Machine, Coin, Absolute Time Regime: Horizontal Coupling in the Axial Age

The principle of externalization of agency, of the emergence of a new layer of hierarchical integration and the recursion of abstracted civilizational performances are immediately displayed in the changes of performances that define the Axial Age transition in Greece. Specifically, the institutionalization of coin currency can be interpreted within the cultural evolutionary framework, allowing for a new understanding of its function. In a modification of Sohn-Rethel's notion of the coin enabling a social synthesis based on real abstraction and Simmel's concept of money as a means for other means, coin currencies can be understood as the medium for a specific extension of operational chains. It will be shown that the coin, the technological structure of the "simple machine," and the metaphysical notion of time in Greece are directly correlated.

They constitute a *horizontal coupling* of agents.

Money as a notional tool "contains" the abstraction of a concrete good or service. As such, it is not only a retro-oriented memory system⁵⁶ or a recording of past debt-relations,⁵⁷ but, moreover, it enables a numerical, quality-neutral coupling of actions *extending into the future*. Stated more strongly, it opens the potential for interactions in the future. The centralized ascription of value to coins forms a virtual or open system of infinitely divisible points in which services and goods, as well as actions, are connected. This medial-numerical matrix spans over the whole Mediterranean space. It commensurabilizes and homogenizes the locally dispersed places of production and consumption by their formatting in abstract numerical symbols. Through this medial matrix, qualitatively different actions, events and processes can be coupled into higher order operational chains. This results in the potential for forming human-based assemblages to a new extent, which can furthermore be flexibly and adaptively constituted. It is characteristic of this function of the coin that it was initially spread and institutionalized in Greece to pay mercenaries.⁵⁸ The coin allowed this class of

⁵⁶ Cf. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1994), 197.

⁵⁷ Cf. David Graeber, *Debt. The First 5000 Years* (Brooklyn, New York: Melville House, 2011).

⁵⁸ Cf. Graeber, *Debt*, 226-8; Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis*, 200-11.

agents to take part in any local market despite not producing or offering anything. The virtual matrix of exchange established by the coin enables the flexible allocation of resources and the coupling of operations and agents beyond the limits of locality.

The Ionian colonies were not only the centers of commerce from which the coin and alphabet started to spread but were also the place where philosophy emerged.⁵⁹ In contrast to historically grown myths, philosophical reasoning is a *techne*, a thought technology for the systematic search for absolute, universal truths. The assertions and interpretations of the world based on rationality and argumentation are in principle comprehensible to any individual at any place and at any time. As a typical expression of the axial metaphysical shift, philosophy draws a distinction between the concrete world with all its variant phenomena and qualities, and a homogenous world of the absolute beyond. This realm of transcendence contains the good, the true and the beautiful and overarches the concrete reality (analogous to the Kingdom of Heaven in the monotheistic axial cultures). It allows for interpretative homogeneity, the establishment of reciprocity of motives, and the commensurabilization of purposes of individuals and collectives. Philosophy, by revealing intersubjective truth, increases the potential

to form operational chains significantly. But the realm of absolute truths remains a *static* realm that is always derived directly from the concrete. As in Plato's cave metaphor, the absolute in Greek philosophy is spread only as one layer of abstraction over the given.

This staticity of the transcendental is also characteristic of the abstract-but-static time concept in Greece. Early cultures display cyclical and oscillatory temporal concepts, which are constituted by regime eras or natural cycles, and are thus defined by concrete phenomena and qualities.⁶⁰ In contrast to these quality-bound time concepts an abstract, an "absolute time *Gestalt*"⁶¹ emerges in Greece. One such abstract notion of temporality was developed by Plato in the concept of the Aeon as that which endures infinitely,⁶² statically layered over the concrete, while the mythical Golden Age is similarly a static realm of the abstract beyond which it is never to be realized in the real world (again structurally analogous to the eschatological concepts of the monotheistic axial cultures). Even when Heraclitus concludes that everything flows, he throws a static conceptual layer of abstraction over the concrete since the monistic principle of everything flowing in itself does not allow for dynamicity or differentiations. The abstract temporality and

⁵⁹ Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis*, 480.

⁶⁰ Cf. Wendorff, *Zeit und Kultur*, 54-7.

⁶¹ Cf. Gloy, *Zeit*, 131-41.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 141-2.

conceptual transcendence forms a layer of *relational homogeneity*, commensurabilizing concrete phenomena, thus allowing the alignment of interpretations, motives and actions.

While the Greek proto-democratic political structures enable organizational flexibility, they remain oriented towards establishing *isonomia*,⁶³ the concept of equality in political rights. The Greek culture did neither develop notions of general societal change, reform, or even revolution, nor of social progress or utopia.⁶⁴ The social world remains static.

This staticity is also characteristic of the economy: profit is retained, not reinvested, slaves and not workers are still the basis of production, and production is not aimed at an inner market.⁶⁵

The realm of transcendent truth in philosophy, the regulative idea of *isonomia*, the “real abstraction” in the coin, and the abstract absolute time concept form a layer of *formal homogeneity* that spans over the given objective and social elements of the world. Interpreted in cultural evolutionary terms, it allows for a flexible, context sensitive, and smooth coupling of subjects, production units, and collectives.

The key to understand this staticity lies in the structure of technology and the means

of production. Work was based on organic power sources - that is, the muscles of animals and slaves, which Aristotle considered as “speaking tools.”⁶⁶ They filled the *slots in the technological matrix* of society, which derived from a certain type of technology, the “simple machines.” Simple machines comprise the “mighty five of power amplification in Antiquity”⁶⁷: the winch, wedge, pulley, screw and lever.

Simple machines have specific functional principles:

- they have one deflection point;
- they move in unidirectional vectors;
- they are employed in “static,” single moving patterns.

The spectrum of operationality thus comprises a limited set of simple functions. Reciprocal to this limit, the simple machine implies a certain ontology:

- they are mainly muscle-powered;
- they involve and unfold around qualities (organisms as energy sources, materials like wood);
- they do not imply a formal measure or abstract concept of force, work or energy.

These functional properties of simple machines result in one essential limitation that correlates to the metaphysical, political and economic structure of the Axial Age: simple

⁶³ Cf. Meier, *Die Entstehung*, 70-90.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 486.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis*, 216.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 603; Metz, *Ursprung der Technik*, 28-31.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 (translation by the author).

machines do not allow for *structural, functional or conceptual innovation*. Since there is nothing to add to the functionality of the winch, wedge, pulley, screw or lever, besides some slight material improvements, they do not imply any potential for *substantial technological progress*. A cultural reality that is built upon atomistic, unchanging simple machines is a *developmentally static reality*. Improvements or quantitative enhancements are only realized by improvements of the organization of the acting agents, but not by improvements of the mechanical elements.⁶⁸ The notional performances developed in Greece, such as philosophy, rhetoric, logical arguments, alphabet and the coin, are exactly complementary to this stage of technology: they enable a flexible organization of the sources of forces that drive the simple machines.

Therefore, coin currency can be understood as a means for "*horizontal coupling*" within a *structurally unchanging technocultural state*. Profit is derived either from sheer conquering or from extracting surplus from the differences between *horizontally* related, meaning developmentally and technologically *equally constituted* places of production or markets.

While development is ideal-typically non-

existent, and places of production remain in *horizontal* reciprocity in Antiquity, in Modernity technological innovations open a new dimension of relations and events: the *vertical-developmental time*, in which states, processes, agents and events are coupled by capital.

9. Compound Machine, Capital, Linear Time Regime: Vertical Coupling in Modernity

Following the introduction of the coin, various features and forms of capitalism were developed prior to Modernity and outside of Europe in China, the Arab Empire, Italian city states and Hanseatic cities.⁶⁹ While profit was retained in Antiquity, later trade capitalism already aimed at surplus production for reinvestment, although fixed capital and the possibilities for investments remained limited. The unique features of *investment or production capitalism* characterizing Modernity are the ownership of the means of production, the establishment of the inner market, and the production *for* the production of surplus.⁷⁰ The reason why Modernity, capitalism and the linear time regime are entangled can be derived from these features once they are correlated

⁶⁸ The innovations of Archimedes occurred after the downfall of Athens and the end of the Classical Period, in which Greece had become a protectorate of the Roman Empire and thus was "frozen" in time.

⁶⁹ Cf. Jürgen Kocka, *Geschichte des Kapitalismus* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013), 23-42.

⁷⁰ This is the minimal definition of capitalism according to the historian of economy Kocka (see Kocka, *Geschichte des Kapitalismus*, 20-1).

to the shift in the structure of technology and the means of production occurring in Europe during the Middle Ages. It can be shown that capital is a mean for the extension of operational chains into the potential future. It allows the coupling of actions across the *vertical-developmental* or *linear-evolutionary time*. Analogous to the coin, which formed a commensurabilizing matrix across the *horizontally* related, *developmentally equal* places of production, capital forms a matrix that commensurabilizes *vertically layered, consecutive grades of development*.

Neither Marx's "fall of mankind" narrative of the primitive accumulation of capital nor the bourgeois ideological counter-explanation of Schumpeter, who assigned special causal status to the efforts of exceptionally intelligent and entrepreneurial individuals,⁷¹ fully explains the emergence of capitalism. A closer look at the history of technology reveals a somewhat different picture, which suggests a fundamentally new understanding of the economic phase of capitalism and the function of capital.

According to the historian of technology Metz, first capital investment societies were established to finance the construction of dams and weir systems in the twelfth century.⁷² The

primary purpose of weir systems is to provide a constant and controllable source of energy for mills which power mechanical devices of all kinds.⁷³ Mills and connected devices, though, are a specific type of machine: "*compound machines*," in which an array of simple machines is linked together into one functional unit. The essential feature of a compound machine is that it consists of various interlocked functional principles and mechanical parts, which are made of different materials such as metal, wood, ropes or leather. Within the machine, they are instrumentally commensurabilized by its functional purpose, which contextualizes each part in the mechanical arrangement of the assemblage. This new complexity of technology has momentous consequences.

The arrangement of simple machines in compound machines leads to the isolation (*Freistellung*) of a new regular, operationally addressable and reproducible object unknown in Antiquity: *force*. The abstract regularity or object force is isometrically effective at all places within the machine. It can be arithmetically described as a function derived from the correlated movements of the mechanically connected simple machines. Force thus emerges and is isolated (*freigestellt*) as an objective,

⁷¹ Cf. Karl Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 15-16.

⁷² Cf. Metz, *Ursprünge der Zukunft*, 42.

⁷³ To the mill as the power source various instruments were attached, such as grinding stones, hammers, spindles or saws (cf. *ibid.*, 41-3).

regular and reproducible fact by the appearance of the compound machine.

The principle of power transmission became widespread after the "Agrarian Revolution"⁷⁴ in the Middle Ages. The invention of the yoke turned horses or oxen into an abstractified provider of force or energy within the assemblage by filling the slot between the plough and the yoke. In another step of externalization and emulation, the organic power sources of early compound machines were replaced by wind and water. The improvements of gears and the movable placement of the sails of vertical windmills allowed for a homogenization and control of force, turning inorganic forces into the main energy source. The steam engine as the universal machine, the machine that only produces power itself, represents another recursive externalization and emulation of the previously only stationary exploitable energy sources. This first stage of an abstract mobile energy provider is followed by another recursive externalization and emulation in the combustion engine and batteries.

Abstract, inorganic mobile energy providers are at the core of Modernity and its means of production. In the moment the compound machine appears, everything can be related to its mechanical functionality and rendered as a

⁷⁴ For the main technological innovations that led to Modernity, see Lynn T. White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

potential provider of energy. This is the birth of labor force and the commodification of labor: humans started to be considered as abstract providers of quantifiable energy (paid with the equivalent of costs needed to retain work power) and were being sorted into "slots" fanning out around the functionality of the machine.⁷⁵

The compound machine has several features that differ essentially from the simple machine, proving that Modernity is yet another civilizational shift, another grade of cultural evolution in which another qualitative extension of the operational chains is realized:

- multiple deflection points internal and external to the machine;
- multidirectional vectors internal and external to the machine;
- inorganic or abstract energy sources;
- controllable and reproducible (steady, homogeneous, discrete) energy flow;
- abstract concept of force, work, energy revealed in the structure;
- abstract, discrete synchronization (clock, control devices);

⁷⁵ The spectral differentiation of the societal slot-matrix emerging around technologies was nicely illustrated by Tainter: "Hunter-gatherer societies [...] contain no more than a few dozen distinct social personalities, while modern European censuses recognize 10.000 to 20.000 unique occupational roles, and industrial societies may contain overall more than 1.000.000 different kinds of social personalities [...]." Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 23.

- dynamic movements and speeds;
- "movements within movements," moving parts within other moving parts;
- innovation is inherent.

Particularly the last feature marks the essential difference: since every compound machine is an arrangement of exchangeable elements, *it can constantly be improved*. This property of constant incompleteness or improvability of the technological assemblages marks the momentous difference with those of Antiquity. By improvements of the arrangement or any single part, machines can instantly reach greater efficiency in every aspect. Therefore, striving for constant innovation and technological progress is *naturally built into the compound machine*. The maintenance of the machines and the competition with machines at other places of production enforce or catalyze their constant improvement. Shortly after the spread of the compound machine, innovation itself was legally codified and commodified: patent law was invented in order to regulate the ownership of *material arrangements or functional syntaxes*.⁷⁶ The compound machine is thus the

technological foundation and precondition for the *institutionalization of the ownership of the means of production*.

With the emergence of the compound machine, social power could extend over the ownership of *material arrangements or technologies* themselves, which, as a *second order power*, governs the *ways of domestication, colonization and ordering of space*. The owner of the means of production is the legally authorized disposer of technical arrangements, alignment programs or patterns of operational chains on which the domestication of nature is based. Different to the traditional elite, which governed space in horizontal, developmentally static time, the *investment or production capitalist is governing the virtual space of developmental time realized in new technologies* through the power to assign money as a catalyst for innovation and production projects. The capitalist class embodies the societal institutionalization of the domestication of vertical time and dynamical development. Functionally, this class is the social interface to the developmental or evolutionary temporality of technological progress. In other words, the compound machine brings forth a matrix of slots for the social role of both the capitalist and the worker.

The compound machine has two momentous metaphysical and cultural consequences which determine the history of Modernity up to today.

⁷⁶ The first legal patent was issued to two coworkers of Gutenberg in Venice in 1474. It granted them a five-year exclusive right to produce printing machines. This secured the technological advantage, i.e., the advantage in knowledge of material arrangements of Venice against other cities. Cf. Peter Kurz, *Weltgeschichte des Erfindungsschutzes. Erfinder und Patente im Spiegel der Zeiten* (München: Carl Heymanns, 2000), 41-63.

The first is that it emits a geometrical matrix out of its discretely structured and mechanically interlocked arrangement. Every machine is an actualization of mechanistic arrangements which as a Platonic potential can be concretized anywhere in space. This Platonic continuum of causal-mechanistic relations is captured in the exogrammatic technology of the construction space in Euclidian perspective painting, later formalized in the Cartesian coordinate system. It serves as an operational interface for the building of these machines as their concretization in material space.⁷⁷ The operationalization of natural laws, the quantification and the modern metaphysical notion of nature, engineering and science emerge out of this state of technological complexity. The demand for a precise description of forces and the demand for the reproduction of these forces with high precision in all kinds of machines (canons, calculations of trajectories of bullets, city walls, ships, clocks, factories) leads to a view of nature as a "grid of absolute laws"⁷⁸ (the term "natural law," again, was introduced by Descartes). Finally, with Newton's force equations, the material world is homogenized,

⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of the relation between the compound machine, perspectival painting and the modern scientific concept of nature, see Chapter 8.5.3 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

⁷⁸ Karen Gloy, *Das Verständnis der Natur*. Band 1: *Die Geschichte des wissenschaftlichen Denkens* (München: C.H. Beck, 1995), 225 (translation by the author).

resulting in the concept of the clockwork universe in which every action, object and event from the micro- to the macrocosm⁷⁹ is commensurabilized. The formal understanding of nature as a homogenous continuum of unchanging laws to which any action can be uplinked or interlocked significantly extends the capacity for planning, resulting in the expansion of operational chains around the globe.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ At the same time Spinoza homogenizes the conceptual world by evacuating God into the level of immanence, thus cleaning it from extramundane qualities, Bach homogenizes the space of musical expression, while the early taxonomies homogenize the expressions of the *bios*. These kind of "form-relationships" or "isomorphisms of world-rendering" are displayed throughout Modernity, as the example of the epistemic isomorphisms around 1900 shows, when Hilbert's axiomatization of mathematics, Rutherford's model of the atom, phenomenological atomization of the mind in philosophy and impressionism in art and music appeared simultaneously. It can be explained by a ratchet-effect of abstraction, whereby in every field the new generation differentiates the findings of the previous one and by that cumulatively and *synchronically* increases the abstraction in various fields. This is the cultural evolutionary explanation for the sequentiality of the paradigms in Modernity and for the "multiple discoveries" in which scientific findings or inventions are brought forth independently by different agents at the same time. For the concept and a list of multiple discoveries, see William F. Ogburn and Dorothy Thomas. "Are Inventions Inevitable?," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1922), 83-98.

⁸⁰ The global coupling of operational chains started literally after the introduction of the medium "globe" in 1492 by Behaim and after the improvements of mobile clocks in the eighteenth century, which allowed longitude to be determined. Following the development of these media, a grid was projected onto the earth's surface, which enabled the optimal planning of maritime endeavors by the placing of global actions and interactions into

As nature becomes the homogenous continuum of natural laws, it is conceptualized as a storage of *potential arrangements of matter*, and therefore of technology. Each new arrangement means a new grade of development, concretized in the continuous innovations and improvements of compound machines. The formal concept of nature provides continuity between grades of development. Herein the second consequence is rooted: The notion of the universe as a continuum of ontologically commensurabilized grades of improvement results in the *linear concept of time as the continuum of potential change*.

The linear or vertical time not only adheres to technological but also to social change, as simultaneously emerging utopian visions prove. In contrast to the Axial Age Greece, in Modernity, beyond the machine, any formally constituted unit consisting of exchangeable parts like societies is understood as improvable and reformable. Progress, therefore, is a principle that underlies both the compound machine and the post-traditional, formal-legally constituted societies of Modernity. It stands for the discovered possibility for *rearrangements of aligned action units*, be they institutional or technical. The cultural evolutionary

new continuum of domestication, emerging from the potential of flexible rearrangements of formally defined objects, entities and operational chains, is the root of the linear time regime.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the inner market is the expression of the potential to gain profits not from horizontal differences, as in Antiquity, but from *vertical differences*, meaning from the *differences between technocultural grades of development consecutively concretized within the same space*. These grades of development are connected by capital. It allows the canalization of labor or energy needed for production and innovation, while simultaneously it also serves as a medium or interface for the potential future advantages of new technologies, numerically expressed in the profit margin. Thus, capital is the medium for establishing potential future differences between technocultural states mediated by the inner market. As such, capital is a medium between present and potential future technocultural states, as it contains potential time in the form of the *potential to realize new relations*.⁸¹ Capital as a recursion of the

⁸¹ This cultural evolutionary explanation allows for a better understanding of the notion of “differential accumulation” brought forward by Nitzan and Bichler, see Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *Capital as Power. A Study of Order and Creorder* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009). The differential accumulation does not only concretize in the realm of pure prices but is based on the potentiality (or expectation) to extract differences in efficiency by investing into a

mathematical coherence. The grid projection was completed around 1900 when the need for synchronization of the timetables of train companies, where initially every company had its own time, enforced to develop a globally unified time system.

function of the coin, as second order money, or as the quantification of the abstraction of money, allows for a coupling of actions across virtual spaces or states in vertical developmental time.

Modernity thus fulfills the criteria for a new civilizational capacity. Capital is the recursion and hierarchical integration of the functions of coin currency, while the compound machine extends the operational chains by a new dimension. These changes are accompanied by the emergence of a new temporal ontology. To determine whether the instantiation of a post-capitalist economy is currently possible, or if it is even already emerging, the cultural evolutionary pattern of recursion and the principle of the qualitative extension of operational chains need to be identified in the current changes of the structure of technology. Simultaneously, a time *Gestalt* can be derived from this, which might recursively grow out of linearity.

local process of progress. It is not only societal or institutional power as control over people (ibid., 269-73), but the power over potential production, therefore it is a *second order power* conveyed by the power to catalyze technologies that have better features than the existing technologies. It is the power over the potential to generate the *conditions* in which power relations can concretize.

10. Information Machine, Active Informationalism and the Generative Time Regime

The linear time regime is a social convention whose validity (or at least applicability) was revealed in the technological structure of the compound machine and was further consolidated by its metaphysical and social consequences. Linearity is entangled with the concept of the universe governed by unchanging natural laws as the continuum in which change and progress can occur. The convention of linearity stands for the homogenization of events and relations in spacetime through causality, allowing the commensurabilization of events and actions across time and space. In this stage of civilizational history capital emerges as a matrix made of interface points that link different grades of technological advancement. Capital contains the potential of *potential production* and as such it is the primary means and medium for the expansion of operational chains into vertical time constituted by grades of development. According to the formal criteria for discrete stages of cultural and civilizational capacities, another complexification of the technological structure and the establishment of a higher level of recursive hierarchical integration demands that a new structure of temporality and economy must again emerge. The Technological Civilization

marks such a civilizational shift. At its core, it displays another qualitative extension of operational chains by the recursive hierarchical integration of the previous technological structure.

In Modernity, simple machines were integrated into the arrangements of compound machines, coupled through an immediate mechanical “communication” between the parts. From a cultural evolutionary viewpoint, the Technological Civilization starts with the utilization of electricity⁸² which allows for an *immediate communication between compound machines and their coupling into synchronized units*. The need to couple compound machines has at least two roots. Firstly, the speeds, forces and required precision in machines start to exceed human processing or mechanical control capacities. Secondly, new problems of the connection of machines and the communication between them arise which cannot be solved mechanistically. It is exactly within this machinical generative milieu that the category of information emerges.

Formally introduced in 1928 by Hartley in “Transmission of Information”⁸³ as signal processing between two equally structured receivers, information became a concept diffusing

⁸² For Bammé’s historical materialist definition, see *infra*, Section 6, 21-25 in this article.

⁸³ R.V.L. Hartley, “Transmission of Information,” *Bell Systems Technical Journal*, Vol. 7 (1928), 535-63.

into every field of science after the “multiple discovery” in the independently developed works of Claude Shannon⁸⁴ and Norbert Wiener⁸⁵ in 1948. Information was formalized as quantification of the decoding probability of differences in a data stream and as the extraction of order out of noise by a system. It is essential to note that the formalization of communication resulting in the category of information was a necessary occurrence within the technological milieu, which had to solve the problem of how to couple or autonomously steer compound machines.⁸⁶

The coupling of machines comprises three levels of regularities: the regularities in the machines or in the states of the machine, the control unit which abstractly maps the states of a machine or a selection of states of a ma-

⁸⁴ Warren Weaver and Claude Elwood Shannon, *A Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana-Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1948).

⁸⁵ Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Paris: The MIT Press and Herman and Cie, 1948).

⁸⁶ The Bit is not a universal unit but a technical necessity since it is more feasible to use on-/off-switches as the basis of automated computation than memory storages which can take up multiple states. In principle, any non-binary numerical system could serve as a computational framework. Therefore, the basic principles of the computer and information theory were “invented” simultaneously by several engineers and mathematicians independently in the United States, Great Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union during the technological progress enforced by the existential stress in WWI and WWII, accelerated then in the Cold War.

chine, and the regularities that emerge from the connection of the control units, which are a second order abstraction of the regularities and events within the machine. Information is the unit which allows for a rendering of abstractions of abstractions. Informational rendering is an abstraction or second order rendering of an already mechanically-geometrically rendered machinic perception of the world. It unfolds a matrix that integrates various locally and contextually constituted matrices emitted by each single machine. The new regularities or "epistemic objects"⁸⁷ that grow out of the coupling of compound machines are already filtered through a machinic detection system or in general through technical or mathematically formal devices. The granularity of informational rendering is therefore an iterative increase of the rendering of Euclidian geometry covering the relations between the objects pre-rendered by machines.⁸⁸ As such, it can map all kinds of

systems, relations and functions. The logical next step is the development of cybernetics as the science of autonomous control of informatically constituted systems. Ross Ashby put it this way: "Cybernetics [...] is a 'theory of machines,' but it treats not things but ways of *behaving*. It does not ask 'what is this thing?' but, *what does it do*."⁸⁹ In this process, substantiality and qualities are de-ontologized, the boundary between subject and object erodes and realities are reframed as discretely describable relations of systems. With the emergence of information everything turns into relational processes.⁹⁰

The second half of the twentieth century can be characterized as the phase of *passive informationalism*, in which the basic functioning principles of systems were revealed. Everything discernable as a system can be commensurabilized informatically by applying the concepts of the feedback loop, homeostasis and

⁸⁷ Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Experimentalsysteme, Epistemische Dinge, Experimentalkulturen. Zu einer Epistemologie des Experiments," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1994), 405-18.

⁸⁸ Therefore, it would be a category mistake to conceptualize cybernetic and algorithmic rendering as a consequence of capitalization. Declaring a phenomenon that emerged in a co-evolutionary process to be the primordial cause of this process is simply ideology and, as such, it prevents the addressing of the actual underlying processes. It is even historically wrong, since cybernetics simultaneously and independently appeared in all cultures that were disposed to computers, as, for example, in the Soviet Union, where, in the

1960s, the implementation of cybernetics and early forms of the internet into economic management was prevented, paradoxically, by socialist apparatchiks themselves.

⁸⁹ William Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1957), 1.

⁹⁰ In this sense, feminism was the expression of the shift from agrarian societies with their characteristically gender-based work division to industrial societies (in the machine's eye all bodies are equal), while the current calls for the acceptance of trans-, non-, para-, xeno- or neo-genders are a symptom of the shift to the information society (in the information machine's eye all bodies are virtual, modifiable, reprogrammable information processes).

self-organization. In this phase systems are rendered but not yet operationalized. As ontology and epistemology are fused in the notion of the self-referential construction of the world by a code-driven system, the result is a processual worldview with the hallmarks of contingency and relativism among the systems related in “flat ontologies.”⁹¹

With the beginning of the new century, *active informationalism* emerges. Once the generative conditions and processes of system formation are revealed it becomes possible to influence their genesis. Since every system is unfolding a self-referential world by its specific selection and synthesis of environmental data, to influence the becoming of a system means to generate worlds. This is currently occurring in nearly every field: from self-optimization by *datafication* of the self, to biogenetics, preemptive politics⁹² and nudging,⁹³ predic-

tive policing, automated speculative markets and derivative trading as bets on potential developments,⁹⁴ to generative design as the automation of creativity by algorithms. *Active informationalism* marks the beginning of the domestication of “genetic spaces.”⁹⁵ Processes of becoming themselves are integrated into operational chains.

Exactly here the seeds of a post-linear temporal ontology can be found. The homogenous continuum of the unilinear time *Gestalt* is dispersed into multiple realizable lines of development: the informational rendering of systems allows for an extrapolation of their developments and the conception of various scenarios of their future being. This results in the constitution of a spectrum of possible futures that depend on the factors in the initial con-

Press, 2008).

⁹⁴ Derivatives are the commodification or objectification of the traditional idea of concrete processes of growth. As such, the linear time frame is abstracted and recursively implemented into the myriads of single derivatives, which make potential becoming tradeable. For a general description of the involved temporality, see Elena Esposito, *The Future of Futures. The Time of Money in Financing and Society* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011); Suhail Malik, “The Ontology of Finance,” *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, Vol. VIII (2014), 629-813. For a summary of Malik with discussion, see Ray Brassier et al., “Pricing Time: Outline and Discussion on Suhail Malik’s ‘The Ontology of Finance,’” *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2017), 84-122.

⁹⁵ Karl S. Chu, “Genetic Space: Hourglass of the Demiurge,” *Architectural Design*, Vol. 68, No. 11-12 (1998), 68-73.

⁹¹ The same principle of rendering by code and its ontological consequences and aporias constituted the postmodern thought in the second half of the twentieth century, starting with structuralism, constructivism, poststructuralism, deconstructivism, system theory to actor-network theory or agential realism, from Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida up to the early Nick Land and Bruno Latour.

⁹² Brian Massumi, “Potential Politics and the Primacy of Preemption,” *Theory and Event*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007), DOI:10.1353/tae.2007.0066.

⁹³ Karen Yeung, “Hypernudge: Big Data as a Mode of Regulation by Design,” *Information, Communication and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2017), 118-36; Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness* (New Haven: Yale University

ditions and their weighting. For example, the projected scenarios of a 2°, 3° or 6° increase of global warming show entirely different future worlds. These scenarios or process continua are not virtual, but objective; they are the recursive abstraction of the linear continuum condensed in single modules as processes of becoming, which can be coupled and exchanged like objects, as the emissions trading proves. Their objectivity is constituted by how much value we are willing to assign to the worlds we want to produce. This is the same principle at work in monetization of the future in derivatives markets. With the possibility to project scenarios informatically, the present takes up a state of uncertainty like Schrödinger's cat because the constitution of the present is substantialized only in relation to its virtual *future anterior* provided by projected potential futures. In *active informationalism* every moment in time is retroactively substantialized as the initial condition for a spectrum of potential realities.

As informationalism allows to commensurabilize systems, now the processes of becoming themselves are being modularized and coupled into operational chains. This level of higher integration brings forth a temporality that integrates all previous temporalities. It can be called *scenario temporality* or *generative time regime*. In the generative temporality

the ubiquitously emerging spots of miniaturized, local developmental processes, or "cones of realization,"⁹⁶ are put into coherence and arranged in operational chains.

The coupling of the control units of compound machines leads to the formation of a new level of hierarchical integration of events, objects and regularities, which grounds the rendering of the world through the category of information. This leads to a reality granulated by projected developments and scenarios on every scale. In this stage of cultural evolution generativity itself is operationalized. The generative time regime emerges in co-evolution. It unfolds orthogonally to the vertical time of developmental linearity through the information-based isolation (*Freistellung*) of its genetic processes. Herein domestication reaches into a new dimension: the processes of becoming themselves are operationally "ready-at-hand."⁹⁷ This realm of regularities accessed by information will necessarily bring forth a new structure of economy as a new mode of re-stabilization of the collective niche exploiting generative processes. After the coin coupled spaces in horizontal time, and capital coupled

⁹⁶ See Chapter 8.2.3. for the concept of the "cone of realization" in historical processes, Chapter 8.6.2 for a definition and Chapter 8.6.3 for currently observable examples in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

⁹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 140-1.

spaces in vertical time, another recursion will lead to an economy that couples spaces in potential, fractal-genetic, or generative time.⁹⁸

11. Distributing Potentiality: Economies of Access as Fractal-Genetic Coupling in the Technological Civilization

"Nothing is ever lost,"⁹⁹ the historian of religion Robert Bellah stated. Just as we still practice potlach at birthday parties, we are still using hammers or coins (or the principles thereof). Currencies are emerging in the generative milieu of work-dividing societies as a means for trans-spatial and trans-temporal coupling of interactions. Next to the exogrammatic

⁹⁸ It can be concluded that the transformation of the Weltanschauung during the Axial Age - Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Rationalism in Greece - is the expression of the emergence of a new layer of integration, in which the individual mental figuration was modulated as an adaptation to the new depths of abstraction and temporality caused by the increase of operational chains through coin usage. Therefore, Reformation in Modernity can as well be understood as a reconfiguration of the psyche reciprocal to the emergence of anonymous social relatedness in the rise of the market, the city, contract- and print media-based states, the machine environment and capitalism. It remains to be seen if another Buddha, Jesus or Luther will appear in the Technological Civilization, unless the spiritual and academic gurus of the avant-garde of every generation, which, due to the speed of progress, is always the manifestation of a new technocultural collective in need for new offerings of metaphysical integration, did not already take up this function.

⁹⁹ Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution. From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.

memory system of writing, they are an actualized Platonic form that enables the increase of social complexity and re-stabilizes the extents of the collective domestication of spacetime. The principle cannot cease to exist.¹⁰⁰ But its form can change.

The essential function of economy is to enable flexible coupling. By providing a medial matrix of abstract placeholders for distributable and exchangeable objects, it enables to establish homeostatic states in the individual which are constituted by the access to goods and services brought forth by collective work. The primary function of economy therefore lies in establishing and enabling balanced states, not in the increase of the number of potential homeostatic states in a single individual (as in the notion of profit production for the increase of personal wealth¹⁰¹). The function of mediating and balancing states can be realized by different medial structures.

Since the homeostatic states of the individuals are entangled with the structure of

¹⁰⁰ It could cease to exist if the memory capacity of the human brain or the range of perception and communication could be increased. Until then, the prosthesis of exogrammatic media remains the central relay for the synchronization of cooperation and coupling of agents.

¹⁰¹ Being wealthy means being able to potentially realize more homeostatic states, i.e., to actualize, widen or differentiate the attractor landscape within the organism. The spectrum of homeostatic states or the attractor landscape that can be concretized by wealth though, unfortunately, does not necessarily also cover all states that feel like happiness, which is why even the richest people can be unhappy sometimes.

distribution of goods and services, the realization of individual homeostatic states will in the future increasingly be dependent on *global* homeostasis: climate change, environmental destruction and problems of global distribution and exploitation force the inclusion of new parameters into the formation of prices that mediate and filter access to commodities. The market, grown as an institution in the eighteenth century, cannot map or reduce the emerging complexities and problems of the hyper-connected “world-society” because the capacities of this prosthetic apparatus to balance the distribution of resources are limited to the translation and mediation of information and decisions made by single subjects based on individual motives and needs in their local contexts. The replacement of a market economy, which mediates individual decisions as the central relay of economy, is inevitable when considering the global consequences of its unregulated processing.

Besides the external pressures for a reform, the market, as well as the capitalist class structure, is also undermined by internal developments. Automation erodes the logic of work-based wages,¹⁰² which de-functionalizes the class distinction in capitalism as the division between workers and owners of means production.

¹⁰² For a broad analysis of this problem, see for example Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, (London: Allen Lane, 2015).

Algorithmization erodes the legally institutionalized ownership of technological arrangements in patent law, since neither algorithms, after their multiple iterations and mutations, nor the products they create can be ascribed to an owner. In the Technological Civilization the economic institutions and classes of Modernity become functionally outdated and will inevitably lose their legitimacy.¹⁰³

Although humanity in the twenty-first century is caught in a path dependency which seems to make a system transition impossible, exactly the technologies developed during the fierce competition in late capitalism are the seeds of such a transition. Information technology permits the inclusion of new parameters into exchange and pricing systems, shifting them away from the orientation and governing by surplus production towards the more efficient and sustainable *distribution of potentiality in economies of access*.

The coin re-stabilized the domestication of spaces in horizontal time. Recursively built upon the coin, capital re-stabilized the domestication of space in vertical time. After

¹⁰³ From a cultural evolutionary perspective, the modern class structure and institutionalized form of ownership will necessarily be disrupted by the technologies of the new civilizational stage, though a systemic re-stabilization in new institutions and formations of subjectivity can only occur after their ubiquitization. For a detailed analysis and discussion of this processes, see Chapters 8.2.4 and 10.4.3 in Löffler, *Generative Realitäten*.

capital, which contained the function of the coin as an abstraction in itself, a new medium will now emerge that contains the function of capital as an abstraction. With the informational rendering of the world into processes, ubiquitous and scale-transgressing projections of scenarios emerge, which, assigned with value, influence the constitution of the present. The continuum of exchangeable goods comprises dematerialized objects that cannot be ascribed to human or physical bodies but only exist as a *potentiality of world-formation*, or as the potential for the establishment of subject-object relations within autonomous or entangled systems that form objects and relations among themselves. In this world of processes exchange does not revolve around consumable objects but around *points of access to potentialities*. The economic medium will couple *processes of becoming in fractal-genetic time*.

In derivatives and futures, this principle of *potentiality distribution* is already concretized. They are bets on developmental schemes that are an *abstraction of classical growth processes* constitutional of investment or industry capitalism. The domestication of vertical time becomes virtualized and localized as the objectification of the abstract potential for fractalized growth processes (the dispersion of the homogenous linear time continuum into a foam of fractal-genetic process times). This establishes a matrix of access points to

a spectrum of *potential future states and developments*. By this numerical assignment, the virtual potential for growth and innovation can be valued (*inwertgesetzt*) and exchanged even without having been concretized. The function of the market to establish equivalence relations between subjects is, therefore, already eroded since *potentiality* cannot be put into an equivalence relation with anything already existing.¹⁶⁴ The question that arises is how the *distribution of access to potentiality* can be implemented, institutionally or technologically, for large scale use.

The emerging post-capitalist economic system can be anticipated. It will highly dynamically, flexibly and adaptively implement extra-economic factors into the exchange processes by a mix of universal basic income, citizen score systems, decentralized blockchain infrastructures, and the management technologies developed in platform capitalism. This will be realized by the inversion of the principle of the latter: after companies have adopted technologies that originally were developed for the public, the public will re-adopt and re-socialize the management technologies enhanced in the competition between the companies exploiting the niches in virtual space. Naturally, this

¹⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis and the consequences of the erosion of equivalence-based reciprocity for institutions, metaphysics and cognition, see Bammé, *Homo Occidentalis*, 686-817.

will lead to another increase of the resolution of control in control societies. The difference is only that it would be a constitutionally, publicly or interactively governed control, which allows the implementation of factors that the processual, functional and motivational structures of private, profit-oriented controlling entities cannot map. This paradigm can be termed "*institutional accelerationism*."¹⁰⁵

The consequence is the formation of a (non-)society constituted by fine-grained "leagues of usufruct,"¹⁰⁶ formed by a dynamical algorithmically established matrix of access slots in which the unlocking of access to goods and services is organized. This would not result in a new planned economy, but rather in a passive and invisible algorithmically controlled and as such constantly adaptable structure of distribution and connection. As an interface between all forms of agentive systems (even the earth's biosphere) it correlates,¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Davor Löffler, "Einbruch in die Technosphäre. Skizze eines postanthropischen Technikbegriffs zur weiteren Erkundung der Möglichkeit technogener Nähe," in "*Menschen*" formen Menschenformen. Zum technologischen Umbau der *conditio humana*, ed. by Bernd Ternes (Berlin: sine causa, 2009), 197-291, 284-7.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Peter Weber, "Wie spät ist es?," in *menschenformen*, ed. by menschenformen (Marburg: Tectum, 2000), 10-59, 23 (translation by the author).

¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the main frontier of societal progress currently lies in the conceptualization and implementation of "matching algorithms" which will connect agents in para- or meta-monetary ways. Cf. Ralph Heidenreich and Stefan Heidenreich, *Forderungen* (Berlin: Merve, 2014), 115-36.

communicates and distributes potentiality in a constantly open recursive link to current extra-economic factors as the conditions of future homeostatic states and potentiality. As an operational interface it links the present with individual, local and global scenarios of potential futures, constantly updating the leeway and guiding constraints of action and decision.

Currently this structure of economy can only be sketched out in broad strokes, since it will appear as an emergent layer *growing out of the abstractions of the currently developed technologies* (the impossibility to conceive it in detail is analogous to the impossibility for a human of the Axial Age to conceive of capital, natural laws, constitutions or progress).¹⁰⁸ From a cultural evolutionary perspective, this is an inevitable development. It is calling for preparation instead of dwelling in dogmas developed in reaction to historically outdated technocultural states, means of production, media, social institutions and figurations of subjectivity. The *deep futurological* perspective,

¹⁰⁸ Civilizational history will continue mainly determined by developments in China, since it has to solve problems on scales that by far exceed those facing the West, leading to the development of complementary technologies. Furthermore, in contrast to western Modernity, Asian cultures are not stuck in the metaphysics of individualism, in which the concept of the individual makes for the relays, center and catalyzer of social institutions. This directly results in a greater leeway for the implementation of technology-based systems for social organization.

seen from a *future anterior* established by the extrapolation of cultural and social evolution, calls us to start the leap in civilizational time before a catastrophe, the typical cause of system transitions, forces us to instantiate it. But, as Hölderlin found, “where the danger is, also grows the saving power.” We all are already working on it; we just have to become aware that we are.

Clouds And Fronts. Onto-Meteorology and the Philosophical Fantastic¹

|Boyan Manchev

Bionote

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Legend

- θ θέσις: thesis
- ὕ υπόθεσις: hypothesis
- ἐ ἐρώτημα: question
- ν νόημα: concept
- νέ νέφος: nebula

The Concept of Front. Front and War

The American mathematician Elias Loomis, who described the famous geomagnetic storm of the late summer of 1859 when there occurred an exceedingly brilliant display of the Northern Lights, first formulated the hypothesis of the existence of weather fronts as early as 1841. But it was not until 1919, after the First World War, that the Norwegian meteorological school adopted this term and concept, while the US National Weather Service began to mark fronts on weather maps only after the Second World War. It is hardly a coincidence that the history of the concept “front” unfolded directly in parallel to the two World Wars. The concept “front” presupposes, in the first place, a planetary, *global* scale of thought; on the other hand, it is inevitably associated with a clash, conflict, furious onslaught of air masses; but also with a complex strategy, codes subject to deductions, experimental hypotheses, and forecasts.

The mapping of weather fronts repeats, or at least is inspired by, that of military

¹ This text is part of Boyan Manchev's book *Clouds. Philosophy of the Free Body* (Sofia: Metheor, 2017) [Боян Манчев, *Облаци. Философия на свободното тяло* (София: Метеор, 2017)]. The English version, translated by Katerina Popova, is forthcoming in 2018.

fronts, borrowing its techniques of representation. The militarized imaginary of the front: dynamic forces, *polemos*, *agon*, clash. Battle scenes. In this way, the front is at once a loaded but also a symptomatic concept. The military concept of the front itself, associated with a frontal surface, with a dynamic curve representing the disposition and dynamic of forces, is in this sense adequate for our thesis on the ontological *polemos*. Another use of the concept of front, referring to a political movement, can also be understood in the same perspective: *Front de gauche*, *Front National*. Obviously, the political concept of front likewise presupposes not just organization based on substantial representation of a particular political identity, of a particular group: "party," but organization of (dynamic) forces. In the front burns the polemical Heraclitian fire.

The cloud: a celestial battle scene, clash, *agon*, revolution. The war of the clouds, the revolution of the storm.

The Erotic Front

The front: not just a battle scene but also an erogenous surface. Ares and Eros.

The front: an ontological erogenous surface. An erogenous surface of the event.

The element that envelops, that is, a front, not a resisting body but the very re-

sistance against the sensual pleasure that overwhelms, exposes, an ultra-erotic front of the total (and minimal - "incorporeal") caress.

The cloud as an incorporeal body-*front*.

The cloud is at once potentiality and actuality - that is why the cloud is inhabited by forms: it is the very metamorphicity of the form that carries a storm, that is, transition of the dynamic form into an *attacking* actuality.

Front - Attack. The attacking actuality as an alter-actualization of the front.

Representation of Force, Force of Representation

Thus, weather fronts are traditionally understood as dynamic formations, divisions of air masses which envelop the planet and to which we owe the phenomenon of "weather," its dynamic morphology and persistent change. Today meteorologists know well that the front is much more a representation of forces than an objective structure. Fronts are the result of the movements of the atmosphere, of its vertical dynamics. They are an effect of the vortical motion of fluids - *apeiron's* vortex rediscovered by modern thermodynamics. Fronts are the trace of the polemical contrasts that are cut into the vortex; that is why they are a representation of forces.

vÉ The front is, on the one hand, a representation/visualization of forces, and, on the other, their effect. On the one hand, it is a concept of dynamic, and, on the other, a dynamic of the concept.

Of course, the front is a representation, but it is also necessary to construct the immanent consistency of the conceptual front. The very question - the question *about* the front in this case - is an immanent consistency of the front of the concept, of the front that is dynamically figured/unfurled in this operation: a *conceptual nebula*.

Cloud, Lightning: Alter-Concepts

v The alter-concepts of *cloud* and *front* have a maximalist task: to allow thought not only to return to the Aristotelian dawn in order to extend it while avoiding scholastic reduction of matter and form, potentiality and energy, but also to confront the problem of the continuum, of continuity and of the possibility of rupture. Or, put most generally, the problem of change and event, of qualitative and quantitative change, of evolution and revolution.

This problem is a problem of continual change and its quasi-dialectical relation to the event.

vÉ Our purpose here, in this cloudy area, in this study of the misty, nebulous limits, is

not to introduce meta-figures in speaking of a particular epistemological order, be it that of thought on being, but to try to intensify the nebula from which concepts crystallize.

v My enigmatic, obsessive, implausible concepts - the alter-concepts *front* and *cloud* - do not just traverse the history of philosophy (Leibniz, Bergson, Bataille, Bachelard); they also reveal the constitutive significance of the problem of the continuity and rupture of the event to science, too.

Here I will refer again to one of my closest fellow-travellers, one of the most original thinkers of the past century, the modern Hermes, Gaston Bachelard. His epistemological investigations logically led him to grapple with the problem of constant change (a problem which I have conceived of through the concept of *persistence*, and which Aristotle may have had in mind in introducing the enigmatic category *entelecheia*), and hence, with the tension between the *rupture* or the "vertical time" of the event and the *persistence* of change. Bachelard introduces the idea of a radically different type of time, thus approaching this problem from a perspective that is structurally close to us even though his premises and formulation of the problem are different. The typologically purest category that designates this type of time is the category "poetic time."

Bachelard introduces it in his short essay "Poetic Instant and Metaphysical Instant": "Flat horizontality suddenly vanishes. Time no longer flows. It spouts. [...] Vertical time rises. On occasion it plunges."²

The dichotomic temporal structure that Bachelard describes, contrasting two types of time, is the following: on the one hand, the *banal* time of experience, on the other, the *intense* time of experience that is defined by Bachelard as "poetic time" but which, as we understand, radically transcends the realm of "poetry." We see that for Bachelard, unlike for me, this *other* time is a phenomenological time of experience; despite this, Bachelard also intuitively that it corresponds to the ontological structures in which the imagination unfolds and modulates.

Potentiality, Time, Event

Unlike Bachelard, I do not think of the time of the event as vertical. Vertical time does not resolve the key question, posed by Bachelard himself, of the discontinuous dynamic that makes it possible to think both of the event and of change.

² Gaston Bachelard, "Instant poétique et instant métaphysique" (1939), included as an appendix in the 1966 edition of his book *L'intuition de l'instant* (1932). Cf. Gaston Bachelard, "Poetic Instant and Metaphysical Instant," in *Intuition of the Instant*, trans. by Eileen Rizo-Patron (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 60-1.

It is impossible to think of time, and hence also of the event, without thinking of potentiality. If potentiality (*δύναμις*) is a potential for change, then it is also a potential for an event.

The question, then, is how to distinguish the beginning of an event against the background of universal and comprehensive change, of the situation of change *qua* condition.

Cloud, Form and Force

What is the force of the cloud? The force of the cloud is change, that is, the coincidence of force and form. Change is a coincidence of force and form.

The force that distinguishes - alters - is the force that is immanent to potentiality itself, the immanent difference of potentiality, which differs from itself.

This force is the very dynamic of *δύναμις*, and we may define it as a force of *alter-actualization*. Before it leads to actualization, it alters the configuration of potentiality itself: the multitude of the conditions of becoming. The immanent change that is manifested as a change of the mode, a change of the conditions which is, in itself, a condition of change as such. Condition-change.

The Hypothesis of the Front:

A Complex Continuum

ú Is rupture or disruption another type of continuity? Let us call this hypothetical continuity *intense* or *complex*.

é Regarding the relation between *continuum* and *figure*:

Is the cloud a multitude?

Is the cloud a figure?

Is the cloud a continuum?

This is precisely what the front suggests.

θ *The front* is a cloudy extension of the idea of an opposition between potentiality as a substantial resource and form-energy governed by *entelecheia*.

θ That is why the relation between *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* must not be founded upon a relation of inside/outside positioning, that is, of three-dimensional centering, but of angular displacement, fractal relation and modal intensity.

θ Thus, instead of an actualization vector, we will speak of an *intense situation*. We will call this situation a "cloud."

Cloud-Limit

From *L'altération du monde*:

Sensory experience always begins at the limit. This does not mean only that our senses have a limit; they *are* limits. The first experience is the experience at/of the limit, an experience, an experimentation of the limit *itself*: the first experience is a liminal experience. In other words, the continuum of alteration is not homogeneity, an indivisible flow; it is always realized at the limit. Continuity is, then, synco-pated, disrupted, discontinuous: discontinuous continuity. (At the level of experience this discontinuous continuity is defined by Bataille as *naked sacrifice* or *dismemberment*.)

But the limit is not negativity; it is neither the end nor the exhaustion of a fact or of a positive operation. The limit is precisely the point where the potential for alteration becomes *effective* (Hegel, *Wirklichkeit*) - it is the very site of alteration: that is where the alteration takes place. The limit, then, may be described less as an end or terminus, as a fixed point in an Euclidean space, than as a dynamic limit, as a dynamic front that contracts

and relaxes, a plastic edge, a Möbius strip that constantly twists back on/away from itself; a dynamic front that *condenses*, intensifies, alters. Its *illustration* - or *alter-concept* - is the weather front.³

*But the first form of solar love is a cloud raised up over the liquid element. The erotic cloud sometimes becomes a storm and falls back to earth in the form of rain, while lightning staves in the layers of the atmosphere.*⁴

⊖ The limit is immanent to potentiality, it is a curved line.

⊖ The limit is a dynamic continuum. It is this limitation of the continuous by the continuous that we will define as change.

The Aristotelian topology must be rethought, while understanding at the same time what "limit" or "boundary" (ὄρος; ὀρίζω: horizon) meant to the Greeks.

The front: the curved line or sinusoidal curve as a limit. The discontinuously-continu-

³ Boyan Manchev, *L'altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale* (Paris: Lignes, 2009), 73-4.

⁴ Georges Bataille, "The Solar Anus," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 7.

ous, periodic, self-like, fractal order of/at the limit.

The Cloudy Edge

The cloudy edge is fringed with gold, with topaz, with silver thread; no, it is not a landscape by Claude Lorrain or Jacob van Ruisdael. And yet it is there.

Does the cloud have an edge? What is a cloudy edge? How could these swirling balls, these wispy whorls, these eerie whirls, these feathery curls be an edge? Is not the edge a limit/boundary?

No, the edge is a place where spaces, times and modes meet.

The edge is a knot that does not bind but frees, it is not a monolithic immanent technique entangling an encountered body, it is a crossing of the external surface like a body of encounter: dimensions, modes.

The Front-Edge. On Celestial Distortions

⊖ *The front is an edge at which actuality and potentiality come into contact.*

Here, however, we are not speaking of contact on a two-dimensional surface, nor even of a section of planes or intersection of surfaces, but of the relation of the two sides of a complex surface. A Möbius strip, a Möbius front.

Thus, the alter-concept of the front is in opposition to the dichotomic view of potentiality as a substantial resource and of form-energy governed by *entelecheia*, which “sublates” potentiality.

⊖ *The edge* is the topological expression of *effectiveness* - the mode of *alter-actualization*. What we call *effectiveness* is an alternative process of actualization that does not reduce but expands potentiality.

At *the edge*, potentiality transforms itself, increasing its power and, in this way, expanding the horizon of the actual.

⊖ *Effectiveness: an alternative process of actualization that does not reduce but expands potentiality.*

The Event-Cloud

⊖ The event is the sudden expansion of the horizon of the actual: the transformation of the expansion from a quantitative into a qualitative mode. A qualitative expansion of the horizon of the actual.

⊖ Horizon of the event; a meteor (that crosses it); an event as cloud/a cloud of the event.

The cloud: a nebula of the event.

The front: an erogenous surface of the event.

⊖ The effectiveness of time is an event-potentiality, an edge of actuality.

⊖ We shall call *front* “the site” of effectiveness.

⊖ Front, persistence of change.

Ontology of the Front

The front is a sedimentation of forms which, being past, possesses both potentiality and actuality. They are deposited in time as sediments, as matter of forms which is itself formed, folded into reliefs - forms. But sedimented time is not exhausted time; it is sedimented insofar as its potentiality is the potential of a returning or re-actualizing actuality; a possibility which is not guaranteed *a priori*, but which is active in the retrojection of the very moment of actualization, a possibility whose vector always propels and intensifies its own potentiality. Thus, the sedimentation of forms is also an active front that draws the celestial and terrestrial relief of the present, the saturated, neither empty nor full space of the transparent air.

⊖ The cloud: anachronism/hetero-simultaneity of form. Its complex temporality.

The Sedimentation of the Cloud

At this moment, after the afternoon pump of sleep, the sudden awakening in the other space-time, the banal after the extraordinary, but also vice versa, Città looks like a lair of clouds, like a landscape of cloudy forms, like compression of time. The hill of the ancient town on which clouds recline, over which they watch or pass or linger, as if the hill itself, overgrown with buildings, proliferation, extension, historical sedimentation of life, mineralization of collective human time, has become a landscape, plane, relief of the subject of the cloud, its shadow, support, accomplice; as if fast connections and slow time are on the same wavelengths, are *the same*. The clouds think the hill or imagine it; they certainly dream it, they certainly make it stand. The clouds stand as a form of thought on the hill, reasonable chaos, disastrous beauty, our stellar affect.

Translated from the Bulgarian by
Katerina Popova

II . GENDERS/SEXUALITIES

Love, Sex, Communism: A Discussion

|Jules Joanne Gleeson, Jose Rosales
and Andrew Culp

Bionotes

Jules Joanne Gleeson is a researcher based at the University of Vienna. Her work focuses on the comparative history of both pre-modern and contemporary gender relations. Recently published work includes a genealogy of gender abolitionary politics for *Blind Field: A Journal of Cultural Inquiry*, two pieces on right-wing internet culture for *The New Socialist*, and a queer materialist reading of the “transgender moment” for *Viewpoint Magazine*. She is currently completing a thesis on the exclusion of the female and effeminate from Byzantine Mount Athos.

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Jose Rosales is a Doctoral Candidate in Philosophy at Stony Brook University. His dissertation is a partisan reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy where he argues that any so-called “Deleuzoguattarian” politics is fundamentally grounded on their commitment to an anti-state, revolutionary vision of communism. His other writings include “Of Surrealism and Marxism” in *Blind Field: A Journal of Cultural Inquiry*, “Die Schwarze Block Nicht War” in *Riot - Was War Da Los In Hamburg?* (Laika/NON.Derivate, 2018), and “Relearning to Hate the World - *Dark Deleuze* Book Review,” *Deleuze and Guattari Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2018).

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Andrew Culp (PhD, The Ohio State University) teaches in the MA Program in Aesthetics and Politics at the California Institute of the Arts. His first book, *Dark Deleuze* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), recovers the hidden negativity of the thinker Gilles Deleuze to challenge today’s world of compulsory happiness, decentralized control, and overexposure, and it has been translated into numerous languages.

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The following discussion arose from a chance encounter now routine for a generation raised by the internet. Emerging from a common interest in ultra-left politics, queer social life and the isolation of academia, the conversation unfolded online with the participants typing away on a shared document while researching resources on-the-fly and holding side conversations over chat. The style of their remarks demonstrates how scholars are now fusing traditional forms of thought with the tools of digital culture, as their high-minded observations are punctuated by quotes from online anthologies, page numbers quickly culled through machine searching, and references provided by hyperlink as encouragement for readers to complete their own deep dive into the material. As such, perhaps the reader should imagine it less as an academic panel discussion and more like a post with threads, replies, likes, and links.

Question: Marxism has become increasingly popular in many places since the 2008 financial crisis in the US and its global economic repercussions. Almost ten years after that crisis, what have we seen happen? Do we still see the winds moving in that direction?

Jules Joanne Gleeson: The last ten years have re-forged Marxism profoundly, and to an extent which deserves careful surveying. Marxist groups have largely entered a state of disarray, often scandalized by in ways I could spend the rest of this piece listing and analyzing. The leadership of many Marxist groups have been left entirely discredited by their handling of, and often involvement in, alleged sexual abuse. This has called into question the leadership of many of the more hierarchical organizations, most notably the UK's SWP. (But "horizontalist" scenes have also struggled, and mostly failed, to resolve questions around protection of participants against peer group sexual predation.) In short, the last ten or so years have not treated Marxist *organizations* kindly.

However, Marxist thought has entered something of a renaissance, especially in light of the ease of distribution of key texts, and the proliferation of informal study groups and book clubs for working through this often-challenging material. One obvious example is

the Communist Research Cluster, who produced a number of free PDF readers¹ which were read in circles around the US (I was briefly running sessions for their Revolutionary Feminist Reader here in Vienna). In this respect, Marxist theory has extended itself markedly.

Jose Rosales: I think what Jules has said regarding the discrepancy between the disarray of Marxist groups/organizations and the renaissance of Marxist theory is one of the clearer and more defining features of the "state of Marxism" since the 2008 crisis. This discrepancy is perhaps even starker when one contrasts the example she quite rightly gave of the scandals that plagued the UK's SWP with the crowds that were drawn to the Idea of Communism conference in March 2009 at London's Birkbeck institute: the conference originally booked a room for 180 while the conference was attended by upwards of 1200 people.

While it may be interesting to spend some time giving a materialist analysis of the way in which the popularity of the very word Communism acts as a means of publishing houses to gain popularity with a wider readership and ultimately sell more books, this might not be that helpful since it tempts leftists of various stripes to point fingers at each other rather than understand *where* and *how* Marxist theory is actually being connected to concrete prac-

¹ Available at www.communistresearchcluster.wordpress.com/readers.

tices. One example of this from the many places Marxism has regained popularity and readership, and one that comes just off the heels of the 2008 financial crisis, can be seen in the experiences of the activists who participated in Iran's 2009 Green Revolution. Why is the experience of activists during the Green Revolution important for helping us understand how the growing theoretical interest in Marxism has been connected to a larger political project? The answer to this question is given by the figure of the interrogators who would question arrested activists and civilians. Now, it was quickly discovered by those who were arrested that their interrogators were not simply doing the work of the State; darker and more profound was their discovery during their interrogations that these were individuals hired by the State and trained in the very discourses and theories of the very Marxist and/or Communist thinkers who have gained such popularity since 2008 - Žižek, Badiou, Laclau, Negri, Althusser and so on. Thus, while it is true that there is a certain disconnect between Marxist organizations and their corresponding theoretical frameworks after 2008, this does not mean that the increased circulation, translation and popularity of Marxist theory has failed to link up with actual, concrete, practices. In this instance, however, theory has been related to a praxis that remains hostile and absolutely incommen-

surable with the project envisioned by Marx himself or by present day Marxist theorists. So, it appears that the status of Marxism today is one of a political position that is met with almost an equal degree of interest as well as hostility.

Andrew Culp: We seem to be caught between two very different stories about Marxism. On the one hand, Marxism appears as the antidote to the illnesses of our political moment. This is Marxism's diagnostic power - it points to the source of our problems. I think that the diagnosis matches the political in which we have found ourselves: financialization feels inescapable, there is wide dissatisfaction toward politicians in general and politics writ large, and it feels like there is a *whole system* set against us. While on the other, we are told that the twentieth century has proven Marxism to be a dead-end. There is some truth to that tale. I do not think that Marxism has recovered from the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of neoliberalism. Yet I agree with Herbert Marcuse that we have learned the wrong lessons from the Soviets - its failure came from an obsessive focus on economic production, which elevated it to a moral principle subjectively hardcoded into citizenship. Neoliberalism extends the hangover from the fall of the Berlin Wall, not only because of its devastating material consequences, but because it has

effectively convinced so many that “there is no alternative” to financial logic. What a cruel legacy given that communism is meant to be the antithesis of economics.

To me, the recent popularity of Marxism speaks of a growing *communist aspiration*. We finally seem to be at a point where the failed economic and political strategies of historical communist experiments are being thrown off. New communisms are arising every day. Just look at the communism that has grown out of the “weird” internet: odd corners of tumblr, dank memes stashes and reading groups that fuse together monstrous communisms that would have horrified the First International. This is the future, and it is up to us to join in or be left behind.

JJG: I am sure that I am not alone in having first encountered key ultra-left texts such as *End Notes*, *LIES*, the *Bash Back! Reader* and *Tiqun* online. Various communities exist primarily for working through this often-challenging material. Outlets like *Ritual Magazine*, *Viewpoint Magazine* and *New Socialist* or theoretical works such as *The Xenofeminist Manifesto* or *Nihilist Communism* (as well as countless polemical “interventions” stored on LibCom) have only ever been published as material on the web. While this is nothing new in one sense (small scale polemical print runs have always been a key leftist activity), the breadth and range of revolutionary material universally

available online has caused a striking expansion of intellectual engagement with Marxist thought.

AC: As Marxists working in the academy, I am sure that we have all struggled with how to address these alternative materials. Academic Marxism can be very conservative in that it wants to establish a clear ancestry of credible thinkers and does not immediately suggest how to treat texts distributed through venues such as blogs, small presses, and online reading groups; except maybe to treat them as “outsider” writing. How have you two negotiated the tension?

JR: First, I just wanted to add what may be a more balanced and helpful counter-example to the one of the interrogator I gave above. In contrast to this example, it is worth mentioning as a counterpoint the publication of Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams’s *Inventing the Future*² (a text also published by the same publishing house that puts out the works of Badiou, Žižek and the like) - if only due to the fact that it was a text that understood itself as belonging to this tradition of Marxist theory while also being a text that made a link between itself and a larger political project. Now, the larger political project here is the one of a Corbyn-led Labor Party with the hope that if

² Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (London and New York: Verso, 2016).

Corbyn was elected as Prime Minister, the kinds of strategies and analyses found in *Inventing the Future* could then serve as the horizon of the Party's struggle and aid in the implementation of a set of policies that would ameliorate the suffering of an increasing number of the UK population. Now, despite (fundamental) disagreements with such a project, I still think this is an important example that helps us understand *where* and *how* the increasing production of Marxist theory is finding the means for having actual, material, consequences.

Second, while the attraction of blogs and small presses is that one can produce writing without having to spend valuable time waiting to hear back from a review committee while still being in conversation with one's peers, it has the potential to also tempt academics and writers to begin to hold themselves to an impossibly high standard: namely, by measuring the content and potential of their work in terms of how often they can post new content. When quantity trumps quality, then once potentially radical mediums of publishing and writing begin to mirror the "'bourgeois' media: constant data flow, information overload and obsolescence, sensationalism... Radicality is reduced to a description and exaltation of manifold struggles."³ Perhaps it is just as

necessary for writing as it is for political organizing to know when one has outgrown the usefulness of a certain medium or form if only to avoid the prolongation of that which has been longing to die.

JJG: My scholarly writing has two faces, which maybe do not overlap as much as I would like to.

Professionally, I have spent my (short) career in Byzantine Studies, and comparative medieval history institutes. There are several prominent Byzantinists who take a Marxist approach to social history. The most famous as Marxists are John Haldon and Jairus Banaji. Haldon produced an innovative comparative theoretical monograph entitled *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* in 1993, a time when historical materialist inquiry could not have been less fashionable.⁴ While certainly not the last word on pre-modern political economy, Haldon makes a convincing case that the tributary mode can be distinguished by a lack of modal distinction between rent and taxes. (In other words, being taxed by the state or charged rent are undifferentiated at the point of surplus extraction, i.e., peasants being stripped of their excess produce.) Banaji was a veteran of the "Mode of Production" debates in India, who turned his attention to agrarian

³ Gilles Dauvé and François Martin, "The Bitter Victory of Councilism," in *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2015), 129-33,

131.

⁴ John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London and New York: Verso, 1993).

relations on Byzantine estates for many years. Banaji has done much to refocus Marxist theory around historical inquiry, and more than any living thinker has revived interest in Marx's focus on political economy's "laws of motion." Both recently debated Banaji's masterful *Theory as History* in a productive symposium hosted in the *Historical Materialism* journal.⁵ While less prominent as Marxists, two of my former supervisors - Peter Sarris and Dionysios Stathakopoulos - also use an historical materialist approach to Byzantine historical sources. Despite this, the field as a whole is still in a state of recovery from the influence of logical positivism. "Theory" is often viewed with skepticism, considered a potential distraction, and treated as an element which needs to justify itself. This seems unlikely to change completely for the foreseeable future, as much of the work required to advance the field's accessibility is outstanding translations, production of critical editions, etc. (Work for which philology is indispensable.) So when writing in this mode, I need to make careful efforts to justify each theoretical step. On the upside, this keeps me on my toes.

Secondly, and somewhat separately, I have been producing Marxist feminist writing for some years now. My primary inspiration is the

⁵ See *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2013), available at www.historicalmaterialism.org/journal/volume-21-issue-4-2013.

approach of Cinzia Arruzza, in her "Remarks on Gender."⁶ This remarkable piece effectively stitches together a disparate and non-continuous body of material into "Three Theses." While this approach could be dismissed as reductive, the outcome is an introductory piece which effectively stages what might be called a "benign fabrication." Presenting a disjointed series of debates which originally took place across decades, and across disparate discursive and political contexts, in a new form which might be read through in an afternoon. (I think this work is valuable, whether or not one agrees with Arruzza's decisive siding with the "Unitary" approach to gender/capital.) These reconstructions can render previously esoteric debates newly accessible and can clarify divergences of position between like-minded scholars.

In a similar vein, I have done my best to include and respond to material which is normally outside of the "canonical" approach to thought Andrew mentions. A large part of my 2015 piece (written with Kate Doyle Griffiths⁷)

⁶ Cinzia Arruzza, "Remarks on Gender," *Viewpoint Magazine*, Issue 4 (September 2, 2014), www.viewpointmag.com/2014/09/02/remarks-on-gender.

⁷ Kate Doyle Griffiths and Jules Joanne Gleeson, "Kinderkommunismus. A Feminist Analysis of the Twenty-First-Century Family and a Communist Proposal for its Abolition," *Subversion Press*, June 30, 2015, www.subversionpress.wordpress.com/2015/06/30/kinderkommunismus. A translation into French by Félix Boggio Éwanjé-Épée was published as: "Kinderkommunismus. Une proposition communiste d'abolition de la famille," en *Pour un féminisme de la totalité*, coordonné par

engages with a mode of gender politics I call “Queer Rejectionism,” which dominates many queer scenes while rarely appearing in published scholarly works. In a 2017 piece published by *Viewpoint Magazine*, “Transition and Abolition,”⁸ I address a range of cultural (and socially reproductive) texts produced by transgender authors. And in a pair of pieces I wrote for the journal *Blind Field* on the history of gender abolition, I attempted to draw into wider view a range of material from both the queer New Left and contemporary transfeminism, which previously had received little attention. My hope here is to bring material previously unmentioned in Marxist theory to the attention of other communists who share my concerns. This is retrieval work.

In short, I have dealt with academic Marxists primarily by avoiding them.

AC: For a while I was worried that the academy is where knowledge went to die. There are so many examples of academics poaching concepts from the streets. And I do not just mean the disgusting colonial practice of anthropology that make careers off others’ knowledge. There is a tendency for the academy to mince

theories when they are incorporated. Consider what has happened to intersectionality, a concept developed as a response to the silencing of black women’s voices in activist spaces. Imagine my surprise when, a couple years ago, I heard that intersectionality was taught in the dorms to all incoming students as “everyone has a different story to tell.” What a transformation! A concept initially developed to foreground the experience of specific groups had been translated into a liberal democratic idea that everyone basically stands on the same footing.

But then I began to think much more about Marx’s old mole, who burrows underground only to emerge in times of revolution. There is an ultra-left idea that as thinkers, we are not the ones who will make revolution (if and when it is made). Rather, we always circulate on the margins, with our influence always being unexpected and contingent. In part, I think Fred Moten and Stefano Harney are right to suggest that the only relationship to the contemporary university is a criminal one, which is to say, to embrace the position of being caught in a state of exception. We must assume that whatever politics we incorporated into our work can only get us in trouble with the institution (and just look at how the alt-right has been getting people in trouble lately!), while also knowing that meaningful work requires us to stick our

Félix Boggio Éwanjé-Épée, Stella Magliani-Belkacem, Morgane Merteuil et Frédéric Monferrand (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam/Collection Période, 2017), 221-42.

⁸ Jules Joanne Gleeson, “Transition and Abolition: Notes on Marxism and Trans Politics,” *Viewpoint Magazine*, July 19, 2017, www.viewpointmag.com/2017/07/19/transition-and-abolition-notes-on-marxism-and-trans-politics.

necks out. And even if we remain modest about our influence on the current situation, at the very least, the academy puts us in a unique position to keep the idea of revolution alive in counter-revolutionary times. Bit rot, the impermanence of collective and a disregard for archiving already strikes a pretty big blow to the lifecycle of alternative materials. Just last week, I was trying to track down materials lost with the disappearance of zinelibrary.info. If that is the case, then maybe it is our job to sneak in as much of the street as we can.

JJG: Much as the “Whiggish” view of history was said to present a linear arc of positive changes (erasing or dismissing setbacks and calamities), vulgar feminist history makes the black lesbians who founded so many revolutionary US groups vanish from view as it shuffles along its business. Gay male popular history by contrast attempts to eliminate lesbians altogether. (Note the ahistorical absence of women in Gus Van Sant’s *Milk*. When, as C.A. Conrad notes, lesbians in fact ran the “back end” of Harvey Milk’s mayoral run.)

AC: Perhaps it is that erasure that demands a turn to queerness? Eve Sedgwick argues in the introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet* that early theories of same-sex desire meant that “there were essentially no valid grounds of commonality between gay male and

lesbian experience and identity.”⁹ She says that the two worlds have to be brought together: first, through challenges to idealized notions of femininity in “the Sex Wars” of the 1970s and increased visibility of trans and butch identities (leading to the invention of a separate axis of sexuality distinct from gender); and second, with the coalitions forged in the 1980s in which lesbians joined with gays during the AIDS crisis to provide a unified response to homophobia. Queer identity is the immediate product of these struggles, but after being in use for decades, it still has trouble living up to its legacy of fighting for a truly common space for all genders and sexualities.

Question: What opportunities does Marxist feminism offer us for a new sexual politics, or new kinds of love?

JR: It is my suspicion that one way in which Marxist feminism could be understood as offering a new understanding of the relationship of work and sex, or work and love, is on the basis of how Marxist feminism has been able to deepen the specificity of what exactly a communist politics promises and entails. The example that immediately comes to mind here is Silvia Federici’s seminal essay “Wages against

⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 36.

Housework." It is in this essay where Federici makes a comment that appears as nothing but a passing remark; a statement that is less a materialist description and more a declaration regarding just what exactly is entailed and implicitly asserted in the project of bringing about a communist future. So, and in the course of her analysis, Federici writes: "[W]e want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create our sexuality, which we have never known."¹⁰ Given Federici's insight, and inquiring into the opportunities afforded to us by Marxist feminism, we could begin by attempting to understand the precise sense in which she makes this remark. In other words, is it the case that Federici is implicitly arguing for a view that seeks out the meaning and social relations of love, intimacy, and familial bonds, insofar as they are stripped of their determinations by the social relations of capital?

My suspicion, however, is that the question with which Federici is occupied is one that is as difficult and profound as it is simple and concise: *What would it mean to love as a communist? To love like a comrade, or as someone in solidarity, or as someone in a romantic relationship? And what are the modes of*

loving, both ourselves and others, that are made possible only by virtue of communism? This is to inquire into the possibility of an image of communism as one that is irreducible to its being the solution to the riddle of history. So, if what is implied by Federici's remark is that communism is the historical condition upon which questions of love and sexuality can be posed, in its most profound and meaningful manner, then what is potentially discovered within the tradition of Marxist feminism more generally is a vision of communism as something more than historical resolutions; a communism that was to be the very condition through which the meaning and function of love no longer derives its sense or value through its participation in a time no longer defined as that of labor or of leisure.

And so, regarding the connection between love and the form of time adequate to it, and with respect to Federici's insistence on the political necessity of maintaining a clear separation of the time of work from that of sex/love/life, we catch a glimpse of how this Marxist feminist analysis of the relationship between production and reproduction are immediately related to Marx's own position on the differing forms of time proper to capitalism and communism. For example, Marx makes a relevant observation in the *Grundrisse* when he writes that: "For real wealth is developed pro-

¹⁰ Silvia Federici, "Wages against Housework," in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2012), 15-22, 20.

ductive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labor time, but rather *disposable time*.¹¹ This disposable-time that is said to be the true measure of the wealth produced under communism; this time with which we can do as we please and that structures one's life as a life defined by this form of time that can only be attributed to communism; this time, then, is the form of time that not only corresponds to Federici's separation of sex from work but does so in a way that moves beyond the brute opposition of labor-time vs. leisure-time (which is simply unwaged time put in the service of reproducing labor-power). In this way, one would be able to see how *disposable-time* is the form of time adequate to communism; as the form of time most adequate for a communist determination of the questions and experiences surrounding love and sexuality; as the form of time proper for our rediscovery of love, for the creation of sexualities we have never known.

AC: It is undeniable that Marxist feminism has been essential in expanding the category of reproduction. Moreover, Marxism was historically at the forefront of "the woman question." But I am curious why queer Marxism seems far less explored in writing than socialist feminism. This is even more surprising giv-

en that political lesbians have almost always been on the forefront of socialist feminist thought. Of course, one could say that reproduction was queer from the beginning. Yet this seems emblematic of most work that could pass as queer Marxism: either the queer theory or the Marxism seems to be brought in through the back door under a different sign.

JJG: In a typical historian's style, I would suggest that we can best approach a new sexual politics by grasping and reviewing some old ideas, and critically reviewing bygone disputes. It may help to return to the notorious Sex Wars and provide an account of that ructious episode. Although much discussed in generalities, relatively little systematic history has been done on the crisis caused to lesbian feminism by Sadomasochism (S&M).

One exception is A.S.G. Robinson's thesis *Passion, Politics, and Politically Incorrect Sex: Towards a History of Lesbian Sadomasochism in the USA 1975-1993*.¹² This history is written from a queer perspective, but in an even-handed fashion (not dismissing or neglecting evidence from the anti-S&M wing). From a black feminist perspective, Amber Jamilla Musser's *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* reads a

¹¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 708.

¹² A.S.G. Robinson, *Passion, Politics, and Politically Incorrect Sex: Towards a History of Lesbian Sadomasochism in the USA 1975-1993* (Master's Thesis, Budapest: Central European University, 2015), www.etd.ceu.hu/2015/robinson_anna.pdf.

wide range of material to produce a compelling case for the enmeshed condition of masochism and racialization. The writings of Pat Califia and Dorothy Allison of course provide views from inside the dispute. (Allison's intensely personal essays "Public Silence, Private Terror" and "A Question of Class" are both sorely neglected by most feminists.) Mark Thompson's *Leatherfolk* collection gathers a startling range of perspectives from the early 1990s, when queer S&M was still in its prime. (By the end of the 1990s these practices had been "straight-washed" in many places.¹³)

Especially interesting for us is that two figures on either side of the Sex Wars at once drew from Marxist theory and sit awkwardly within the canon of Marxist feminists: Audre Lorde and Gayle Rubin. Rubin's famous essay "The Traffic in Women" tested the limits of Marxist theorization to explain gender, introducing structuralist conceptions of kinship which have proven widely influential. Lorde was a remarkably effective socialist organizer, and also scathingly attacked S&M lesbians. But this

¹³ Amber Jamilla Musserm, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Dorothy Allison's "Public Silence, Private Terror" can be found in *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class and Literature* (New York: Firebrand Books, 1994), 101-19; Allison's "A Question of Class" (also originally published in *Skin*) can be accessed online at *History Is A Weapon*, no date, www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/skinall.html; Mark Thompson (Ed.), *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice*, revised edition (Los Angeles: Daedalus, 2015).

was founded in the limits of Lorde's own theory of sexuality, outlined in the classic essay "On the Uses of the Erotic," which should be engaged with by all queer feminists. What united both sides of the Sex Wars was a belief that major victories could be won in the field of sexuality. I worry that this belief has ebbed or has been ceded to liberal feminist "sex positivity." I think a work of this recovery could be very helpful in returning us to revolutionary sexual politics.

Marxist feminism has all too often fallen silent on sexual matters, and queer issues are sadly included in this. I recall attending a panel at Historical Materialism 2014 where trans feminist theorist Nat Raha was speaking on queer materialism and conceded that, at that point, little had been written. There remains a stubborn perception among many scholars that queer studies are supplementary, or perhaps antagonist in an anti-systemic methodological sense, to Marxist inquiry.

One issue is that the "realist" dimension of Marxism often results in gender analysis which begins by "securing the normative," i.e., working out why the "average" household exists as it does. This risks a downplaying of queer experiences as "exceptional," and a falling short of accounting for the impact we have had on various revolutionary movements.

AC: One person to blame is Michel Fou-

cault. Or more precisely: the standard take on Foucault in gender and sexuality studies. There was a little early work on Foucault, such as Barry Smart's, that synthesized him with Marxism. But by-and-large, he is seen as an anti-Marxist figure. In the Anglophone world, his anti-Marxism was played up. The *Power/Knowledge* collection begins with "On Popular Justice: A Discussion with Maoists," and *History of Sexuality*, Volume I begins with a critique of the Marxo-Freudian synthesis of Wilhelm Reich. True to form, a friend once recalled a queer theory seminar in which the class was offered the choice of reading the *History* "for the millionth time" or a work on Marx, and all of the people working in sexuality studies choose the former. Yet this opposition seems overplayed. *Operaismo* long-incorporated his thought, and he remained essential to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Marxist "universal history." And even when Foucault tussled with Marxism in the public spotlight, he remained partner with an unrepentant Marxist (Daniel Defert) and worked with the Prison Information Group to benefit communist prisoners. Though still a bit marginal, I think we are finally seeing a return with new translations of Guy Hocquenghem and Mario Mieli.

JJG: An increasing body of queer Marxist scholarship is already being written, however.

First of all, I should mention the re-

markable work of Georgy Mamedov and Oksana Shatalova, two queer activists based in the former USSR state of Kyrgyzstan. Their "Queer Communism Manifesto"¹⁴ and the more recent piece "Against Simple Answers: The Queer-Communist Theory of Evald Ilyenkov and Alexander Suvorov"¹⁵ both advance what they call the *Queer Idea*. The Queer Idea has a threefold character: "anti-essentialism; a consideration of exclusion and stigma; and political and ethical radicalism." Following from this, their queer-communist politics is one of *denaturalizing* difference. Following Soviet philosopher Ilyenkov they promote the idea that the human is "100% (not 99%)" the result of social forces. This approach has informed their work at the School of Theory and Activism, Bishkek (STAB), during a time of increasing political homophobia in Kyrgyzstan. The queer-communist's response to the rightward shift of their political environment to a "complex question" is admirable, and their work is both rewarding and inspiring.

More conventional academic works include Kevin Floyd's *Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009), Peter Drucker's *Warped:*

¹⁴ Georgy Mamedov and Oksana Shatalova, "Queer Communism Manifesto," trans. by Mohira Suyarkulova, *Art Initiatives*, November 29, 2013, www.art-initiatives.org/ru/content/manifest-kvir-kommunizma-1.

¹⁵ Georgy Mamedov and Oksana Shatalova, "Against Simple Answers: The Queer-Communist Theory of Evald Ilyenkov and Alexander Suvorov," trans. by Giuliano Vivaldi, *ArtsEverywhere*, August 17, 2017, www.artseverywhere.ca/2017/08/17/against-simple-answers.

Gay Normality and Queer Anti-Capitalism (2014), and Holly Lewis' *The Politics of Everybody: Feminism, Queer Theory, and Marxism at the Intersection* (2015), and each have taken somewhat different approaches to inaugurating research projects which are at once queer and Marxist.

Most clearly a defense of Marxism as a theory, Floyd convincingly makes the case for the totalizing drive of Marxism. Drucker's work is equal parts historical and theoretical and considers the non-normative gender formations which arise with an eye on the political economy that developed throughout successive eras. I found it especially helpful that Drucker included identities such as Elizabethan London's "moll" (effeminate men who often found work acting as female characters, or in "moll houses"). Lewis' work is a prolegomenon specifically to a queer Marxist feminism. *The Politics of Everybody* contains much valuable argumentation on topics ranging from deconstruction to trans politics which I had never encountered previously in a published academic work. Although I did not find her opening sections introducing the history of thought altogether reliable, Lewis succeeds in establishing a strong "point of departure" for a trans-inclusive Marxist feminism. These three books are powerful foundations for any number of queer materialist research projects.

JR: And to Jules' list, I would briefly

add Petrus Liu's *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (2015). Liu's text being significant not simply in terms of the amount of research condensed in under 200 pages; *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* shows how via Sedgwick's insight that rethinking sexuality can be a basis for rethinking the social, queer Marxism must be understood as neither the planned economy or collectivized labor of its historical counterparts. A true queer Marxism, as Liu puts it, is "a living philosophy" that brings Marxism to bear on queer lives; one that, before anything else, demonstrates that queer life is the content adequate to the methodology¹⁶ of Marxism.

AC: Yes, and I am often troubled by not knowing how to treat older socialist feminist works that attempt materialist analysis through gender essentialism. Consider, for instance, Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*.¹⁷ On the one hand, it is rather popular today to relegate large parts of 1970's lesbian-separationist writing to the historical trash bin as anti-trans. While on the other, I am wondering if there are parts that should not simply be written off?

¹⁶ For the sake of clarification, the methodology intended here is neither dialectical materialism nor scientific socialism but rather *historical materialism*. And it is the historical materialist method of Marx that Liu views as the only legitimate means of thinking through what exactly a queer Marxism would and could be.

¹⁷ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morris and Company, 1970).

JJG: The first trans-feminist I read was Lisa Millbank, the self-styled “RadTransFem.” Millbank’s hope was (and perhaps still is) to retrieve the insights of the second wave, including its thinkers who were most hostile towards trans women. I have since grown rather skeptical of her approach to performing “*bandita*” exegesis on radical feminist theory (which I think has failings which extend even beyond the transphobia Millbank tried to extricate them from: besides in the work of Andrea Dworkin, black women barely appear in this material.) And certainly I never found her guidebook (the self-published *The Prude’s Progress*¹⁸) for stripping lesbian sexuality of all patriarchal domination altogether convincing. All the same, that was my introduction to transfeminism, although I had been reading radical feminist material for years beforehand. Like many trans women, I have also had a phase of intensively reading “TERF” (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist) material. Above all, this taught me that transphobic feminism is a primarily middle-class phenomenon: the cladding of systemic thought is fit unconvincingly around the most base and everyday prejudice. You can see this most clearly in the gaping inconsistencies and “unlikely alliances” which proliferate in these circles (reactionary sexologists who believe

in innate gender differences are regularly embraced by TERF activists, for instance).

Many trans thinkers I know are in a state of exhaustion with regards to transphobic feminism. This year however I was pleased to read Joy Ladin’s powerful essay “Diving into the Wreck: On Trans and Anti-Trans Feminism.”¹⁹ Adrienne Rich was of course a central thinker in the second wave, and after Audre Lorde was perhaps its second-best poet. She was also a supporter of Janice Raymond, whose notorious screed *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (1979) remains the definitive “TERF” magnum opus.

Rather than either dismissing Rich, or letting her off the hook, Ladin teases at how the figure of the *androgyny* appears fleetingly across Rich’s own writings. Androgyny is at once prominent and awkward in Rich’s oeuvre read as a whole: they slide in and out of view, oscillating from central to absent. In this way, Ladin executes exactly the method set out in the eponymous poem: delving into feminism’s history and sifting free what transfeminism cannot afford to lose. This is “reparative reading,” as Eve Sedgwick had it.

Question: Can there be a queer ethics? Ought there be one?

¹⁸ Available at the author’s blog *A Radical Transfeminist*, 2012-2013, www.radtransfem.wordpress.com/category/articles/the-prudes-progress.

¹⁹ Joy Ladin, “Diving into the Wreck: On Trans and Anti-Trans Feminism,” *Eoagh*, Issue 9 (2017), www.eoagh.com/?p=2783.

JJG: Ethics has become a focus for more and more theory. There are several major schools which provided a basis for thinking through how best to live. I will begin with Gilles Deleuze, as I know my interlocutors are experts on his work. Deleuze drew heavily from the writings of Spinoza in his efforts to revitalize communist thought. Much of Spinoza's metaphysics was of course designed as a principle of "first principles" for his ethical thought. This "affirmationist" approach promoted by the extended influence of Spinoza's ethics is perhaps best expressed in a quote from Mark Fisher, now displayed on a mural at Goldsmiths College, London: "Emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order,' must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable."²⁰

JR: As I have mentioned to Jules in the past, clarifying this relationship between "ethics," Spinoza's *Ethics*, and Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza's corpus is complicated for a host of historical and theoretical reasons (one particularly significant aspect of its complex history being the role of Spinoza in the various attempts to de-Stalinize the French Communist Party, with Althusser being

perhaps the most notable). Given our roundtable format I will simply highlight a few features that I think are indispensable for understanding the logical and philosophical relationship that Spinoza and Deleuze maintain relative to that sub-discipline of academic philosophy we know as ethics, since it is their relationship to ethics itself that is a large part of Deleuze's recruitment of Spinoza in his counter-tradition to the one that traces its roots back to eighteenth century European (Enlightenment) philosophy. It is only then that, I think, it is possible to determine what these various frameworks offer in terms of inquiring into the existence, possibility, desirability or moral obligation of a *queer* ethics.

For Spinoza, and more so Deleuze, ethics is not simply the search for an answer which adequately resolves the problem of how one goes about living the "good life"; in fact, the profound meaning of ethics remains irreducible to how individuals are more or less living a life of virtue even though the question of individual lives is a necessary part of any ethical project. So, in addition to concerns with living a life of virtue, ethics means an inquiry into the kind of relationship that needs to exist between our thinking, feeling and the ways in which particular social formations throughout history over-determine or condition a specific kind of relation between how we understand

²⁰ Originally from Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 16.

ourselves and how we understand who we are, and what we are capable of relative to the world as a whole. This definition of ethics (which clearly would not be accepted, or ever used, within academic philosophy departments) is one that views the question of an individual ethical life as one that inquire into how the problems, neuroses and blockages we confront and experience as personal, individual and private are, before being anything else, of a social, collective and therefore public nature. To *détourn* Deleuze's formula regarding the capitalist process of production: problems, dramas and crises are always social before being personal and individual. So any undertaking of ethics begins from the admission that not only do we retain various bad habits of thought that we use in daily life and that either produce half-formed concepts or unintelligible ideas; an inquiry into the socio-historical circumstances that favor the masses, the enslaved, the colonized or the proletariat to live in a condition where they find it easier to rely on the bad habits of thought and its mutilated concepts. Ethics, then, is the search for the truth of what it would actually mean to give detail and content to our present "condition"; a search that sees it necessary to discover the logical and necessary relationship between personal and social problems, between individual and collective neuroses. It is for these reasons that Spinoza

can write, in the concluding Scholium to Part II, that his is a text written with the aim of aiding us in every aspect our lives:

in our social relations, in that it teaches us to hate no one, despise no one, ridicule no one, be angry with no one, envy no one [...] it teaches us that each should be content with what he has and should help his neighbor [...] solely from the guidance of reason as occasion and circumstance require [...] Finally, this doctrine is also of no small advantage to the commonwealth, in that it teaches the manner in which citizens should be governed and led; namely, not so as to be slaves, but so as to do freely what is best.²¹

AC: I should interject to say that there is a lot at stake with the varied uses of Spinoza in Marxist circles, namely, Louis Althusser and his students - Antonio Negri and Gilles Deleuze. Much is made of Althusser's turn to Spinoza as a rejoinder to Hegel and the dialectic. While this is true, the key insight lost to most is that Spinoza is introduced as an ally to Freud. Spinoza here provides the bridge between a theory of the subject and a

²¹ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics. Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*, trans. by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1992), 100, EII P49 Scholium.

larger materialist project. In contrast, Negri sees Spinoza as a joyous communist whose ethics are found in the collective - hence his preoccupation with imagining the figure of Spinoza's Multitude as it operates on different terms than Thomas Hobbes's imagination of the People. For Negri, it almost goes back to Jean-Paul Sartre's earlier notion of the group-in-fusion. As such, Negri's reading contributes a political theory of Spinoza that undermines the Leninist paradigm of Marxist politics, from the need for a vanguard to the party's function in the discipline and education of the unformed masses. Deleuze's reading of Spinoza is far less directed toward a specific political end. "The Ontological Turn" that included Speculative Realism, Actor-Network Theory, Assemblage Theory and New Materialism drew heavily on a reading of Deleuze's take on Spinoza, though for the most part, it was implicitly or explicitly anti-Marxist. My own favorite reading comes from Susan Ruddick, who argues that Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozism should be contrasted with Negri's; rather than providing us tools for building a collective, Spinoza helps us disrupt the images of thought fed to us by tyrants and cheats.

All of these approaches provide wonderful tools for Marxism, but where in it does queer ethics appear? New Materialism seems to have taken up the challenge, as many of its thinkers

came out of socialist feminism. Just look at the amazing career trajectory of Donna Haraway! The conceptual thread of kin and kinship continues to explore an important thread of queer thought. Remember, in the midst of Judith Butler's critique of *Paris is Burning*, she briefly praises how houses reveal alternative family structures.

JJG: As a pet gripe, Butler's treatment of Venus Xtravaganza in that essay is perhaps the weakest single passage in her career. She seems almost not to realize that Xtravaganza is not a fictional character. It is a remarkably different approach to her painstaking phenomenological reconstruction of David Reimer's childhood in "Doing Justice to Someone."²²

AC: Absolutely. As much as queer feminism wants to think about race, it largely treats it as a question of intersectionality, which combines the two through coalitional politics rather than a theoretical union. Most queer theorists still lack a *theory* of how race and gender intersect. Women's, gender and sexuality studies have only further sidestepped the issue a bit by turning toward "low theory."

New Materialism seems to offer a feminist alternative to low theory. But returning to "stuff" does not always sit well with Marxism

²² Judith Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2001), 621-36.

or queer theory, in spite of many theorists' best efforts. Training analysis on objects can easily slip into naïve commodity fetishism, and reversing the classic queer theory move of skipping past "being" to "doing" can turn into just another form of essentialism. Perhaps there are readings of Spinoza that split the difference?

JR: I think Andrew is absolutely right. The turn to Spinoza by people of that generation is wholly political. Especially as it is no secret that Althusser himself saw Spinoza as the means of correcting the Hegelian perversions that were said to be the real causes of Stalinism. However, it is worth noting that given the fate of Spinoza as a figure to whom various political positions are assigned, the association of Spinoza and Deleuze with what is at stake not simply in queer theory but in queer life is due to a set of shared problems that are *materialist* in nature. Materialist because they are problems encountered within the concrete, actuality, of daily life. And while one might be tempted to consider Butler's remark as belonging to this materialist position insofar as these alternative family structures are concrete resolution to the problem of precarious housing situations, I would hesitate to endorse such a line of thinking. The solutions devised by already oppressed groups to the social problems generated by capital (housing,

access to health care and services, etc.) are necessary and done out of survival. To put it bluntly: Butler's remark is nothing but the excitement of bourgeois voyeurism. If there is something particular to queer life that is depicted in *Paris Is Burning* it would be the conditions that determine what is possible and not possible as a queer (these conditions being the need for alternative housing structures, the fact of one's increased vulnerability simply by virtue of one's job, e.g., sex work, or gender identity, etc.). So, it is true that even the most refined theories of performativity fall short of addressing the material conditions of queer life. And just as both of you have noted, the key problem that arises out of the recent attempts in queer theory to overcome the limits of Butler's position are to be found in various positions that unwittingly make materialism into a variant of animism, or into a more one-sided account of the relationship between thinking and being where matter-itself is both problem and solution.

The latter of these two is best seen in Pheng Cheah's article "Non-Dialectical Materialism,"²³ where Cheah argues for a non-dialectical theory of change by relocating the possibility of real social transformation in matter and not form, in the world of matter-it-

²³ Pheng Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism," *diacritics*, Vol. 38, No. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008), 143-57.

self and not the immaterial domain of idealism and its abstractions. While Cheah argues that this is a position that is derived from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of impersonal forces and pre-individual singularities, it is not at all clear to me how these notions require a re-definition of the materialism that begins with Marx and continues in their joint works. It is true that Deleuze and Guattari are singular in thinking through the existence of supposedly absolute processes of *deformation*, or *deteriorialization* where what is at work is something that evades the classical distinctions between matter and its forms, or a form and its variable contents. But this is a theory about change in general, whereas the specific interest of transforming the material reality of queer lives finds no political guarantees in general theories of how change occurs in the world. So, what a non-dialectical materialism really amounts to is not a confirmation of Deleuze's many anti-Hegelian comments and rather amounts to neutralizing any possibility for a collective subject to change its material conditions and thereby transforming what the meaning and substance of their lives is in the process.

To detach any notion of revolutionary transformation from a materialism that begins from the concrete, reality, of queer life (and including its set of particular interests, desires, and needs) amounts to a vision of po-

litical struggle that understands itself to be revolutionary due to the (over-)emphasis placed and privilege granted to the reality of change *in general*. This is tantamount to saying that what is most revolutionary in terms of change is a change that remains blind to the consequences for any subject or group whatsoever. It is a theory of change that is universal and equal only to the extent that we are barred from saying how and why it is beneficial for everyone... let alone for queers and especially queers of color. If what is at stake is not life in general but specifically queer, intersectional, life, then any notion of change can only be revolutionary to the extent that it is a qualitative transformation for queer life. And here we also encounter what is promising with the recent work on queer Marxism since what was revolutionary in the vision of communism is also at work in queer Marxism and in a historical materialist understanding of change. The kind of change we are interested in has never been general in nature; it is always for someone such as the proletariat of the past or the queers of the present.

JJG: "Bad habits" are of course a major contemporary trend in queer thought: nostalgia, effeteness, failure and other "negative affects" have been brought to the fore by thinkers like J. Halberstam, Heather Love and Sara Ahmed. What insights into this can be provided

in assessing this trend by your queer Deleuzian ethical-politics? Or do they suggest another direction?

AC: Recent queer feminist thought on bad feelings has really run the gambit. Lauren Berlant largely takes negativity as their state of being for relations, Sianne Ngai uses ugly feelings diagnostically, Heather Love returns to a history of injury to remind us of work left to do, and Jack Halberstam treats failure as pedagogical. As such, negativity is treated almost as the price for membership, in the queer community and otherwise. In contrast, Sara Ahmed's "feminist killjoy" is a positive project that lacks any redemptive qualities. I love how it has struck a chord with so many people.

Though not especially Spinozist at first glance, one concept from Deleuze that has not really been explored in much depth comes from *Anti-Oedipus*. In it, he and Félix Guattari argue that subjectivity is retroactively produced through the excess of a social formation. (In the technical terms they use, the conjunctive synthesis of consummation/consumption is the process through which subjects "consume" what a socius produces and "consummate" their identity by claiming mastery over a particular body without organs.) As such, our identities are products we are meant to suffer/enjoy. This is why Deleuze and Guattari say that subjectivity is produced "like Prell shampoo," leading them to modify Spinoza's famous axiom to be "god

= nature = industry." And as Nietzschean-Spinozist-Marxists, their position is certainly one of *rebellion*.²⁴

What a different image of the subject than today's clichéd Spinoza-talk of growing capacities, enhancing the subject, and larger collectives! When ripped out of Deleuze and Guattari's "universal history of capitalism" that includes various modes of subjectivity, such Spinozism falls victim to a presentism that makes it indistinguishable from self-help maxims. Why all the metaphysical footwork if the end result is an "ethics" based on rather abstract notions of more, better, stronger? Here, the queer rejection of the naturalizing impulse to accept "what is" as a given remains absolutely key to maintaining our critical faculties. That is why I would be much more excited by a queer return to the historical materialism of *Anti-Oedipus* than another study of ethology or cosmic queerness.

JJG: My dear friend and performance studies scholar Jack Belloli has suggested queers should try focusing less on failure, and more on skills. I wonder if (and why) we find our failures a good deal easier to focus on...

JR: Perhaps the danger in focusing too much on failure as what defines queer subjects,

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 254-5.

and a danger that I think you are rightly critical of, is that it equates what queers make of their own identity with the material conditions and limits that define their subject-position within capital. And it is for this reason that the features of antagonism, abolition and so on are so important since every identity that simply assumes a ready-made position within capital is one that readily identifies with everything that maintains their precarity, alienation and dispossession. However, I will say I am inclined to say that what Halberstam gets right in theorizing failure as a queer art is the idea that failure is indicative of the degrees of separation between oneself and the norms that give order to and render intelligible one's social existence. Failure, however, is not a program and particularly for queers it is something that can even be worse than death. And to quickly return to Andrew's point (and one that I am in agreement with) regarding the possibility of arguing for a queer subjectivity in *Anti-Oedipus*: this queer anti-Oedipal subject is one that is defined by its antagonism and combat, and not its reliance on the "failing better" because we were never in a position to afford failure in the first place. So, it is for these reasons (and more!) that the ethical tradition coming out of Spinoza and Deleuze concludes that if we are made to undergo sadness, to feel weak, to be made to see lies as

truths, eliminating the cause of our anguish means nothing short of eliminating the society in which one finds themselves. Or in the words of *Anti-Oedipus*: "The Women's Liberation movements are correct in saying: We are not castrated, so you get fucked."²⁵ And in spite of Sara Ahmed's critical take on Deleuze's theory of affects, what is common to the models of subjectivity that come out of Ahmed's killjoy, Deleuze and Guattari's schizo-subject, is their unruly character, their subjectivity being one that is willful. This is a subject that does not simply "fail" to re-calibrate its desire to the demands of capital, it is a subject of non-compromise, one that refuses to collaborate with the forces that seek out its repression.

To conclude and bring together my earlier comments, I think two things can now be clarified: First, if there exists something like a queer ethics, it is an ethics insofar as it is critical of, and materially organizes against, the present state of things (abolition thesis). Second, this definition of ethics echoes various definitions of queer and queer subjectivity, such as Lee Edelman's *No Future*; or the queer subject found in works like *Queer Ultraviolence* (a text that I know all three of us have a deep affinity for!) and related groups such as Bash Back!. These would belong to a definition of queer ethics as the project of finding the means

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 81.

to reverse engineer capital's death-drive that governs one half of social life. It is an ethics of un-doing; or, as Andrew puts it in his book on Deleuze, it is the labor of un-becoming all the internalized guilt, self-hatred, and resentment of this world in order to better work toward its abolition. Additionally, queer subjects undo what has been done to them, so they can relieve themselves of the burden to be, or to fail at being, somebody. And perhaps this refusal of being somebody is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they talk about the joy of being nobody, of becoming-imperceptible:

To become imperceptible oneself, to have dismantled love in order to become capable of loving. To have dismantled one's self in order finally to be alone and meet the true double at the other end of the like. A clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everybody else [...] to no longer be anybody.²⁶

JJG: Probably my favorite piece in the Back Back! reader is titled "What Is it to Become Beautiful?" It argues that ugliness leaves you along with liberalism, as you immerse yourself in the collective process of overcoming oppression. In contrast to much of the radical

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 197.

feminist material I have already mentioned, it explains: "Becoming beautiful means fighting a liberatory struggle without a utopian illusion of liberation."²⁷ This speaks to my experience with queer politics, and friendships.

JR: Same! And I have always thought that, in some way, "What Is it to Become Beautiful?" is a necessary companion piece to Tiquun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, and particularly with respect to the chapter on the young-girl and anorexia.²⁸ Here, the young-girl, discovering there is little she can do to change the world around her, embarks on the task of changing herself. The painful outcome of this being that the young-girl finds herself in a situation of powerlessness only to transform it into a mastery over herself and body. So given the severity of life as a young-girl, "What Is it to Become Beautiful?" is a necessary rejoinder in that it rejects beauty as the self-subjugation of young-girls for beauty understood as "the violent and persistent confrontation between your body and Cosmo"; and where the violent and relentless confrontation definitive of this kind of

²⁷ The Mary Nardini Gang and A Gang of Criminal Queers, "What Is it to Become Beautiful?," in *Queer Ultra Violence*, ed. by Fray Baroque and Tegan Eanelli (California: Ardent Press, 2011), 278-82.

²⁸ See Chapter 9 "The Young-Girl against Herself" in Tiquun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. by Ariana Reines (Los Angeles, California: Semiotext(e), 2012), 121-30.

beauty is also “the youth’s only hope.”²⁹ But putting aside what is produced by “theory” we can also take our cue from history, and particularly from Stryker’s *Transgender History* where we read the stories of what went down at the Cooper’s Donuts in Los Angeles (1959) and Dewey’s Lunch Counter in Philadelphia (1965)³⁰ since these were moments where solidarity between sex workers, homeless youth and the surrounding working-class neighbors meant defending each other’s lives against the economic and political violence of the state. And so those present at either Cooper’s Donuts or Dewey’s Lunch Counter can equally serve as models of the ethically queer life. This also has the added benefit of serving as a qualitatively different vision to Butler’s remark, which Andrew pointed us to. In any case, and given the fact that most of this engagement with the ethics of queer life comes from those projects influenced by Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, Althusser, etc., I wonder *what other approaches to ethical life can help queers?*

JJG: I would like to introduce two other trends relevant to the discussion: firstly, eth-

²⁹ Gang and Queers, “What Is it to Become Beautiful?,” 282.

³⁰ Susan Stryker nicely summarizes the history, relation, and significance of these two dates as follows: “The Dewey’s incident, like the one at Cooper’s, demonstrates the overlap between gay and transgender activism in the working-class districts of major U.S. cities in spite of tensions and prejudices within both groups.” For more see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (California: Seal Press, 2008), 62.

ics approaches as a form-of-life, and secondly, the revival of Aristotle’s “Virtue Ethics” performed by Alasdair MacIntyre.

“Forms of life” has proven a recurring phrase in ethics since the twentieth century, although the term has a slightly tangled history. A similar turn of phrase appears in Michel Foucault’s famous essay “Friendship as a Way of Life,”³¹ but the term forms-of-life in fact originates with Ludwig Wittgenstein (usually a figure associated with “analytic philosophy”). Wittgenstein began his *Philosophical Investigations* with an engagement with St. Augustine’s view of the image, indicating his shift away from an earlier style of philosophy as propositional treatise (which had become a central text to the canon of logical positivism, due to the Vienna Circle’s unrequited fascination with Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*).

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that language operates not primarily according to incorrect or correct statements, but instead as a series of games which can only be understood through grasping the whole relevant culture. In this way, some kind of collapse between semantics and ethics occurs. (The exact implications of this have seen wildly diverging interpretations).

³¹ An interview with the French publication *Gai Pied* that appeared in 1981, published in an English translation by John Johnston in Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 135-40.

Forms-of-life was then adopted in the 1950s by Pierre Hadot.³² Hadot was among the first French scholars to engage with Wittgenstein, a shift from his earlier career as a scholar focused on ancient and medieval thinkers (especially Plotinus). These two interests were brought together as follows: Hadot argued that, rather than providing an attempt at systematic thought proceeding through defensible propositions, ancient philosophy instead served as a *means* towards living a philosophical life. Rather than systematic treatises expected to be read as progressive successions of propositions, philosophical writing was intended to challenge and train its reader.

Hadot's thought was deeply influential on Michel Foucault, who drew much of his approach toward Late Antiquity's thought from Hadot's writings (as explored in Stuart Elden's *Foucault's Last Decade*³³). Foucault's key ideas concerning "care of the self" were based on reading ancient philosophy as ethical aids (or technologies, as Foucault, but not Hadot, would term them). In understanding Foucault's approach to "normativity," this ethical undergirding needs to be considered.

³² An English translation of this is available: Pierre Hadot, "Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy," trans. by Arnold I. Davidson and Paula Wissing, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1990), 483-505.

³³ Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

Giorgio Agamben drew then on the phrase forms-of-life in his 2013 monograph *The Highest Poverty*, which analyzed the normative writings used by medieval monastic founders. Normative writing was used in medieval monasteries to establish the explicit limits of communal forms-of-life (Agamben's focus is mostly on western material, the *regula et vita*, while my own is focused on Byzantine *typika*). Most interestingly, Agamben treats the development of this type of writing as a *genre* question. I think that kind of approach might prove more widely applicable as we attempt queer cultural inquiry.

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981)³⁴ provides another view of the history of morality. MacIntyre notes that moral issues of the day (which often appeared as points of political discussion) were "incommensurable," beginning from such differing principles that resolution could never be achieved. Yet besides vague references to differing "value," moral philosophy did not seem to provide any warnings of this. MacIntyre charged moral philosophy as suffering from a state of continual overproduction: imperatives of securing employment ensured a churn of publications which could never hope to further moral inquiry in a meaningful sense (instead serving solely as professional ephemera fit for feathering careerist nests). In

³⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

other words, MacIntyre provides a materialist thumbnail sketch for the intellectual bankruptcy of contemporary professional philosophy.

Instead of perpetuating this, MacIntyre proposed a return to the ethical maxims of Aristotle, for whom virtues were displayed amongst one's peers. (MacIntyre compares these plural "virtues" with the singular "virtue" Christians sought to protect during modernity: morality as reducible to avoiding or performing particular deeds). In this way, MacIntyre provides an approach to ethics which centers the community, the group of mutually concerned peers. Ethical life arises not from contemplation, nor revealed truths, but from reciprocal conference.

Both of these approaches to ethics stress their core as *relational*, and habitual. Virtues and forms-of-life are both responsive to historical activity and cannot be understood without appreciating the contours left by it. Both these views can serve as aides in our efforts to (collectively) achieve queer survival. But they also show us what it truly means to make up your own language, to set your own terms, to choose your own friends. They show us that queer community is not an end but our means toward ethical ordering (even in our unfavorable circumstances, or especially).

To me, both of these approaches have much greater merit than is widely realized. Foucault is (of course) a towering figure in queer thought, but it is disappointing that the pro-

found reach, and deep roots, of forms-of-life is not more widely known. If we are to provide a challenge to the heterosexual normative order, appreciating the depth of Wittgenstein and Hadot's attack on "proposition-centrism" is one way of doing that.

AC: "Life" itself has followed quite an itinerant line. Vitalist philosophies have grown in popularity as Henri Bergson has been thrown back in the spotlight. Yet there are older vitalisms that remain integral to how we think about social and political life, perhaps the most important being Afro-Caribbean Thought. Parenthetically, Donna V. Jones's investigation in *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*³⁵ is essential here.

I am curious how queerness problematizes "life." Queers have long been accused of being anti-life, something etched deeply into the gay unconscious through the AIDS crisis. Lee Edelman's polemical treatment of reproductive futurity is one response: when Focus on the Family accuses queerness of being the end of the world, let us meet their bet and raise them one. This is the queer nihilist politics of the journal *Baeden* and other that I have a strong affinity towards. There is even one way of reading Foucault's final chapter of *History of Sexuality*, Volume 1 as warning about all of the dangers

³⁵ Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

associated with using life as a category of thought in the age of biopolitics. Yet with all of these risks, queerness is driven to explore otherness on its own terms; forging alternative intimacies, locating new spaces of encounter, cultivating weird archives.

My own approach has been to take the easy way out. In *Dark Deleuze*, I use the discourse of gay shame when dealing with subjectivity.³⁶ This fits with a move in contemporary theory toward pessimism, perhaps the most well-known being Afro-pessimism. As argued in a recent article Jose and I helped publish,³⁷ the result is a “negative identity politics” whereby we fight from the subject position we inhabit but through a disidentification from ourselves. Though I should admit that when writing *Dark Deleuze*, I had not yet worked out how Afro-pessimism could fit with my approach to Deleuze, especially given how extensively Frank B. Wilderson, III draws on Lacan. As a placeholder, I reiterated Deleuze’s use of George Jackson as the paradigmatic figure of a line of flight. It took me a long time to work it out, but I recently completed the manuscript for an essay on the coincidence of Afro-pessimism and the Non-philosophy of François Laruelle. Look-

ing at the big picture, my argument is not that all of these pessimisms put us all on the same team. Though for us, even if their starting points are radically different, we see comparative theories of self-abolition that indicate to us that queerness, left communist anti-politics, and black thought all drawing from a similar playbook.

JR: Perhaps the most striking difference between the ethics of Deleuze/Spinoza and that of “forms-of-life” is that while we have found some way of providing some content to the concept of the ethical existence of queers (undoing, antagonism, ultraviolence, etc.), the same cannot be said for the latter. This is made even more difficult since the form that mediates and binds a life to itself, at least with respect to its use by Agamben, is any form whatsoever. The only requirement being that it accomplishes this fusion of norm and life. In the case of Wittgenstein, this concept does seem to gain further utility for the question of ethical practices for the realities of queer life - what good is a form-of-life if it simply signifies everything that grounds the possibility of utterances (environment, culture, history, politics, etc.) to be received as meaningful by a linguistic community? Moreover, what happens if the forms-of-life that ensure meaningful communication harbor within themselves the norms and values against which queers rebel?

³⁶ Andrew Culp, *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

³⁷ K. Aarons, “No Selves to Abolish: Afropessimism, Anti-Politics, and the End of the World,” *Hostis*, Issue 2: Beyond Recognition (2015), 103-27.

What good is the guarantee of meaning when the meaning and worth of life is unequally and unevenly distributed across the globe? Asked in this manner, one is tempted to say that it is because this lineage, which starts by privileging the guarantee of meaningful speech in our socio-linguistic environment in order to understand forms-of-life, that it also ignores ways in which queers have been, and continue to be, those who signify an aberration or who are consigned to a life defined by their slow and/or social death.

In the face of these theoretical blind spots, perhaps it is better to say that what is specific to queer subjectivity with all its antagonism and violence is precisely that it begins not from some transcendental grounding of meaning but from meaninglessness as both an objective condition as well as a subjective tendency. This approach also imagines the subjects of un-doing or self-abolition as a life that introduces deviant, meaningless, a-signifying utterances. Instead of staving off the complete loss of meaning, queer subjects find their home in the non-signifying breaks of language since it is only in the moments when the foundations of meaningful speech are felt to be in question that there comes into existence the possibility of "producing a new utterance, an operation of the signifier as expression of a meaning, a possible split in a given order, a breach, a revo-

lution, a cry for radical reorientation."³⁸ The more auspicious moments for the ethically queer subject, then, are more likely to be those situations where the very meaning of speech itself is no longer guaranteed and called into question (and perhaps this is part of why you, Andrew, mentioned *Baeden*). Or better still, in addition to the suspension/contestation of hegemonic structures and its meaning, ethically queer subjectivity gains in force when it confronts those structures without betraying the fact that the meaning of its life and its speech remain incommensurable with the semiotic systems required by capital. Now, on this topic of imagining a form of revolutionary subjectivity that is equally communist and queer, perhaps we encounter another, related, question regarding queerness and what Jules once called a "communitarian ethic": namely, *can queer politics ever overcome the communitarian framing, and does it even need to?*

AC: Miranda Joseph's *Against the Romance of Community* is the key reference for me.³⁹ In it, she argues that communities are constituted through practices of production and consumption. This is where the queer critique of homonormativity is really enhanced by a Marxist

³⁸ Félix Guattari, "Causality, Subjectivity and History," in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality. Texts and Interviews 1955-1971*, trans. by Ames Hodges (Los Angeles, California: Semiotext(e), 2015), 235-80, 239.

³⁹ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

perspective. Of course, there is also the sociological problem of community as being constituted through a clear inside-outside, that almost-always lead to boundary policing like at MichFest (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival) - an internationally-influential annual women-only gathering of feminists that ran from 1976 until 2015, when organizers decided to shut it down rather than include transgender women.

JJG: MacIntyre's challenge to modern moral philosophy has proven widely influential, but so far as I know has limited traction in queer thought. This is a pity, and I think many of the "surface level" discussions which clutter queer life (call outs, etc.) could be grasped better with Aristotelian conceptions of virtues in mind. My view is that many of the more ferocious disputes between queers are unwitting efforts to resolve questions along these lines, in a hostile context. They are efforts to work out who our peers are, before it is too late.

Using this lens, you can answer quite easily why, for instance, the 1980s row around S&M became so intractable during the events around the Barnard Conference. The exchange was between loose groups with markedly differing mores and conventions: the leather dykes drew from gay S&M counter-culture and participated in mixed gender spaces, which developed a great number of the conventions around consent and sexual safety still in use to this day. Anti-

S&M lesbians were more firmly rooted in consciousness raising circles and tended towards a lesbian separatism that deemed even Andrea Dworkin impure, due to her bisexuality.⁴⁰ For these groups lesbianism specifically was not a quality of revolutionaries, but *was* the revolution. (The most succinct and abstract defense of this position is found in the writings of Monique Wittig). At its worst, this stance proposed lesbianism as something to be protected (from gay men, bisexual women, and the male energies of S&M freaks.) The divergence in "operative context" of each party meant much of this debate occurred around incommensurable po-

⁴⁰ Dworkin describes attending an event called "Lesbianism as a Personal Politic" in 1977: "Hisses. Women shouting at me: slut, bisexual, she fucks men. And before I had spoken, I had been trembling, more afraid to speak than I had ever been. And, in a room of 200 sister lesbians, as angry as I have ever been. 'Are you a bisexual?,' some woman screamed over the pandemonium, the hisses and shouts merging into a raging noise. 'I'm a Jew,' I answered; then, a pause, 'and a lesbian, and a woman.' And a coward. Jew was enough. In that room, Jew was what mattered. In that room, to answer the question 'Do you still fuck men?' with a No, as I did, was to betray my deepest convictions. All of my life, I have hated the proscribers, those who enforce sexual conformity. In answering, I had given in to the inquisitors, and I felt ashamed. It humiliated me to see myself then: one who resists the enforcers out there with militancy, but gives in without resistance to the enforcers among us." Originally published as: Andrea Dworkin, "Biological Superiority: The World's Most Dangerous and Deadly Idea," *Heresies No. 6 on Women and Violence*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 1978), 46-9; reprinted in *Letters from a War Zone. Writings 1976-1986* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989), and accessible online at Andrea Dworkin Online Library, no date, www.nostatusquo.com/ACLU/dworkin/WarZoneChaptIIID.html.

sitions, despite superficial commonalities such as an overrepresentation of humanities academics, and both sides facing down stigmatization from much of the public. It is for this reason that no fruitful resolution occurred (most participants have not changed their basic stances, but simply no longer want to talk about the dispute).

I should clarify that my view is not a pessimistic one: although sometimes fractious to the point of fractal, queer communities have done remarkably well at protecting and defining themselves, and at providing places of refuge for those left in dire need by the heterosexual order. One example of this is the success (despite the odds) of ACT-UP in saving untold millions of lives from the AIDS crisis. In the early years of the epidemic, ACT-UP not only agitated for further funding, but in fact compiled and processed huge reams of information. A range of queer groups used this knowledge and developed the original “safe sex” (later fully co-opted by the global state/NGO complex). Even by 1987 this process was well underway, as recorded in Douglas Crimp’s remarkable essay “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Crimp notes the conceptual limits in understanding AIDS that were to become yet more prominent a decade later, with the introduction of retrovirals: by the late 1980s, AIDS was a crisis which mostly killed Africans. After the introduction of retrovirals this became a yet sharper divide, and black communities in the United States were often left without access to treatment due

Many of those who dedicated their time to this process were trained medical professionals, but the bulk were considerably less qualified than the many medical experts who did nothing to end the crisis in its early years. “Making do” is often the order of the day, queer survival skills are often picked up as required. Necessarily, survival in times of crisis demands of us mastery of skills in which we have often not received formal training. Instead, queer survival is enabled through queer communities.

To talk of “community” in queer circles is to invite cynical responses (I think few of us have not been burnt badly in one way or another from *within* anti-heteronormative spaces), but some theorization of communities is simply inevitable. We do not have the luxury of a truly mass culture. Instead, throughout queer history specific territories, conventions, counter-cultures, aesthetics and mores have arisen and shifted rapidly, often baffling and horrifying outsiders. We teeter constantly between the esoteric, the arbitrary and the class collaborationist. MacIntyre and “forms of life” theorists each gesture towards the bedrock of moral inquiry within social relationality. Towards the norms we agree upon in opposition to the prevailing normativity.

to profit-driven healthcare. Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic,” *October*, Vol. 43 (1987), 237-71.

JR: I think the last point you made about the connotations of the word “community” in queer circles is something that most, if not all, of my friends and I have been feeling for quite some time. And, of course, this is tricky since we need each other, and yet queer communities still fall prey to the exclusion, marginalization or erasure of other queers. In this instance I am sympathetic to the use of “form-of-life” as a way to understand what theorizing about queer communities would mean; since at the very least it would require us to provide the determinate content of what is both desirable and detrimental in terms of a queer form-of-life. And perhaps when we end up specifying just what is queer about this form-of-life, we discover that it has something to do with this issue of, as you pointed out, thinking the relation between a community and its survival. Moreover, the form-of-life as a way of theorizing this relation could lead us to a position that treats phenomena such as resisting arrest, fighting back against police violence and defending the spaces that give queers access to material resources, and can no longer be treated as a moral dilemma up for public debate (such as the one we are seeing today regarding whether or not anti-fascist groups in the U.S. are in fact the same as the neo-Nazis and white supremacists they oppose): these are simply the skills and knowledges needed to protect queer

lives. But what is the ultimate outcome of all this? More militancy without material stability and/or gain? Not quite. And since I could not put it in anymore beautiful and precise terms, I will simply repeat what transpinay/bakla author b.binaohan writes in the introduction to her *Decolonizing Trans/Gender 101*:

The community and available resources are critical for ensuring that more of us lead successful lives in ways healthy and happy. To allowing many of us to survive. And for us to go beyond survival. To reach a place where we can be free. Of oppression, of violence, of racism, of cissexism, of transmisogyny, of transphobia, of colonialism. Just. Free.⁴²

It should be noted that b.binaohan’s work on the intersection of race and gender is additionally important here since she begins her analysis by addressing the way in which gender, like class, is *racially constructed*. And I think it is true that any theorization on community relative to queer subjects needs to confront and find ways of addressing the continued effects of colonialism and race as they manifest themselves in queer spaces. Failure on our part to do this intellectual and prac-

⁴² b.binaohan, *Decolonizing Trans/Gender 101* (biyuti publishing, 2014), 6-7.

tical labor within queer spaces has the potential consequence of excluding, tokenizing and/or outright erasing of the experiences and conditions of queers of color, and particularly I am thinking of indigenous and/or trans women of color. It would mean that despite our good intentions there remains the possibility of repeating exclusion and/or co-optation in the very construction of this form-of-life - the clearest case of this being Sylvia Rivera's ousting from the Gay Liberation Front (GLF):

... Sylvia Rivera (and other trans women of color) who were pushed out of the Gay Liberation Front by white gays as a means to divorce themselves from the disreputable "trans women" for a bid of respectability politics. Of course, it worked, given that the GLF was able to obtain some sort of civil recognition while entirely omitting the needs of trans women from it.⁴³

JJG: I was recently re-watching Rivera's famous "Y'all Better Quieten Down" speech at the Christopher Street March in 1973 (received much more favorably by history than it was by gays and lesbians at the time). I was always struck by the precision of her arguments: that her rapists in prison had been straight men. But what I had not fully recognized in my ear-

⁴³ b.binaohan, *Decolonizing*, 69.

lier viewings was how this was very much an organizational intervention: she gives the address of S.T.A.R. (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) and encourages the crowd to come along. It is no howl of anguish, but even in the face of audience hostility, an attempt to forge a group fit to confront the dire conditions of 1970s trans street life. Her thinking and activity were both oriented towards solidarity and political formation. We need to recover that spirit.

Question: What challenge does queerness pose to distinctions between species? Must (or can) queers be human? Does developing queerness demand of us a new humanism, anti-humanism, or both?

JJG: Questions around humanism are becoming a raging concern for queer studies, while having already burnt themselves out in various other fields. With the trenchant Afro-pessimist Lacanian attacks of Calvin Warren on much of queer studies for what he calls its "closeted humanism,"⁴⁴ this controversy seems set to continue. (For what it is worth, I do not agree

⁴⁴ See Calvin L. Warren, *Onticide: Afropessimism, Queer Theory, and Ethics* (ill will editions, 2015), 8, 21, www.illwilleditions.noblogs.org/files/2015/09/Warren-Onticide-Afropessimism-Queer-Theory-and-Ethics-READ.pdf; Calvin L. Warren, "Onticide: Afro-pessimism, Gay Nigger #1, and Surplus Violence," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2017), 391-418.

with Warren that much of queer theory is humanist, but I personally am happy to come out of the closet as one.)

These questions are entwined with the limits of species, another normative boundary most see as foundational to life, but which some queer scholars have done their best to trouble.

It is safe to say that animals loom large in both queer activist politics and thought and are especially prone to testing the conventional limits of inter-species concern. Veganism is a wholly disproportionate practice among queer circles as compared to the "general population." (For their part, meat eaters and hunters are often prone to framing their practices as "manly," or "red blooded.")

Queer animals have become a flourishing concern for some gender theorists. In many cases, this focus corresponds to a rejection of humanism. One strand of "methodological anti-humanism" which has proven especially fruitful, if quite strange to the uninitiated, is actor-network theory. The often exuberant, often cryptic, work of Bruno Latour has found much favor throughout the culturally-oriented wings of the humanities. This school was drawn into dialogue with Marxism feminism by Donna Haraway, in her classic *Cyborg Manifesto*. Haraway saw overcoming species boundaries as only one frontier in the contemporary's collapsing of

dichotomies: "The dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ... they have been 'techno-digested.'"⁴⁵

Much of queer treatment of animals is informed by this approach, seeking to overcome the more obvious points of focus for scholars. But recently this decentering of the human has come under fire. Andrew has already mentioned that Haraway's career has taken some... unlikely... turns. A recent piece by Sophie Lewis, "Cthulhu Plays No Role for Me,"⁴⁶ challenges the drift of Donna Haraway's thought into a misanthropic anti-natalism, which (despite Haraway's protests and disclaimers) cannot escape racism. I side with Lewis' thoughtful and personally engaged critique: we should be cautious that anti-humanism is not treated as a "quick fix" in avoiding a nativism and anti-blackness, that is actually much more pervasive than a mere corruption produced by humanist thought. Racist thinker Nick Land's "Accelerationism" also shows this: anti-blackness and anti-humanism can be perfectly compatible.⁴⁷ And Eve

⁴⁵ Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 149-81.

⁴⁶ Sophie Lewis, "Cthulhu Plays No Role for Me," *Viewpoint Magazine*, May 8, 2017, www.viewpointmag.com/2017/05/08/cthulhu-plays-no-role-for-me.

⁴⁷ Simon Reynolds, "RENEGADE ACADEMIA: The Cybernetic Culture Research Unit," *Energy Flash*, November 3, 2009,

Mitchell's masterful essay "I Am a Woman and a Human" shows that black feminism and what she calls "Fanonian humanism" are equally compatible.⁴⁸

Anti-humanism and humanism are each prone toward supporting anti-blackness, crude "triumph of civilization" teleologies, and species chauvinism; in that each of them arises from a shared social context. The ferocity of recent anti-humanist offensives within queer studies conceal how low the stakes are, when the battleground is primarily outposts in academia. Rejecting this or that school of thought will never serve as a cast iron guarantee that we are not reproducing the worst in the world. We should be wary of scholarly fads, as vital as they are to contemporary academic careers. Only the dialectic can be trusted: not to deliver us from any evil, but as a means of us delivering one another.

AC: I tend to shy away from naturalistic examples in my writing. Though lately

www.energyflashbysimonreynolds.blogspot.co.at/2009/11/renegeade-academia-cybernetic-culture.html; Robin Mackay, "Nick Land - An Experiment in Inhumanism," *Umōlec Magazine*, No. 1 (2012), www.divus.cc/london/en/article/nick-land-ein-experiment-im-inhumanismus; Jeremy Gilbert, "My Friend Mark," *Jeremy Gilbert*, March 2017, www.jeremygilbertwriting.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/my-friend-mark40.pdf.

⁴⁸ Eve Mitchell, "I Am a Woman and a Human: A Marxist Feminist Critique of Intersectionality Theory," *LibCom*, September 12, 2013, www.libcom.org/library/i-am-woman-human-marxist-feminist-critique-intersectionality-theory-eve-mitchell.

I have been trying to expand out the intellectual history of western epistemologies of the human started by Foucault in *The Order of Things*. While Foucault ends the book on the Death of the Human, much like Nietzsche's Death of God - opening the door to animal studies - I think that the episteme that followed it was planetary-thinking. Yet we are seeing an exhaustion of this thinking, especially with the crisis-level failure of planetary and human sciences to properly address the environmental devastation wrecked by humans throughout the Anthropocene.

Returning to the human, I have been thinking a lot about two categories: monsters and aliens. There is a long tradition of thinking sexuality through the monstrous, in large part due to a monster's disfigurement serving as a metaphor for the bodily dimension of abjection. So, in contemporary theory, there is Christina Sharpe's *Monstrous Intimacies* and Susan Stryker's essay in *The Trans Studies Reader* on Frankenstein.⁴⁹ Yet I think that there is a limitation to using monsters to think about the human: it treats marked subjects as deformations of the human. And while that might be a

⁴⁹ Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010); Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, Vol. 1, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 244-56.

useful index of how popular discourses might treat subjects, its deconstruction exists within a limited political horizon. The two poles: forced inclusion and voluntary exclusion. The demand for no longer being treated as in-human, or the choice to fight the system from the outside.

The alien seems more interesting to me. Unlike the monster, which is the familiar that has become strange, the alien is something truly other. Certainly, there is an established phenomenology of the Other, such as Lacan's model whereby "desire is the desire of the Other," "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other," and "there is no Other of the Other." Yet those approaches always return to scenes of recognition, which causes the same deconstructive re-inscription problem I mentioned when discussing the monstrous. I do not mean using the alien to once again deconstruct the human by revealing an outside that appears as a supplement but is necessary for constituting the very boundaries of the category of the human itself. Instead, what about that even more dissident tradition of thinking the Outside on its own terms? That of Blanchot? This is where Edelman places queerness. For him, queerness is not an identity that one embodies, not even partially or temporarily. Queerness jams the gears of the symbolic. It is the alienating force of the libido that wildly disrupts any

attempt to identify whatever. It is the birds themselves in Hitchcock's *The Birds*. So in this sense, becoming-animal would neither include barking like a dog or galloping like a horse nor even undergoing a personal transformation through a relationality with animals. It would mean a radical break from the human altogether, not on a personal level, but as the outside force of the great unknown comes crashing down on all of us at once.

JR: It seems that the relationship of queerness to humanism and to species (if there is one at all) presents a variety of possibilities but none of which seem to present themselves as either unavoidable or necessary. Primarily due to the ambiguity of the term species here, since one might think that discussions of species regarding humanism are referencing Marx's notion of *Gattungswesen* (species-being) and whose meaning is determined in political and historical terms rather than those of evolutionary biology, for example. If the question refers to determining who does and does not count as "human" within a humanism, and we understand humanism to be a social and political project and not some taxonomy of differing bodies, then at the very least we could say that queers have been excluded from enjoying all the privileges granted to fully human subjects. So here the question of species understood as a product of the development of life on this

planet has little purchase on the discussion.

Alternatively, if we understand species in its evolutionary biological sense, the recent work of Preciado comes to mind. Mostly because *Testo Junkie* is a text that is less ethical philosophy than a historical, material and political attempt to update various theories of how power and capital are related (and whether it be Foucault's biopolitical regimes or Deleuze's control societies). Additionally, it is a text whose main argument is that humans as a species have now become capable of determining a large portion of their own evolution as a species; and this is clearest seen in the production of hormones like testosterone or the ubiquity of the pornographic image. Therefore, Preciado concludes that what is fundamentally at work is the co-imbrication of the processes whereby human beings determine, reconfigure, or transform the subjects and objects of pleasure/desire alongside the processes of the global reproduction of this new "pharmacopornographic" subjectivity.⁵⁰

But *Testo Junkie* does not paint a pretty picture if what we want is an explicitly queer and liberatory politics since it defines today's

⁵⁰ "There is nothing to discover in sex or in sexual identity; there is no *inside*. The truth about sex is not a disclosure; it is *sexdesign*... The pharmacopornographic business is the *invention of a subject* and then its global reproduction." Beatriz Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. by Bruce Benderson (New York: The Feminist Press, 2013), 36.

struggle as the project for the re-appropriation of the global production of substances and images; and all in order to reorganize this productive process in order to construct a world where our substance use and erotic excitement fundamentally breaks with the histories of exploitation, colonization, etc. To his credit, however, it is an analysis that helpfully explains how the social problems generated by capital (depression, sickness, anxiety, etc.) double as the ground for value production - it shows that the nature of the achievements of technological development subsumed to market demand is a success in terms of "transforming our depression into Prozac, our masculinity into testosterone, our erection into Viagra, our fertility/sterility into the Pill."⁵¹ To affirm the project of *Testo Junkie* only gets us further away from the question since Preciado's view includes the following three claims by necessity: (i) queerness and queer politics have outlived their usefulness (what is truly useful is a techno-experimental subject); (ii) the current relationship between the human and non-human species is not seen as being a source of possible moral dilemma (the continued use of non-human species for our technogenders is not seen as problematic); and (iii) we should aim to repurpose our powers of determining just exactly what it is we desire and how we go about

⁵¹ Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, 34-5.

satisfying its demands (a goal that potentially overestimates the capacities of contemporary subjectivity). So while biology may never have been our destiny, there still exists a destiny for our biology: and a destiny that is increasingly being determined by the reproduction of our *technogendered subjectivity*.⁵²

JJG: Autumn last year I attended Folsom Europe, the continent's largest gathering of leathermen. There were many sensual delights while strolling through the packed crowd filling Fuggerstraße: many couples had matching PVC outfits, some wore telltale yellow rubber, one man was being led through the throng by another while leashed and blindfolded. My overriding memory, however, was the puppies.

Puppy play has blossomed in popularity among gay men, and at this point has an autonomous character which exists both within and beyond leather culture more generally. Puppies have an unmistakably uniform attire: prominent hound masks, leather straps or skintight suits across their torso, and perky tails. The result of being clad in so much black PVC was that their bodies seemed slender, their move-

ments were defined by a center of gravity drawn down to embrace the pavement. When not in motion they rested on their haunches, panting, blithely oblivious to street dirt.

While an admirer, I personally have never felt an obvious fit for the leather community, which is primarily based around intense informal ties of male sociality and successive ritualized initiation (the highest point of which is claiming and holding title: Mr. Rubber Sweden, Mr. New Jersey, and so on.) As a woman, I can only be some kind of outsider to this. (Leatherdykes are a proud tradition in their own right, but throughout Europe mostly a defunct one.) Leather culture has always idealized a cultivation of masculine vigor, an unabashedly gay manhood.

The puppies, however, were quite something else.

While those wearing them were exclusively (like over 9 from 10 of the crowd) male, a strangely androgynous aspect to their aesthetic struck me. Their carefree frolics and bounding energy lacked a decisively masculine spirit (unlike most outfits and postures on display around them). At once puppy players stray across norms of species behavior and regress to an impossible childhood. They were no longer men, but houndrogyne. To me these figures, yelping for attention and sprawling over pavements, seemed the exact reverse of the strut-

⁵² "Gender in the twenty-first century functions as an abstract mechanism for technical subjectification; it is spliced, cut, moved, cited, conceived of as design [...] No political power exists without control over production and distribution of gender biocodes. Pharmacopornographic emancipation of subaltern bodies can be measured only according to these essential criteria: involvement in and access to the production, circulation, and interpretation of somato-politic biocodes." Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, 129.

ting Masc4Masc hulks which dominate most gay spaces. Rather than deny having ever been effeminate boys, as Eve Sedgwick had it, the puppies staged an unfamiliar and uncanny return.

Upon remarking about this strange ambiguous character to a friend, they patiently replied: "They're not men or women, they're puppies!"

The Idiosyncratic Archive: Queerness, Duration and Photography

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Bionote

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We experience the speeding up and slowing down of time depending on where we are going, how we get there and our relationship to the outcome. Waiting in line always feels longer than chatting with a friend. We accept, retreat and get exacerbated by the constant inaccuracies of time. As much as there are frustrating limits in our ability to control time, there are also potentialities of unexpected temporalities. *They were not of their time or they were ahead of their time* are adages we accept as being out of time with one's lived time. We witness and participate in time's elasticity constantly

throughout our lives, yet expect time to be suspended through photography and organized within the archive. The constraints of historical truth to explain the data can amputate fragmentation, temporality and elasticity from critical discourse analysis. In cases of queer representation, cursory information does not tell us what is buried or hidden. This leaves us with the task to chip away at, read between the lines and find the gaps - to follow the subtle traces of historical queerness.

The history of queer lives as a location of inquiry, debate and knowledge has come to the fore in recent years through questions of space and time in the archive. Queer time and space in the archive and its complex relation to temporalities facilitate critical approaches to discourse and social change by shifting hegemonic power relations from validating absolute truth to signifying potentialities. Beyond the surface of normative time there are fragmentations in the archive that stitch across time to reveal elasticity, which opens valuable debates on existence, tenacity, and the idiosyncratic. Rather than adhere to the efficiency and completeness associated with the principles of archival work, this paper focuses on, as stated by Walter Benjamin, "being at home in marginal areas,"¹ in order to push

¹ Cited in Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla (Eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 6.

out from the sides to investigate distinctive applications of difference. Discourses of time and temporality have been key considerations for scholars across disciplines; however, this approach to queer thought and visual culture is waiting to be more fully elaborated on and understood. My research takes up these considerations in order to place archival queer photographs within this discourse, to examine how and under what conditions fragmentation, relationality and time play a role in queer knowledge with a particular focus on photography.

By shifting the borders of traditional historiographic practices, Foucaultian approaches to historical analysis inform critical knowledge of how we are constituted and constructed through the assemblage of relationality. Historical narratives are often troubled in queer archives due to the precarity of materiality, such as lost and missing information, as well as the complexities of secret lives and manifestations of shame. Without an interdisciplinary methodology of cross-pollination and hybridity, discreet elements of knowledge become embedded in the problematic of erasure. What is at stake is how we can understand ourselves, others and representation through time, space and archival knowledges.

The mobility of time, as outlined by Henri Bergson, is that no two moments can be the same;

duration is varied and heterogeneous. Here the question of self-organization is linked with consciousness as an intuitive perception of experience and the flow of inner time.

Let us imagine an infinitely small piece of elastic [...] Let us draw it out gradually in such a way as to bring out of the point a line which will grow progressively longer. Let us fix our attention not on the line as line, but on the action which traces it. Let us consider that this action, in spite of its duration [...] that, if we intercalate a stop in it, we make two actions [...] Let us take our mind off the space subtending the movement and concentrate solely on the movement itself, on the act of tension or extension, in short, on pure mobility.²

Duration for Bergson is not simply a chronological line, but actions that trace time. The concept of tracing suggests that while the whole picture may not be known, our attention is not the line of indisputable fact, but rather an outline of possibilities. Here we can imagine that location and orientation play a role in how mobility of time is exercised, and how under certain circumstances, life choices or our sheer existence requires us to trace

² Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 164, 165.

our own life paths. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed speaks of how traces can be troubled through orientation and location. There is an interplay between Bergson's notion of the heterogeneous and duration, and Ahmed's concepts of orientation. Ahmed asserts that perception is informed by locality, whereby to "turn toward"³ or "tend toward"⁴ is directional and involves orientation. The tactility and corporeality of orientation is to twist or turn with or from a vertical line. Like Bergson, time and space are extended through consciousness and the intuitiveness of experience.

While Bergson offers the "infinitely small piece of elastic" that traces the action between "here and there," Ahmed's example is the literal act of tracing. If we trace our hand on a piece of paper, slowly moving the pen around each finger, we adhere to the formal structure of the act. However, if the paper shifts or our hand moves, the alignment is altered. To not follow the patterns or structures of normativity is to derail from the straight line of social ordering and disorient from compulsory heterosexuality. If we consider the act of tracing as a collective phenomenon where we follow the lines of social conduct, such as in compulsory heterosexuality, rotating

away from this schema blurs the alignment of normative expectations.

In what ways can we see sideways, bent, crooked approaches to life, experiences and consciousness? The very notion of marginality speaks of being outside the line of normativity, on the sidelines of society, texts, economics or social status. For Ahmed, this is an oblique line that is both shaped by the status quo and rejected by oblique queer bodies who function slantwise to normative straight orientation. I am interested in how time is sideways, how duration and the elasticity of time are entwined in the experience of consciousness. I suggest "oblique time" as a phenomenological apprehension of time and duration that is both of-its-time, yet outside it; a temporal self-awareness that is manifested in the rejection of normativity as a lived experience. The notion of "oblique time" offers queer historical research an opportunity to evaluate the idiosyncratic as expandable and resilient yet opening discourse to the discrete differences found in individual experiences. Through the examination of time's elasticity, archival research can be considered through proximity and relationality, in order to reflect on extensions and interdependence, rather than simply a system of opposition.

Jack Halberstam asserts that queer time arises out of "opposition to the institutions

³ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 107.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

of family, heterosexuality and reproduction”⁵ and “develop[s] [in]to other logics of location, movement and identification”⁶ that may not entirely resolve the notion of historical queerness but rather shows “the existence of these relations.”⁷ Further, Halberstam insists on the development of critical languages to assess obstacles toward social change; this particular argument seeks critical considerations beyond conventional forms of association and belonging that function, however temporally, outside middle-class logics of reproduction, family values and/or normativity. Queer time under this rubric is not simply elastic, bouncing back to its original state but rather contingent on the challenging of normativity.

The interrelationship between the passing of time and the human experience as set out by Bergson is not predicated on sequential ordering, but rather on the passage of our interventions.⁸ These actions that we express through duration constitute our consciousness, however fragmented, partial or temporary, to apprehend a moment in time. The archive of Semoura and Bonnie Clark from Beinecke Rare

Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University demonstrate the complexity of non-sequential ordering and socio-cultural apprehensions of time and space. Yet, there are no exact dates, birth names or explicit locations, other than somewhere in New York state, thus making this collection difficult, if not impossible, to fully apprehend. With such profound gaps in information, the speculative quality of this collection invites disparities, disagreement and incongruity.⁹ Here, we must speculate, in order not to entrap them into our contemporary views of gender and sexuality, but rather to unfetter them from prescriptive heteronormative axioms. I focus on a particular photograph of Semoura and Bonnie Clark that agitates linear time and frustrates quantitative research.

⁵ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F.L. Pogson (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2012).

⁹ Semoura and Bonnie Clark worked the vaudeville circuit in the U.S. While nothing is known of their private lives, in documents and newspaper articles about them, they are identified as “sisters.” Was “sisters” tongue-in-cheek or does it give us greater access to understanding their gender?



Figure 1. Semoura and Bonnie Clark.

Source: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Photograph taken at Bell Studio, New York. Exact location and date unknown.¹⁰

Figure 1 complicates time, relationality

¹⁰ I would like to gratefully acknowledge Emma Ward from Glasgow University for her assistance in providing me with digital images of this collection.

and queer subjectivity by being in one time, yet speaking to another. According to the *Ruckus! American Entertainments at the Turn of the Twentieth Century and the Bonnie and Semoura Clark Black Vaudeville Collection*, the only dates provided of Semoura and Bonnie Clark are based on two ink and wash drawings of Bonnie and Semoura Clark in 1913.¹¹ Yet, the layered complexity of this photograph is both in the technology of the image and what is represented in the photograph. Figure 1 is a *carte-de-visite*,¹² a popular form of photography at the turn of the nineteenth century that arrived in the United States in 1859, suggesting that this image was created some fifty-four years after the appearance of this technology in the U.S. This photograph speaks to “the act of tension or extension, on pure mobility,”¹³ particularly as the subjects represented themselves not of their time but rather a harkening back in time. This chronological inconsistency juxtaposes one

¹¹ See Bonnie and Semoura Clark Black Vaudeville Photographs and Ephemera. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, www.beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/ruckus-american-entertainments-turn-twentieth-century-and-bonnie-and-semoura.

¹² *Cartes-de-visite* were albumen prints mounted on thick paper card, and were an international standard that were employed as social medium of exchange, “calling cards.” The technology of *carte-de-visite* allowed for each photograph to be easily and cheaply reproduced and duplicated.

¹³ Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 138.

time period through another, to reveal “oblique time” as sideways, bent and contradictory, yet engaged in valuable discourses of subversion and the status quo.

The conventions of photographic portraiture in *cartes-de-visite* utilized typical repetitions of class commodification, the parlour setting; the consistent trope of respectability. These tropes were foundational to the aesthetics and procedure of *cartes-de-visite* and are considered homogeneous and uniformed in how subjects are represented.¹⁴ As a site of industrialization and mass production, *cartes-de-visite* transcended beyond the private into the public sphere, where photography played a significant role in disseminating domestic bourgeois values, creating a larger discourse of the cult of empire, representation and queerness. However, in this image the subjects subvert the status quo by unmistakably performing a multiplicity of cultural commodifications, such as upper-middle-class tropes of respectability, and femininity and masculinity, while firmly disrupting their cultural signs of normativity.

¹⁴ “The vast majority of *cartes* depict individuals or couples posed in the studio; the small size of the format appears to leave little room for more complex subject matter.” See “A Brief History of the *Carte de Visite*,” *American Museum of Photography*, no date, www.photographymuseum.com/histsw.htm.

Bonnie is on the left, Semoura on the right, with an unknown male in the centre. Thick drapes cascade down either side of the stained-glass window. Long silk dresses puddle onto the floor, while the man in the centre has shoes so shiny that they sparkle. Bonnie and Semoura’s flat chests with compact pectoral muscles rise above the lace trim of scooped necked gowns. Silk and satin fabrics caress broad shoulders, fitted snugly to their waists with swathes of fabric neatly encircling the trio. The performativity of middle-class respectability through photographic conventions is apparent, as is its disruption of white middle-class values of hierarchy and dominion.

To remove or discredit the conscious queering of gender in this image is to accept normativity as sanctioned historically, rather than as conditional, enforced or regulated. This portrait, in all its unknowns and temporality, addresses the significant meaning of black historical queer subjectivity by signalling how race, sexuality, gender and class distinction are intertwined and relational. Fragmentation and misinformation are not simply a limitation but also an advantage to understanding how temporality and elasticity are measured beyond the constraints of truth. Cultural theory scholars working with questions of queer history have argued that queer archives are “repositories

of affect"¹⁵ or "sites of recuperation,"¹⁶ while further arguments have also been made for the cultural relevance of users and interpreters of queer archives.

Bonnie and Semoura Clark pattern reoccurring symbols of middle class values found in *cartes-de-visite*, yet their specific image and representation speaks to how the mass production of photography could be radicalized. The regulation of sexuality, subjugation of peoples of colour and oppression of women were and are political sites of hegemonic power that were and are instilled through both social and cultural policing. This politicized position suggests that historical analysis of queer subjects can be rearranged from silence into reclamation by employing research skills that undermine discursive technology as a device to control by activating discourses of social change and reform. By queering conventions, subjects had the potential to represent and make visible, however temporally, queer selfhood that could operate outside the cultural crisis of categorization.

The idiosyncratic repositions of archival knowledge are constellations that inform key

components of fragmentation: it is the paradox of the too-soon, too-late and where present time cannot be fully grasped. Elasticity of time is conjured in and around consciousness between perception-recollections and recollection-perceptions and memory to elucidate on the illogicality, oddness and peculiarity of historical queerness as functioning obliquely through time: compressing, expanding and manoeuvring it as a site of social difference and cultural value.

Photography cannot be fully understood as a static process but rather in its relation to the complex association with time, representation and the matrix of visual signifiers. Time is embedded into photography both as a marker of its moment and beyond. Photography fixes time through its procedures, grounding a historical moment; yet photographs float across historical time, producing a suspension of time and meaning.¹⁷ Mechanical reproduction repeats what has transpired at one time, which may never be duplicated either existentially or pragmatically.¹⁸

Without the analysis of relationality between history and life, duration and

¹⁵ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Charles Morris (Ed.), *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: *Cartes-de-visite* and the Bourgeois Imagination," in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. by J.J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 80-98.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. by Hannah Arendt and trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

time, the idiosyncratic and their effects on consciousness, we undervalue the impact of time beyond limited notions of linear time. What happens when things are out of time in the archive? How does it affect legibility and knowledge? Such questions take a step toward the examination of fragmentation, the elasticity of time, and the impact of queer archival photographs on the cultural capital of industrial capitalism, its social function and subversion. These gaps in how we examine queer history, the archive and photography insist on further attention, in order to grasp the value of how and under what conditions fragmentation and the idiosyncratic mobilize queerness.¹⁹

¹⁹ This paper was first conceived as “Queer Photography, The Archive and the Elasticity of Time” - a presentation for the “Without Borders: LGBTQ+ Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections” conference, in cooperation with The Queer London Research Forum at the University of Westminster, the Bishopsgate Institute and the London Metropolitan Archives in London, UK, June 2016.

III. CULTURE/NON-PHILOSOPHY

EDITORIAL NOTE

This Section offers more than one perspective of the "history of heresies" within non-philosophy and the history of Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale (ONPhI). Each contribution should be read independently in spite of some referencing to one another among the authors. The journal does not endorse any of the positions and, therefore, none of the contributions should be seen as "framing the reading" of the next one.

Tract(atus) 23:**La théorie est attendue. Notice**

|Gilles Grelet

Biographie

Gilles Grelet (Nantes, 1971), PhD, co-directeur avec François Laruelle de la série *Nous, les sans-philosophie*, et auteur d'une quarantaine de publications en France et à l'étranger (dont un essai anti-politique à paraître dans *Filozofski vestnik*). Il a enseigné par exemple à l'Université Paris-8, au Collège international de philosophie et en prison. Il vit sur le bateau "Théorème," en Bretagne.

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Ce texte, le vingt-troisième de mes tract(atus),¹ a été rédigé à la demande de l'artiste basque Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa pour donner lieu à une affiche; il ne comportait pas de titre. Il a souvent été désigné par ses premiers mots, parfois aussi comme "Tract(atus) de la théorie."

¹ Série de textes *théoristes* en sept points, dont "Anti-phénoménologie," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, tome 129, No. 2 (2004), 211-24; "Anti-phenomenology," trad. anglaise par Kris Pender, *Academia*, sans date, www.academia.edu/4624766/Gilles_Grelet_-_Anti-Phenomenology, constitue la pièce maîtresse.

Tract(atus) 23:**Theory Is Waiting. A Note**

|Gilles Grelet

Bionote

Gilles Grelet (Nantes, 1971), PhD, is codirector with François Laruelle of the series *Nous, les sans-philosophie*, and author of about forty publications in France and abroad (among which an anti-political essay forthcoming in *Filozofski vestnik*). He has taught for instance at Paris-8 University, the International College of Philosophy and in prison. He lives on the boat "Théorème," in Brittany.

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This text, the twenty-third of my tract(atus),¹ has been prepared at the request of the Basque artist Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa for the purposes of an open display; it had no title at the time. It has often been designated by its first words, sometimes also as "Tract(atus) of theory."

¹ Series of *theorismic* texts in seven points, of which the essay "Anti-phénoménologie," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, tome 129, No. 2 (2004), 211-24; "Anti-phenomenology," trans. by Kris Pender, no date, *Academia*, www.academia.edu/4624766/Gilles_Grelet_-_Anti-Phenomenology, constitutes the centrepiece.

Publication originale: Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa (dir.), *Concert pour poing levé* [vidéos sur DVD et posters] (Montreuil: Éditions Matière, 2007).

Traductions anglaise (MuKHA) par Ray Brassier, espagnole par Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa et néerlandaise par MuKHA.

Exposition à Vitoria-Gasteiz (Artium Museum, 2007), Bilbao (Carerras Música, 2008), Cologne (Clages, 2008), Anvers (MuKHA, 2009),² Ljubljana (28th Biennial of Graphic Arts, 2009), Ferrol (Centro Torrente Ballester, 2010), Séville (Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, 2011), Clichy (Pavillon Vendôme, 2014), Madrid (Casa Encendida, 2017) et Barcelone (Arts Santa Mònica, 2018).

² Exposition grand format de l'affiche (photo), accompagnée d'une seconde affiche cosignée par Hugues Choplin.

Original publication: Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa (dir.), *Concert pour poing levé* [poster and DVD videos] (Montreuil: Éditions Matière, 2007).

English translation (for MuKHA) by Ray Brassier, Spanish translation by Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa, and Dutch translation by MuKHA.

Exposition in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Artium Museum, 2007), Bilbao (Carerras Música, 2008), Cologne (Clages, 2008), Anvers (MuKHA, 2009),² Ljubljana (28th Biennial of Graphic Arts, 2009), Ferrol (Centro Torrente Ballester, 2010), Séville (Pavillon Vendôme, 2014), Madrid (Casa Encendida, 2017), and Barcelona (Arts Santa Mònica, 2018).

² Enlarged poster exposition format (photo), accompanied by a second poster co-signed by Hugues Choplin.



Publication bilingue français/anglaise:
Robin Mackay (Ed.), *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, Vol. 6: Geo/Philosophy (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2010), 477-9.

Gilles Grelet, le 24 mai 2018

French/English bilingual publication:
Robin Mackay (Ed.), *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, Vol. 6: Geo/Philosophy (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2010), 477-9.

Gilles Grelet, May 24th, 2018

Translated from the French by
Taylor Adkins

I

La théorie est attendue, établissement de l'homme – du réel sans chair, sans phrase, sans monde – dans la condition de l'attente

II

Le corps de la théorie

– écriture formulaire, enthousiasme ascétique, surrection populaire ordonnée, coque passant bien dans la lame, voile vibrant dans la brise, montant à l'assaut du vent –
est institution de l'attente

III

Cette institution – cet acte – est attentat au plein du monde, à la suffisance des mondains, à la morgue des vivants ; attentat par le vide, la distance prise, la parole laconique, défaite, tirée du silence ; attentat angélique, de l'ange qu'est le je sans moi, le corps sans chair, l'acte sans pratique, la formule sans discours

IV

**Austère et théâtral, l'acte de la théorie traverse la pratique, ne s'y engluant pas :
ne fait pas monde. Tranchant de l'aile, du tract épuré, du traité
incendiaire, de la joie marine traversant la mélancolie sans bornes**

V

Attente instituée, attentat formel, en forme de traversée,
de discernement, d'ordre tranchant, sévère, ardent.

Attentat du je traversant le moi
(écriture en-je destituant les bavardages du moi).

Théorie aiguë, armée.

Théorie-bateau

VI

Les mondains, qui ne savent que les compromis jou(iss)eurs de la terre et du ciel, parlent d'une mauvaise blague, d'une blague qui ne fait rire personne

VII

Théorème d'Anacharsis :

IL Y A LES VIVANTS, LES MORTS, ET CEUX QUI VONT SUR LA MER

Gilles Grelet

Celui Pour Qui Le Monde Est Un Bordel Dont La Pratique
Est La Putain Et La Philosophie La Grande Maquerelle

Le 5 juillet 2007

I
Theory is waiting, it establishes man
–the flesh-less, phrase-less, world-less real–
in the condition of waiting

II
 The body of theory
 –formulaic writing, ascetic enthusiasm, ordered popular uprising, hull cutting
 truly through the waves, sail fluttering in the breeze, taking on the wind–
 is the institution of waiting

III
 This institution –this act– is a full-on attack on the world,
 on the vanity of the worldly, on the morgue of the living;
 an attack via the void, the distance taken, via the word that is
 terse, distraught, dragged from silence; an angelic attack,
 from the angel that is the I without me, the body without flesh,
 the act without practice, the formula without discourse

IV
Austere and theatrical, the act of theory crosses practice without getting bogged
down in it; it does not become worldly. Incisiveness of the wing, of the purified
tract, of the incendiary treatise, of maritime joy crossing boundless melancholy

V
 An instituted waiting, a formal attack, in the shape of a crossing,
 a discernment, an order that is cutting, severe, and ardent.
 The attack of the I crossing the ego
 (the writing in I dismissing the chatterings of the ego).
 Armed theory, extreme theory.

Boat-theory

VI
 The worldly, who only know of pleasant compromises between Heaven and Earth, speak of a bad joke, a joke nobody finds funny

VII
 Theorem of Anacharsis:
THERE ARE THE LIVING, THE DEAD,
AND THOSE WHO GO TO SEA

Gilles Grelet
 He For Whom The World Is A Brothel Where Practice
 Is The Whore And Philosophy The Great Madam

5th July 2007

I

La teoría es espera, establecimiento del hombre – lo real sin carne, sin frase, sin mundo – en situación de espera

II

El cuerpo de la teoría
– escritura formularia, entusiasmo ascético, levantamiento popular ordenado, casco
que surca airosa la ola, vela vibrante en la brisa, remontando a contra viento –
es la institución de la espera

III

Esta institución – este acto – es un atentado al lleno del mundo, a la
suficiencia de los mundanos, a la morgue de los vivos; atentado
mediante el vacío, la toma de distancia, la palabra lacónica, derrota,
sacada del silencio; atentado angelical, del ángel que es el yo sin mi,
el cuerpo sin carne, el acto sin práctica, la fórmula sin discurso

IV

**Austero y teatral, el acto de la teoría atraviesa la práctica, no se envisa en ella:
no crea mundo. Filo del ala, de la octavilla depurada, del tratado incendiario,
de la alegría marina que atraviesa la melancolía sin límites**

V

Espera instituida, atentado formal, en forma de travesía,
de discernimiento, de orden tajante, severo, ardiente.
Atentado del yo atravesando el ego
(escritura en yo destituyendo las palabrerías del ego).
Teoría aguda, armada.
Teoría-barco

VI

Los mundanos, que tan solo conocen los compromisos gozadores/jugadores de la tierra y del cielo, hablan de un chiste malo, de un chiste que no hace reír a nadie

VII

Teorema de Anacársis:

ESTÁN LOS VIVOS, LOS MUERTOS, Y AQUELLOS QUE VAN SOBRE EL MAR

I
Theorie is wachten, het plaatst de mens
– het vleesloze, zinnenloze, wereldloze reële –
in de conditie van wachten

II

Het lichaam van de theorie
 – formulematig schrijven, ascetisch enthousiasme, geordende volksrebellie, goed door
 de golven klievende romp, in de bries trillend zeil, oploevend, de wind aanvallend –
 is de institutie van het wachten

III

Deze institutie – deze daad – is een directe aanval op de wereld,
 op de ijdelheid der mondainen, op het lijkenhuis van de
 levenden; een aanval via de leegte, de genomen afstand, het
 laconieke, verslagen, uit de stilte getrokken woord; een angelieke
 aanval, door de engel die het ik is zonder mij, het lichaam zonder
 vlees, de daad zonder praktijk, de formule zonder discours

IV

**Streng en theatraal steekt de daad der theorie de praktijk over, blijft er niet in plakken: maakt
 geen wereld. Kordaatheid van de vleugel, van de gezuiverde daad, van het ontvlammende
 traktaat, van de maritieme vreugde die de grenzeloze melancholie oversteekt**

V

Geïnstitueerd wachten, formele aanval, in de vorm van een
 oversteek, een onderscheiding, een snijdende, strenge, vurige orde.
 Aanval van het ik, het ego overstekend
 (het schrijven in ik ontzet het gepraat van het me).
 Scherpe, gewapende theorie.
 Boot-theorie

VI

De mondainen, die enkel de wel(lust)ige compromissen van hemel en aarde kennen, hebben het over een slechte grap, over een grap waar niemand om lacht

VII

Theorema van Anacharsis:

ER ZIJN DE LEVENDEN, DE DODEN,
EN ZIJ DIE TER ZEE GAAN

Gilles Grelet
 Degene Voor Wie De Wereld Een Bordeel Is, Waar De Praktijk
 De Hoer Is En De Filosofie De Grote Hoerenmadam

L'histoire de l'ONPhI n'est pas seulement une question de perspectives

|Anne-Françoise Schmid

Bionote

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La revue présente dans la suite un long article sur l'histoire de l'Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale (ONPhI), écrite par une personne qui en a sans doute été proche, n'y a pas participé, mais qui connaît probablement tous ses acteurs. Cette situation n'empêche pas d'en écrire un historique, mais, sans méthode historique, ce projet produit l'illusion de connaître directement ce dont il s'agit. Or une telle situation de témoin marginal devrait au moins conduire à beaucoup de prudence. Il y a à mon avis de l'imprudence dans l'interprétation continue qu'Alex Peltier en donne. Et c'est pourquoi, heureuse que ce texte soit publié, je me vois malgré tout dans l'obligation de rappeler certaines "règles" de méthode lorsque l'enjeu est de la philosophie et les discussions problématiques qu'elle engendre.

ONPhI's History Is Not a Matter of Perspectives

|Anne-Françoise Schmid

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In the following pages, this journal presents a long article on the history of Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale (ONPhI) written by someone who has certainly been in its vicinity, and even though he has not participated in it, he probably knows everyone involved. This situation does not prevent him from writing a history of it, and yet, without a historical method, this project produces the illusion of being directly aware of what was involved. However, such a situation of marginally bearing witness should at the very least move forward with a great deal of prudence. In my opinion, there is quite a bit of imprudence in the ongoing interpretation that Alex Peltier has given. And this is why, although I am pleased to see this text published, I feel,

Il n'est pas nécessaire d'ajouter des événements à cette histoire. J'y ai moi-même participé et je pourrais évidemment décrire les fameux samedis (un samedi sur deux pendant deux ans) où s'est conçu et composé le *Dictionnaire de la non-philosophie*, par exemple. On pourrait d'ailleurs tenir compte de ces faits sur tout de sortes d'échelles (les philosophies, les concepts, les contextes, les conditions empiriques, les affects, les répétitions, etc.), mais en superposant les flux, sans chercher à les condenser dans un seul.

Mais c'est encore autre chose que je voudrais suggérer ici. Dans l'ONPhI, il s'est agi d'œuvres philosophiques, et de la création d'un milieu pour et avec elles. Certaines de ces œuvres étaient déjà très développées, celles de Serge Valdinoci et de François Laruelle, d'autres étaient en train de se faire, telles celles de Gilles Grelet et de Daniel Nicolet, d'autres cherchant plus à se situer parmi ces jaillissements de concepts. Or, de cela, une histoire continue ne peut rendre compte, ni des œuvres, ni des affects qui les accompagnent. L'histoire de l'ONPhI a quelque chose de rare. Si l'on considère ce que l'on appelle après-coup l'histoire de la philosophie, il faut bien admettre que la rencontre entre philosophes créateurs est une sorte d'impossibilité. Des rencontres bien connues de Descartes et Pascal, de Leibniz et Spinoza, de Russell et Bergson,

despite everything, obligated to relay certain "rules" when philosophy and the discussions it generates are at stake.

There is no need to add any events to this history. I myself have participated in it, and I could obviously describe the famous Saturdays (every other Saturday for two years) when the *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, for example, was conceived and composed. Furthermore, we could take these facts into account on all sorts of levels (philosophies, concepts, contexts, empirical conditions, affects, repetitions, etc.), but by superposing the flows, without seeking to condense them into a single one.

And yet, what I would like to suggest here is altogether different. In the ONPhI, it was a question of philosophical works and the creation of an environment for and with them. Some of these works were already quite developed (those of Serge Valdinoci and François Laruelle), while others were in the process of being formed (such as those of Gilles Grelet and Daniel Nicolet), while still others were seeking more so to be situated among these outpourings of concepts. But an ongoing history can account neither for that, nor for the works, nor for the affects that accompany them. There is something quite rare about the history of the ONPhI. If we consider that what is after the fact called the history of philosophy, it must indeed be acknowledged that

rien n'a jamais filtré, et ce n'est pas anecdotique, deux créateurs ne peuvent échanger, au moins dans un premier temps. J'ai assisté au moment où Michel Henry et Jacques Derrida se sont trouvés face à face... Il ne s'agit pas seulement de questions de personnalité, ni même d'anecdotes, la création de l'œuvre ne permet pas l'histoire au sens où ceux qui viennent ensuite la conçoivent. L'histoire est très utile parce qu'elle permet, par après, de construire des ponts et des liens entre les philosophies, conçues dans l'effort de la précision des nouveaux concepts et liens entre ceux-ci. L'histoire est nécessaire pour faire se parler les philosophes. On peut même construire des méthodes pour combiner et superposer certains de leurs concepts pour les immerger dans de nouveaux contextes, scientifiques, artistiques, technologiques. Mais faire "parler" les philosophes exige de construire des outils conceptuels, et pas seulement de "raconter," ce à quoi la philosophie résiste.

Si l'on désire écrire l'histoire philosophique par flux et continuité, il faut alors construire d'autres dimensions, afin de créer une épaisseur et une verticalité, sans quoi les affects sont rapportés à une continuité construite par après qui aplatit autant les concepts, - la dignité des créations, les affects - par exemple ici le concept et l'affect de "solitude." La solitude ne peut être com-

the encounter among creative philosophers is a sort of impossibility. Nothing has ever filtered the well-known encounters of Descartes and Pascal, Leibniz and Spinoza, Russell and Bergson, and this is not just anecdotal, for there is no exchange between two creators, at least not initially. I was there when Michel Henry and Jacques Derrida found themselves face to face... It is not just a matter of questions of personality, nor even a matter of anecdotes: the creation of work does not permit history in the sense of those who will conceive it afterwards. History is quite useful because it allows in the aftermath to construct bridges and links between philosophies, bridges and links that are conceived in the effort to specify new concepts and bonds that link them together. History is necessary for making philosophers speak to one another. It is even possible to construct methods for combining and superposing some of their concepts in order to immerse them into new scientific, artistic, technological contexts. But making philosophers "speak" requires the construction of conceptual tools and not just a "recounting," which is something philosophy resists.

If the desire is to write philosophical history with flux and continuity, then other dimensions must be constructed in order to create a depth and a verticality, without which the affects are related to a continuity constructed

prise dans l'interprétation d'un unique flux, elle est à la fois concept et affect, et demande une épaisseur tout autre. Si l'on fait une histoire continue à partir des faits, on construit un roman, qui n'a à voir avec la philosophie et ses rencontres impossibles. Le malentendu entre philosophes est donc normal, mais une histoire continue l'obscurcit et ne permet plus de comprendre cette impossibilité de rencontre comme pertinente pour la philosophie et les philosophes.

Or le miracle de l'ONPhI est qu'elle a été construite sur une épaisseur. Elle est le seul exemple d'une organisation de groupe différente, fédérant dans cette petite partie de l'histoire de la philosophie contemporaine, avec une tentative de constituer un corpus commun de notions et de thèmes. François Laruelle avait toujours eu la volonté d'aboutir à un tel corpus capable de fonder une école, et sa non-philosophie permettait d'accepter les positions philosophiques spontanées ou travaillées d'autres membres du groupe. Elle a eu pour principe de se faire rencontrer plusieurs philosophes, qui ont gardé par la suite des liens amicaux et une estime qui ne se sont pas défaits. Gilles Grelet y a mis beaucoup d'énergie et d'invention. Serge et François ont pu se parler. La seule tristesse est que l'un des participants n'a pas réussi à terminer sa thèse, les concepts étaient trop fluents dans

after the fact that severely flattens the concepts - the dignity of creations, the affects - here, for example, the concept and affect of "solitude." Solitude cannot be understood in the interpretation of a single flux, since it is both concept and affect and requires a completely different depth. If an ongoing history is developed starting from certain facts, then what is constructed is a novel that has nothing to do with philosophy and its impossible encounters. Misunderstanding between philosophers is therefore normal, but an ongoing history obscures this and no longer makes comprehensible this encounter's impossibility as relevant for philosophy and philosophers.

Yet the miracle of the ONPhI is that it has been constructed on a depth. It is the sole example of a different group organization coming together in this small slice of the history of contemporary philosophy with an attempt to constitute a shared corpus of notions and themes. François Laruelle always had the desire to end up with such a corpus that would be capable of founding a school, and his non-philosophy made it possible to accept positions that were spontaneous or elaborated by other group members. Its principle was to promote the encounter of several philosophers, philosophers who have afterwards maintained friendly ties and an esteem that have not diminished. Gilles Grelet put quite a lot of energy and

les discussions. Nous avons projeté, après le *Dictionnaire*, d'écrire de concert un *Traité des passions*. Mais les deux ans du dictionnaire avaient déjà demandé beaucoup de sacrifices en voyages (Lausanne, Reims, Chaumont principalement), et cette disponibilité en régularité et en espace n'a pu se renouveler. L'Internet et Skype n'existaient pas à ce moment pour nous.

L'article d'Alex Peltier me paraît assez proche dans sa façon de celle de Ray Monk dans sa biographie de Bertrand Russell. A partir de faits - et à propos de Russell, on peut dire qu'ils sont très nombreux, puisqu'il nous reste sa correspondance, classée par lui-même, ses manuscrits, sa bibliothèque avec les annotations sur les ouvrages, etc., à partir de tous ces éléments gigantesques et dispersés, Ray Monk a fait une continuité, qui laisse sceptique tous les russelliens, parce que c'est, sans le dire et le voir, le "roman" de la vie de Russell. Comme le poète dont on dit qu'il sort de chez lui après l'écriture de tout ce qu'il y a au monde et voit enfin la lune qu'il avait oubliée, Monk avait oublié de tenir compte du "principes des relations externes" qui signifie que les faits sont indépendants de l'expérience. Dans le texte qui est présenté dans la suite sur l'ONPhI, il importe d'insérer un tel principe - proche de ce que Laruelle appelait la recherche de "termes premiers" - pour reconsidérer cette histoire dans toutes ses dimen-

invention into this group. Serge and François are still able to speak to one another. The only sadness is that one of the participants has not successfully defended his thesis, since the concepts were too fluid in the discussions. After the *Dictionary*, we put forth the idea of writing a *Treatise on the Passions* as a group. But the two years involved in writing the dictionary had already required a great number of sacrifices in travel (mainly Lausanne, Reims, Chaumont), and this availability in regularity and space was not able to be provided again. At that time, Skype and the internet were not at our disposal.

Alex Peltier's article seems to me close enough in its own way to that of Ray Monk in his biography of Bertrand Russell. One can say about the facts concerning Russell that there are quite a few of them, since we have his correspondence (which he archived himself), his manuscripts, his library with his own annotations, etc. Ray Monk has created a continuity out of all these disparate and countless elements, a continuity which leaves all the Russellians skeptical, since it is, without saying and seeing it, the "novel" of Russell's life. Like the poet, of which it is said that he has left home after writing about the whole world and has finally seen the moon he had forgotten, Monk forgot to account for the "principle of external relations," which means that facts

sions et en tenant compte de l'effort de création de chacun dans cette collaboration. On peut multiplier les flux, comme on peut enrichir les métaphores pour tenter d'attraper une idée nouvelle ou inattendue avec sa part d'inconnu ou de savoir indocte. Nous proposons de lire le texte d'Alex Peltier sans oublier qu'il y va de philosophie et pas seulement d'un récit comme histoire immédiate et livrée à l'opinion. L'histoire de l'ONPhI reste à faire, peut-être en-deçà et au-delà de l'opposition classique entre continuité et rupture, entre préoccupation de fondation et mise en œuvre d'un collectif non-standard.

are independent of experience. In the following text about the ONPhI, it is important to insert such a principle - which is close to what Laruelle called the study of "first terms" - to reconsider this history in all of its dimensions and to account for the creative effort of each person in this collaboration. The flows can be multiplied, just as the metaphors can be enriched in order to catch sight of a new or unforeseen idea with its unknowns or to grasp unlearned knowledge. We propose to read Alex Peltier's text without forgetting that what is at stake is philosophy, and not just a narrative as immediate history left up to opinion. ONPhI's history is still to be made, perhaps on this side of or beyond the classical opposition between continuity and rupture, between preoccupation with establishment and the elaboration of a non-standard collective.

Translated from the French by
Taylor Adkins

Giving an Identity: Coordinates of Invention. Heresy and Dissidence Among Non-Philosophers¹ |Narciso Aksayam

Bionote

Born in 1975, physiotherapist, epistemology teacher at Institut de formation de masso-kinésithérapie (Reims, France), **Narciso Aksayam** conducts research about how to teach and how to learn immanence in an embodied perspective of questioning (both at Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, and Rouen, France). As an editor and as a journalist he has conducted many interviews with François Laruelle and Serge Valdinoci, and he has published several archives of non-philosophy and unpublished papers and films of Gilles Grelet. As a translator, he was invited by Katerina Kolozova to accompany François Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid during the summer school New Forms of Realism in Contemporary Philosophy in Ohrid, Macedonia, 2015. As a literary critic, he has published several articles and reviews about contemporary French poetry (in *Cahier Critique de Poésie*, centre international de poésie Marseille) and was invited in 2017 at the Poetry Market of Paris to present recent developments in the poetical fields of embodiment and hypnosis.

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Abstract

Not known enough for his former publications in philosophy, François Laruelle's at

¹ *Identities* would like to thank Taylor Adkins, who generously edited this text. - Ed.

tempt to institute a democratic field for all hermeneutic content and every philosophical knowledge is not that easy to re-enact starting from the Nietzschean and Levinassian apparatus of his early thought, and considering the refusal of reciprocity that is correlated with his theory of Unilaterality.

This difficulty also manifests in the résumé of his philosophical career. Though presented for a long time as solitary, Laruelle recently acknowledged that his work had been built within the dynamic of colleagues and disciples as well. From there, an insight on the intersubjective past of non-philosophy will unfold the coextensive network of affects that are part of its construction as a matrix of Democracy. And since Heresy is one of the major figures of Laruelle's thought, it is interesting to pay attention to how dissidences have been dealt with in his own discourse and posture while non-philosophy was emerging as an intersubjective assemblage.

Two historical characters will be considered: Serge Valdinoci, an early collaborator in the 1980s, who built a specific method of immanence, *europanalysis*, and who distanced himself from non-philosophy at the turning of Philosophy III; and Gilles Grelet, a prominent disciple in the 1990s, who co-founded Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale (ONPhI)

with Ray Brassier, and who played such a major role in non-philosophy that it drove Laruelle to write *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*.²

Keywords: democracy, europanalysis, Serge Valdinoci, heresy, Gilles Grelet, intersubjectivity, non-philosophy, François Laruelle

Introduction

There are many fictions surrounding non-philosophy. We all know that this is a necessary part of the results of Laruelle's works. One explicit goal that can summarize both the way (the method) and the practice (the deed) of non-standard thought is to set Philosophy free by resorting to philo-fictions or by means of its metamorphosis/transvaluation into Fiction. And, as far as we can observe, this leads philosophical thought to both invention and harmlessness and also leads it to leave both the powers and shackles of Sufficiency, i.e., to recognize and to renew the use of Decision within Thought through a process of weakening Philosophy or, as Laruelle describes it, *a proposal of degrowth*.³

² François Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. by Drew Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univocal, 2012).

³ Narciso Aksayam (Ed.), #TRANSISTOR [DVD-ROM] (Plancy-l'Abbaye: INgens, 2012). All translations from the French, unless otherwise indicated, are mine, and all French references are taken from their original editions

Nonetheless, this freedom of invention, which can also be described - we now know this too well - as a Redemption for the Hell of the World that we live in, has a price: the price that has to be paid to Rigor. And when we speak of an axiomatic method, Rigor is the non-thetic name of Truth, although we might no longer be able to bear such a theoretical burden that currently comes with this name. Assertions about non-philosophy are not assertions about the World, i.e., about Philosophy, and are even less assertions *from* Philosophy - at the very least we should have to be careful, methodologically careful, about them for them not to be so. But one trap that we always fall into within the non-philosophical matrix is that we have to deal with descriptions that are two-sided and unsymmetrical. This is the unbalanced price of the rigorous Unilaterality that we accept, that we greet as an eminent process of the Real or as an emanating effect that circumscribes it from the ground of descriptions.

I. Democracy at the Expense of Reciprocity

Most of us - especially since 1996's *Principles of Non-Philosophy*⁴ which, together with *Théorie des Étrangers. Science des hom-*

with paginations. Some translations from the French have been consulted with and edited by Taylor Adkins.

⁴ François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

mes, *démocratie, non-psychanalyse* [*Theory of Strangers: Science of Humans, Democracy, Non-Psychoanalysis*],⁵ opened the third age of the philosophies that Laruelle has used to distinguish within his own work⁶ - have welcomed and have even acclaimed the statement that non-standard thought is the long-awaited (messianic?) framework for introducing Democracy among thoughts. And that is precisely the meaning that we witness in the title of the deservedly well-known book by John Ó Maoilearca of 2015: *All Thoughts are Equal*.⁷ Yet, regarding the rigorous mechanisms that lead to this result and keeping in sight the complex two-sided descriptions that non-philosophical propositions always involve (or import into their utterance), we have to remember that Laruelle's work, from the very beginning of his writings, is more about Sovereignty and about releasing a radical affect of subordination within experience than it is about Democracy or equality of status in Thought. We cannot ignore that *Unilaterality is about undisputable hierarchy* or act as if it is not.

This is indisputable at first, because Unilaterality is far from the reach of any

⁵ François Laruelle, *Théorie des Étrangers. Science des hommes, démocratie, non-psychanalyse* (Paris: Kimé, 1995).

⁶ Regarding Laruelle's own periodization of his work (Philosophy I to V), see Laruelle, *Principles*, 307-8.

⁷ John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

contortion of *Logos*: the One forbids Agora and incapacitates its claims to rule any aspect of the Real. And it is also impregnable because it puts an absolute one-way direction into causality (but maybe rather "invents" than "puts," if we quibble over vocabulary), and it is one-way to such an extent that we have become familiar with the name "The Last Instance," which determines its effects without even being known as a cause by whatever undergoes its determination. Here is the strict formulation of what Laruelle from early on used to call, in an obviously Deleuzian reference and continuity, the process of *machinic syntaxes*, which were described according to the causality originating in the Other or in Difference: *X distinguishes itself from Y which does not distinguish itself from it*.⁸

⁸ This axiom is initially taken from François Laruelle, *Le déclin de l'écriture. Suivi d'entretiens avec Jean-Luc Nancy, Sarah Koffman, Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1977), 7. But the oldest formulation of this syntactic matrix can be found in Laruelle's doctoral dissertation: "the series of emissions (noeses) only moves forward by following the traces of the other from which it distinguishes itself at the same time as it is identical to it, but more powerful, more sovereign, never separated from what it produces." François Laruelle, *Économie générale des effets d'être*, tome 1 (thèse de doctorat, Paris: Université Paris Nanterre, 1974), 183. We can encounter the same syntax published for the first time in *Machines textuelles* [*Textual Machines*] and applied to define the term *machinic* as it specifies a functioning of drives: "the effect of a drive distinguishes itself from this drive which does not distinguish itself from its effect." François Laruelle, *Machines textuelles. Déconstruction et*

Due to the lack of available translations, most of the present-day readers of Laruelle, especially in the English-speaking world, may feel the posture or this reading of non-philosophy's statements as having a little bit too much of a Nietzschean taste. After all, Laruelle's recent publications - especially since the "amplification of non-philosophy," which he has accomplished by quantum-colliding inside a generic matrix of thought - have implied a radical stepping beyond previous formulations of his work.⁹ But we could consider this as a second trap into which any attempt at catching up with non-philosophy's theoretical discourse has to fall, albeit a trap that is more external than the genuine two-sided complex representations we indicated above. This trap could be identified as a systematic-axiomatic illusion, the temptation to receive the internal consistency of the axiomatic apparatus, its internal structural rigor, as having no genetic or historical manifestation, i.e., the belief that the theoretical edifice as a whole is given as such immediately, and the denial that it is the result of a long lasting work: a character-

libido d'écriture (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 10. A translation of the "Introduction" by Taylor Adkins is available online at *Speculative Heresy*, September 1, 2013, www.speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2013/09/01/translation-of-f-laruelles-introduction-to-textual-machines.

⁹ François Laruelle, *Philosophie non-standard. Générique, quantique, philo-fiction* (Paris: Kimé, 2010). A translation by Taylor Adkins and Rocco Gangle of this book is forthcoming in 2019 by Columbia University Press.

istic confusion between the experience and the production of its description, which brings us to the naïve belief in the sheer elimination of one step of non-philosophy by its next step.

There is no concept more Deleuzian-Nietzschean, although it had been enveloped earlier within the Marxist name of "determination in the last instance," than the concept of unilaterality to describe the specific deconstructive causality that has motivated Laruelle since his initial publications.¹⁰ The unilateral syntax of sovereignty (already two-sided as it is implied in the Derridean protocol of supplementation) goes through the prior period of Philosophy I until it coagulates with the problematic of finitude, which culminates with the question of Power and Mastery: How to articulate *a theoretical matrix that embodies its own finitude within the laws of its machinic functioning?*, with the initial Heideggerian questionings that launched Laruelle's research: *What is the principle of production and reproduction of*

¹⁰ The concept of unilaterality is hard to identify quickly in Nietzsche's work, because Nietzsche is quite obsessive about causality: just having a look at Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), § 112, 127, 217, 360, 374, illustrates this clearly enough; but a thorough reading of the first paragraph of Deleuze's Chapter I: "Difference in Itself," *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28-69, will convince any reader of what is taking place at this very moment in European thought.

the various meanings of Being? What is the law of the authentic functioning of the effects-of-Being that combines the destruction of their metaphysical and repressive forms with the production of these effects as such?¹¹

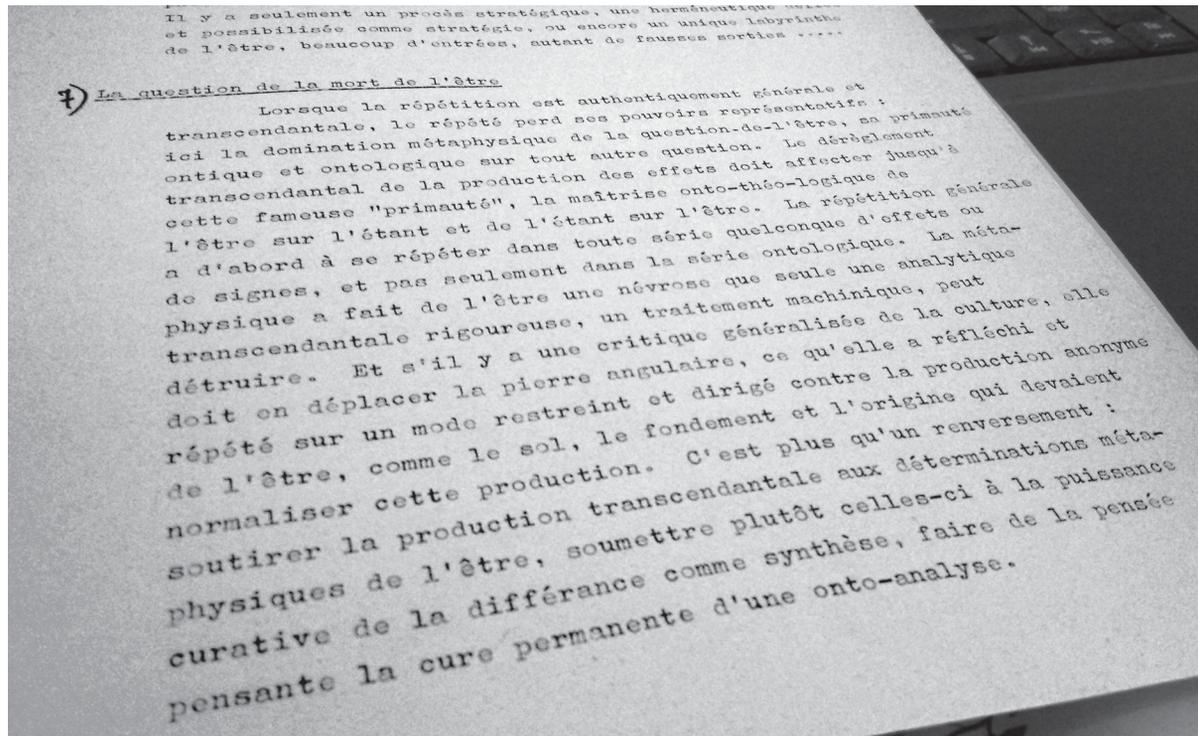


Figure 1. Laruelle's unpublished doctoral dissertation, titled *Economie générale des effets d'être* (new abridged version title: *Au-delà de l'Idée*), presented and defended in 1974 under the supervision of Paul Ricœur (1913-2005).

¹¹ Laruelle, *Économie*, 2. From an initial formalization of the syntactic essential processes of Deconstruction through the ontological embedding of Decline (i.e., Finitude as a becoming) - Decline of Writing, and thereupon of Hermeneutics - Philosophy I can be summarized as the ornery attempt to melt the esoteric transcendental framework shaped by both Nietzschean Will to Power and Eternal Return (of the Same/as the Other), with an active-affirmative interpretation of Finitude taken from Levinas' sharp demur, to Phenomenology as an ethical ascendancy of powerlessness.

The turn to Philosophy II in the early 1980s coincides with the renunciation of formulating this principle of finitude from within Philosophy and with the acceptance/discovery that this finitude shall be absolutely immanent only if received from outside Philosophy and *Logos*. From the point of view of Philosophy, this is a turn from an internal finitude to an external finitude. But from a non-philosophical position of vision, this is a theoretical correction corresponding to a lived and contemplative affect of indifference that defines in new terms a Science and its own force (of) thought:

a Science that turns Philosophy into a mere object which can thenceforth be treated as a material and can from then on be incomparably invented.

But this affect as such is not an affect of Democracy. Since it is described as a *pure affect (of) impregnable self-inherency* with neither content nor predicate, it is an affect of solitude and uselessness,¹² an affect of division whose cut Philosophy cannot bear, whose sovereign inertia Philosophy cannot stand, especially since Philosophy represses its transcendental need for this engine of Otherness as a function in its own economy of movement and Becoming (for instance, in the case of Laruelle's Philosophy I: the question of what is the energetic libido that drives any deconstructionist at work).

There is no way that leads by means of equality to a theoretical position where solitude is freed from reciprocity. How could we establish a unilateral freedom of causality, an unreciprocal determination, by any kind of democratic interplay? Indifference is the very trait of sovereignty. To choose one's enemy without being exposed to being chosen by anything, by anyone, to be the enemy accepting the attacks that one undergoes as valuable events (there are countless metaphorical variations in

Nietzsche's writings about this elitist causality) is a Nietzschean luxury.

Actually, we cannot deny that non-philosophy provides equality and Democracy. But it is a very strange kind. Since it is a Democracy among Philosophies' discourses and procedures, non-philosophy is more akin to a Democracy of Subordinates, the achievement of equality among subalterns. From an aristocratic posture, in the way Deleuze could have expressed this in his anti-Hegelian *Nietzsche and Philosophy*,¹³ we could say that *all Slaves are equal* (specifically from the master's perspectives¹⁴). Because, if theory manages to make Philosophies equal, this is only from a non-philosophical radical hierarchy, an affectively lived one. In that sense, we probably should not talk about equality but rather about equanimity, which is one true name of Indifference, since "being equal" in French literally means "it doesn't matter" (*ça m'est égal*).

Yet, since Philosophy in non-standard thought becomes both an object of interest for a new science and a raw material for experimenting invention through fictionalizing Decision (especially as an art of axiomatics), we must be more accurate in our formula. Rather than talk of Slaves, the correct phrasing would be *all guinea pigs are equal*. They are equally

¹² François Laruelle, *Principes de la non-philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 168.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: The Athlone Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 8-10.

faced with a non-standard posture, whose use, since the turn to Philosophy III, of a strange unquestioned unethical metaphor to describe an effect of its immediate syntactical framework - *cloning* - we cannot ignore. (As a reminder, the famous sheep Dolly, now taxidermized and resting at the National Museum of Scotland, was born by way of cloning, using the process of nuclear transfer, precisely in 1996; this scientific issue was on everyone's lips when Laruelle was writing - and teaching - the *Principles*.¹⁵)

In fact, and to conclude the matter, rather than *all thoughts are equal*, we should understand *all worlds are equal* because, in the frame of non-philosophy, all thoughts are not. Unless we consider the Vision-in-One not to be a thought, even though a very lonely and very hieratic one. This is a meticulous issue of definition: concerning what non-philosophy considers Thinking, concerning what borders it draws (if it does) between Thought and Experience or

¹⁵ Laruelle has never spared the funny and slightly cheesy references in his discourse. In the 1980s, it was obvious for the French ear that the acronym for Non-Thetic Transcendence was referring to Trinitrotoluene: T.N.T., an explosive; but nowadays T.N.T. rather indicates Digital Terrestrial Television... This is the sad becoming of humoristic otherness (though non-autopositional) lost in the coming and going waves of culture. See François Laruelle, *Une biographie de l'homme ordinaire. Des Autorités et des Minorités* (Paris: Aubier, 1985); English edition: François Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man: On Authorities and Minorities*, trans. by Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet (Cambridge: Polity, 2018).

lived experience (*Erlebnis*), concerning if it limits Thought to the mere domain of Intuition or if it confines the task of non-philosophy no longer to be Heideggerian "thinking Thought," destined to *destroy the onto-theo-logical repression of Being's Sovereignty of production, the oppression of Metaphysics, which has always lived on the repression of these productive effects-of-Being, and to derive from Being a brand new jouissance*.¹⁶

At least we already know that non-philosophical thought is described by Laruelle as un-reflected, non-egological, without repeating; and that it stands as a whole with the given-without-givenness: as a consequence of the fact (the lived experience) that the given-without-givenness shows itself rather (from) itself, and *consequently* through the form of the thought of which it is the cause.¹⁷ And since this thought, with neither affirmation nor negation, without any kind of position, is mere and "neutral," it clearly enjoys a different status because it invalidates all objections brought by philosophical thought. These are precisely the terms of an essential asymmetry between obviously different kinds of thought, if not different natures or essences.

The only reason why we stomach this blatant lack of Democracy in the non-standard ap-

¹⁶ Laruelle, *Économie*, 3.

¹⁷ Laruelle, *Principes*, 122.

paratus, the only reason why we tolerate it and are even prone to support it, is because the undisputable hierarchy that it builds places an absolute lack of contents, a radical void of attributes and an indescribable absence of self-consistency or self-sufficiency in the position of unilateral Determination, which is a position of absolute (auto)nomy and absolute sovereignty, if not (precisely because it consists of no substance) absolute tyranny. Is this what Derrida was tempted to see as a transcendental reign of terror in Laruelle's own practice?¹⁸

Admittedly, being invisible, being intangible, being impregnable, being immaterial or unsubstantial, i.e., being radically elusive, cannot be described as an authoritarian position, or as an aggressive potential, but neither can it be denied being a radical power. *This is the radical power to drive anything or anyone powerless.* There are numerous mundane representations of such power or of the endeavor to somehow reach it: from the Marvel mutant character Kitty Pride to the fog-convertible Count Dracula; from the martial art of Aikido

to the unspeakable truth of Tao; from Christian negative theology to the uncategorizable and unfigurable God within Muslim traditions... In the ability not to support any predicate, i.e., in the capacity to avoid being an object in any way - even in the dual and circular contemporary mode - lies the power to thwart any intention, to defeat any law, to frustrate any knowledge, and even, in the epistemo(logical) case of non-philosophy, to escape any intuition.

The absolute hierarchy in which such a power indulges is tolerable in a democratic apparatus (*dispositif*) only because of emptiness, only because of an essential disruptive opening. But on the other hand, its dense (rather than hermetic) emptiness is what provides it with its utter power. Here we begin to glimpse some of the exact syntax of its immanence. Yet we are also able to discern that this power, which deeply lies in disappointment, is radical rather than absolute, in the sense that it needs an occasion (an intention, the beginning of an attempt, the habits of a practice or the reflex of a movement) to be exerted, to affect anything or anyone. Indifference means nothing without a stimulus to experience it or to sort of trigger it: to manifest it as an effect, even when caused by foreclosure. Within these lines, we attain precisely the terms that redistribute the respective positions and functions of transcendence and immanence within the model that Philosophy III displayed in the 1990s.

¹⁸ François Laruelle et Jacques Derrida, "Controverse sur la possibilité d'une science de la philosophie," *La décision philosophique*, No. 5 (avril 1988), 62-76; English edition: François Laruelle and Jacques Derrida, "Controversy Over the Possibility of a Science of Philosophy," trans. by Ray Brassier and Robin Mackay, in *The Non-Philosophy Project*, ed. Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjevic (New York: Telos), 76-94.

But Laruelle goes further. Not only does this Sovereignty get its power and its ultimate hierarchical position in the sequence of determinations from its absolute weakness and inconsistency, its allergy or its immunity to any predicates, any content, any objectification or any self-intuitive fold, but Laruelle also prevents it from ever being privatized or appropriated - even by science itself (as he acknowledges that Philosophy II was too close to such a risk¹⁹).

As a pure dispersive efficiency, as an absolute repulsive might, as the causality of the unconditional Otherness that refuses ontological determinations (of knowledge, of mastery, of Being as the ultimate frame of Phenomenology...), unilateral Sovereignty has already been used and defined in prior ways as a tool of exception - in Levinas, for example, enabling Jewishness to avoid the requisition from philosophical Greekness (and here stands the messianic feature of revolutionary discontinuity, as Ernst Bloch, for example, has shown about Thomas Münzer²⁰). And we could somehow describe the same uses currently around Blackness and the development of Radical Black Thought: Absolute Sovereignty is of great use or carries great positions of freedom in the formalization of a

process of decolonization of thought and feelings. But from a non-philosophical point of appreciation, these remain local deconstructive praxes, intermediary recourses, and unrigorous depiction, if not fraudulent extortion, of the non-mundane Force (of) Thought in the name of one residual predicate.

The unilaterally sovereign One does not share (or, if it does, it does so only by an illusory residue involving a theoretical incompleteness) its indivisible power (of) effect with any predicate withdrawn from *Logos* or from the World, and it belongs to none. Even when Laruelle grants this Sovereignty to ordinary man, or to man-in-man, he exposes non-philosophy to an accusation of anthropocentrism (and what Ó Maoilearca's work posits in his book is precisely the possibility of a non-human thinking from within the non-standard matrix). The One (and its slightest epekeinomorphic divergence with regards to philosophy) holds sway from an absolutely privileged position in a hierarchic topology of thought over the only empty cell (of the) Real that it (is), among a neutralized Hell of an ideological mesh of illusions, of a philosophical compound of denials, of dizzying mixes of transcendences in which our theoretical World consists. But what the One holds sway (over), prior to whatever and in the last instance, is itself - because of its mystic inherence (to) itself. And as

¹⁹ Laruelle, *Principes*, 59.

²⁰ We sure are still waiting for a serious publication confronting Laruelle and Bloch on utopia, ethics and the futural.

such, it is subordinate, and at a pinch even coordinate, to nothing.

The impregnable asymmetry and the absolutist haughtiness which characterize the syntax of the theoretical structure described above might surprise many of Laruelle's contemporary readers, especially those who had the chance to encounter him and to get acquainted with the discreet and nice person that he is, and even more so the few who had the chance to listen to his teachings or to work with him in any way. Even when dealing with a highly technical point of metaphysics, or when explaining the traits of some thinkers whom he would spend time analyzing, criticizing or deepening, Laruelle has always appeared to be far from arrogance, self-sufficiency or contempt. Yet there are obvious traces of the prowess of Nietzscheanism in Philosophy I, and there is some flagrant condescendence toward philosophers' self-deception or semi-blindness when Laruelle analyzes (and sharply abstracts) the mechanisms of their processes throughout most of his books - and sometimes with an amusingly cruel sharp pen. Let us quote one of the impressive early footnotes to give a taste of the initial aggressive-affirmative style Laruelle was using in his earlier works in the neighborhood of Deconstructionism and Differentialism. In the following quote, he is dealing with the old doctrines of liberation (Marxism, psychoanalysis) which yet require the

apology, voluntary or not, of the Master (and the auto-position of Mastery) as a face of the reactive Other inspiring love rather than subversion. The quote begins "[a]gainst para-Christian and dualistic (religious) reactions that make the misery of the conjuncture..." and segues into a footnote here:

[Footnote 3] 1976: *L'Ange [The Angel]* (Lardreau and Jambet) and *Marx* (Michel Henry: Marx, "one of the first Christian thinkers"). There is, of course, almost no connection between the dualistic aspiration of the former and the strictly founded dualism of the latter. But the dualistically religious essence of these two works marks their mutual belonging to the misery of the conjuncture, which is fully impregnated with a spirit of *reaction* against Marxism, with a reactive desire for its destruction. These reactive rebellions are not to be confused with an active-affirmative destruction of Marxism by the recourse to Nietzsche. The conjuncture, like everything else, is cut in two, split by the Other, even if it be covered with a mutual appearance of anti-Marxism. It is certain that Marxists will fall for this... nothing, however, is more repugnant to us than the disillusioned militants of a cause that has no longer their

love. Old wounded and abandoned Marxists, young Marxists back from the ideological front, Freudians seized by timidity, Structuralists adrift; Lacanians who have suffered under the Master and are coveting Nietzsche: it is a bidding war to see who will, under the spotlight, expose to others his wounds with the least shame. We have no reason to love them, these twisted and disappointed minds, these limp intelligences whose palinode echoes around them and whose very reason for philosophizing is summarized in saying: I was the one who has suffered the most... understand me...²¹

We can guess that with such Nietzschean ways of looking down on his contemporaries (structuralists, Marxists, Heideggerians, Freudians...), Laruelle has begun quite a solitary career. We hear in his former texts so much of the cold halcyonian wind; his irony is so sharp and ruthless; his technical virtuosity is so implacable that we could ask if he would not be himself two-sided as a man: a charming, thoughtful and kind-hearted person on the one hand; a devastating, merciless and stark writer using a scalpel as a pen, on the other hand (but generically fused under which one of them?).

²¹ François Laruelle, *Nietzsche contre Heidegger. Thèses pour une politique nietzschéenne* (Paris: Payot, 1977), 62-63.

II. The Extraordinary Man and the Rising of His City

In fact, Philosophy I was not the most solitary path in Laruelle's course of thinking. It was not precisely beginning down the path of loneliness when he gathered prominent authors (Maurice Blanchot, Edmond Jabès, Mikel Dufrenne, Paul Ricœur, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida...) around Levinas' work,²² published astonishing virtuoso articles in Georges Bataille's illustrious journal *Critique* (such as "Le style di-phallique de Jacques Derrida" ["The Di-phallic Style of Jacques Derrida"] and "La scène du vomit ou comment ça se détraque en philosophie" ["The Vomit Scene, or, How It Goes Wrong in Philosophy"]²³), and was interviewed by most of the leading deconstructionists.²⁴ However, hanging out with Derrida and his friends was not precisely a good way to make academic friendships because deconstruction had also raised a lot of animosity around itself. (Derrida was not that influential, especially in the French university system: he had not even obtained a doctorate until 1980.) Choosing to

²² François Laruelle (dir.), *Textes pour Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980).

²³ François Laruelle, "Le style di-phallique de Jacques Derrida," *Critique*, No. 334 (1975), 320-91; François Laruelle, "La scène du vomit ou comment ça se détraque en philosophie," *Critique*, No. 347 (1976), 265-79.

²⁴ Laruelle, *Le déclin*. In fact, we cannot exclude that ending this book with a series of questions was rather an editorial constraint than a personal choice of the author.

flirt with deconstruction was a pretty good way to become marginal, and Laruelle was doing a little more than flirting.

So when he began to turn his former approach into an interest toward the immediate givens of unary multiplicities (rather than continuous multiplicities, as in Bergson), toward the transcendental Cut as dispersive *a priori*,²⁵ i.e., toward the essence of minorities as the One (when everybody around was just beginning to take full stock of the ontological and ethical articulation of the Other), when he began to open a severe critique toward Philosophy as the zenith of authoritarian Mastery exerted over ordinary man,²⁶ which led to the publication of the highest technical and critical introduction to the theory of difference²⁷ by Les Presses Universitaires de France, and when he took an unpredictable radical leap that

overthrew the twentieth century's complete set of Thought, he lost a lot of support and a few friends in the move. As Jacques Derrida referred to this about thirty years later, "no one understood what he did."²⁸

Fortunately enough, by that time he had an editorial shelter at Aubier, initially with the book series *Analyse et raisons*, founded by the renowned author and professor Martial Guérault, specialist of Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Fichte, practitioner of high-standard inter-nalist methodology, and creator of *Dianoematics*, his posthumous theory of philosophical history. At least he would be able to publish some of his books among other publications of contemporary researches and translations. At that time with Aubier, he created his own series, *Res. L'invention philosophique*, where he could host the works of some of his contemporaries (Gilbert Simondon, Serge Valdinoci, Gilbert Hottois, Daniel Nicolet, Abel Jeannière, Anne Cauquelin, François Foulatier, etc.). But he was longer able to be forgiven for having so quickly short-circuited the embattled paths over which old opponents had bitterly fought for decades, and for treating those opponents, from that moment on, all too playfully and with too much of a virtuoso inconsequence.

²⁵ François Laruelle, *Le principe de minorité* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1981). The "Foreword" of this book has been translated by Edward Kazarian and is available online at *Dark Precursor*, September 1, 2013, www.darkprecursor.net/2013/09/01/francois-laurelle-le-principe-de-minorite-foreword-in-english. A large extract of the same book is also translated: François Laruelle, "The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter," trans. by Ray Brassier, in *The Non-Philosophy Project*, 159-69.

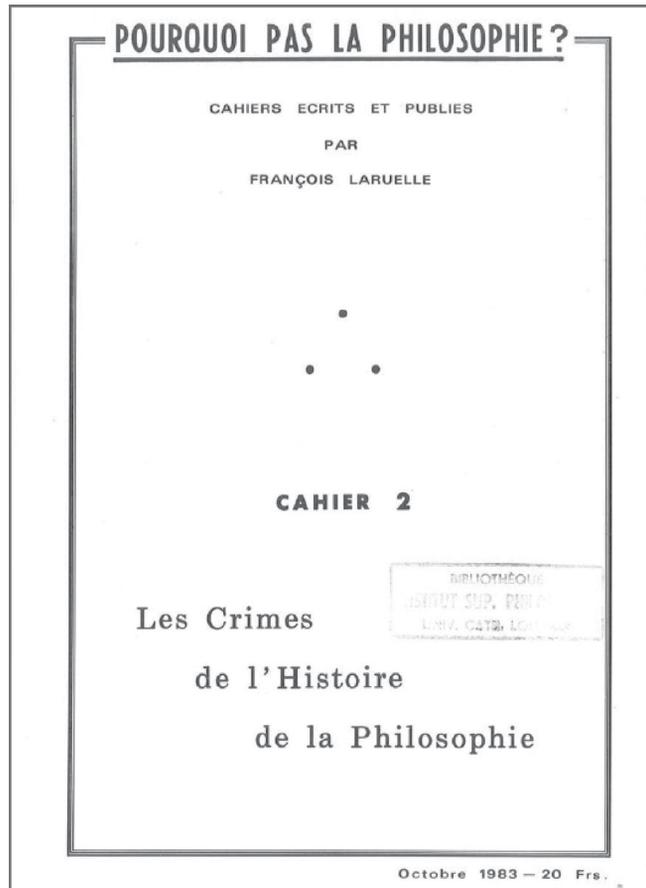
²⁶ Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*.

²⁷ François Laruelle, *Les philosophies de la différence. Introduction critique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986); English edition: François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Rocco Gangle (London and New York: Continuum, 2010).

²⁸ Remarks made on March 8, 2003, during a session at the Collège international de philosophie, "Hommage à l'œuvre de Michel Henry. Ce qui n'est pas du grec (A. David, J. Derrida, D. Franck, J.-L. Marion, J.-L. Nancy, N. Depraz, F.-D. Sebbah)," 29, *Collège international de philosophie*, www.ciph.org/IMG/pdf/memoire_orale_1983-2017-2.pdf.

By that time, Laruelle was still trying to set up a research program at the International College of Philosophy, newly created in 1983 by Dominique Lecourt, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye and François Châtelet. But what bears witness the most to his solitary posture of work is the self-edited journal *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?*, which he began composing and distributing on his own, from April 1983 until October 1985. It was a six-issue, old-fashioned and typewritten publication - a quite inventive and incisive development of thought which defined and sketched the whole of non-philosophy: from a thinking Science which is theorematologically determined by Multiplicities as People (a science illustrated by the analysis of Decision) to the prospecting practice (of) Future by means of Hyperspeculation, i.e., philo-fiction.²⁹

Figure 2. Laruelle's 1980s self-published journal titled *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?*.



It was only in 1987 that Laruelle found himself surrounded by a group of researchers with a new publication project, this time a collective one: *La décision philosophique*. What we could call the very first collective of non-philosophers took shape around this publication, with members that would leave their marks in many disciplines: Maryse Decan, Laurent Leroy, Jean-Marc Lemelin, Anne-Françoise Schmid (whom we know very well now due to her important work in epistemology), Maryse Dennes, Tony Brachet

(who developed the first insights about non-psychoanalysis), Vincent Maclos, Daniel Nicolet (who played a major role in Wittgenstein's reception in France), Serge Valdinoci, Gilbert Kieffer (who established the first breakthrough

²⁹ Aksayam, #TRANSISTOR.

toward non-æsthetics), Stéphane Douailler, Alain Arvois, Manuel Sumarès, Isabelle de Mécquenem, Patrice Vermeren or Philippe Petit (probably the most senior student of Laruelle and his most regular friend in the French editorial world of journalism).³⁰

What has to be underlined is that this life-changing publication has been particularly decisive for Laruelle's writing: it was the place where experimental texts emerged as a specific praxis of non-philosophy.³¹ But this first collective has led also to two major publications: *La non-philosophie des contemporains*, which confronts Althusser, Badiou, Deleuze, Derrida, Fichte, Kojève, Husserl, Russell, Sartre and Wittgenstein, and within which Laruelle is credited with having signed an article using the byline of Tristan Aguilar;³²

³⁰ Probably certain names are missing here. The complete archaeology remains to be done, and archives needed for such a task have not been gathered yet. However, we have to thank Étienne Brouzes for his friendly patience in providing a trove of documents and data, without which this text could not have been composed.

³¹ Fortunately, the English-speaking world has access to this amazing translated anthology: François Laruelle, *From Decision to Heresy*, ed. by Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), which has gathered, next to some of the prominent theoretical excerpts taken from Laruelle's books, most of those published experimental texts that are scattered and hard to find in France.

³² Le Collectif Non-Philosophie, *La non-philosophie des contemporains*. Althusser, Badiou, Deleuze, Derrida, Fichte, Kojève, Husserl, Russell, Sartre, Wittgenstein (Paris: Kimé, 1995); Tristan Aguilar, "Badiou et non-philosophie: un parallèle," en *Non-philosophie des contemporains*, 37-46; English edition: Tristan Aguilar,

and a far more well-known volume, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, which turned out to be deeply impregnated by the rupture of Philosophy III, and which put an end to the editorial activities of this collective as such.³³ This would mark the termination of a period that lasted about 15 years, the longest among Laruelle's enumerated Philosophies.

But although the first collective experienced something of a diasporic development - the scattering of some members, dormancy for others, or simply disaffection for a few - Laruelle would not be alone anymore in the same way he had been at the beginning of the 1980s. As he reached the academic status of full professor, a new generation was gathering around him: former students who prolonged their post-graduate studies with him as a mentor and who moved to non-philosophy as a matrix that had already been constructed, aside from the usual philosophic apparatus, i.e., as a place from which to engage with a historical background. A lot of them had discovered non-philosophy, which was not exactly welcomed inside academic programs, through recorded courses that Laru-

"Badiou and Non-Philosophy: A Parallel," trans. by Taylor Adkins, *Speculative Heresy*, March 6, 2010, www.speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2010/03/06/translation-of-laruelles-badiou-and-non-philosophy-a-parallel.

³³ François Laruelle et al., *Dictionnaire de la non-philosophie* (Paris: Kimé, 1998); English edition: François Laruelle et al., *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univocal, 2013).

elle was broadcasting via his university's long-distance learning programs. This collective of youngsters would soon be christened as the "Heretical Disciples" as they published their first volume of articles in 1998.

Juan-Diego Blanco, the first author to publish an introductory study on Laruelle, carried out at the Catholic University of Louvain under the supervision of Ghislaine Florival, was soon joined by Hugues Choplin, who was destined to become one of the most accurate specialists of contemporary French thought, and by Gilles Grelet, Mathias Lebœuf, Didier Moulinier, Laurent Nadot, Virginie Patoz, Laurent Salbert. Then, in the following years, more would gradually join them: Étienne Brouzes, Marc Develey, Jean-Michel Lacrosse, Sathya Rao, Boris Sirbey, Sylvain Tousseul, Sophie Lesueur, Sylvain Letoffé, Jean-Baptiste Dussert, Patrick Fontaine, and many others. But two things had changed in the meantime.

The first of these changes was the technological evolution between the two generations of non-philosophers, which becomes explicitly clear when we pay attention to dates: the turn to Philosophy III coincides with the rapid worldwide spread of the internet. The second change, at a very different level of depth inside theory, is closely coupled with Gilles Grelet's work with Laruelle in the process of writing his dissertation and also in-

involved the proximity and companionship of the still unknown Ray Brassier: the plan to create the International Non-Philosophical Organization (Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale, hereafter ONPhI) was formulated during Grelet's thesis defense in December 2002 as a necessary "rectification" of the academic and mundane use of non-philosophy.

Regarding the internet development, as a French trailblazer of blogging, Didier Moulinier played a major role (and still does) in the early presence of non-philosophy on the web, but also for teaching philosophy, europanalysis, elementary poetry (*poésie élémentaire*) and philosophy publications, among other skills in centralizing data and broadcasting information. He soon became, and remains, the best access point to a recent and complete French bibliography of Laruelle,³⁴ but he is also well-known for the lexicons he prepared, especially those which pursue the development of non-psychoanalysis. Following him, many other authors contributed to the blossoming of non-philosophical websites: from Sylvain Letoffé's *Cahiers (d') étrangers* [*Notebook of the Stranger*] and Sophie Lesueur's *uni(s)-vers* [*uni-(ted)-verse*], to Jean-Michel Lacrosse's *non-mondaine* [*non-worldly*] or Alessandro Bertocchi's *pensée-de-*

³⁴ Didier Moulinier, "Bibliographie de François Laruelle," *La non-philosophie*, 21 octobre 2008, www.la-non-philosophie.blogspot.com/2008/10/bibliographie-de-francois-laruelle.html.

nature-à [*thought-likely-to* or *in-the-nature-of-thou+ght*]. And by this time, new printed collections began to support non-philosophical research: first of all, Éditions Kimé, founded by Béatrice Charrié in the 1990s, with their *Bibliothèque de non-philosophie*; or the more recent Éditions PETRA, which started their series *Transphilosophiques* around 2002, while other more established publishers opened their existing collections to single book publications of Laruelle (Mardaga, Exils, Textuel, Le Cerf, Fayard, etc.).

Yet the advent of the ONPhI also coincided with the use of the internet as a broader medium at the precise moment when gifted characters joined the project, such as Marc Develey, who graduated in mathematics and became a specialist in non-linear optimization of algorithms applied to micro-processors, and Étienne Brouzes, a PHP developer and art school student. The latter became the webmaster of all the ONPhI internet outlets (as well as of many of the blogs mentioned above) and also became the publishing designer of the most recent non-philosophical printed journal so far, *Philo-Fictions*, this time with an international scientific advisory board. The international spread of non-philosophy has entered the phase that we know today, with the acceleration that we are witnessing, through the influence of social networks and the numerous translations of Laru-

elle's work during the past ten years, opening up an accumulation of international secondary literature.

But underneath this widening of non-philosophy's influence, and the building of an intense international research network, the ONPhI was also the theoretical theatre of a profound change of style in Laruelle's thought and, consequently, in his writing, a change that we can assess rather literally as a *crucial* turn. This is the non-religious turn which characterizes the period that lasted from 2002 until 2008 and the explicit penetration of the heretical (then messianic) themes within the matrix of expression and conceptualization that non-philosophy adopted during Philosophy IV - after which Laruelle ceased to number the ensuing evolutions of his work. Concerning this turning point of the theory, a large amount of texts and documents (among which those that have been published and discussed on the ONPhI website), many emails and letters should be examined in order to clarify the role of each actor who was involved in the theoretical intensification that happened in the operations (in a military sense as well) that the ONPhI was initially meant to deploy.

In a very recent interview, Laruelle was asked about what he had to go through - more so than any other author of his generation - particularly when it came to work in college

setting, group and team work, or journals and collectives, and if this collegial work had an impact on his writing, on his themes, on the turning points of his research or on the corrections that he found important to make in his project. Laruelle answered that he was intrigued by “such a question,” because he had not “ever thought about it in such a clear form”:

I always thought of myself as extremely solitary, as an isolated worker - a Gnostic surrounded by the whole philosophical tradition of the world. I always felt at the extreme point of intellectual loneliness, but many of us have the same experience. The philosopher likes to have disciples, but in fact he is especially in need of friends. I call a disciple the one who betrays me, and a friend the one who betrays me by remaining faithful. It is not within the reach of us all to know how to make a betrayal out of our power of friendship. My friends are the room of echoes in which I work. Besides conceptual materiality, there is an affective materiality that is a true “setting” [“milieu”] of existence.³⁵

³⁵ François Laruelle et Vincent Citot, “Entretien,” *Le Philosophoire*, No. 43 (2015), 57-72.

This affective materiality that describes the assemblages of relationships (personal ones as much as, more broadly, social or environmental), within which the doctrine and the architecture of Thought that Laruelle has elaborated grew, is not precisely thematized: neither as part of the syntax of experience, nor as part of the rigor of immediate Finitude which non-philosophy details. We can most likely assume that the struggle against mixtures and against Ideal continuities has surely determined a certain avoidance to underline any kind of relation in the non-standard matrix (especially any kind of other or otherness) or to somehow consider any intersubjectivity prior to the essential dispersion of beings and multiplicities. But more profoundly, we can relate such an absence to the reluctance expressed by Laruelle to acknowledge that the One could be a psychological experience, the reluctance to allow the Real to be psychologized. And maybe here we behold how Rigor can be a matter of strategy, Laruelle’s point being that the One must be emphasized as a theoretical lived experience (defined in the frame of a science), not as a psychological lived experience; a generic and formal or symbolical lived experience, not a personal experience.³⁶

So we have to accept committing a crime here. A partial one, but a crime that this text

³⁶ Aksayam, #TRANSISTOR.

has somehow already committed since its beginning, one of those that Laruelle points to as “the crimes of History of Philosophy.”³⁷ But as soon as we would delight in looking at the genetic process that orchestrated the production of non-philosophy, not only do we have to make a jump out of the inner movement of attention that non-philosophical discourse drives in the doctrine, but we have to also deal with contingent and contextual materials that are much further away from the transcendental gestures and immediacies (of) Thought that Laruelle’s matrix relishes considering. Perhaps in doing so, we are part of the everlasting crime that the History of Philosophy is guilty of, that which Laruelle denounced in the programmatic publication *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?* in a different context, in the French academic situation thirty-five years ago. But digging deeper into the archives involved, with the different turns that the theoretical deployment of non-standard thought underwent, might open a few barely known aspects of its emergence, broadening our understanding and our appraisal of what we already esteem as a masterpiece of art.

³⁷ “History of Philosophy is the entire set of theoretical and pedagogical technologies that make it possible to subject individuals, not to a class or even to a State but to state-philosophical difference as ‘major’ paradigm.” François Laruelle, “Les crimes de l’histoire de la philosophie,” *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?*, No. 2 (octobre 1983), 35-36, reproduced in Aksayam, #TRANSISTOR.

And it might also raise uncommon questionings about aspects of related problematics that are not usually approached inside theory but are connected to Laruelle’s own personal journey, as well as to the future of the discipline and method that he has offered to his contemporaries and to his intellectual heirs.

III. Fallen Angels: Relating the Encounters of Invention

Having a look at the intersubjective past and present of non-philosophy - more than just soliciting supplementary amounts of theoretical positions, historical controversies or avant-garde admonitions around methodological or axiomatic endeavors - will also unfold the coextensive network of affects that is part of a collective doctrinal construction (as much as a conceptual and logical mesh can), on a sensitive and fragile, though intense, theatre of relationships between creators.³⁸ And since Heresy constitutes a major figure depicting Minorities in the discourse of Sufficiency, at least since Laruelle’s 2002 *Future Christ*, which inaugurated Philosophy IV,³⁹ it is above all interest-

³⁸ This theatre has been once curiously put on stage in a hermetic play, *Rosalie Superstar*, by Foutre de Dieu, which follows each period of non-philosophy to build an intensive drama of compulsive abstractions among intersubjectivities. See Foutre de Dieu, *Rosalie Superstar*, en *Omajajri* (Châlons-en-Champagne: Cynthia 3000, 2007).

³⁹ François Laruelle, *Le Christ futur, une leçon d’hérésie* (Paris: Exils, 2002); English edition: François

ing - while looking backwards at the path that non-philosophy has travelled in its historical emergence - to pay attention to how dissidences have been dealt with in Laruellian discourse, when idiosyncratic non-Laruellian characters emerged among non-philosophers.

In fact, the management of dissidences in collectives and among disciples has a lot to reveal about the affects of Democracy, which non-philosophy is able to promote or call its members to improve on. Of course, we can argue, and effectively we have to, that questioning non-standard thought in this way may imply taking stock of the mundane parameters of relationships, like empiricist psychologies, and it consequently implies taking the risk of stepping back into the worst of former philosophical habits. But, for what may be somewhat hard to measure for contemporary readers who are in the process of discovering Laruelle and non-philosophy's protocols, the question of assessing which attitude is best equipped to deliver its promises of Democracy or of freedom for inventive multiplicities remains open.⁴⁰ And more

Laruelle, *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁴⁰ One of the most active bloggers among the readers who try to analyze the worldwide reception of non-standard thought and the opportunity to compare it with other French contemporary proposals (like Deleuze's, Badiou's, or Latour's), quite famous on the internet, is Terence Blake, a.k.a. "Agent Swarm," who is peculiarly concerned by these questions and refuses to accord any prominent

deeply, the theoretical options, the doctrinal manifestations or the methodological choices manifested by the dissidents in the different lineups of the precisely dated variations of the non-philosophical collectives will also reveal how heterodox approaches (of immanence, of invention, of mysticism, of rebellion, of how to organize research or activism, etc.) formulate a very different point of view on non-philosophy - but from the inside - and what it means to confront divergent standards of rigor when trying to promote a new collective and open praxis of Thought.

Let us consider two different historical emergent figures among non-philosophers who have accompanied Laruelle during some of his years of labor. Both were, though in very different ways and at different periods, deeply involved in the theoretical development and the intellectual promotion of non-philosophy, and both were very close to Laruelle. Both were bringing major theoretical propositions and a major long-lasting wave of creativity into the Laru-

position in the debate to Laruelle's perspective and methodology over other attempts to improve our conceptualizations of Democracy and its actualization. For example, Blake began to argue on the point that, based on non-philosophers with whom he has been in contact with throughout the years, non-philosophy is not as likely to support Multiplicity than the Deleuzian deterritorializing schizo-assemblages, which provide and articulate a more open ontological pluralism, specifically by having stopped being a philosophy of Difference, to adopt a philosophy of multiplicity that eludes the critique formulated by Laruelle.

ellian construction. And both experienced, but clearly differently in each case, some kind of resistance, some difficulties in having their own approach recognized as much as they were recognizing and promoting Laruelle's, and even some sort of stonewalling or explicit rejection that finally led both to take some distance, and more or less walk away, from further construction within non-philosophy.

III.A. The In-blind Thought that Fuels Civilizations

The first of these characters is Serge Valdinoci, who was already mentioned above as an early collaborator of *La décision philosophique* in the 1980s. Although of course very hard to re-enact, it seems the encounter between Laruelle and Valdinoci took place around 1984, as attested by the review Valdinoci wrote of *Le principe de minorité* [*The Minority Principle*], which was published in 1981. His assessment of Laruelle's research is clear: while comparing Laruelle to John of the Cross because of the "active Night," Laruelle intensifies his theorization in this work, which was born from a "difficult and absolute enterprise" and is described as a "foreign book" that deserves patience and respect as to be near approached.⁴¹

⁴¹ "Un livre étranger": contrary to the usual translations, when used as an adjective, Laruelle's *Étranger* in French means "foreign" rather than "strange" (cf. Laruelle, *Théorie des Étrangers*). What is remarkable in this book review by Valdinoci is to observe that

When Valdinoci met Laruelle's line of theoretical exploration, he had already published with Nijhoff. Valdinoci's doctoral dissertation is titled *Les fondements de la phénoménologie Husserlienne* [*The Foundations of Husserlian Phenomenology*],⁴² and he was mentored in 1979 by the same professor who also advised Laruelle - Paul Ricœur - in a period when there were no longer any specialists or researches of Husserl in France, since everybody had followed the Heideggerian mood of the *Zeitgeist*. And Valdinoci was completing *Le principe d'existence* [*The Principle of Existence*], an inquiry into psychiatry and phenomenological theory of psychopathology (Ludwig Binswanger, Medard Boss, Eugène Minkowski, Wolfgang Blankenburg) when he participated in creating the first collective of non-philosophers. Although closer to Raymond Ruyer (1902-1987) rather than to the stars of French Theory (because initially Ruyer was his teacher at the University of Nancy), when Valdinoci asserted that the "pathological state is perhaps pure existence,"⁴³ he was already in the neighborhood of Laruelle's dispersive Cut inside Being. Yet he was holding on to psy-

Laruelle would not use such a vocabulary before the late 1990s. See Serge Valdinoci, "Notes critiques: *Le principe de minorité* par François Laruelle," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 89e Année, No. 2 (avril-juin 1984), 268-70.

⁴² See Serge Valdinoci, *Les fondements de la phénoménologie Husserlienne* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1983).

⁴³ Serge Valdinoci, *Le principe d'existence. Un devenir psychiatrique de la phénoménologie* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1989), 1.

choanalytical inquiries about the embodiment of the deepest experience, which tallies with both Michel Henry's critiques of ontological monism from the point of view of an incarnated ipseity,⁴⁴ and with Charles Blondel's approach of the cœnesthetic "pure psychological," which was of major importance for Minkowski's phenomenological psychiatry.⁴⁵

Valdinoci's contributions to *La décision philosophique* were substantial. From the opening editorial⁴⁶ to feature articles,⁴⁷ his writings were always in-depth analyses and dense

⁴⁴ Michel Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); English edition: Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. by Girard Etzkorn (Hague: Nijhoff, 1973).

⁴⁵ Charles Blondel, *La conscience morbide. Essai de psychopathologie générale* (Paris: Alcan, 1914); English edition: Charles Blondel, *The Troubled Conscience and the Insane Mind*, trans. unspecified (London and New York: Routledge, 2014). See also German E. Berrios and Filiberto Fuentenebro de Diego, "Charles Blondel and *La conscience morbide*," *History of Psychiatry*, Vol. 8, (1997), 277-95.

⁴⁶ Serge Valdinoci, "Tout va bien!," *La décision philosophique*, No. 7 (1988). We have to mention that *La décision philosophique* had only odd numbered issues. The even numbers of the publication were single letters mailed to subscribers or were left in few specific bookshops.

⁴⁷ Serge Valdinoci, "Au-delà du principe de philosophie," *La décision philosophique*, No. 1 (mai 1987), 50-69; "L'Un, une nouvelle condition de pensée," *La décision philosophique*, No. 3 (décembre 1987), 39-49; "La naissance de la science à l'époque de la philosophie, en Europe," *La décision philosophique*, No. 5 (avril 1988), 5-39 (here Valdinoci is given the opening article in the journal); "La science de l'homme immense: une analyse non-platonicienne," *La décision philosophique*, No. 9 (1989), 65-79.

explorations of the experiences of Thought, of technical aspects of the abusive withdrawals of Philosophy from the Real (in the sense of "forfeitures"), or of programmatic propositions for the development of research, always caring and endeavoring to render closely Laruelle's thought or his analyses, but offering as well very innovative insights, astonishing original overviews or stunning unexpected connections in highly overwhelming formulas. The only rubric to which Valdinoci offered a contribution was the one called "Textes expérimentaux," in accordance with and consistent with his reluctance to any kind of literary play with words, fancy language or hollow rhetoric, which he has always found so invasive and pointless in continental twentieth-century philosophers.

Both knew they were launching something, something unlike anything else, something to be reckoned with. They began to undertake a very passionate and symbiotic work in multiple directions, with Valdinoci joining Laruelle in special sessions at the International College of Philosophy, publishing a thematic feature article about *La décision philosophique* in the College's *Le Cahier*⁴⁸ and spearheading in his own research the attempt, as he says in his own

⁴⁸ See the section "Études" with texts by Laruelle, Valdinoci and Pierre-Jean Labarrière in *Le Cahier (Collège international de philosophie)*, No. 4 (novembre 1987), 25-66, and specifically Serge Valdinoci, "Derechef, qu'est-ce que s'orienter dans la pensée?," in *ibid.*, 41-51.

words, to access, in the dead of Night, the black, negative, inhuman conditions that make the ordinary of man. All of this felt like a heroic period. They even confronted together Alain Badiou at Villa Gillet (the famous international multidisciplinary center in Lyon), and Valdinoci was approached to become the headmaster of an emerging non-philosophy school, the first of its kind. The intensity of their collaboration can be witnessed in the only published text Laruelle had ever co-written with anyone that we know of: "Lettre ouverte aux professeurs de philosophie" ["Open Letter to Philosophy Teachers"], which they wrote together in 1988 in order to invite readers to join the group behind *La décision philosophique*.

Il ne peut donc être question que *La décision philosophique* se fige en gardienne d'un néo-académisme. Afin de préparer effectivement la diffusion au sens élevé du terme, une puissante *action-philosophying* est appelée de nos vœux. Il faut saisir la chance que libère la destruction des célèbres « horizons incontournables » du discours et de la pensée et, pour nous, saisir cette chance signifie : resserrer au maximum les distances qui séparent actuellement la production et la réception. Tel est le mot d'ordre, si besoin est. C'est pourquoi, outre 1. les textes scientifiques et 2. les textes de sensibilisation pédagogique, 3. une nouvelle pratique du genre philosophique est proposée sous forme de textes *expérimentaux* et de *philo-fiction*. Il s'agit d'une pratique qui conduirait vers sa propre théorie en exposant les règles d'invention, en rendant transparente l'écriture du genre philosophique. La philosophie doit sortir de son *habitus*, de son inertie post-socratique et inventer de nouvelles pratiques textuelles qui ne soient pas seulement de consommation de textes déjà faits, mais d'invention et de production différentes.

Pour le collectif
de *La décision philosophique*
F. Laruelle et S. Valdinoci.

Figure 3. The last paragraph of Laruelle and Valdinoci's co-authored text, from *La décision philosophique*, No. 5 (April 1988), 126.

Deepening his own research and articulating that research in line with Laruelle's, Valdinoci explored, in accord with his viscer-

al commitment to psychiatry, the *patheme* that impregnates Europe: as being the continental embodiment of a Culture cradled by Philosophy's excision of the Real and constitutively immersed in its own hallucination. He calls the patheme *the black proto-affection of knowledge*.⁴⁹ In 1990 this led Valdinoci to publish *Introduction dans l'europanalyse: Krisis 2, transformer la phénoménologie de Husserl pour fonder la philosophie* [Introduction into Europanalysis: Krisis 2, Transforming Husserl's Phenomenology in Order to Ground Philosophy] in Laruelle's series *Res. L'invention philosophique*, offering a method which transubstantiates Husserl's *Krisis* in order to penetrate the core difficulty of experiencing real thought as a cœnesthetic and deep-rooted interior affect, and in order to place therein the movement of the crucial human adventure, which is

⁴⁹ *Patheme* refers to *pathos* and is an antithesis of Lacan's *matheme* (which is too much of a linguistics-centered theory in Valdinoci's perspective). As a matter of fact, we could say that in some way Valdinoci is in non-philosophy what Antonin Artaud was in surrealism - though his sense of absolute vertiginous dread can also remind of Georges Bataille, to whom he dedicated a tremendous conference in 1997, see Serge Valdinoci (dir.), *Georges Bataille: L'économie du sacrifice* (Reims: Le Clou dans le fer, 2004). But Artaud, as if he were theorizing psychopathology itself, was using *clinic* (examining a lying [reclined] patient) and the psychiatric clinical relation (the naked reliance on a caregiver to take in one's suffering) as a foundational metaphor for the lived-Cut, for the living state of reduction: a *protophor* (unlike Laruelle's, Valdinoci's use of metaphor is rather related to Max Black's - to whom Ricœur introduced him - than to Derrida's).

a mystical internal embedding. This was the opening of an intensely driven productive period leading to what was called the Fire Trilogy: *Vers une méthode d'europanalyse* [Toward an Europanalysis Method] (1995), *La traversée de l'immanence. L'europanalyse ou la méthode de la phénoménologie* [Traversing Immanence: Europanalysis, or, the Method of Phenomenology] (1996), and *La science première. Une pensée pour le présent et l'avenir* [First Science: A Thought for the Present and the Future] (1997), the massive deployment of an immanentist theory of invention.⁵⁰

Despite having very different writing styles and fairly different motives of inquiry, Laruelle and Valdinoci were theoretically very close at the beginning, and this can illuminate the reason why it so happened that their encounter developed as an intimate confluence, each respecting above all the uncompromising cutting-edge thinker he had come across. Stat-

⁵⁰ Serge Valdinoci, *Vers une méthode d'europanalyse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995); *La traversée de l'immanence. L'europanalyse ou la méthode de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Kimé, 1996); *La science première. Une pensée pour le présent et l'avenir* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997). Presently, translations of europanalytic texts are very rare. One can consult the translation of the opening of *Vers une méthode d'europanalyse*, as well as extracts from *La science première*, by Jesse Newberg (originally made available online on February 18, 2013 on Newberg's blog, which is now defunct) available online as: Serge Valdinoci, "Why Europe?," trans. Jesse Newberg, *INGens*, January 9, 2018, www.ingens.eu/index.php/pages/73-europanalysis-english-version; and at *Archive.org*, web.archive.org/web/20130422180523/http://cups.zxq.net.

ing that the Cut is prior to the Idea, that dispersion is prior to any synthesis, or that there is an ordinary state of Reduction on whose behalf Thought has to positively abandon *Logos*, was pretty God damn heretical in a traditional philosophical context, even after Heidegger's death. It was highly improbable that one would come to know someone reaching such a level of the work of Thought, someone who would take the same risk of being an outlaw of the principle of sufficient reason. They immediately had a sense of such luck. But the turn to Philosophy III would put an end to this long-lasting honeymoon period.

The shortest way to explain the difference between the two thinkers and between the two matrices of immanence they have erected is most likely to see those differences as already having been there from their earliest publications.⁵¹ Immanence has always been described in Laruelle's text as an indivisible power (of the) cut ("Immanence divides, transcendence en-

⁵¹ More profoundly, considering their intellectual profile and their respective manners of thinking, Laruelle could be perceived as being more Fichtean while Valdinoci as being more Hegelian. But the more accurate comparison would be that of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, particularly because of the great work Valdinoci has been doing for so long on the late Merleau-Ponty, and because, when reading the first chapters of *The Visible and the Invisible*, and while answering in a very profound manner to Sartre's dualism, they sound as if talking about Laruelle. With such interiorized different characters, misunderstandings should have occurred between them sooner or later.

compasses," he says⁵²); as a determining Identity undetermined by any Otherness; and named, in as great an opposition as that of Being to beings could imply, *the One*. In tune with the possible descriptions of the One's essence, Valdinoci always insisted on the embrace (of) immanence, on its inexpugnable inherency (to) self, on its conflation "with its depth, its consistency, its flesh, its immediate (auto-) impression, and which therefore is not requisitioned as limit of an operation of extraction, of analysis,"⁵³ but he insisted very little on its unary characteristics: rather than the One, Valdinoci preferred naming it *the Inner*, *the Internal*, the pure *Autos* (of) affect, or *the Endon*.⁵⁴ That is why his thought was not con-

⁵² Laruelle, *Le Christ futur*, 65, quoted in Christophe Samarsky, "Sur la musique," en *Naufrage sillonnées (pas d'elle)* (Paris: TheBookEdition/Collection arabesque, 2010).

⁵³ François Laruelle, *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (Liège/Bruxelles: Mardaga, 1989), 37-79; English edition: François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univocal, 2013), 33-79.

⁵⁴ *Endon* is a Greek root that means "internal," "inside." Valdinoci explores and uses this etymological radix (or prefix) to create a complete conceptual set: *endoception*, *endoconcepts*... This root is very common in medicine: "endoscopy," "endogenic," and so on. But above all, it became a major psychiatric concept when Hubertus Tellenbach (1914-1994), a German phenomenological psychiatrist wrote his great work on melancholia, see Hubertus Tellenbach, *Melancholy: History of the Problem, Endogeneity, Typology, Pathogenesis, Clinical Considerations*, trans. by Erling Eng (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1980). We will see in the next pages the strange and capital role played

cerned so much with the question of how to articulate Transcendence via unilateral determination in the last instance, via the (Non-)One or via cloning: there was no other side than the in-side, and he has never used the metaphor of Hell to describe the World but has used only the sense of chaos to describe the Universe in a blind state (condition) of invention. If we understand Unilaterality as the depiction of *X distinguishing itself from Y which does not distinguish itself in return*, then Laruelle was building on the distinguished side while Valdinoci was building on the side which is not.

So when Laruelle brought up in 1996 the principles of a unified theory that definitively forbade saying anything about the One foreclosed to *Logos*, he swept away the complete non-philosophical Valdinocian *theory of writing* as an internal practice of ingestions of *Logos* by a general æsthesis (i.e., pre-noetic sensitivity, or, as he names it, *Endoception*, i.e., Impression); as an operative Reduction able to transubstantiate *partes extra partes* Occidental representations into visceral pathemes, able to reach back to how concepts are initially impregnated by *Endon*. And in doing so, Laruelle *de facto* excluded Valdinoci's program for a mystical experimenting with black Thought. There was no longer a place for europanalysis in non-philosophy. The theoretic-

cal split was effective. From Valdinoci's point of view, Laruelle was just essentializing the Limit where there was no limit anymore, because there was no Where, neither perceptive Space-Time nor unity, but merely immensity without borders and no outer part.

In fact, the only explicit and remaining traces of this period in Laruelle's books are the entry "Europanalysis" in the *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*⁵⁵ and the one and only footnote that can be found in Laruelle's *Principles of Non-Philosophy*.⁵⁶ Knowing how rare footnotes are in Laruelle's texts, especially after Philosophy I, and that references to contemporary thinkers are even rarer, there could not be any higher way to pay tribute and express his respect to the intense companionship that brought them together to the deepest incursions into Thought. It turned out to be a hurtful wound. Valdinoci felt that his work was shortened to one sentence (yet a rather clumsy rather than a tactless one), which gave to europanalysis an identity that has been reduced in coordinates related to Philosophy - thus giving place to a kind of thought which was intimately foreign to any place.⁵⁷ In that sense, it was a reason for

⁵⁵ Laruelle et al., "Europanalyse," *Dictionnaire*, 69-71; Laruelle et al., "Europanalysis," *Dictionary*, 58-60.

⁵⁶ Laruelle, *Principes*, 41; Laruelle, *Principles*, 304.

⁵⁷ In fact, this footnote takes place on a page whose purpose is to bury Philosophy II, "this point is crucial," Philosophy will no longer be "dissolved, forgotten or critiqued and hastily rejected" (Laruelle,

by melancholia and manic depression in the thought of Laruelle's dissidents.

Valdinoci to feel wronged regarding the work of analysis and promotion he had always been doing for Laruelle's thought. From that perspective, the title that he gave to the third volume of the 1995-1997 trilogy, *First Science*, probably the most powerful book of mysticism written in the French contemporary field (it is huge, literally), can be interpreted as an implicit controversy and rival response to Chapter 2 of Laruelle's *Principles: "First Science" as Unified Theory of Science and Philosophy: Or, Democracy within Thought*,⁵⁸ although in its contents

Principles, 35). It is clear in this passage that Valdinoci's work is equated with Henry's philosophy. Non-philosophy is turning from absolute to radical. We already know, though admitting "the strictly founded dualism" of Henry's Ipseity of auto-affective flesh (see above), that Laruelle rejects it because of the empiricist remains that are kept in such an embodied theorization of immanence. This is also consistent with the reluctance to psychologize the One-Lived. But the question remains: Why does not Laruelle take into account the living flesh as a precise experience of Finitude, like Henry describes it when recalling Maine de Biran's *sense of effort* inside the lived *Resistant Continuous*? And why does he not take into account in the same way Valdinoci's psychiatric Finitude of Sense (of hermeneutics) as this Finitude is felt (confronted) while traversing chaos? This is probably related to Laruelle's minimal investment in theorizing the body, especially since he had stopped theorizing the libido. On that matter, François Laruelle, *Le concept de non-photographie / The Concept of Non-Photography*, bilingual edition, trans. by Robin Mackay (Falmouth/New York: Urbanomic/Sequene Press, 2011) seems to position himself in a new set of descriptions (see below, and see also Narciso Aksayam, "Fudging Laruelle's Decision: A Historical Path toward a Non-Philosophical Body," forthcoming).

⁵⁸ Laruelle, *Principles*, 37-78.

Valdinoci's book remains deeply respectful and mindful of Laruelle's breakthrough.

At that time, the *Dictionary*, which has been written by the members of the first collective, was a theoretical mess as compared to the new requirements of Philosophy III's unified theory. Laruelle performed an immense labor of writing to get to the point where every entry would fit with consistency the new lines of rigor which non-philosophy was inserting. Between the two thinkers, there would not be any strategic union without theoretical union. And it still remains a real affliction to look at Valdinoci's draft for the entry of "Affect,"⁵⁹ which would not be given a place in the *Dictionary* because of its obvious transgression of an irremovable and newly definitive rule. Each one would carry on through their own path of thought, *further, deeper, wider* or more *according to*, but certainly with a new taste to be recognized and felt in Solitude.

Nevertheless, beyond those contingent misunderstandings belonging to the past of two masterpieces of French thought, sometimes (especially since the quantum turn of, let us name it, Philosophy V, although these names are sometimes no longer relevant under Laruelle's pen) non-philosophy still resounds with a suddenly surprising europanalytic accent. This is

⁵⁹ See Serge Valdinoci, "Le manuscrit de l'article 'Affect,'" *INGens*, 28 mai 2018, www.ingens.eu/index.php/europanalyse-continent-d-invention/80-serge-valdinoci-le-manuscrit-de-l-article-affect.

particularly true when Laruelle develops his conceptions of the undulatory, the “immanent,” the depth of the body, or generalized fractality:

... this fractality is not either manifested in geometric manner by a jagged profile, by spikes, angles, ruptures or points of interruption, by a symmetrical angularity occupying a surface *as being flat*; but by another type of excess that occupies the surface, yet *as being deep*, in so far as this depth is not in or of space, or behind the surface, but a depth peculiar to an extreme flatness for which the plane remains only an adjunct phenomenon of superficiality and of its own “intensive” depth. This excess is constituted by intensive “spikes” that the strict identification of the opposed predicates, peculiar to representation, produces, for example the representation of the appearance and of that which appears.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Laruelle, *Le concept / The Concept*, 79. Some modifications of Robin Mackay’s translation have been made here, in consideration of the difficulty of this passage. *Non-spatial depth, excess, strict identification of opposite predicates* and even *intensive* or *qualitative depth* are typical europanalytic topics, concepts or modes.

III.B. The Sharpness and the Rigor of Discipline

The second case of dissidence and heresy among non-philosophers is the one of the heresiarch in himself, i.e., the Rebel in himself, namely, Gilles Grelet. After evoking the living black Abyss with Valdinoci, let us now call upon a Meteor, a truly fulgurating comet. We have to recall that everything seems to precipitate in 1998, the year when the page of Philosophy II was definitively turned by the release of the theoretically unified *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*. That same year, indeed just a few months later, a new collective book was to be published: *Discipline hérétique. Esthétique, psychanalyse, religion* [*Heretical Discipline: Aesthetics, Psychoanalysis, Religion*].⁶¹

At this time, Grelet had been one of Laruelle’s doctoral students since 1996, and he could be seen for several months in Laruelle’s classrooms, listening to global topics like “Man and City” or to Laruelle’s attempt to design a *non-phenomenology* in a seminar which was given twice a month. Laruelle’s place was a little more consolidated within academia because he had published *Principles of Non-Philosophy* in Jean-Luc Marion’s series and had reached the level of Professor. It was probably a moment for a brief recovery from certain aca-

⁶¹ Le Collectif Non-Philosophie, *Discipline hérétique. Esthétique, psychanalyse, religion* (Paris: Kimé, 1998).

demic survival strategies, as well as from a major heart surgery which he had to undergo in 1992. And we can guess, according to the dates, that Laruelle was working on both *Introduction to Non-Marxism*⁶² and *Théorie des Étrangers*.

Among the ten essays of *Discipline hérétique*, only two were signed by former members of the collective: Gilbert Kieffer and Tony Brachet. All the other texts were productions from a completely new group, spanning non-philosophical effects from æsthetics to psychoanalysis, from geopolitics to poetry.⁶³ One might say: "the usual" (or - but who would dare? - "the ordinary"), yet how accurate, how bold and how inventive those contributions were! However, when we arrive at the last essay, obviously something different was happening, a burning sharpness in the cutting of phrases, a radical and fierce recklessness in the sequencing of ideas, an unexpected radicality of thought, even in the use of references and in the insightful knowledge of Laruelle's writings. But above all, what was happening was someone able to say "I," and to undertake the hard-line

⁶² François Laruelle, *Introduction au non-marxisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000); English edition: François Laruelle, *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univocal, 2015).

⁶³ In *Discipline hérétique*, europanalysis was even sort of mentioned in one and a half pages under the pen of Danilo di Manno de Almeida, but in terms which appalled Valdinoci's readers so much that it was hard not to suspect some kind of indirect reckoning, one last bitter twitch from their breakup.

stance that comes with it. "Un bréviaire de non-religion" ["A Breviary of Non-Religion"]⁶⁴ was the first step that Grelet was making into non-philosophy, and it was a resounding one.

Neither heresy nor non-religion had ever been posited this way in non-philosophy before.⁶⁵ At the opening of the book, Laruelle lays bare the axioms of pure heresy, and redefines, in a still famous text,⁶⁶ what he formerly called unilateral indifferent Science as a radical Heresy as much as a Heresy of radicality. At the end of the book Grelet draws the lines of the discipline which he names *theorism* or *non-religion*, and which "can be told of Rebellion, of radical struggle against an implacable enemy: necessity, with its worldly horizon of corruption and of death, in which consists what I call Nihilism."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Gilles Grelet, "Un bréviaire de non-religion," en Collectif, *Discipline hérétique*, 182-216.

⁶⁵ In fact, if "non-religion" appears only once in the *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, under the entry "Other (non-autopositional Other, non-thetic Transcendence)," the entry "Man (humans)" states for the first time that "[n]on-philosophy is a rigorous heresy: it makes of man a being-Unseparated (from) self, and thus Separated-without-separation from the World." Laruelle et al., *Dictionary*, 79. And the entry "Time-without-temporality (radical past, transcendental future, world-present)" ends with defining the "heretical time or the heretical conception of time, without history or becoming." Ibid., 148.

⁶⁶ François Laruelle, "De la non-philosophie comme hérésie," en Collectif, *Discipline hérétique*, 7-23; François Laruelle, "Non-Philosophy as Heresy," trans. by Taylor Adkins, in *From Decision to Heresy*, 257-84.

⁶⁷ Grelet, "Un bréviaire," 182.

As opposed to Valdinoci and his gigantomachic drought of chaos, Grelet is a man of few words, his writing tends to culminate in aphoristic formulas, and his publishing is very rare due to endless rectification. But, like Valdinoci, when they connected, Grelet had an intellectual background different from Laruelle's. Thus, if we want to sketch the direct line of ascendancy which he belonged to, we must call upon the following lineage of teaching: Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), a Thomist specialist of Medieval philosophy, teacher of Henry Corbin (1903-1978), the first French translator of Heidegger and specialist of Shiism and Islamic mysticism, teacher of Christian Jambet (1948-), a former Maoist and author (with Guy Lardreau) of the book *L'Ange* [*The Angel*]⁶⁸ (see above), the first teacher that Grelet met in philosophy. And it was precisely *L'Ange* that Grelet was appealing to in non-philosophy.

We have to understand that *theorism* is profoundly animated by a rare reluctance to culture and a rare indifference to the production of any kind of scientific knowledge (what could be another point in common shared with Valdinoci). What Grelet calls the Angel is *the abolition in person of Law, the accomplished "realm" of Justice, since it has no image (of) self*. Non-religion is the Rebellion-in-

man against foreclosed radical individuality; it considers cloning as the alienation of the heart of Man to the sorcery of Transcendence; and it makes of *Non-Thetic-Transcendence-(of)-self* a dissolving force that is opposed to the spontaneous *faith* in a reciprocal determination of the Real, a faith on which the rationality of every *World-Discourse* relies, as *Sufficient S(p)ecularity*. In short, Grelet was asking how non-philosophy could be able to radically change subjects by changing their relation to any fate.

From a Lacanian apparatus (R, S, I) and with a Blanchotian affect, what Grelet posits is a line of division between Pretense ("le Semblant") and Saintliness. "*It is right to divide/divinize ourselves*": here is the first statement that begins *Déclarer la gnose. D'une guerre qui revient à la culture* [*Declaring Gnosis: On a War that Comes Back to Culture*], the first book published off his dissertation.⁶⁹ But this line also divides the field of theorization of immanence: on the one side, philosophies of

⁶⁹ Gilles Grelet, *Déclarer la gnose. D'une guerre qui revient à la culture* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 11. Readers must consider a second text by Grelet as a necessary complement to this book, especially since Laruelle takes its content into account in the answer he gives to Grelet's position: Gilles Grelet, "Anti-phénoménologie," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, Vol. 129, No. 2 (2004/2), 211-24; English translation: "Anti-phenomenology," trans. by Kris Pender, no date, *Academia*, www.academia.edu/4624766/Gilles_Grelet_-_Anti-Phenomenology.

⁶⁸ Guy Lardreau et Christian Jambet, *L'Ange. Pour une cynégétique du semblant* (Paris: Grasset, 1976).

pure immanence (like Henry's archi-Christology) which absolutely negate Transcendence (i.e., *Terrorism*); on the other side, Laruelle's majoritarian non-philosophy that leaves Transcendence pretty intact (i.e., liberal *Theoricism*). A rightist deviation and a leftist one.⁷⁰ Aside of those two, Grelet's theorism carries the requirement for any Rebel to be *both the arrow and the target*, that is, to be oneself the field where Transcendence is to be purified from its imposture (cf. Pretence): an immanent war field.⁷¹ What Grelet did in this very first essay was exactly what Laruelle had done with europanalysis: giving a place and identity to Laruelle's own practice by means of theoretical coordinates.

This introduction of the fiercest struggle against the World, expressed with such a rigor and generalized via religious themes (considering that Philosophy is just one possible dis-

⁷⁰ Grelet adds a third kind: *Tourism*, characterized by a superficial use of non-philosophy as mere pedagogical tool for academic philosophy learning.

⁷¹ "The Real is war" (Grelet, *Déclarer la gnose*, 66).

To support this argument, Grelet quotes Christian Jambet: "the absence of foundation of the real, that is war itself; the forgetting of war, that is precisely the tragedy of nihilism; the incapacity to wage war, that is the sign of servitude." Christian Jambet, "Une lecture hégélienne," *Cahiers de la torpille*, No. 2 (mars 1999): *Sommes-nous héroïques?*, dir. par Cynthia Fleury et Yannis Constantinidès, quoted in *ibid.* In this war, agnostic Rationality is the enemy that hypostatizes Death into cultural Time (*ibid.*, 80). The minimum imperative requirement of Rebellion is to suspend any belief in Death, the maximum one is to play the Angel (*ibid.*, 95).

course of faith accorded to Transcendence among others, but precisely the most s[p]ecular of all), was acceptable for Laruelle, as he was himself working at this very moment on renewing his ties with Marxism. But moreover, we can easily imagine how Laruelle could have welcomed and greeted being challenged by a young worthy heir. The relation grew passionate and enthused but more comfortable than the former one with Valdinoci, because as a disciple Grelet's theoretical matrix was already more fitted into non-philosophy's matrix than Valdinoci's could have ever been. Their respective works went closer and this co-construction reached its climax in 2002, the year of Grelet's thesis defense.

It is uneasy to grasp how much this co-working was decisive for the development of the religious metaphorism in Laruelle, which emerged as the turn to Philosophy IV, but it was surely determining. And *Future Christ*, the first book ever departing from the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy that afterwards discusses a Principle of Sufficient Church, was published in this same year. One thing is clear: Grelet's thesis defense is ONPhI's ground zero. Taking place on December 14th, 2002, Grelet's presentation in front of his jury was built like a military operation against the University, as an attack to recapture teaching from "the vampirism of spontaneous sufficiency."⁷² The aim

⁷² Gilles Grelet, "Soutenance de Nanterre," *Organisation*

was to rectify non-philosophy by a usage of it and to make non-philosophy operational through theorism, which was described as the proletarianization and the radical militarization of theory rather than its theoreticist reform. Grelet ended this presentation with the first-ever reading of the articles and by-laws of the forthcoming ONPhI, which he had devised with Laruelle.⁷³

As we explained above, given the internet at this historical conjuncture, in the following year (2003) the international organization was ready to be launched and fully operational. And there Grelet immediately developed his "activism of theory, the one which hauls the philosophy-form over the coals and which gives to non-philosophy its organizational sharpness."⁷⁴ His proposal was immediately adopted and intensified by publications of other members (like Hugues Choplin's or Erik Del Bufalo's). The international scope of the ONPhI gathered also rising figures of cutting-edge thought, such as Katarina Kolozova and, as already mentioned

above, Ray Brassier,⁷⁵ and it opened a growing community of young international researchers, such as Jason Barker, Sun-Baek Jeong, Jeong Ae Kang, and others.

But, of course, Laruelle was called to communicate inside the ONPhI, and, as he was challenged to, he had to answer Grelet's militant position. A few months after the beginning of the ONPhI, Laruelle's attitude was then to theorize (on) the occasion of Non-Religion, the traditional move of Parricide (at least known in theory since Freud), and to distinguish (especially in order to protect members who were not concerned with radicality) Grelet's stance of theorism from his role inside the organization. What mattered to Laruelle was to question the resentment involved in the introduction of (non-)religion into non-philosophy and to avoid the use of retaliation by calling, among non-philosophers, for a non-philosophical Ethics of discussion.⁷⁶ Respect and even admiration were profoundly present, but the posture was rather lukewarm as compared to Grelet's claim that the Theorist should be "a moral atomic bomb."⁷⁷

Non-Philosophique Internationale, September 14, 2003, www.onphi.net/corpus/22/soutenance-de-nanterre.

⁷³ ONPhI, "Statuts historiques de l'ONPhI" (Paris, le 21 janvier 2003), *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, January 15, 2006, www.onphi.net/corpus/39/statuts-historiques-de-lonphi. The document is signed by Ray Brassier, Gilles Grelet and François Laruelle.

⁷⁴ Gilles Grelet, "Combattre sur deux fronts," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, April 8, 2003, www.onphi.net/corpus/4/combattre-sur-deux-fronts#.

⁷⁵ Together with Brassier, in 2005 Grelet and Laruelle started a new series of publications, *Nous, les sans-philosophie* [*We, the Ones-without-Philosophy*], meant to welcome anti-philosophical, non-philosophical and extra-philosophical essays, whose content and language were not destined to fit the academic taste.

⁷⁶ François Laruelle, "Parricide. Ou comment Saint-Gilles à l'Épée rectifie la non-philosophie," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, October 3, 2003, www.onphi.net/corpus/24/parricide--ou-comment-saint-gilles-a-lepee-rectifie-la-non-philosophie.

⁷⁷ Gilles Grelet, "Fils de l'homme, frère du peuple:

Laruelle was compelled to answer at a level higher than ONPhI's. At a theoretical level, he had to assume the position of answering Grelet's theorist matrix, as Grelet had put it in axioms in his doctoral dissertation and in his book *Déclarer la gnose*, and as he had turned it into activism on an international scale with the ONPhI. But given the role that Grelet has taken among non-philosophers, and given their complicit relationship and the influence that they had on each other, it was no longer a matter of a simple footnote. The answer that Laruelle had to give to Grelet's proposal of Non-Religion would be a complete book: *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, which is, for more than half of it, a precise answer to the sharpness of *Saint Gilles' sword* and a specific attempt to reclaim and to re-found ONPhI's theoretical basis.⁷⁸

voilà le théoriste," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, November 2, 2004, www.onphi.net/corpus/30/fils-de-lhomme-frere-du-peuple--voila-le-theoriste; English edition: Gilles Grelet, "Son of Man, Brother of the People: Behold the Theorist," trans. by Ray Brassier, *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, November 2, 2004, www.onphi.net/corpus/29/son-of-man-brother-of-the-people-behold-the-theorist.

⁷⁸ "Saint Gilles" (related to Marx and Engels's *Holy Family*) and "Tintin in the Land of Culture" (Grelet, *Déclarer la gnose*, 4) are two nicknames, or terms of endearment (hypocorisms), given to Grelet by Laruelle which illustrate pretty well the extent and the affective spectrum of their relationship, at least from Laruelle's point of view - to carry the complete investigation, hypocorisms given to Laruelle by Grelet are missing, of

With this in mind, we can assert that this book, as a response to the parricide, which "in reality [...] constitutes the father, or else enjoys giving itself a father,"⁷⁹ was for Laruelle a struggle with the Angel as his own production, as his own progeny, as himself perhaps - Rebellion being taken as an object "putting non-philosophy to the test."⁸⁰ Taken in detail, all of Grelet's Gnosis appears, in Laruelle's assessment, to be about "deficient analyses or limits of philosophy," which involve preferring (Non-)Religion to (Non-)Philosophy, because this Gnosis has "already begun with a religious reduction of philosophy": "Emasculating philosophy as imaginary makes the task easier... ." ⁸¹ At a technical level, though Grelet states that "Religion is more world-thought than Philosophy," Laruelle considers that "it does not provide either the adequate vocabulary nor the critical technique that philosophy provides and which are necessary in order to be able to speak of non-religion in the name of the Real"⁸²; and because of that, it risks "be[ing] confronted with [Philosophy's] return

course...

⁷⁹ François Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie à la fin des temps philosophiques* (Paris: Kimé, 2006), 153; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 183-4.

⁸⁰ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 159; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 191.

⁸¹ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 148, 149; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 178, 179.

⁸² Grelet cited in Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 156; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 187.

in the form of the sufficiency of a theological or philosophical 'absolute.'⁸³ But looked at the level of an intersubjective behavior, facing the emergence of a dissidence, Laruelle's process is once again to give a place and an identity to the autonomous insider, carrying him back to the outer margins.

This identity would be a philosophical one: Platonism, "[t]he instance of the Angel is a repeat of Platonic *mania*"⁸⁴; an identity which could even be recognized in Grelet's writing style, within the characteristics of which Laruelle finds "some linguistic fetishism and a secret idealism of the all-language or of language as absolute."⁸⁵ And the place would be the one of a leftist deviation of non-philosophy, leading to the conclusion that "the Rebel is in-hatred of the World" but, not being indifferent enough to the World's Sufficiency, "he thus hates the World with the means of the World,"⁸⁶ i.e., a place which would be now coordinated in the perspective of Laruelle's non-philosophy.

Though explicitly composed as a friendly fencing match, even with a sort of paternal affection and a professorial care, Laruelle

clearly declares that "all the critiques of non-religious gnosis that non-philosophy bears here only touch on the hasty intervention into non-philosophy by non-religious gnosis (its aspect of leftist deviation), but in no way whatsoever bears upon a possible usage of this thematic"⁸⁷; though he had taken very seriously Grelet's work and his rigorous and demanding theses and, as a response, ended up writing his most contextual book ever by answering local objections or challenges to social organization (what can be seen as a rare homage, even a kind of tribute to his improbable gifted pupil), the message to be heard and to be understood was first and foremost the following: "several 'non-philosophies' may not exist."⁸⁸ What would be confirmed in practice (and congruously with events in the World) by changing the functioning of the ONPhI and reformulating its status and bylaws in August 2006⁸⁹ (after dissolving the former version in January of the same year) was an important strategic move, given the work that Grelet had done by being at the forefront of the initial organization.

⁸³ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 149; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 179.

⁸⁴ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 181; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 220.

⁸⁵ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 155; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 186.

⁸⁶ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 151; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 181.

⁸⁷ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 158; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 190.

⁸⁸ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 152; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 183. "May not," "cannot"... depending on the translation we choose; but the meaning remains "won not."

⁸⁹ See "Statuts de l'Organisation," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, 2006, www.onphi.net/statut?lg=fr.

We can consider that the 2002 ONPhI's by-laws were Laruelle's and Grelet's jointly written and co-authored text.⁹⁰ By reforming the ONPhI, Laruelle was endorsing a symbolical, but official, split. But he was also giving a final and decisively clear non-philosophical definition of Heresy, and even more so a definition of non-philosophy accorded to Heresy: "Non-Philosophy is *heretical* in Philosophy, but it is *orthodox* inside Heresy."⁹¹ The move was to give a place, but a minor one, to the Angel and to the Rebel in the matrix of non-philosophy. But this placing was no longer expressed in terms of Democracy. Laruelle could assert that Rebellion "does not constitute an *œuvre*, or it is the Rebel in person that is precisely this *œuvre*"⁹²; but the angelic rebel that Grelet was has made an *œuvre* as such within non-philosophy, as an operation of metamorphosis which was his deep effect in Laruelle's work: he has brought non-philosophy to cast off the political scale of its language and to adopt a religious terminology to define its identity, i.e., a deep effect in theory which corresponds to a new metaphori-

cal leap.⁹³ In several ways, Grelet has been the seed for the emergence of Messianism as the non-philosophical model of a democratic future, and a giant step for the conceptual development that Laruelle has accomplished toward a non-philosophical *Mystique*, a *Mystique* accorded to his own rigor - at least better accorded than Valdinoci's black *Mystique* was.

This liberal turn of the ONPhI, on the contrary, did not lead Grelet to adopt a low profile, but, instead, made him more elusive both in theory and in the World. Maybe this was in complicit agreement with Laruelle's interpretation of the Rebel in person as being precisely Rebellion's only *œuvre*, and in this goal lay the desire to use the means of the World. Or maybe this confirmed the course of his path as being - rather than to achieve unanimity inside an activist organization of academics, to posit a method that would be able to turn subjects' worldly discourses into Angel practices of poignant solitude. Grelet progressively left behind his professional ties, his friendships in French activist cinema⁹⁴ and also his connec-

⁹⁰ Although the writing in detail was likely led by Gilles Grelet with Ray Brassier, before offering Laruelle to chair the organization.

⁹¹ François Laruelle, "Discipline, tranchant, rigueur, leur conversion non-philosophique," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, 2006, www.onphi.net/letters/8/discipline-tranchant-rigueur-leur-conversion-non-philosophique.

⁹² Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 170; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 206.

⁹³ Let us be clear here: the jump is real, but it is a jump from a former metaphor to a new one inside the theoretical matrix of description.

⁹⁴ Gilles Grelet was close to Dojo cinéma, a group of avant-garde directors of documentary films (see Aksayam, #TRANSISTOR), which filmed two important video documents that should really be translated and subtitled. The first one is a filmed session at the International College of Philosophy (CIPh), where Grelet led a seminar, and which is of preliminary interest on the matter of how Theorism enforces the effort to raise a new kind of subject. See

tion with the immediate becoming of the ONPhI, and proceeded out to Sea, on a sailing boat, which he outfitted as an integral part of his theoretical apparatus and which he significantly baptized *Théorème*. He would carry on his break toward saintliness. In 2007, once more he made use of his discipline (of) division, and stated on a scathing, small print run poster which announced the publication of his *Proletarian Gnosis*⁹⁵: "THERE ARE THE LIVING, THE DEAD, AND THOSE WHO GO TO THE SEA," signed as "He for Whom the World Is a Brothel Where Practice Is the Whore and Philosophy Is the Great Madam."⁹⁶

It is hard to assess how far the present paper has invested in committing a crime by telling backstage anecdotes of the History of Non-Philosophy. More than revealing any kind

Un séminaire de théorie de Dojo cinéma, Daily Motion, www.dailymotion.com/video/x3mw7a. The second one, Une Bonne Manière de commencer, is an amazing experimental short film - amazing both because of its cinematographic and incredibly innovative form as a documentary and its theoretical content - that was produced by Gilles Grelet and Hugues Choplin, the first presenting a theoretical Kōan and the latter making theoretical live comments from another place while Grelet is explaining his pitch. See Une Bonne Manière de commencer, Daily Motion, www.dailymotion.com/video/xzfsq.

⁹⁵ See Gilles Grelet, "Tract(atus) 23: La théorie est attente," en Aksayam, #TRANSISTOR; Gilles Grelet, "Proletarian Gnosis," trans. by Anthony Paul Smith, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 2014), 93-8.

⁹⁶ Surprisingly, this poster happened to be widely distributed and was translated in numerous languages, especially inside the network of European Art Galleries. [The poster and all of its translations are reproduced in this issue of *Identities*, see *infra*, 108-11.

of supplementary truths, it belongs in the last instance to the increasing amount of fictions that are currently accumulating around non-philosophy and are forming puddles of statements like mirrors, curiously shimmering with iridescent facts and dark irradiant coruscations of Thought. This is fiction and is a hierarchically authoritarian one, at least because it takes place (how not to take heed of this from now on, when asking about giving an identity?) with regard to Laruelle's work, and places these two figures of dissidence that we have presented here only with regard to *his* non-standard thought rather than doing the opposite. But we all know, at least since Einstein and Poincaré, that giving coordinates to any object and to any of its movement of acceleration depends on the choice we make of a reference frame. Choosing the One's unilateral causality, determination in the last instance, force (of) thought or non-thetic-transcending as universal constants of appreciation to be assessed and to be identified from the perspective of a unified theory, every kind of theoretical proposition might have some predictable influence on our descriptions, on the power that we recognize in non-(non-Philosophical) thoughts, or on the understanding of the semantics and hermeneutics which they rely on - at a minimum, it might have curious anamorphic effects, even if it preserves their structural proportions (*Gestalt*).

We also know that depending on our cultural background, but even more so on our entry point, when penetrating non-philosophy (whether it be a random point, or a Philosophy II point or a Philosophy IV point or a secondary literature point, etc.), there will be plenty of partial, limp, crippled, mutant, semi-blind, trivial, unrigorous, waiting-for-answers non-philosophies, or at least ones in the process of identifying themselves, and waiting (suffering?) for the manifestation of their being determined-democratic or quantum-chaotic, unilaterally-inventive or heretical-orthodox... whether or not it would be the case. Perhaps, indirectly, this paper might somehow help. (But maybe we have to wish that it makes all of this even more difficult.)

Regarding their democratic claims, the two examples of dissidence detailed above and the unilateral functioning, which our analysis began to look at, tend to show that rather than pertaining to Democracy in itself by essence, non-philosophy endeavors to be protective for Democracy, or to guarantee Democracy among the objects and processes that it applies to. But becoming one of these objects or processes implies satisfying very rigorous and very demanding conditions. And these conditions in the end always lead these objects or processes to the same result, i.e., their being neutralized. It is easy when dealing with Philosophy because the tool was built to accomplish this

exact purpose with an undeniable and admirable virtuosity. But when confronted with theoretical apparatuses that claim not to fit inside Philosophy's frame, things tend to become more difficult.

In this case, then, the apparatus ought to be first neutralized by Philosophy itself to be suitable for non-philosophical Democracy - this is what happens to Religion, which "does not provide either the adequate vocabulary nor the critical technique that philosophy provides" in order to be spoken of "in the name of the Real."⁹⁷ If not, the apparatus is sent back to an interspace between Philosophy and Non-Philosophy (as we have seen in the case with europanalysis), from whence its articulation within Democracy somehow fails, because there is nothing like non-philosophical Democracy for thoughts that cannot be spoken of "in the name of the Real," but only a residual place, an interworld that looks like the limbos of Rationality. And here stands maybe something more, something deeper.

Only the few who have read Grelet's *Déclarer la gnose* before reading *Struggle and Utopia* know that indeed Gnosis deploys via a double irrationalist, theosophical and messianic imperative (*not to believe in death and play the Angel*, as we already said above), and

⁹⁷ Laruelle, *Lutte et utopie*, 156; Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia*, 187.

that consequently it involves “the unrestricted dislocation of all that makes life merely possible,” “what is called Enthusiasm, the other side of Melancholy: all the greatness of humanity is able to ‘concentrate’ in it, but in an immediate reciprocation with naked horror.”⁹⁸ Grelet specifies his thought in one of the very last theorems of his book, the penultimate one: “the subjective structure of the Gnostic stems from the alternation of exaltation periods and dejection periods,” and this is explicitly “the messianic condition”: what it describes is the immediate affect of the One according to Gnosis, the One innerly lived, ever and everywhere, as being divided.⁹⁹ And what this leads him to say is that Love (the metaphysical one, that cuts and unites and cuts as it unites) is, as such, some thought, “it is even Thought *par excellence*”; and that its propositions, “deeply rooted in Melancholy,” can be called *pathemes*.¹⁰⁰ Surprisingly, Grelet ends his book on the terrain where Serge Valdinoci dwells (but without any reference to him).

Save for referring Melancholy in the last instance to Platonic *mania*, Laruelle has never confronted Melancholy, or manic depression, not even any other affect or further psychiatric aspects, to conduct his analyses of angelic Rebellion. We already mentioned his reluctance

⁹⁸ Grelet, *Déclarer la gnose*, 96.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

to any “psychologization” of the Real (even his late tendency to insist on the formal character of the One, rather than on its lived affective character), and also how rare, until recently, his approaches to the body have been, and even more rarer when it comes to lived incarnation. Perhaps, then, we can hypothesize that the non-philosophical apparatus finds here the limits of the democratic field it provides and presumably finds why it needs at least a previous philosophical reduction of its objects in order to operate. Laruelle’s non-philosophical tools might rather be broadly *Logos*-centered tools, and this could be especially consistent with his own path through Heideggerian hermeneutics and through Derridean deconstruction.

Even if in its hierarchical syntax non-philosophy resorts to some unknown sort of dispersive empty monotheism, like Artaud’s crowned anarchist or Deleuze’s betrayer-King Richard III,¹⁰¹ to (perhaps?) a monotheism-without-theos which radicalizes negative theology by implanting Multiplicities into itself, non-philosophy probably provides the widest and most comprehensive democratic facilitation for rationalities, i.e., for world-discourses or

¹⁰¹ On these, see Antonin Artaud’s one of a kind novel *Heliogabalus; or, the Crowned Anarchist*, trans. by Alexis Lykiard (Chicago: Glitter Books, 2006), and Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” in *Dialogues*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), 45.

for conceptual matrices. But what about Democracy happening to affects, or, which is kind of scarier, affects happening to Democracy? Is non-philosophy still operating when Thought is not likened to *Logos*, to Writing, or to Law, but enlarged to non-conceptual or non-conceptualized experiences (such as affects, impressions, motor reflexes, visceral behaviors), to experiences that have not been formerly placed under the mastery of Rationality but yet have to live together, and even have to cohabitate, in the first place as *embodied experiences which are not solvable in Philosophy*? Or can we imagine a non-philosophical matrix which would not rely in the last instance on ideas (but is not it here nothing more than a retaliation of the accusation of Platonism, in the form of a nominalistic Platonism?), but on *unconceptualized events happening to a sensitive formless lived matter*? Maybe the now long delayed third volume of the trilogy that opened with *Future Christ*, and advertised as *Non-Érotisme [Non-Erotism]*, or the eagerly awaited coming tetralogy on music, could begin to answer such questions.

Surely, we are not able to re-enact the distribution of affects that have animated each historical move by which the production processes of non-philosophy have been governed - only fictions can do so. We also cannot re-enact Laruelle's own affects or the economy of affects that has led his relationships with fel-

low thinkers, be they peers or disciples. We cannot even re-enact what portion of strategy or decision was involved there. Outside theory, precisely as the two-sided man that we suggested he could be, though (but of course) in-One, Laruelle has kept well his friendly relations with his former sidekicks. Nevertheless, during the 2014 international colloquium at Cerisy,¹⁰² certainly the most important international academic event gathering around him every generation of non-philosophers for a five-day conference session of theoretical work, there were two obvious absentees: Serge Valdinoci and Gilles Grelet.

As we have seen, they both have been associated for a while, and with the most dynamic influence, with Laruelle and non-philosophy. From a Humean perspective, in accordance with the three principles of associationism,¹⁰³ the association with Valdinoci was one of *contiguity*, supported by the spontaneous proximity of two uncompromising pioneers. The association with Grelet was rather one of *engendering*, supported by the seminal causation of a master on his disciple. So, we would have to ask, who could have been with Laruelle in a similar as-

¹⁰² "La philosophie non-standard de François Laruelle," du mercredi 3 septembre au mercredi 10 septembre 2014, Centre Culturel International de Cerisy, 2014, www.ccic-cerisy.asso.fr/laruelle14.html.

¹⁰³ In Hume's psychology, the three principles of associationism are resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect.

sociation but based on the principle of *resemblance*?

In the affective confrontations and comparisons of affective influences, i.e., in sharing one's life in an intimate co-determining creativity and exchange of working dynamics; in a supportive emulation that overcomes utmost adversities; but also in the stamina of a long-lasting embodied companionship, the winner is always the spouse, i.e., the wife in the last instance. Because the couple, in the depth of their exchange of gazes, provides as a real concrete face "the immediate reciprocation of the naked horror," which Grelet was positing. But it also provides the immediate reciprocation of love facing horror in a conjoined existentialism becoming aware, by sharing lives with one another, of its vulnerability, of its risks and of its value. Although not necessarily in the fulgurant lightning of an aphorism or in the immediate rapture of a gut feeling, this reciprocity of love is constructed as a long-lasting and slow, daily process that measures a fidelity, specifically in light of dealing with infirmity, raising children, and home-building that enables enough serenity to nurture creation. Such a thing - fellowship - is probably able to affect only monks confined in the same abbey for a lifetime, or under the fire of warfare. So far, we are not able to tell - and it might have to be a matter of our

future readings of their respective writings - if Anne-Françoise Schmid happened to elaborate her association with François Laruelle on the basis of the Humean principle of resemblance. But we already know that the jointly written text which they have co-authored is not only a conceptual one: it lasts throughout the closure of the metaphorically numbered periods of non-philosophy, and it provides an intense and fruitful dispersion of affection around them, which is enjoyed by their closest collaborators, as well as the many people who get to know them. And this text, since it is the text of their very lives spent together, is both embodied and ideal, both dual and one.

IV. DOSSIER: PIOTR SZCZĘSNY (1968-2017)

Piotr Szczęsny (1968-2017) was a Polish chemist, a training officer, an NGO worker and a member of the Polish Mensa Society. In his youth, he took part in the Solidarity protests, but - according to his own assessment - his engagement with politics had been casual. He was never part of the formal opposition movements in Poland. On October 19, 2017, he self-immolated in protest of Poland's ruling party, PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice]). He died at the hospital ten days later. His self-immolation caused an emotional debate in the Polish media, with commentators on both sides of the political spectrum accusing him of being mentally ill. He is survived by his two children, both of whom were doctoral candidates at the time of his death, and a wife he spent thirty years with, who is a pharmacist.

Leaflet of October 19, 2017

|Piotr Szczęsny

Translator's Note

Translated here is **Piotr Szczęsny's** farewell letter (*list pożegnalny*), as Polish media called it; it is often referred to as a "manifesto." Szczęsny distributed it as a leaflet to passers-by before setting himself on fire shortly after 4PM on October 19, 2017, near the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. On that day, a meeting of the Warsaw City Council was held at the Palace, with the participation of Jarosław Kaczyński, the chairman of PiS, whose policies Szczęsny wanted to oppose. In the leaflet, he addresses many of the recent policies of the Polish government, accusing them of authoritarianism and taking orders from the ruling party rather than following democratic protocols.

The translation is based on the original publication in *Oko.Press*, October 19, 2017, www.oko.press/piotr-s-szary-czlowiek-zyje-czesc-pamieci.

Bogna M. Konior

1. I object to the restriction of civil rights by the government.

2. I object to breaking the binding rules of democracy and to the factual destruction of the Constitutional Tribunal and of the system of independent courts.

3. I object to the government break

ing the law, especially the Polish Constitution. I object to any of those responsible (including the President) taking any steps whatsoever towards changing the Constitution - let them first respect the existing one.

4. I object to a model of governance in which those in the highest positions of power carry out the orders of a vaguely-defined organizational command center tied to the PiS party chairman, evading any responsibility for their decisions. I object to a legislative process in the Parliament in which bills are drafted hastily, without debate and appropriate consideration, often at night, and then are necessarily and immediately re-drafted.

5. I object to the marginalization of Poland in the international arena and to making a mockery out of our country.

6. I object to the destruction of the natural environment, especially by those who are supposed to protect it (the logging of the Białowieża forest and other environmentally precious territories, favoritism shown to the hunting lobby, promoting the use of energy derived from coal).

7. I object to creating or amplifying social divides. I especially object to the construction of the "Smolensk religion" and

using it to divide the population. I protest the seances of hatred that the monthly commemorations of the Smolensk events had become, and the language of xenophobia and hatred introduced by the government into public discourse.

8. I object to [the government] filling all possible positions with [party] affiliates, who, to a great extent, do not possess the necessary qualifications.

9. I object to the diminishing of the accomplishments and to the slander of authorities, such as Lech Wałęsa, or the previous chairmen of the Constitutional Tribunal.

10. I object to the excessive centralization of the state and to legislative changes that conform local governments and NGOs to the political needs of the ruling party.

11. I object to the government's hostility to immigrants and oppose the discrimination of various minority groups: women, homosexuals and other LGBT people, Muslims, and others.

12. I object to the complete incapacitation of the public television and almost the whole of the radio, and to turning them into tools of propaganda. I am especially devastated by the destruction (thankfully, not yet total) of Trójka, the radio station

I have been listening to since my youth.

13. I object to utilizing the special forces, the police and the prosecutor's office in the pursuit of one's own (party or private) interests.

14. I object to the careless, negligent, and ill-prepared educational reform.

15. I object to the ignoring of the enormous protests of our health sector professionals.

I could level many more objections at the current government, but I have concentrated on the most pertinent [issues] that threaten to undermine entirely the existence and workings of society and the state. I am not appealing directly to the current government because I believe that any such actions would be futile.

Many who were smarter and better-known than I am, as well as many Polish and European institutions, have already appealed to the government, requiring it to take various actions. These appeals were invariably ignored and those who made them were slandered. Most probably, I too, will be slandered for what I have done. But at least I will find myself in good company.

I would, however, wish that the chairman of PiS and PiS's high representatives understand that my death weights directly on them, and that they have my blood on their hands.

I address this call to all Poles who decide who governs Poland, to oppose the actions

of the current government, which I myself am protesting against. Do not be deceived by the fact that their actions might occasionally calm or have the appearance of normality (as has recently been the case) - in a few days or weeks they will continue with their offensive, and again break the law. They will not retreat or surrender what they have already acquired.

Although this saying is admittedly well-worn, it is fitting here: if not us, then who? Who, if not us citizens, is supposed to bring order to our country? If not now, then when? With every moment of delay, the situation in the country worsens and it becomes harder to repair the damage.

Most of all, I appeal to those who support PiS to wake up. Even if you sympathize with their postulates, consider that not every method of their realization is admissible. Realize your ideas within the bounds of the rule of law in a democratic state, and not as they are currently being realized.

I call to action those of you who do not support PiS, remain neutral or have other [political] preferences. It is not enough to wait and see what time will bring. It is not enough to express discontent to your friends. You have to act. There are possibilities for action, and those actions could take a lot of forms.

I implore you, however, to remember that the PiS electorate are our mothers, brothers,

neighbors, friends and colleagues. This is not about waging a war on them (this is what PiS would want) in order to "convert them" (that would be naïve), but to appeal to them to carry out their beliefs according to the rule of law and of democracy. Perhaps it would be enough to change the leadership of the party.

I, a common, ordinary man, just like you, appeal to all of you - do not wait any longer! This government needs to change as soon as possible, before it completely destroys our country, before it completely deprives us of freedom. And it is freedom I love above everything else. This is why I decided to self-immolate hoping that my death will shake the conscience of many, that our society will wake up and that you will no longer wait for politicians to do everything for you - because they will not!

Wake up! It is not too late!

It can be expected that PiS will attempt to diminish my protest and search for some kind of leverage over me. I had decided to make this task easy and point out the primary problem myself.

I have been suffering from depression for several years, which makes me a so-called "mentally ill" person. And yet, there are million people like me in Poland and they are able to live their lives more or less normally, often their illness not been known.

Furthermore, the term "mental illness" can also refer to ailments such as insomnia or

stuttering, therefore not directly signaling mental incompetence.

The issues certainly related to my illness are eating and sleeping disorders, low energy, the tendency to postpone everything (procrastination), and that I perceive reality as bleaker than most “normal” people.

But in this situation, it is fine, because it lets me notice worrying signals before others would and react to them in a more decisive manner. And perhaps it is also easier for me to sacrifice my life, even though, I assure you, it is not easy at all.

What else can I add - views such as mine are expressed by many in my surroundings, publicists, politicians, thus they cannot be rooted in my skewed view of reality.

And why such a radical form of protest? Because the situation is dramatic. This is not about the fact that the government makes many or some mistakes (every government does), but that this government shakes the foundations of our sovereignty and the functionality of our society.

Meanwhile most of the society is asleep, paying no attention to what is happening, and it needs to awaken from this slumber.

Translated from the Polish by
Bogna M. Konior

Letters to the Media of October 20, 2017 |Piotr Szczęsny

Translator's Note

Along with the leaflet, **Piotr Szczęsny** wrote two short letters, referred to as "Letters to the Media." They were handed over by Szczęsny's family to the major media outlets and published on October 20, 2017.

The translation is based on the original publication in *Oko.Press*, October 20, 2017, www.oko.press/piotr-s-szary-czlowiek-zyje-czesc-pamieci.

Bogna M. Konior

First Letter

I have done so little for my Motherland.

I was born in 1963, which puts me in a good position to remember PRL,¹ to remember Solidarność, the regaining of independence and the forming of our democracy. Because of that, I can better evaluate the current events.

I was still in high school when Solidarność was ignited. And in this high school, alongside my classmates, we started an Independent Students' Union, for there was no way to join Solidarność for underage students.

¹ Polish People's Republic, the official name of Poland between 1952 and 1989; translator's note.

On December 13 [1981] I was already a university student, I had been up until noon handing out my first leaflets. Under martial law [1981-1983] I did what millions of others did in Poland - handed out leaflets, went to demonstrations, listened to Radio Free Europe, burned candles in my window.

On June 4, 1989, I participated with joy in the first partially free elections and in all the subsequent ones.

My contribution to regaining independence has been microscopic, I am ashamed that I have thus far done so little for my Motherland. And I know that I need to change it.

Second Letter

I am ashamed to explain that Poland is not the same as the Polish government.

I am ashamed to have a President, who is the president of his party and its supporters only, and who breaks the constitution (the vetoing of two unconstitutional bills, only in order to propose two other, still unconstitutional bills, is no redemption).

I am ashamed to have a Prime minister who follows party orders.

I am ashamed to explain to my western friends that Poland is not the same as the Polish government.

I am ashamed to have to use again the term “nomenclature” and the phrase “the party and the government” as in the times of PRL.

I am ashamed to witness the defamation of people who earned nothing but respect for what they have done for free Poland.

Translated from the Polish by
Bogna M. Konior

Media Intellectualism or Lived Catastrophe? Mediating and Suspending the A/political Act

| Bogna M. Konior

Bionote

Bogna M. Konior is the Media and Technology editor at the *Hong Kong Review of Books*, editorial board member of *Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy*, and the director of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies, Asia. She was recently a visiting researcher in Media and Culture at the ICON Center for the Humanities at the University of Utrecht, and is lecturer at the Department of Cultural Studies in Lingnan University. Her work in media cultures and the Anthropocene is published in *Transformations: Journal of Media and Culture* and forthcoming in *PostMemés* from Punctum Press. She holds a BA in Film Studies, a MA in Media Studies, and a PhD in Cultural Analysis. Her collaborative work exploring theory in the Anthropocene has been exhibited internationally and can be viewed at www.bognamk.com.

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Abstract

Piotr Szczęsny set himself on fire in protest of the Polish government in October 2017. Charged with political orientation, his self-immolation posed a challenge to the news media, forcing it deep into the gutter the suicide archive, where commentators debated appropriate aesthetics of protest in a country whose image-

ry is predominately thanatic; in a nation-state that has been resurrected after its many occupations yet still remains within a sacrificial grave, with death as the cornerstone of community. In this article, I situate Szczęsny's death within the nightmare-bound post-Soviet political scene through historically contextualizing the debate around his suicide, where the act itself was criticized on the basis of its inappropriate aesthetics of irrational self-harm. I argue that such binding of a/political catastrophe in a bundle of representations corresponds to what François Laruelle calls media intellectualism, a form of engaging suffering that relies on its mediation. Seeking an alternative discourse of engaging the a/political act, I look to Katerina Kolozova's non-standard politics of pain and to Oxana Timofeeva's work on "the catastrophe." These positions, which I call stances of the *unsubject*, offer us different starting points for creating solidarity in spaces of void, pain and depression. For the unsubject, pain is the prerequisite for forming the political, albeit in a non-standard manner, where politics cannot oscillate around representations, ideologies or identities. Rather than mediate self-immolation, I ask whether the way that we define "the political" could benefit from a subtraction of mediation, from a catastrophic thinking in parallel with the brutality of the real, rather than the repetition of (national) trauma.¹

¹ The author wishes to thank Michał Piasecki for providing

Somnambolic Fatalism

We project onto the future what we cannot endure as something which already occurred, or which is happening now [...] A fear of the future and anxiety about some indefinite event ("we will all die") is easier to suffer than a certain, irreparable, and irreversible horror that has just happened ("we are all already dead").²

Piotr Szczęsny was fifty-four when he set himself on fire in front of the Palace of Culture and Science in downtown Warsaw on October 19, 2017. We know little about him. He was a chemist and a member of Mensa International. He is survived by his children and wife, a pharmacist to whom he was married for thirty years. To the passersby, he handed out his manifesto, as the media later dubbed it, a document as dramatic and archaic in style as the form of protest that he chose. In it, next to the oft-repeated accusations against the Polish ruling party, which has been gradually dismantling the democratic structures built by their predecessors since the first partially free elections in

his expertise and assistance in the process of writing this article.

² Oxana Timofeeva, "The End of the World: From Apocalypse to the End of History and Back," *e-flux*, No. 56 (June 2014), www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60337/the-end-of-the-world-from-apocalypse-to-the-end-of-history-and-back.

1989, he explains that his fellow citizens must "wake up" before their fundamental and recently acquired freedoms have eroded. He laments the ruling party's unconstitutional behavior, oppression of women and minorities, homo- and xenophobia, attacks on the independence of the legislative system and the media. In a separate letter sent to the major Polish news channels, he explains that he blames himself for not doing enough as a political citizen. He expresses an outdated impulse to annex Poland to the aspirational "West." In no uncertain terms, he spells out a temporal fornication; in his admonitory vision time loops backwards into the clutches of authoritarianism. In the letters to the media, he gives no orders about how he wants to be represented, only explanations for what he knows will be judged insane. He hopes not to attract the attention of those in power but of citizens whom he believes to be in slumber.

Perhaps it is in this desperate yet chaste call to "wake up" that the tragedy of his undertaking rests. It would be a mistake to perceive any resemblance between Szczęsny's alarm and the millennial tokenization of wokeness, for which the Internet and social media have become the most fertile performance ground. Szczęsny's act exists within a divergent media paradigm, which cannot be apprehended without first theorizing the void onto which his words fell. Poland, by

its historical circumstance, is a nation of somnambulists - as Andrzej Leder writes, Polish political consciousness is trapped in a dream-state, where agency has been sworn off in favor of patient submission to the violent forces of history, which obey only their own logic.³ With its turbulent past over the last three centuries, contemporary Poland perceives itself as trapped between traumatic hurricanes of history. Leder describes how the Polish imagination dreamt through (*prześnić*) immense economic changes under Nazi and Soviet rule, resigning itself to detachedly observing grim revolutions carried out by alien hands. The violent dispossession of Jews and the elites, who owned a large share of land, and the transfer of wealth to the peasantry between 1939 and 1956 practically gave birth to the Polish middle classes and yet it remains unregistered in the symbolic sphere: what is remembered is Poland's own bellicose struggle for independence, paid for with the blood of millions of Poles. It is no accident that only a few months after Szczęsny's death, the government sought to criminalize any reference to the Polish state's participation in the Holocaust, thus creating a news storm that Szczęsny's singular death could never induce. One cannot be persecuted for what alien hands have carried out. Leder evokes Lacan's

³ Andrzej Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja: Ćwiczenie z logiki historycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013).

concept of transpassivity to describe Polish political cognizance: "everything is happening as if of its own accord, beyond the subject's power" and yet the subject can experience, vicariously, both the pleasure and the violence inherent in the Other's doing.⁴ Violence is the kernel of this Polish paradigm of *mediation*, where obscure pleasure nests itself in displaced experiences of death and murder.

Removing any agency from itself, Polish politics is not, however, a detached astral body: it is rather trapped in the terrifying vulnerability of sleep paralysis, where, despite the subject's presence, every "revolution is experienced [in the Polish society] as a nightmare."⁵ The Polish political psyche thus emerges at the crossroads between Scientology (alien presences within us, un-exorcized specters of communism, and "Jewish" tendencies in our ruling classes) and Slavic resignation to the meaninglessness of all struggle, for the awakening must be forever postponed. Sleep paralysis: the violent Other is the determinant of all history. Awakening: Poland has to

⁴ Leder, *Prześniona*, 20 (all translation from Polish are mine, here and below). Leder draws on the work of Daniel J. Goldhagen who analyzed the participation of regular Germans in Nazi crimes. Goldhagen focused on the possibility of vicariously experienced pleasure in the acts of violence carried out by others. See Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

⁵ Leder, *Prześniona*, 16.

face the living nightmare of the void. Between folksy fantasies of the Sarmatian manor house and aspirational belonging to the Western democratic elite, there lies only the nothingness of an unregistered social transformation, which never birthed a coherent national identity, but rather is itself a vacuum around which Polishness oscillates. Some of the most popular Polish Internet memes reflect this sense of groundlessness: "Poland is not a country, it's a state of mind." At the end of the nineteenth century, when Poland really did not exist on the map of Europe, French surrealist Alfred Jarry set his play *Ubu Roi* "in Poland, that is to say Nowhere."⁶ If the African American subject is, as Abdul R. JanMohamed writes, "death-bound," I would say that the Polish subject - or perhaps in some cases the post-Soviet one - is "nightmare-bound."⁷ For JanMohamed the death-bound subject is "a deeply aporetic structure to the extent that he is 'bound,' and hence produced as a subject, by the process of unbinding," where the slave can *be* in two ways: to remain a slave or to die, a choice between two modes of death.⁸ In the post-Nazi, post-Soviet condition

⁶ Alfred Jarry, *The Ubu Plays*, trans. by Kenneth McLeish (London: Nick Hern Books, 2000), 65.

⁷ Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁸ Jan Mohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject*, 2. JanMohamad also draws on the concept of social death, where the slave's powerlessness is the extension of the master's power and as such the slave is subject to death at any moment.

we should speak instead of a nightmare-bound subject stuck in the waking life of somnambulant fatalism: what has happened so far has been a nightmare but wakefulness is worse yet. Perhaps this is why, in the post-USSR, we can also find the Russian necro-realists who practiced a "politics of indistinction," considering themselves as not belonging to any particular nation or politics because they did not consider themselves alive.⁹

If Szczęsny's call to awakening must fall on deaf ears, it is the fire in which he clothed his stubborn, frail body that sentenced him to a double misfortune as soon as the Polish media machine awoke to the event, spewing images of heroism and illness like a spider spins its web around a fly. If asleep during its entry into the twentieth century, Poland developed its national imagination under the partitions (1772-1918). Colonized by three different empires - Russia, Prussia, and Austria - the country solidified its political imagery in Romanticism; the struggle for independence was tied with the thanatic imagery of combat, martyrdom, messianism, and sacrifice. The debate between our two greatest Romantic poets, Juliusz Słowacki and Adam Mickiewicz, whose statue stands be-

See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁹ Alexei Yurchak, "Necro-Utopia. The Politics of Indistinction and the Aesthetics of the Non-Soviet," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 2008), 199-224.

fore the Palace where Szczęśny died, on whether revolution is a matter of organized collective action or individual sacrifice not only complemented political discourse; but it *became* that discourse, with politics and poetry superposed onto one another. (Poland has as many statues devoted to poets and artists as it has to war heroes: aesthetics *was* war. Any respectable Polish government must have at least some artists on its side.) Maria Janion, influenced by psychoanalysis, created a method for the type of critique that engages Polish society primarily on the level of the imagined: phantasmatic critique (*krytyka fantazmatyczna*).¹⁰ For Janion, the phantasm, an interstitial area in which the subject weaves fantastic worlds into material ones, is the locus of culture, both emancipatory and manipulative. However, after 1989, anticipating Francis Fukuyama's thesis on "the end of history," Janion proclaimed the demise of the phantasmatic:¹¹

[1989 is] the symbolic end of a grand epoch in Polish culture, the epochal ascendancy of the Romantic-symbolic style. For the last two hundred years, our culture organized itself around spiritual values,

apprehended as symbols of Polish identity, such as the Motherland, freedom, national solidarity. With structural changes in politics and economy, aimed at turning Poland into a "normal," democratic, free-market country, this peculiar homogeneity has been challenged.¹²

No wonder, then, that the Polish media focused its commentary on the *aesthetics* of Szczęśny's protest, explicitly or implicitly rejecting or embracing pagan Catholicism, idealistic pessimism and Romantic symbolism. Agnieszka Holland, influential Polish filmmaker who had lately directed episodes of *House of Cards* (2013-) and a Jan Palach biopic titled *Burning Bush* (2013), ecstatically celebrated Szczęśny as a modern-day prophet, "more sensitive than any of us [...] fire annihilates but - just like anger - it also shines bright, lighting the way," she wrote.¹³ A large opposition party, PO (Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform]) likewise (at times) embraced this act, turning Szczęśny into a symbolic guillotine over the head of the ethno-nationalist ultra-Catholic PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice]).

Marches were held, dirges sung, even po-

¹⁰ Maria Janion, *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej: Szkice o egzystencjach ludzi i duchów* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1991).

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹² Janion, *Projekt*, 6.

¹³ Agnieszka Holland, "Agnieszka Holland o samospaleniu Piotra: 'Ogień niszczy, ale też oświeśla drogę,'" *OKO Press*, October 22, 2017, www.oko.press/agnieszka-holland-o-samospaleniu-piotra-ogien-niszczy-tez-oswietla-gniew.

ems were written. Szczęsny's words, where he calls himself "a common, regular man" (*zwykły, szary człowiek*) were projected onto the buildings of Warsaw, solemn and imperative. His face landed on the cover of the biggest opposition newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. His funeral was delivered by one of Poland's most vocal opposition priests, Adam Boniecki, who later received a short-term media appearance ban from the Polish Catholic Church. An engraving was made in front of the Palace. Mementos were sold at a big charity fundraiser. This kind of mythologizing did not fare well with the Polish intellectual liberal left, gathered around publications such as *Kultura Liberalna* or *Dwutygodnik*.¹⁴ They rejected Szczęsny's act, not only arguing that he was mentally ill but also condemning the dramatic rhetoric of his death. In the rational liberal discourse, they argued, there is no place for Szczęsny; such irrationality turns "us" into "them," retorts to the same arsenal of archaic patriotism, martyrdom and suffering that PiS built its populist platform on.¹⁵

Indeed, next to the party's passionate resurrection of patriotic martyrdom, Szczęsny's death seems to be a symptom of a phantasmatic

¹⁴ A note here: I focus my analysis of the left mainly on the example of critics writing for *Kultura Liberalna* and *Dwutygodnik*, yet by no means is this an exhaustive account, simply an attention to the main strand of criticism.

¹⁵ Tomasz Sawczuk, "Nie wchodźmy w buty prawicy!," *Kultura Liberalna*, November 14, 2017, www.kulturaliberalna.pl/2017/11/14/sawczuk-nie-wchodzmy-w-buty-prawicy.

relapse rather than a challenge to the dominant rhetoric. Death, freedom, sacrifice and resurrection are the most pervasive memes in Polish political culture. Since 2010, as Szczęsny himself notices, PiS has been building a pseudo-religion around the Smolensk plane crash, when a Tupolev heading from Poland to Russia to commemorate the Katyn massacre - a mass murder of 22,000 Polish citizens by the Soviets, many of them intellectuals of military officers, crashed, killing ninety-six officials, including the President and the First Lady. Amidst conspiracy theories and growing anti-liberal sentiment, Poles elected the deceased president's brother, Jarosław Kaczyński, to power. It was not long before traditionalist, Catholic thinkers transmitted to us this conspiratory prophecy from their corner of the Internet: Katyn was now twice-christened by the blood of Polish martyrs, the crash took place on the vigil of the Sunday of Divine Mercy, our saint stigmatic Faustyna Kowalska spoke with the words of Christ himself when she said: tenfold blessed will be Poland if it suffers for the fulfilment of the divine plan (my paraphrase). Enforcing Poland's self-perception as the great martyr of history, Tomasz Terlikowski writes that through sacrificial suffering in Katyn, Poland will incarnate Christ.¹⁶ It is

¹⁶ Tomasz Terlikowski, "Bojaźń i drzenie," *Salon24*, April 16, 2010, www.salon24.pl/u/terlikowski/171531,bojazn-i-drzenie.

not mediation, but transubstantiation that defines the Polish right's approach to politics, culture and national identity. An example: eager to accelerate the divine plan, to prepare itself as vessel for the resurrection of the undead god, the party had recently ceremonially crowned Christ the king of Poland.¹⁷ In this curious superposing of temporality, even our head of state has been dead for two thousand years - there is no escape from the phantasmatic graveyard. In an interview discussing Szczęsny's death titled "Suicide Is Not Politics," essayist Tomasz Stawiszyński observes that "Polish patriotism is steeped in these stories. Only death can facilitate collectivity. The specter of Thanatos haunts our political reality."¹⁸ There is a fear on the left that "politicizing" this self-immolation would be akin to creating another hysterical counter-religion, wrapped around Szczęsny's grave like a poisonous vine. One critic openly wrote that more dangerous than authoritarian policies is the fact that "the supposedly modern, rational and liberal opposition unknowingly uses

the language of Jarosław Kaczyński's party!"¹⁹ That this is the main trajectory of criticism on the Polish liberal, educated left clearly shows that the loss of political identity, self-perception and image, the blurring of borders between the left and the right is what appears to be a far greater menace to the left than the policies of their government. In this, the Polish left is not so different from the Western left, focused on grooming its cultural identity. Assuming that there is no difference between unreasonable and apocalyptic, such defensive reactions affirmatively answer the question that David Chioni Moore posed over fifteen years ago: is the "post" in "post-colonial" the "post" in "post-Soviet?"²⁰ For recently independent nation-states, the desire to join what leftist Polish refer to as "the Western liberal democratic family"²¹ rejects bodily terror and the body's visceral thirst for annihilation as feral or primitive. Eager to uphold the image of a rational who holds in disdain populist, romantic imagery of sacrifice, the left argued that it was ill-mannered to have laid at their feet an ashen body that they had never filed an order for.

¹⁷ "Oficjalnie: Jezus Chrystus 'Królem Polski' Prezydent, posłowie i 6 tys. ludzi wzięło udział w uroczystości," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 19, 2016, www.wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,21000510,tlumy-na-intronizacji-jezusa-na-krola-polski-uroczystosc-trwa.html.

¹⁸ Adam Puczejda and Tomasz Stawiszyński, "Samobójstwo to nie polityka," *Kultura Liberalna*, November 14, 2017, www.kulturaliberalna.pl/2017/11/14/stawiszynski-puczejda-samospalenie-polityka.

¹⁹ Łukasz Pawłowski, "Samospalenie. Polskość radykalna," *Kultura Liberalna*, November 14, 2017, www.kulturaliberalna.pl/2017/11/14/piotr-Szczęsny-samospalenie-polityka-polska.

²⁰ David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA*, Vol. 116, No.1, Special Topic: Globalizing Literary Studies (January 2001), 111-28.

²¹ Pawłowski, *Samospalenie*.

While he never failed to appreciate mourning, sadness and grief, when it came to performances of political misery, Walter Benjamin already harshly criticized the inclusion of self-satisfied suffering and victimization into politics.²² In her article "Resisting Left Melancholy," Wendy Brown picks this thread up to denounce the contemporary left, unable to produce a coherent theoretical worldview, paralyzed in its internal struggles over culture and identity, each with its hermeneutic vision of utopia. She admonishes "the revolutionary hack who is more attached [to the failure of some kind of political ideal] than to seizing possibilities for radical change. [This attachment] to the object of one's sorrowful loss supersedes any desire to recover from this loss."²³ Ostensibly distancing themselves from irrationality, the reactions to Szczęsny's death ascribe to a similar logic. They seek to preserve an idealized Western democratic liberalism, well aware that to awake to a sense of a void that constitutes Polish identity would irrevocably reveal no such belonging. They deem the *form* of self-immolation to be too archaic and yet they remain likewise melancholic in their yearning for a return to a politics that

once was reasonable, before the theatrical populism that they are currently patiently enduring, confident, however, that this state of affairs is temporary and things will eventually return to "normal," that is, as before.

Self-immolation is not only an ethical problem. Charged with political orientation, it poses an epistemic challenge to the media, forcing it to delve into the tormented archive of suicide imagery in search of appropriate representations. These trips down the sacrifice lane, often charted within the turmoils of national trauma, release an ostensibly feral unreason of self-harm, which in turn creates fear around the loss of political identity. Szczęsny's death forced Polish media and its flagship intellectuals knee-deep into the gutter of the suicide archive, where they debated appropriate aesthetics of protest in a country whose imagery is predominately thanatic; in a nation-state that has been resurrected after its many occupations yet still remains within a sacrificial grave, with messianic death ever the cornerstone upon which community is to be built. How does a subject that remains paralyzed on the edge of an identity void create representations of political death-drive appropriate for mass circulation?

²² Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy (On Erich Kästner's New Book of Poems)," trans. by Ben Brewster, *Screen*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer 1974), 28-32.

²³ Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *boundary 2*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1999), 19-27.

Media Intellectualism and the Violence of Mediation

The victim is twice victim, once as wronged [...] and a second time by effacement, albeit legally, of the injury that had been suffered, an effacement whose publicity offends the victim.²⁴

As it circulated in the media, Szczęsny's brutal death was rapidly repackaged as a token, or better a ruler with which to measure the intensity of political participation and the spectrum of convictions: where you stood on Szczęsny was used to outline how far to the left or right you were, or even how much of an understanding you had of the Romantic phantasm (which, if you had it, would naturally lead you to dismiss Szczęsny as yet another martyr). The act itself had been entirely overshadowed by the question: How would it *reflect* on us to embrace this form of protest? Szczęsny's suicide was parceled into political options: those who embrace it are romantic liberals, those who reject it are manipulated by the imperial dismissal of unreason, those who mock it have blood on their hands. Simulacra stripped down to its core: no longer able to think death, politics writes itself out of it, protesting

that it never chose to be implicated, or obsessively polishing its own "liberal rationalist" image. Representations are bounced off one another until nothing else is seen, their primary stakes lay in debating appropriate forms of protest, decay and death, ultimately turning the question of violence into one of an *image* of violence. Natalia Kaliś, for example, compared Szczęsny's self-immolation to Marina Abramović's performances: both put *spectators* in the uncomfortable position of witnessing self-harm.²⁵ The sheer brutality of death was obscured to then be resurrected within a formalist media debate concerning the return of the Polish-Romantic phantasm and the interplay of political images. Such tokenization of the victim, its overrepresentation in ideology and image, François Laruelle argues, is the condition of media intellectualism today:

The victim's overrepresentation is the forgetting of its origins, of its necessity, and its contingency. Like any term that sees its media moment arrive, the victim passes through a stage of expansion and then of nausea, of ascendance, and of decline. By the time we grasp it, it is already perhaps too late; it is theoretically dubious, eroded by the media [...]

²⁴ François Laruelle, *General Theory of Victims*, trans. by Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 64.

²⁵ Natalia Kaliś, "Samospalenie pod Statuą Niewolności," *Dwutygodnik* (November 2017), www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/7477-samospalenie-pod-statua-niewolnosci.html.

As though it were miming and fabricating an artificial unconscious, media corruption has made the victim a new ethical value, a point of condescension and effervescence, of the exacerbation of ideological conflict. Here are the affects proper to the excess of information, like the nausea that affects certain philosophers.²⁶

Those who kill themselves in protest can have death sewn onto their corpses like a reflexive straightjacket, binding them forever in a bundle of representations: a hero, a revolutionary, a madman, a radical, a terrorist. Under what conditions are these representations created and circulated? What is the connection between media and the kind of intellectualism that, according to Laruelle, corrupts the victim to the “point of condescension and effervescence, of the exacerbation of ideological conflict”? And is it possible to think Szczęsny’s act without its many mediations?

To burn to death can take as long as thirteen minutes but most suffer excruciating pains long after, like Szczęsny, who died in a hospital ten days after the initial five-minute-long auto-cremation. In the tradition of suicide as political protest, self-immolation occupies a place spectacular, shocking, alluring and painful. In splendor of both peaceful and violent

demise, its entry into the global imagination in 1963 overlapped with the acceleration of the global circulation of images, when a grainy, black-and-white footage of the eerily calm Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức setting himself on fire to protest the repressive Catholic regime in South Vietnam appeared on television screens worldwide. Now easily found online, one of the Internet’s few uncensored snuff films, it obscures the suffering inherent in setting fire to one’s limbs. We see no panicked flesh clinging to its own survival, only a man as calm as if he was meditating on an uneventful day. Unlike those who perish in large fires, most often suffocating after passing out from carbon monoxide poisoning, the scattered fires of self-immolation burn unevenly through the body. What causes death is a heat stroke that melts internal organs or an extraordinary gushing of blood through boiling flesh wounds. The Polish phantasm, oversaturated with messianic images of romantic sacrifice, seems to have little tools left at its disposal to comprehend the sheer brutality of annihilation by fire, even though two of the earliest recorded self-immolations in Europe were committed by Poles: Karol Levittoux burnt himself in 1841 to protect his friends during an interrogation, and priest Andrzej Fedukowicz reportedly set himself on fire in 1925, consumed by guilt over his collaboration with the Bolsheviks, who

²⁶ Laruelle, *General Theory*, 1.

tortured him into obedience.²⁷ Self-immolation then entered the arsenal of anti-USSR protest. In 1968, Ryszard Siwiec set himself on fire to protest the invasion of the Warsaw Pact militaries into Czechoslovakia, in which another dissident, Jan Palach, also burnt himself to death. His body ablaze, angrily pushing away the militia, who tried to both rescue him from the fire and obscure him from sight, Siwiec was - tragically - scarcely noticed by his fellow citizens, who were happily celebrating a public holiday at a busy sports stadium.

Despite this history, perhaps because of the intransigence of political positions with which self-immolation is associated in Eastern Europe, Poland has no interest in theorizing this form of death. In the (much older) Chinese Buddhist tradition, for example, auto-cremation falls under 遺身 (to abandon the body), a term that also covers contemplative violence present in: feeding one's body to insects or wild animals, starving or drowning oneself, leaping from trees, or self-mummification.²⁸ Daodu, a

monk in fifth century China wrote that the body was "like a poisonous plant; it would really be right to burn it," to which emperor Liang Wudi replied:

When your body and life become impermanent, then you should have your corpse cast into the forest. By donating it to the birds and beasts one completely perfects *dānapāramitā* and also makes good *karma*. Because of the eighty thousand worms it is not appropriate to burn yourself. It is not something to be encouraged."²⁹

The eminent monk and the devout emperor thus debated whether the body should be abandoned as a matter of principle in an act of will, or rather donated to eighty thousand worms in an act of exchange. And yet, this path to Buddhahood was not only a sacral matter but the monks' political act of protest against the corruption of the ruling elites, who strayed from the righteous path. Buddhist self-immolation can lead to Buddhahood, although for many of the literati it was nothing more than a sorry manifestation of hysterical, overzealous mind of the faithful. Nevertheless, throughout the ages it was often performed in public spaces and, sometimes, generated respect and pious

²⁷ Levittoux's death was the subject of a few poems, including *Burza*, authored by one of Poland's most esteemed national poets, Cyprian Kamil Norwid. Little is known and much disputed much is disputed about Fedukowicz, here I follow sociologist and priest Roman Dzwonkowski, *Losy duchowieństwa katolickiego w ZSRR 1917-1939. Martyrologium* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1998).

²⁸ James A. Benn, *Burning for the Buddha. Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 9.

²⁹ Benn, *Burning*, 4.

reflection as well as political turmoil.³⁰ In Poland, however, metaphysical inquiry is left to the stigmatics, while self-immolators are unflinchingly political: they let flames turn their bodies into screens, a combustion meant to produce a hologram of a violent world, a mediation of state violence or the violence of foreign occupation. Could it then be possible to think Szczyński's death without this pervasive sense of mediation inherent in Polish somnambulant fatalism, the mediation of the Romantic phantasm, the mediation, finally, of self-immolation itself as a holographic projection of political violence?

In *General Theory of Victims*, Laruelle describes how the victim is the new politico-quotidian doxa: the horrific events of the twentieth century turned philosophy into a great dramatizer of suffering; gradually the media, too, took up this figure to "bear witness" to it, ultimately overexploiting the images of victimhood for the pleasure and power of philosophy, with its self-proclaimed ability to give voice to the suffering of victims.³¹ He defines a media intellectual as any intellectual whose currency is in the creation of representations, images and mediations of suffering, "who is engaged and embedded by power and who emerges through the press and the media and derives profit from this, is content to represent victims, to pho-

tograph them in language, writing, or image."³² "To photograph in language, writing or image" should not be understood as a taking of a physical photo or putting words on a screen but rather as an overdetermination, where victims are used as source material for representations and interpretations that become more important than their original suffering. Laruelle is no luddite: for him, contemporary "tele-intellectuals" are as invested in representation and mediation as Voltaire and Zola once were.³³ Against overdetermination, the purpose of non-philosophy would be to subtract representation rather than to qualify it, to think not about deciphering the victim and its motivations but think according to the silence of victims, their unrepresentability. It is this silence, this resistance to representation that most troubles media intellectuals: "the victim is too silent for the philosophers, those men of speech; that is the problem, and it is this victim's silence that must be [according to them] interpreted by identifying it in a repeated mediatic display."³⁴ The media intellectual cannot bear the horror of this silence, nor can she draw power from it.

While specific instances of suffering and the media sphere are rarely discussed in the volume true to Laruelle's practice of thinking-

³⁰ Ibid., 1-10.

³¹ Laruelle, *General Theory*, 2-3.

³² Ibid., 4.

³³ Ibid., 51.

³⁴ Ibid., 70.

without-example, Katerina Kolozova's work, in its explicit focus on physical pain, articulates a (non-)political practice that I want to consider in relation to Szczęsny. In her non-philosophy, rooted in the brutality of physical pain and shared horror of recognizing the indifference of the real to suffering, the sharp shock of pain is the prerequisite for forming the political, albeit in a non-standard manner, where politics do *not* oscillate around ideologies or identities.³⁵ Kolozova amplifies Laruelle to argue that humans (not as subjects, but as generic humanity without the shroud of representations) are defined by the possibility - and, for many, actuality - of being tortured, persecuted and pained. Political solidarity stems from a bodily, mute avoidance of this violence from the position of the lived (*Le vécu*), stripped to the brutality of indifferent real, beyond the veils of philosophical meaning and signification: "It is the real of the radical vulnerability and immanent revolting. The inexhaustible force of revolt is not based in philosophy or in the world - it is situated in the radical opposition to it, it acts from the standpoint of the lived."³⁶ We could call this

an unsubject, a subject *undone*: pain is a void that suspends all meaning, all worldly affairs. This lived pain is generic and unknowable, it resists any representation, even though philosophy wants to make zombies of all humans, parading them around as identities for its own benefit. For Kolozova, then, only negating all the representations piled up on the lived suffering can create solidarity and compassion:

The philosophically mediated idea of a victim, the one produced by the media and the intellectuals who represent the victim, pretends to be the reality of the victims suffering and one is interpellated to identify with these images and the meanings assigned to them [...] The media are one of the most powerful and most active "machines" of the production of philosophical images (or of the ruling representation in and of the world which dictate our actions). The more they seek to be realistic the more detached from the real they are.³⁷

Such media intellectualism envelops Szczęsny's death in a threefold manner: formalizing it and focusing on aesthetics; debating the crime committed or not committed by the politicians; discussing what reflections this

³⁵ Katerina Kolozova, *The Lived Revolution: Solidarity with the Body in Pain as the New Political Universal* (Skopje: Euro-Balkan Press, 2010).

³⁶ Katerina Kolozova, "Of the Possibility of Immanent Revolt as Theory and Political Praxis," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 1-2 (2013), 95.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

death can cast on activists, intellectuals and cultural actors who use or decline to use it. The closer it wants to get to death, the less it can grasp it. It fits in neatly with all the practices of mediation inherent in Polish history that I outlined before. While liberal intellectuals specifically want to dissociate themselves from exalted unreason of symbolism, they, too, cannot help but to practice a mediation of the lived.

Catastrophic Revolt

Ultimately, Szczęsny's act cannot escape the confines of media intellectualism because Poland keeps enacting its own trauma - the dream of the Other who controls history, of Romantic messianism, or of aspirational belonging to the West - without confronting what lies underneath: the void of the unsubject, frozen under the partitions of history and paralyzed in the nightmare of transpassive mediation of violence. In "The End of the World: From Apocalypse to the End of History and Back," Oxana Timofeeva writes that national narratives of a traumatic past "serve to establish an idea of the present, which can be cured, and of the future, which by this remedy can be saved."³⁸ Such mantras of unjust past wounds stabilize the fantasy of redemption or recovery. No wonder that these days we can find a proliferation

of these narratives, not only in Poland. They focus on the legacy of a harmful past, because it is easier to believe in the restoration of some kind of a lost order than to look beyond the horizon of disintegration: of societies, of nature itself in consequence of climate change, of the organization of labor, and even humanity following mass automation. Although she does not follow on that thought, Agnieszka Holland mentions in her commentary on Szczęsny that the changes happening around us are of an epic scale - the data revolution, comparable to the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, the consequences of which were two world wars; globalization, which excavates all kinds of stubborn fears around losing national identity; and the emancipation of women, which, if followed through, could be a profound challenge to the current economic organization of the world.³⁹ It is not despite but because of these seismic changes that, fanatically, the past echoes through the present, projecting itself into a promise: make "something" great again, remedy the harm that has been done to protect from the violence to come. Nostalgia, founded in obsessive repetition of trauma, is why even an event as brutal as self-immolation cannot break through the wall of media intellectualism. What is Timofeeva's solution?

³⁹ Agnieszka Holland and Lukasz Pawlowski, "Musiż krzyczeć coraz głośniej," *Kultura Liberalna*, November 14, 2017, www.kulturaliberalna.pl/2018/01/02/agnieszka-holland-wywiad-polityka-pis-opozycja.

³⁸ Timofeeva, "The End of the World."

I propose instead of trauma, to talk about catastrophe. The difference between the two is that one cannot really recover after a catastrophe, as one normally recovers after a trauma. Catastrophe is meta-traumatic. It happens absolutely: at the beginning there is - there was, always already the end [...] You cannot change anything; the worst is what just happened.⁴⁰

This might sound not only terrifying but also unviable: how could we live with a sense of an all-pervasive catastrophe? And yet Timofeeva pushes our thinking in that direction: not only she would disagree with complaints of the Polish liberal left that apocalyptic thinking is apolitical, she would argue the exact opposite. The root of the word *apokalypsis*, from Greek, denotes revelation or unraveling of a certain reality: "as far as it unveils (i.e., unveils what is), etymologically, the apocalypse is always now."⁴¹ To replace trauma with catastrophism would thus mean to say neither that it will get better nor that it will get worse. It is rather to see that *it is already worse* but - I would add - worse than *nothing* since qualitative comparisons lose their power in face of an ever-repeating end of the world. Not worse *than*, just worse. The criticisms of

Szczęsny's suicide are based on the exact opposite idea: that there exists a stable ground, a deviation from which is aberrant and therefore apolitical. Tomasz Stawiszyński warns to not lose touch with "real" politics or "you will find yourself part of David Koresh's sect, surrounded by FBI agents because you took seriously apocalyptic prophecies about the end of civilization."⁴² In this scenario, apocalypse equals political autophagy and only a specific brand of politics, such as voting, can make a change. From such a stable ground, political commentary turns into one of measurement and approximation: just, enough, still, not yet. Stawiszyński further writes: no one is in jail yet, we still have our passports, the situation has not yet warranted this form of protest.⁴³ For Timofeeva, the opposite: the worst has always just happened, it is worse than nothing and better than nothing, the catastrophe is where we come from and where we are heading. Perhaps this catastrophic thinking could create a generic, incomprehensible ground of solidarity, one without empathy and without ever fully understanding one another. Catastrophe means knowing the indifference of the real to suffering, recognizing its brutality and ongoing violence, which manifests in the world constantly, not only in the spectacular events, such as

⁴⁰ Timofeeva, "The End of the World."

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Puchejda and Stawiszyński, "Samobójstwo to nie polityka."

⁴³ Ibid.

suicide, that the media builds its intellectualism around. The indifferent real is what cannot be perceived, and yet, once glimpsed, cannot be unseen. We are undone by it and see each other as unsubjects, or unsee each other as subjects. Once encountered, this horror of indifference must necessarily inform all of our thinking, creating *no* exception, admitting no possibility for a non-catastrophic life.

For Kolozova, bodily pain and terror occupies an important place within this horrific recognition: it is pain that is the ground for forming of (non-standard) politics, without identities or representations, before the world's mute indifference and incomprehensibility. Pain is pre-discursive, it shreds signification and meaning, it is what must necessarily escape all media intellectualism, all attempts to bind it in image, language or interpretation. Even for those living with chronic pain, it escapes the sphere of signification. As Margaret Atwood writes, "who can remember pain, once it is over? All that remains is a shadow [...] in the flesh."⁴⁴ This radically solitary experience of pain is - perhaps paradoxically - the prerequisite for solidarity:

... I would say that solidarity and political responsibility toward the suf-

fering of others originates from our ability to identify with the pain of the other body [...] In fact, the less we can recognize the other as human [...] [t]he less we see a Subject in control of the potentiality of violent threat against the body, the more we are called upon acting towards its protection: the level of vulnerability is proportional with the absence of the masterful subject of humanity.⁴⁵

Such solidarity is built in the occluded reality of each painful encounter with the real, for each person once each time. These encounters, although they escape signification, are the fabric of the world. This is no universal horror but rather a generic one, it unveils "internally according to the syntax of the real of what took place"⁴⁶ for each person that experiences pain and violence. Kolozova gives us an example of the Gezi park protests in 2013 to describe how the unmasking of violence is afterwards diluted by its media representation: the activist knew the truth of violence which cannot be mediated and translated into a political agenda. Sheer revolt is at first anti-political, not coherent, dictated only by reality, and yet it is the reason for the forming of

⁴⁴ Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2002), 207.

⁴⁵ Kolozova, *The Lived Revolution*, 114.

⁴⁶ Kolozova, "Of the Possibility," 94.

any recognizable politics further on. Timofeeva allows many events into the catastrophic: what people do to each other, what people do to the environment, but finally also the “catastrophe of one’s own existence, the apocalypse of the now,” the senselessness of reality, which we can glimpse holding together only by a shred of an inexplicable reason that permits without explanation the countless violence of life.⁴⁷ By its very indifference to human thought, encounters with horrors of the real cannot be spoken; this is a terror that ties our tongues into knots, and yet we can recognize each other in the shared obscurity of suffering, in the black-box of violence and in the thrust of the unspeakable. Knowing this is an exercise in non-relational co-suffering: not empathy, not understanding, but rather a thoroughgoing recognition of the obscurity of our struggles, the reasons and motivations for which we might never grasp.

Szczęsny intuited this, he knew that there was really no way of ever explaining why someone would sentence himself to this most painful of deaths. Perhaps this is why his impulse was to try and explain the unexplainable, to photograph himself in language before others could. He admitted openly to suffering from depression, a common illness that, he said, does not prevent political engagement. In the letters

⁴⁷ Timofeeva, “The End of the World.”

to the media he wrote that many suffer from depression and live on. He added that what he perceived anyone could see, in fact his criticisms had been voiced many times by others and therefore could not have been rooted exclusively in his mental disorder. He did, then, make a plea to not overdetermine his pain through his depression. Depression is the new hysteria, not only in its commonality but also in its connection to the bodies of those who are never allowed political authority. To come back to the unfortunate comparison of Szczęsny’s death to Abramović’s art: throughout the history of art, women who exposed their pained, frightened, grotesque, abject bodies were accused of perversity and hysteria, that old cunning disease that once mysteriously affected females only, whether because the witches cursed the uterus to stray inside the body, or because patriarchy perceived the feminine as inherently unreasonable, untrustworthy. Like self-immolators, these women understood that their bodies were akin to pathographic media that registered patriarchal violence. Sometimes violence tips over from mediation to transubstantiation: Ana Mendieta showed that womanhood is like a splash of blood on cold dirt and - tragically - she became just that, on the pavement outside her drunk husband’s apartment.⁴⁸ Where, then, is

⁴⁸ Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) was a performance artist, who featured blood and pain prominently in her work. In the *Siluetas* series she created forceful images, often in

the border between mental and physical pain, between individual turmoil and structural violence of societies in which we live? When does depression cease to be an individual matter and becomes a societal one? Kolozova notices that physical pain is, in fact, an element of depression, despite its label as a mental illness:

Even when experienced and categorized as “mental,” “emotional” or “psychological” in its identity-in-the-last-instance, pain is a bodily category. When the perplexities of the troubled, humiliated soul that has been subjected to violence are experienced as *pain*, one inevitably recognizes that an immediate transposition of the psychic experience onto the bodily plane has taken place.⁴⁹

To add to that, Byung-Chul Han describes extensively how depression is tied to our “burnout society,” with its never-fulfilled promises of realization through endless work: depression for him is the failure to achieve a “successful”

response to real-life violence against women, such as the rape and murder of Sarah Ann Ottens. In one of them (*Untitled*), a female silhouette is created out of blood on snowy ground. Mendieta is widely believed to have been murdered by her partner, artist Carl Andre, although her death was not legally ruled to be murder beyond reasonable doubt. She fell to her death from a 33-storey apartment building during a violent argument with Andre.

⁴⁹ Kolozova, *The Lived Revolution*, 108.

subjectivity, to feel at ease with the demand of positivity and attainment of satisfaction through labor.⁵⁰ What I believe is rarely considered is that this should include political labor. From his own words, we knew that Szczęsny felt that he had failed as a political subject. In a culture that is increasingly politicized, and given his past work with pro-independence movements, he said that he felt like he had not done enough in politics. Perhaps Polish liberal left asked the wrong question about Szczęsny when they debated whether his suicide was justified by the current political system, or whether it was hysteria. While they produced interpretations rooted in their knowledge of the Polish phantasm, claiming that suicide was apolitical, they missed the fact that Szczęsny *had already told them* that he had suffered from a failure to realize himself as a political subject. This a/political burnout, experienced as real, physical pain of depression is what underlined his tragedy, not something that was produced by it. They posed as their conclusion what in fact was his beginning: the failure to rise as a subject to fill the confines of what is perceived as a political life, being instead trapped in the position of the unsubject, the pained, the apolitical.

⁵⁰ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

Postscript: From Catastrophic Archive to Nightmare-Bound Future

The reactions to Szczęsny's death show a failure of contemporary media intellectualism, caught in the loop of representational culture, bound in their own obsessive production of "photographs of victims." Timofeeva's catastrophe and Kolozova's pain offer us different starting points for creating solidarity in spaces of void, burnout and tragedy, where understanding and empathy do not come easy, but a mutual recognition of obscure suffering could produce a non-standard politics, which does not conform to the contemporary preoccupation with identity and representation.

As a parting reference, I want to look to a manifestation of this kind of non-standard, a/political practice in the post-Soviet archive: the "non-Soviets," as they called themselves, the necro-realists, a group active just before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and their politics of indistinction. They, too, wanted to practice a catastrophic (non-) politics in the shadow of the world's collapse. In "Necro-Utopia: The Politics of Indistinction and the Aesthetics of the Non-Soviet," Alexei Yurchak wonderfully describes their core practice: "Instead of challenging the state by occupying an oppositional subject position, these people carved out a subject position that the state could not recognize in 'political' terms

and therefore could not easily define, understand, and control."⁵¹ Obsessed with taxidermy, especially "noncorpses" on the border of life and death, and what they called "dimwitted meriment" or "energetic idiocy," they produced several works and performances, but it would be difficult to call their practice artistic in any colloquial way.⁵² Their whole way of life (and for some, also death) was that every situation could be turned into an absurd one that resisted interpretation, and any subject could be turned into a noncorpse, not quite living or dead and therefore escaping the power of the state. Once, for example, they beat up a mannequin in public with such devotion that many onlookers thought they were assaulting a human being. In the midst of this affair, the police finally arrived, with the crowd already hysterical. They were dumbfounded to find out that no crime actually took place. By making this kind of behavior their way of life, the necro-realists not so much opposed the state as completely confused it: "this was their strategy of becoming a kind of subject who could use many of the resources of [the] state (social welfare, subsidized housing, employment, education, etc.) and yet largely avoid the political subjectivity of a citizen."⁵³ Their lives were extreme: they avoided the news, worked only low-paying

⁵¹ Yurchak, "Necro-Utopia," 200.

⁵² Ibid., 202.

⁵³ Ibid., 212.

jobs to cover the minimum necessities, sought maximum free time and minimum engagement with the state and forced themselves, sometimes to the point of death, into an existence that was drastically reduced, a status of the nonperson. Living under a system that they experienced as immutable, they wanted to “suspend the political,” they sought to relate to each other as not-quite-humans, who existed in the zone between life and death, sanity and insanity. In short, they embraced the very void of identity that contemporary Poland, trapped in sleep paralysis, fears to recognize as its own. Rather than seeking to qualify themselves in opposition to the state, they practiced a politics of indistinction; they “cultivated a negative linguistic skill,” politicians only interested them when “they were not quite alive but in a state of being transformed into nonpersons.”⁵⁴

Looking to this archive, we could perhaps avoid the temptation of media intellectualism. Rather than mediate self-immolation, we could ask what is it about the way that we define “the political” today that fails to actualize many as political subjects, including Szczęsny, who himself deeply felt this failure. Could this definition benefit from a subtraction of representations, from a catastrophic thinking in parallel with the brutality of the real, rather than the repetition of (national) trauma? The

necro-realists sought to negate and suspend the political not to criticize it but because they wanted to create a parallel practice: a non-politics, a politics of indistinction. There is little sense in any direct replication, each non-political practice must be situated in its own times. After Szczęsny’s death and its aftermath, which exposed the failure of subsuming the political under the aesthetic, we could debate not the deviations from a political norm but find ways to suspend it. In Poland specifically, this could mean inhabiting, rather than rejecting, the position of the unsubject trapped within sleep paralysis, nightmare-bound. Such catastrophic suspension of what is expected of the political is not angst, it is not fatalism, it is not an excuse to disengage. It is, however, a denial of the promise of trauma and rejuvenation, whether that trauma is the phantasm of Polish martyrdom, or the current leftist promise of a return to the Western democratic family. The catastrophic does not pass points of no return, it rather expands our perspective to the realm of the nightmare and the unsubject where there were never any checkpoints: violence and struggle erupt constantly throughout the world, despite the tendency of media intellectualism to only style *some* events, such as suicide, as violence. Perhaps from this ground a different mode of non-standard politics could form, which necessarily admits an obscurity of suffering alongside its painful immediacy.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 210.

V. REVIEWS

**Towards Katerina Kolozova,
Toward a Radical Metaphysics
of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle**

Katerina Kolozova, *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle* (Brooklyn, New York: Punctum Books, 2015) | Paulo Ricardo Vidal

Bionote

Paulo Ricardo Vidal (1992) is a Brazilian writer. He holds BA in Law from the University of São Paulo, Brazil (2016), and is graduate in Law from the University Lumière Lyon II, France (2017). He is particularly concerned with the fate of thought after Lacan and Laruelle.

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Since the early 1930s¹ the most radical encounter between man and nature *qua* real exteriority is provided by the collision experience. The colliding enterprise operated by Kolozova in this book, whose modeling should not surprise readers of François Laruelle (whose texts - mainly *Introduction au non-marxisme* and *Philosophie non-standard* - obviously constitute obligatory preliminary studies), consists in

¹ When the first cyclotron was built by John D. Cockcroft and E.T.S. Walton in 1930 at the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge, Great Britain. Andrew Robert Steere, *A Timeline of Major Particle Accelerators* (Master's Thesis, Michigan: Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University, 2005).

**Para Katerina Kolozova,
Toward a Radical Metaphysics
of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle**

Katerina Kolozova, *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle* (Brooklyn, New York: Punctum Books, 2015) | Paulo Ricardo Vidal

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Desde o ano de 1930¹ o encontro mais radical do homem com a natureza enquanto exterioridade real é providenciado pela experiência da colisão. O empreendimento colisor operado por Kolozova nesta obra, cuja modelização não será estranha para os leitores de François Laruelle (cujos textos - como *Introduction au non-marxisme* e *Philosophie non-standard* - constituem leitura prévia obrigatória, obviamente), con-

¹ Quando foi construído o primeiro ciclotron por John D. Cockcroft and E.T.S. Walton in 1930 no Laboratório Laboratory em Cambridge, Grã-Bretanha. Andrew Robert Steere, *A Timeline of Major Particle Accelerators* (Master's Thesis, Michigan: Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University, 2005).

reinstating the scientificity of Marx's project (*contra* Marxist philosophical - thus *sufficient* - readings), approximating it to Laruellian thought dispensed from Philosophie II on, explicitly aiming at recovering its potential for immanent revolutionary political action, which in its turn demands an understanding of the real as outside the range of linguistic intervention, appropriation, and reinvention. This is because it is indispensable, the author warns us, to profess this resisting externality of the real, conceived thus as *τρόπος*, not *οὐσία*,² in order to oppose totalitarianism in capitalist speculation, postmodern theory, and (concrete) politics.

To recover the scientificity of Marx's work explicitly and to duly reject the Althusserian *coupure*³ is possible once Kolozova detects

² "Therefore, my use of the Laruellian real is hybridized with what I understand to be the Marxian understanding of the real [...] In *Toward the Transcendental Metaphysics of Socialism*, I insist on the material or physical determination in the last instance of reality as it seems that it is precisely the physicality and the linguistically incompetent instances of reality that are subject to the capitalist holocaust." Katerina Kolozova, "Reply: Response to Anthony Paul Smith," in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism*, *Syndicate*, February 6, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

³ Agreeing with Michel Henry: "the classical codification of Marx's writing into two stages - that of the 'young Marx' and 'the old Marx' - is a false one. It is an exegetic creation of philosophical interpreters and a close reading of Marx's own text seems to refute this classification. That is why I strove to consistently

siste em reencontrar a cientificidade do projeto marxiano (contra as leituras filosóficas marxistas) aproximando-o criticamente do pensamento laruelleano de Philosophie II em diante, com o objetivo explícito de recuperar seu potencial de imanente atuação política revolucionária, para a qual se fará necessária uma compreensão do real, concebido como *τρόπος*, *não οὐσία*,² enquanto exterioridade fora do alcance da intervenção, apropriação, e reinvenção linguística - pois é indispensável afirmar a exterioridade do real para que se combata a ditadura na especulação capitalista, na teoria pós-moderna e na política (concreta), nos afirma a autora.

Recuperar a cientificidade da obra de Marx ignorando, explícita e justificadamente, a *coupure*³ althusseriana é possível uma vez que

² "Therefore, my use of the Laruellian real is hybridized with what I understand to be the Marxian understanding of the real [...] In *Toward the Transcendental Metaphysics of Socialism*, I insist on the material or physical determination in the last instance of a reality as it seems that it is precisely the physicality and the linguistically incompetent instances of reality that are subject to the capitalist holocaust." Katerina Kolozova, "Reply: Response to Anthony Paul Smith," in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism*, *Syndicate*, February 6, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

³ Concordando com Henry: "the classical codification of Marx's writing into two stages - that of the 'young Marx' and 'the old Marx' - is a false one. It is an exegetic creation of philosophical interpreters and a close reading of Marx's own text seems to refute this classification. That is why I strove to consistently invoke quotes and bring forth references from both the

its determination-in-the-last-instance in the concept of “labor force,” and in its aperture to τύχη, that is to say, in the rupture with the colonizing circularity of philosophical thinking (which Kolozova, admittedly following Laruelle, identifies with capitalism itself *qua* hegemony of abstraction), which works through the amphibology of thought vis-à-vis the real (as in the privilege example of the classic doubling “Being”/“thought”). In a parallel manner, the scientificity of Laruelle’s program is equally affirmed on similar grounds⁴: the proposal of *science de la philosophie* (a formula

invoke quotes and bring forth references from both the ‘early’ and ‘the later Marx,’ trying to demonstrate that Marx’s commitment to certain themes is lifelong and his definition of the communist project has remained essentially unchanged throughout. I claim, and here I concur with Henry, there has never been an ‘epistemic break’ in Marx. The nervous system of his entire project is essentially non-philosophical or post-philosophical and humanist in a non-humanist sense.” Katerina Kolozova, “Reply: Response to Miglena Nikolchina,” in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism, Syndicate*, February 20, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

⁴ “Non-philosophy and Marxist scientific thought are defined by the same ambitions and admission of the same limitations as those defining science,” provided one accepts that “Sciences explain the ways in which realities operate without the pretension to conquer, subjugate, and control the real itself (which is something different from the technological desire to subjugate, control, and exploit).” Katerina Kolozova, “Reply: Response to Dominic Fox,” in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism, Syndicate*, February 13, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

a autora encontra sua determinação-na-última-instância no conceito de “força de trabalho,” e em sua abertura a τύχη, isto é, no rompimento com a circularidade colonizadora do pensamento filosófico (que Kolozova, seguindo explicitamente Laruelle, igualará ao próprio capitalismo *qua* hegemonia da abstração), que opera pela anfibologia do pensamento vis-à-vis o real (como na clássica duplicação “Ser” e “pensamento”, por exemplo). Paralelamente, a cientificidade do projeto de Laruelle é igualmente afirmada com argumentos semelhantes⁴: a proposta de “ciência da filosofia” (que aparece como sinônimo da empresa laruelleana de não-filosofia em determina-

‘early’ and ‘the later Marx,’ trying to demonstrate that Marx’s commitment to certain themes is lifelong and his definition of the communist project has remained essentially unchanged throughout. I claim, and here I concur with Henry, there has never been an ‘epistemic break’ in Marx. The nervous system of his entire project is essentially non-philosophical or post-philosophical and humanist in a non-humanist sense.” Katerina Kolozova, “Reply: Response to Miglena Nikolchina,” in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism, Syndicate*, February 20, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

⁴ “Non-philosophy and Marxist scientific thought are defined by the same ambitions and admission of the same limitations as those defining science,” provided one accepts that “Sciences explain the ways in which realities operate without the pretension to conquer, subjugate, and control the real itself (which is something different from the technological desire to subjugate, control, and exploit).” Katerina Kolozova, “Reply: Response to Dominic Fox,” in *Syndicate Symposium on Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism, Syndicate*, February 13, 2017, www.syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/toward-a-radical-metaphysics-of-socialism.

that appears synonymous to the Laruellian non-philosophy enterprise in some moments of its evolution) is based on the conception of science as naïve and primitive thought *qua* search for the apprehension of the real in an exhaustive and systematic fashion while avoiding implicating the duplication of representative thinking crystallized in ideas of "truth" or "essence," or confirming positivist dogmas. For Kolozova, respectively, no science can dictate the apolitical natural laws for its own historical development.

It is opportune for us to deter ourselves around the Marxian concept of *Entfremdung*, as this idea is the way in which Kolozova leads us to the theory of the German thinker, its point of approach with Laruelle's non-psychoanalytic positions, and the book's major political motif. Such *estrangement* in no way refers to an essentially or existentially human *praedicamentum*, appearing, however, as general result of a series of typically philosophical and capitalist *abstractive* operations that submit the lived reality to fetishistic logic. Overcoming the condition of *estrangement*, i.e., purging alienation from the real via political combat, makes up the major metaphysical ("muscular" yet properly metaphysical - and Kolozova declares the urgency of rescuing metaphysics⁵ from philosophical imperialism)

dos momentos de sua evolução) está calcada na concepção da ciência enquanto pensamento primitivo e naif como busca pela apreensão do real de maneira exaustiva e sistemática sem que se implique na duplicação do pensamento representativo cristalizado nas ideias de "verdade" ou "essência", ou que se confirmem os dogmas positivistas. Para Kolozova igualmente, nenhuma ciência pode decretar leis naturais apolíticas para seu próprio desenvolvimento histórico.

O conceito marxiano de *Entfremdung* é a entrada que Kolozova nos oferece à teoria do pensador alemão, seu ponto de aproximação com as posições não-psicanalíticas de Laruelle, e o motivo político maior do livro. Detenhamo-nos, portanto, nele. Tal *estrangement* de modo algum se refere a uma *predicação* essencial ou existencialmente humana, mas aparece como resultado geral de operações de *abstração*, tipicamente filosóficas e capitalistas, que submetem a realidade vivida à lógica do fetiche. A superação da condição de *estrangement*, isto é, a expulsão da alienação do real via luta política, é interpretada como objetivo metafísico ("muscular," mas propriamente metafísico - e Kolozova afirma a urgência de se resgatar a metafísica⁵ do imperialismo filosófico) maior no pensamento marxi-

⁵ Which constitutes an inescapable human horizon. See

⁵ Que constitui um horizonte humano inescapável. Leia Katerina Kolozova, "Metaphysics of Finance Economy: Of its Radicalization as the Method of Revoking Real Economy," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 11, No. 1-2 (2015), 19-31.

objective inside Marxian thought. *Estrangement*, for Laruelle, in an assertion that adequately expresses the productivity of comparing both writers; it “is experienced or lived [...] as trauma, and is a form of oppression by virtue of the sheer experience of inflicted violence and pain that it causes to the human ‘body’ and ‘spirit.’” (p. 24) *Estrangement* is logically anticipated in the process of alienation when one assumes the actuality (or, at least, amenity) of the Spinozist *conatus*, as does Kolozova.

The analysis of the process of alienation leads us through considerations regarding commodity as foreclosure of physicality to the vampiric hegemony of the code in the context of contemporary capitalism. Scrutinizing speculative finance industry which, by negating sensual life, implies the *inexistence* of economy, amounts to the point of departure for the study of austerity measures as applied by Merkel and Obama after 2008. Kolozova then proposes a deconstruction of neoliberal fantasies and myths (exemplified by the “self-perfecting” of the *wanna-be* capitalist individual subject to continued wage labour-oriented education in the context of painfully exaggerated compulsory job mobility): the logical indetermination of the use-value (in the form of the significance

ano. *Estrangement*, para Laruelle, numa afirmação que expressa adequadamente a produtividade da comparação entre os dois autores, “is experienced or lived [...] as trauma, and is a form of oppression by virtue of the sheer experience of inflicted violence and pain that it causes to the human ‘body’ and ‘spirit.’” (p. 24). *Estrangement* é previsto logicamente no processo de alienação em si dada a realidade do *conatus* spinozista assumida pela autora.

A análise do processo de alienação nos leva através de considerações sobre a commodity enquanto denegação da fisicalidade até a hegemonia vampírica do código no contexto do capitalismo contemporâneo. As finanças e a indústria financeira especulativa, que negando a vida sensual, implicam na própria *inexistência* de uma economia propriamente dita, são ponto de partida para o estudo das políticas de austeridade implantadas por Merkel e Obama pós-2008; e para a desconstrução de das fantasias (como a do autoaperfeiçoamento do indivíduo *wanna-be* capitalista sujeito a uma educação continuada orientada ao trabalho assalariado num contexto de exagerada e dolorosa mobilidade empregatícia), e dos mitos neoliberais, como o da indeterminação lógica do valor-de-uso (na forma da significância da “economia bruta”, afinal de que outro modo se justificaria a necessidade das medidas de austeridade enquanto medidas de concentração de renda?), e o da posição fragi-

Katerina Kolozova, “Metaphysics of Finance Economy: Of its Radicalization as the Method of Revoking Real Economy,” *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 11, No. 1-2 (2015), 19-31.

of “brute economy,” behold this absolute foreclosure, how else would austerity measures *qua* wealth concentration procedures be justifiable or - critically - intelligible), and the weakened position of national States facing transnational banks, being the most eloquent cases, revealing thus economy as *immer schon* political.

Besides being a critical reader of Baudrillard, from whom she fuels herself in her examinations of finance capitalism’s axiomatic abstraction, and a Spinoza enthusiast (it is out of *Ethics*, ultimately, that the author takes the most radical imperatives for political activity), Kolozova passes through the canon of feminist thought, with determination-in-the-last-instance of exploitation as sexual exploitation, as developed by Shulamith Firestone, and the cyborg demands of Haraway. The author further dialogues with accelerationist philosophers such as Nick Land, Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, partially absorbing them, assembling a work which forces itself as ineluctable to anyone interested in the critical and political potential of the surging *non-standard* incursion.

lizada dos Estados nacionais face aos bancos, com a revelação da economia como *immer schon política*.

Além de leitora crítica de Baudrillard, de quem se alimenta em suas considerações sobre a abstração axiomática do capitalismo financeiro, e entusiasta de Spinoza (é do tratado *Ethica*, no final das contas, que Kolozova retira os imperativos mais radicais para a atuação política), passa Kolozova pelo cânone do pensamento feminista, com a determinação em última instância da exploração enquanto exploração sexual desenvolvida por Shulamith Firestone e as demandas ciborgues de Haraway. Dialoga igualmente a autora macedônia com os filósofos aceleracionistas Nick Land, Alex Williams e Nick Srnicek, absorvendo-os parcialmente. A obra se afirma como incontornável aos interessados no potencial crítico e político da surgente incursão *non-standard*.

Towards Katherine Behar (Ed.), *Object-Oriented Feminism*

Katherine Behar (Ed.), *Object-Oriented Feminism*
(Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota
Press, 2016) [Stanimir Panayotov

Bionote

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Katherine Behar's collection is the result of a series of panels hosted by the annual conferences of the Society for Literature, Science and the Arts in the period 2010-2012. Her edited volume *Object-Oriented Feminism* will be of particular interest for readers in feminist theory, philosophy and poststructuralism as they intersect with curatorial and art practices, and thus also being interesting for artists, curators and cultural workers navigating their ways in the worlds of theory and philosophy (which does *not* mean that the book is a contribution to philosophy proper). It will also deserve the attention of anyone who has a continuous interest in the revival of various

forms of realism and materialism in philosophy and cultural studies and who would like to see a more lively connection between those areas, on the one hand, and hard and life sciences, on the other hand, regardless of the latter being in conjunction to arts or not. The volume manifests that for those facing those connections, turning a blind eye to a feminist perspective of object orientation would amount to self-induced oblivion into the sacred categories of feminist concern (embodiment, the body, even gender and sex proper). On the volume's account, this is a concern that has exhausted its principled focus on social constructivism. Whether object orientation has always been a feminist concern is a problem I will return to at the end of this review.

Object-oriented feminism (hereafter OOF) was instigated in and around the theoretical phenomenon of so-called "object-oriented philosophy" (hereafter OOP), which first spurred on the internet, and subsequently spread among academia, as a result of the specific hijacking of Bruno Latour's work, done by Graham Harman. There was a Heideggerian twist in this process, with Harman claiming Latour as a "philosopher."¹

¹ This is in itself a problematic consensus that few have addressed. It is not the place here to pursue an objection to that end. Suffice it to say that one is flabbergasted by the very fact that Latour would license Harman's act. In the context of the book reviewed here, however, this is an important move, since this

When the term “object-oriented philosophy” first appeared, and the subsequent brands of “object-oriented ontology” (hereafter OOO; the conflation of OOP with OOO is sometimes problematic, too) and “onticology” surfaced under the pens of Ian Bogost and Levi R. Bryant, many of those already used to the tenets of scientific and critical realism experienced the phenomenon as a ludicrous theoretical crescendo unencumbered by its own pretension of revising post-Kantian philosophy. Back around 2008/9, the terms sounded as odd as the suggested OOF would sound (at least to the unreconstructed feminist post-structuralist), spearheaded here by Behar and her collaborators. It remains to be seen whether OOF will continue to bear the air of oddity *within feminism* alone, or will it be normalized in the general OO parlance and the related literature. For it has by now become clear that inducing yet another theory “turn” is a relatively easy job, but the feminist skepticism in us should remain in place when it comes to the consequent processes of reception. This is all the more important since the field of OOO, as well as the related “speculative/new realism” (hereafter SR), has been under the unfriendly fire of a plethora of feminists.

Upon reading this book, the present reviewer felt that it was divided in two parts:

Harmanian retooling and rebranding of Latour allowed the unproblematic identification of OOO with philosophy. Latour’s consent is by now irrelevant to this problem.

the editor’s Introduction, on the one hand, and the remainder of texts, on the other. Apart from the Introduction, the book gathers ten contributions from authors, including Behar’s own chapter, that come from fairly different fields and backgrounds, and not all of them have been involved in the SLSA events, thus giving platform to more voices. With the Introduction as a stand-alone text, the book seems to feature three groups of chapters, so strictly speaking I will try to navigate between those four possible units. Chapters 1 to 3 by Irina Aristarkhova, Timothy Morton and Frenchy Lunning seem to provide ideas to serve as the theoretical backbone of OOF. Chapters 4 to 7 by Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Katherine Behar, Adam Zaretsky and Anne Pollock appear to be demonstrations of what OOF could do in action. This group of chapters traverses both arts and curating as well as issues of bio- and necropolitics. Because the approximation between this intersection with a more robust treatment of OOF’s politics is already present in this grouping, it is then relatively easy to transition to the third group, i.e., Chapters 8 to 10 by Marina Gržinić, Karen Gregory and R. Joshua Scannell, chapters which, with the odd case of Gregory, provide explicit commentaries on OOF’s political consequences, and related theory turns.

Behar’s Introduction is ambitious, very well informed of the historical mutation it at-

tempts to enact and the dangers around it, not to mention her capacity to survey theoretical phenomena and waves as they intersect and what would that entail for the project of OOF. This might come as a banality, but it is also a very *well-focused* introduction. It is itself a work of theory: far exceeding the purpose of an introductory text, but without losing sight of its primary purpose, and without being read as the usual mapping of the chapters ahead. Behar has done anything in her powers to comprehensively conceptualize every theoretical moment that contributes/has contributed to what would OOF be and become. All of this is noteworthy because the theoretical and political implications of constructing something like OOF are nearly gigantomachic. This is even truer considering that the internal criticisms within the feminist hive mind are already as harsh as it gets. Behar, to my opinion, has left very little to no space for the reactive feminist to mount an attack against her project.²

² This does not mean that OOF is safely sanitized from theoretical feminist scrutiny of whatever origin, or any other scrutiny for that matter. It means that fundamental conditions for offering OOF are met. What is more, these are conditions that could also justify the singular use of "feminism" in the volume's title. In the current climate of feminist studies worldwide, the use of "feminism" rather than "feminisms" is a move that alone could cause fire and fury, with little to no knowledge or curiosity as to why singularity (or universality) matters for feminists. My praise has nothing to do with OOF's alleged imperviousness to criticism and has everything to do with its elaborate argumentation against, globally

The first group of chapters (1 to 3) opens with Aristarkhova's "A Feminist Object," which for the most part is a meditation on Heidegger's views on aesthetics, poetry and art, and what these entail for the "object." Aristarkhova's view is that it is philosophers and artists who are left to *listen* to objects. Her chapter offers a detailed account of the logic of possession of an object, as opposed to an unpossessive epistemology more appropriate for OOF. But the problem with Heidegger, which I already mentioned (see above, note 1), is most pressing in this chapter. Because the Harman/Latour tandem is framed as a philosophical one, OOF is automatically streamlined with post-phenomenological philosophical thought and philosophy proper, allowing little space for OOF to be examined and projected from non-philosophical, that is to say, non-reductionist, angles. Just as "feminism" does not equate "philosophy," so "OOF"/"OOF" should not equate "philosophy." *The identification already presupposes a deficiency within OOF.* However, some of the chapters do express certain allergy to phenomenology. Without an intention to devalue the many qualities of Aristarkhova's chapter, who seems to operate with precisely this identification in mind, sadly, her chapter is an example that the identification has already been taken for granted within OOF itself. One can only hope that the speaking, the ongoing feminist adversarial imaginary.

legacy of the OOF volume will bring about the questioning of Harman's rebranding act. (Part of that hope comes from OOF's allure to the arts.) Timothy Morton's and Frenchy Lunning's chapters are both contributing to this problem, with the added value of Harman's thesis on aesthetics as first philosophy. Both chapters discuss the process of "withdrawal," which is fundamental for Harman's OOP. In Morton's case, withdrawal and deviancy of objects are paralleled. The quality of "deviancy" is redolent of the theological "overflowing" of the One. It comes as no surprise that Morton's suggested "weird essentialism" is indeed an essentialism: it does have quasi-theological overtones, despite his oft comic phrase. Both the object and thinking are defined via deviance. Object-oriented reality is "withdrawn" and as such it is intimately facial ("in your face, your face," 71). Lunning's work attempts a crossover between Harman and Kristeva. Indeed, there has been little engagement with the "abject" ever since SR and OOP became "things," and Lunning's chapter fills a gap in the literature. She, too, employs an implied intimacy, already present in Harman's notion of "allure." Her crossover concerns the "potential for agency" (90), and she tries to demonstrate this potential by engaging with Victorian and turn-of-the-century female sexuality and imagery, a field she is expert in. She then moves on to discuss Morton's "hyper-

object" as the end game of modernism precisely in the context of abjected subject/object relations in Victorian culture.

The second group of chapters (4 to 7) begins with Povinelli's treatment of Harman's allure of the object, which "solves Kantian correlationism via *aesthetic* rather than ethical or logical means" (108). Trying to apply features of Harman's aesthetic theory to the Karrabing Film Collective's work, Povinelli explains that what is most important in this choreographing of OOP is that despite the impasses of correlationism strong or weak, we can still at least know that objects *are* objects. The human-world relation, *pace* Harman, is on a par with the object-object relation, which means that any access to truth is aestheticized. Behar's chapter takes as its object the cosmetic phenomenon of Botox, and thus speaks to Morton's "in your face" OO reality. She claims that there is a fetishization of liveliness, often caused by the posthumanist rehashing of animism and panpsychism, whereby OOP is "poised to smuggle anthropocentrism back into the game" (124). This also means that the condition to qualify the subject as an object is her being alive. Behar wants to move away from this condition without having to parade with some sort of ethics of extinction, and she has found a way in the applications of Botox. Her analysis responds to the Latourian idea that only objects

that *do* things qualify as agential, which, from an OOF perspective, entails that OOs would re-lapse in anthropocentrism. As with Povinelli, this chapter also highlights the problem that so long as the subject is not treatable as an object, all ontoepistemological pretensions to “distributive agency” (or Lunning’s “potential for agency,” for that matter) are false flags of anti-correlationism, idolizing life in what she wittingly calls “vivophilia” (127). Behar’s ethics-oriented answer is the Botox-centered necrophiliac orientation to objects, something she sees as already present in the tradition of feminist body art. Adam Zaretsky’s text has many qualities but none of them includes tangibility. It is meant to confuse and diffuse rather than offer a use of OOF. As a practicing maverick of bioart, Zaretsky is in the position to ridicule and perform object orientation at the same time: after all, he has practiced this orientation for many years by now through bio and body art. Brimming with original and memorable ironic and parodic phrasings, one should extract from his *opus ludens* the critique of “listmania” in OOP (see 155, 159-60). The second point to single out is Zaretsky’s understanding, which happens to overlap with the reviewer’s, that “OOO claims to be nonobfuscatinal while reeling in utter phenomenological glazing” (154) and that the affective listma-

nia does not count as “newness.”³ Finally, as Behar, he too singles out the fetishization of liveliness (his term is “vitalmania,” 170). With vivophilia and vitalmania already spelled out, Pollock’s chapter interprets the scientific fixation with life and reproduction in animal homosexuality, and more specifically, climate change and pollution as they correlate with affecting species’ sexuality. The chapter explores how critiques of climate change can tend to re-naturalize heterosexuality by normalizing animal sexuality. Pollock has gathered arguments from the weakest to the most radical ones and offers a correction to feminist understandings of the problem which carry on the logic of what Lee Edelman defined as “reproductive futurism.” Again, as in Behar, the author does not necessarily want to subscribe to an ethics of extinction in order to be theoretically in tune with the near subliminal deification of anti-anthropocentrism. Rather, what she offers here is an apology of artificial queerness: if animal queerness could be caused by pollution, it should not be ruled out as an aspect of vivophilia/vitalmania. Nor should animals serve as the better role model for human sexuality for the reason that they are helpless victims of man-made climate change.

³ Similar arguments have been proposed by Dan Zahavi, specifically with regards to Harman, in less playful and in strictly scholarly parlance. See Dan Zahavi, “The End of What? Phenomenology vs. Speculative Realism,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2016), 294-6.

The last group of chapters (8 to 10) opens with Gržinić's reconsideration and historicization of the present reorientation of politicized feminism, or, to be exact, academic feminism. Much of what Gržinić says in this chapter has already been spelled out elsewhere and part of her arguments are rather repetitive.⁴ Her thesis is that new materialist ontologies in particular are a *symptom* of the "humanization of capital" (208-9). She attempts to both maintain the critique against the "allergy to 'the real'" and expose the "dark side of new materialism," but carefully explains that she does not hold accountable these ontologies alone for repudiating the human as responsible to this humanization. Gržinić does not offer an exit strategy, but only a worry that neoliberal capitalism offers fertile ground for the post/non/human. As a result, the proliferation of the agential does not contain an agenda for political subjectivization, only an agenda for the agency's political depotentialization.⁵ Gregory's chapter on the cultures

of Tarot cards is an odd example of doing OOF in general, and in effect has little to no relevance to OOF, in my understanding. Yet it does join the discourse on capital in the context of Gržinić's thesis. In a way, she offers an account of the withdrawal of speech into the object (the cards), and their enigmatically autonomous "work" (233). In an argument similar to Morton's essentialism, she suggests that this practice drives humans' orientation toward objects as a "natural gift." Tarot is here seen as a model of letting the object *speak* (Aristarkhova has already tried to make the case of the human *listening* to it), even whisper, to the subject, in a game of randomization that does live up to the idea of lowering anthropocentrism and the subject to the status of an object. Scannell's chapter is the last one and it, too, has little relevance to the F in OOF. He mongrelizes Puar's critique of intersectionality and Haraway's notion of the cyborg in a discourse on big data. His thesis is that the assemblage of the cyborg goddess, which he identifies, is the behavioral model for big data governance and "is in fact an organizing principle of an emerging logic of algorithmic governmentality" (248). In a vain similar to Gržinić, Scannell provides evidence that big data governmentality is purely mathematics- and not human-oriented. But while Gržinić complains that there is little to no resistance to the

⁴ See Stanimir Panayotov, "Neonecromicon," *borderlands*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2014), 1-16. I would advise the reader to read Gržinić's contribution together with her chapter "Who Is the Other Woman in the Context of Transfeminist, Transmigrant, and Transgender Struggles in Global Capitalism?," in *After the "Speculative Turn": Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*, ed. by Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy (Brooklyn, New York: Punctum Books, 2016), 107-16.

⁵ Gržinić's thesis is in sync with the critique offered by Jordana Rosenberg, see more below in note 7.

humanization of capital, Scannell does attempt to draft at least a strategy to understand the indifference of the mathematical model to the embodied world. The fact that big data algorithms are real does not mean they are human. He coins the notion “deep managerial time” to describe the “ontological stabilization of populations” (251) in a move he calls prehensive (or, Whiteheadian) sociology (of data management). The cyborg(ed) goddess of Puar is the “emergent object” of algorithms in deep managerial time: “Objects are [...] only as real as their capacity to be made computational” (263). Scannell, too, is skeptical about our ability to provide meaningful analyses of this emergent object predicated on the phenomenology of the body. Whether this body’s informational status is not phenomenological might be an open question, but it is refreshing that the volume features such phenomenological skepticism toward the status and the epistemology of the body. Scannell’s chapter has too many excellent qualities and dimensions to list. His definitional brilliance is extraordinary, and contributes greatly to the volume. This is especially true when he derives from the Puar-Haraway assemblage what he calls “digital mysticism,” in a sort of neoscholastics of info-flows. However, I remain unconvinced his chapter has much to do with feminism or OOF.

Similarly to Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy’s *After the “Speculative Turn,”* Behar’s *Object-Oriented Feminism* does not offer sections that give keys to interpreting the texts *en bloc*, which is why I decided to review her volume with my own compartmentalization. This is a curious decision that might suggest that in Behar’s view all of the contributions make a whole, which is not the case (the same is true of Kolozova and Joy’s volume). The book would have gained more consistency if it tried to organize the texts in sections, because, even though the intertextual flow is more or less smooth, not all texts seem related and focused on OOF proper and it is sometimes confusing to understand the sequence (for example, I do not see any reason to have Gržinić’s text before Gregory’s, but the other way around would work way better).

Let us return to the question whether object orientation has been a feminist concern to begin with, and that thus no anamnesis is needed, which would, paradoxically, question the very label OOF. In and of itself, the volume alone does not provide evidence that object orientation has been a feminist matter from the get-go. I do not think the editor intended to prove this point, although she herself has addressed it partially (see Behar’s “An Introduction to OOF,” note 1 on pp. 29-30), but overall the volume does not manifest the

tendency to historicize such a thesis. This matter has been, however, addressed by Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy's *After the "Speculative Turn": Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*,⁶ which came out around the same time in 2016, and Behar's volume should be read (as working) together with it (and the other way around). The point here is not comparison but complementarity. In light of the specific feminist complaints against novel forms of feminist objectivity and rationalism that revise some poststructuralist complacencies and the over-emphasis on textuality and discursivity, the very academic term of "feminism" arrived at a

⁶ See Stanimir Panayotov, "Speculum of the Pruning-Scissors. Review of Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy (Eds.), *After the "Speculative Turn": Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*," *The Minnesota Review*, Issue 88 (2017), 132-8; Bogna M. Konior, "Review of Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy (Eds.), *After the "Speculative Turn": Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*," *Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy*, November 27, 2017, www.c-scp.org/2017/11/27/katerina-kolozova-and-eileen-a-joy-eds-after-the-speculative-turn. The editors of both volumes knew of each other's work, see specifically Behar, "An Introduction to OOF," note 25 on p. 32. Behar, Lunning and Gržinić are all contributors in the two volumes. It is also noteworthy that both Behar and Kolozova and Joy have been published and promoted by Joy's open-access Punctum Books. The relevance of this should not be underestimated, since Punctum Books was the host of SR and OOF/OOF books and journals since the very inception of those "turns." Punctum also published Behar's preceding work, which she herself mentions as a defining moment in her work towards OOF, see Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson, *And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art* (Brooklyn, New York: Punctum Books, 2016).

new crisis which is vigorously denied. Kolozova and Joy's volume revealed that it would be futile to embrace something like a "new" feminist and scientifically rigorous objectivity and universality in SR, while at the same time reframing academic feminism as a field that has no other choice than accommodate scientific data in ways it has stubbornly avoided to do ever since poststructuralism became a recognizable theory pin. Having said that, both Kolozova and Joy's volume and that of Behar have never aimed at antagonizing the cultural turn and the postmodern matrix of poststructuralism from a "disinterested" position: but that does not exclude the idea of maintaining a "view from nowhere." In fact, while Kolozova and Joy and their collaborators corrected the flawed idea that there is now a new stage of feminist objectivity, Behar and her collaborators demonstrate that objectivity is both a feminist and cultural concern. The very fact that the OOF volume is edited by an artist and curator and features other artists, as well as numerous examples from the arts world, should be telling for a specific *turn within* the epistemology of the cultural, not outside it.

In this sense, both these volumes, and here in particular Behar's OOF project, defy the expectation and, in some cases, the theoretical presupposition⁷ that a feminist SR or

⁷ See Panayotov, "Speculum," 132-3, where I have already reviewed this problem. Rosi Braidotti's attack on the "sausage fest" of SR and OOP/OOF, in Timotheus Vermeulen, "Borrowed Energy (Interview with Rosi Braidotti)," *Frieze*, August 12, 2014, www.frieze.com/article/borrowed-energy, neither discriminates between those fields, nor knows the literature, nor looks in the most obvious resource to check her own assumptions, that is, Katerina Kolozova, *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 24-7, 117-20, who has already proved that Braidotti and feminist poststructuralism, and even posthumanism, implicitly, in light of the works of Barad, Bennet, Kirby and their cohorts of followers, can work together with something akin to feminist objectivity and universalism. I have addressed these very problematic omissions in Stanimir Panayotov, "The View from Nowhere and the View from Somewhere: Embodiment in New Realism and New Materialism" (unpublished paper presented at Sixth Annual Conference of the New Materialism Network: New Materialist Politics and Economies of Knowledge, Faculty of Law, University of Maribor, Slovenia, October 2, 2015). For a more informed, if even more scathing critique, see Jordana Rosenberg, "The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present," *Theory and Event*, Vol. 17, Issue 2 (2014), who has the gall to dismiss SR and OOF under the common rubric "the ontological turn" while reducing all these fields to misinformed and latent Marxisms, but does manage to explain what of *dialectical materialism* is dismissed under the operative umbrella term the "ontological turn." Unfortunately, the consensual reference on the matter of how Marxism and dialectical materialism (would) relate to a "feminist" SR and OOF (of which I, in turn, would use the umbrella term "feminist objectivity") has become Pheng Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 70-91, which is cited

OOF are figures of theoretical-feminist self-loathing burning in the heart of the sacred category of embodiment. On the contrary, some of the criticisms espoused against the all-male theory turns of SR/OOF, while partially true (see again Behar's note 1), are intentional misnomers defending an undefendable monopoly over the category of embodiment, and its political idolatry thereof. Thus, the attacks mounted against feminist object-orientation and/or objectivity have, at best, shaky ground and, at worst, no theoretical references to their cause. Behar's volume puts an end to a long-held feminist certainty and objection.

several times across Behar's volume. Rosenberg's 2014 critique, despite its vitriolic and often off-putting language, deserves at least an elaborate mention, which is not the case in the present volume. It is not cited anywhere in Kolozova and Joy's volume, too, which is generally unfortunate.

Towards Jamie McCallum (Dir.), *The Real Work*

The Real Work, directed and produced by
Jamie McCallum, USA, 2016, 5.19 minutes, color
| Senka Anastasova

Bionote

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The Real Work by Jamie McCallum opens with an illuminative and suggestive narrative - how daily low-waged hard work reflects on people's life in America today. Unfolding into a short period, this film shows an effective way to understand the social labor and how capitalism is affecting common working people. Behind the plot present, the social context is America after the global economic crises, rapidly exposed to the capitalistically organized

forms of social reproduction and over-accumulation. The main provocation for making this video essay is rising questions about asymmetry of power that currently exists between labor and capital. One of the core effects of labor critique is to develop hegemonic equilibrium between the strength from below and above, between the power of employer and employee in particular jobs, to increase wages, to improve working conditions against exploitations, especially with focus on different forms of work - those that are unpaid, degrading, dangerous, low-waged and unattractive.

The Real Work's framing of current and complex American economic context is not just left at the metaphorical level, somewhere behind the represented. *The Real Work* is a thoughtful, documentary film by Jamie McCallum that opens a new way of thinking about work in the social economy sector and capital accumulation in America today. Compared to other social justice documentaries from 2016/2017 this film establishes a narrative line that is related to critically rereading the context of political economy - specifically not through grand economic narratives of history, but through personal focalizations and experience of few people: workers, diggers, real flesh and blood subjects and their stories.

At the beginning, the audience is easily involved into the personal standpoints of the

subjects. I am going to present the “political” and “economic” views from this film, through three diggers “voices”. The first digger is a carpenter (see Figure 1). He says that one could



not go away from the projects when the job comes and one is not in the position and does not have an option to reject the job when it comes, even if he does not like it. The second digger says that the point of work is not to do what you love, but to support yourself, to be able to make for a living. The third digger is a woman, she is a personal care attendant. She works hard to survive with a low paid job. She feels like she is hurting herself and her family. Through her we see the direct state of body discipline in capitalism and the forcing of the body in economic terms of utility to be productive, but at the same time to be a subjected body. She finds working for a low paid job meaningless, but she is thankful that the job she has been doing means more to someone else than it does to her.

Figure 1. Scene from *The Real Work*.

The body of the worker(s) as an artefact is important in this film, at socio-political and cultural level of interpretation; it is extended outward from each worker. J. McCallum is focused on the idea of the “body of the worker” as political and economic semantic field of the sign that designates the body in the specific social group in society (that is, the group of manual workers, health care workers). In sociological and culturological sense, when listening to the third (female) digger, we see her (see Figure 2) trying to find the reason for doing low paid hard work, while she is split between herself and her family. Here, one of the basic implicit questions that McCallum opens through her is how the concept of the body mat-

ters for the labor theory against capitalism? In socio-culturological context, the body of the worker in this film feels society's pressure; it is used to fill the gaps of non-sense of doing exploitative hard work. The third female narrator is moving her body, digging, while talking about the need to work, to earn for life. This scene represents the social body whose movement is regulated by society's system of authority, understood in the sense as posited by Foucault¹; this female body replaces the whole pain inside her by using her physical body to work for life. The focus here is on the strengthening of the idea about the body - out of the physical capacity of doing the hard work. This scene is one of the most powerful in the film. Work here is understood as a "punishment" that has to make use not only of the (female) body for low paid work, but of the economic representation of the society, because that body is not so much the subject of pain but the object of a representation. As anthropologists discover subjects that are exploited, established in the visual socio-logical forms, this scene opens the core talk

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 130.

about wage, and thus makes the work visible.² *The Real Work* redefines the terrain of socio-culturological and economic determination of the body, while at the same time it shows how doing (hard) work is the way to be included into the legitimate protocols of *visible labor* in society.



Figure 2. Scene from *The Real Work*.

At visual-technical level, this documentary is opened to the critical thinking of the film diegesis in socio-culturological context. Jamie McCallum makes the relationships between all workers, he deals with the de/framing of

² Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework* (Bristol: Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975), 5.

their voices and it is in this way that he builds his specific aesthetics and politics reception effect to the audience. Hence, the radical act in this video essay is that J. McCallum spreads the radical critique of the current capitalist society in a way that he takes the economic plot from the empiric frames in American economic society, and puts in subjects/actants/workers/diggers with no pretensions to show what is "real," but to follow the personal and emotional commitment of the workers. Jamie McCallum points to the low wage hard work as the "Real," that is, "traumatic experience,"³ and we are unable to integrate it in our daily reality when we say "real". That is the power of his expression.

The Real Work actualizes Marxist and post-Marxist interpretations in contemporary political theory; Jamie McCallum is sensitive to the dissensual politics that defines itself through the perceptual matrix of social theory of labor, in a way that suspends neoliberal forms of domination and enters a "radical democratic" terrain of labor via giving space to the voices of resistance. The subjects in *The Real Work* are *auctorial*, which means that J. McCallum has left the plot to unfold through them in the focalization diegesis, without the author's interventions. These diggers are im-

pressive witnesses of the fury of the history of precarious work, longing for basic labor rights. For some of the workers, doing hard work is a central aspect of their identity, for others shoveling dirt in an empty field reminds them of others, jobs they found socially useless, meaningless, or degrading. In the depth of every narrator's/digger's voice lays the understandable anger of Jamie McCallum, mixed with sepia toning, on low paid jobs, as just another day of bare survival.

Cultural studies, political theory of cinema and political sociology syllabi could take *The Real Work* as documentary related to the interpretations of the "libidinal economy" of the "holes". The spectator follows the idea that doing hard work is symbolically showed, via *digging holes*. The students in cultural studies and political sociology could discuss the "holes" in this film as a proto-base that could open the question: Does working a hard job today leads us to nowhere? Is the digging with no aim? Is it a ride without an answer? The question is: to dig, day in and out, until you are capable of doing it. To dig well, or to die.

Music in the video, sky, rainy cold weather, cold hands, the diggers' dry faces are some of the excellent cover frames for the atmosphere in the film. On the one hand, the film could be perceived ultimately as pessimism (as everlasting digging in the hole/the de-flated)

³ Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

rather than systematic organization and thinking against capitalist economic hegemony. On the other hand, *The Real Work* shows that holes could be spacious - they are made of space, they are created only by *an action* upon something; and are ontologically dependent entities (everything begins with a hole, vaginal birth, cosmic black hole; holes, as a matter of life). In this sense, *The Real Work* opens a cinematic door for a different interpretation of a hole, as a space between the human work and the landscape (society); or a hole as a connection to the very Land (as in Tarkovsky's movies, the Zone from *Stalker*); or, as a bridge between life and death (Jesus comes to Lazarus and orders him to rise from the hole). In a visual methodological-sense of social theory, the "holes"/"ruptures" show that they stay *active*, to be covered by the next method (an upcoming better society, for example). In *The Real Work*, the "hole" could be related to the vision of the future of labor's fights/rights, that one cannot be enclosed within any dialectical totality, or logical unity,⁴ between what one does, and what one can do, what one has or what one could have. Beyond the tired voices of workers, there is the voicing-over that sets up the main frame and coloring of this film, i.e., the

workers deserve to work with more dignity and respect for the jobs they are working; there is a moment in the film when the female digger says that the economy today leads people to be afraid of organizing themselves, but we need a change. The struggle against work is to produce *time* to have a life outside work, *outside* our jobs, to strength our community, which does *not* mean to erase the valorization of human activities which have escaped from labor's acts.

The Real Work by Jamie McCallum is an influential video essay that treats economy, unpaid work, social justice inequality, grasping the idea for organizing better conditions for work, regulation, protection of worker's rights, and change in anti-capitalist society in America today. This film would be important for productive analyses of social justice documentaries. Jamie McCallum shows that "real" work stays beyond the monopolization of our lives, beyond exploited forms of waged work performed by workers in the United States,⁵ beyond the uncertain economic future. While we are digging for our life, the life is happening somewhere else, it is outside the hard work, and we are longing to name it, in the dialectic of semblance. There is the "Real" that cannot be reduced to the "fact" into reality. This film should be part of social justice festivals in

⁴ Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, trans. by Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano (New York: Autonomedia and Pluto Press, 1991), 12.

⁵ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), 13.

America and Europe that treat unpaid work and anti-capitalism today.



Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy

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Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy is an open-access, peer-reviewed international journal focused on non-philosophy. Published annually, Oraxiom seeks non-philosophical scholarship in various fields across the humanities, sciences, and arts, as well as in various forms, including audio-visual, literary, and new media experimentations. Its goal is to investigate the current state and the genealogy of François Laruelle's non-philosophy and to further explore the possibility of alternate instantiations of non-philosophy as an applied method of research and practice, not necessarily confined to the work of Laruelle. Alongside academic research, the journal is committed to publishing contributions in experimental formats, including but not limited to creative arts research, theory- and philo-fiction, translations, and documentation of collaborations. Oraxiom also accepts submissions from guest editors for special themed issues. The goal of the journal is to establish a space for the publication of non-philosophy and its iterations.

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