



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

NON-PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS

ART DISARMING
PHILOSOPHY

EDITED BY

STEVEN SHAKESPEARE,

NIAMH MALONE

AND GARY ANDERSON

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Art Disarming Philosophy

Performance Philosophy

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Art Disarming Philosophy

Non-philosophy and Aesthetics

Edited by
Steven Shakespeare, Niamh Malone,
and Gary Anderson

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*The editors would like to dedicate this book to François
Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid.*

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Introduction

In February 2018, an event took place at the TATE Liverpool. François Laruelle, among other eminent invited speakers, addressed a public symposium, the fruit of an ongoing partnership between the gallery and Liverpool Hope University. The symposium itself was followed the next day by a more informal ‘long-table’ discussion of the issues, before Laruelle asked to be taken to see the famous Antony Gormley sculpture installation *Another Place* situated on Crosby beach to the north of Liverpool. There, a great French thinker came face to face with the strange, eerily wistful metal figures as they maintained their relentless gaze towards the ocean, all the while allowing the slow, decaying force of wind and salt water to take its course.

‘Laruelle and art’ became an encounter that day, not just an abstract idea; the whole event turned into a provocation for new encounters of thought and performance for the writer-thinker-performers gathered here, both those present at the original day and those who joined the project as it developed over many months and the course of a global pandemic.

This resulting volume represents a convergence of significant currents in contemporary thought. The first is represented by non-philosophy, pioneered in the work of François Laruelle. The second is, of course, performance philosophy, the theme of the series in which this volume appears.

In this introduction, we outline the reasons for this convergence and give some initial background to why they are being thought and practised together, before summarizing the individual contributions to the book. Briefly, non-philosophy and performance philosophy are not just two separate fields with more or less arbitrary points of comparison and overlap. Rather, they are both ways of enacting thought, in which no dualism is assumed between thought and practice. In fact, it is the implied claim of this volume that to think and practice them together is itself a way of ‘disarming’ the decisions which

philosophy takes to ensure its own mastery. Disarming implies taking away weaponized force, but also charming, enticing, setting once hostile partners on a peaceful path, whose destination is not yet known.

NON-PHILOSOPHY AND PERFORMANCE

In order to understand that claim, we have to give some outline of non-philosophy and its diagnosis of the pitfalls of philosophy. Laruelle has long argued that philosophy is marked by a structure of ‘decision’: philosophy seeks to master reality by determining its divisions, hierarchies and principles. It may distinguish between form and matter, reason and passion, the transcendental and the empirical, the transcendent and the immanent – the possibilities are endless. It decides how reality is structured according to these categories, how they relate, mix and differ. What these ‘decisions’ share is a commitment to philosophy’s own authoritative and determinative status. It is philosophy which presumes to determine the Real.

Laruelle turns this picture on its head; or, more accurately, he evacuates it of its authority and status. He posits that it is the Real which, in the last instance, determines all thinking. And the Real is not and can never be itself an object of that thinking. It is, to use his terminology, ‘foreclosed’ to thought.

Non-philosophy affirms the immanence of thought to the Real. In other words, thinking (including philosophy) is not able to ‘step back’ from everything and get a view of reality as it really is. It cannot circumscribe the Real and state what ‘everything’ is, whether its answer is that everything is thought, matter, difference – or even immanence itself! To say the Real is radically immanent is, in a sense, to say nothing about it except that we cannot get a handle on it. As Anthony Paul Smith puts it, ‘Non-Philosophy is in this way a kind of sobering up from philosophical drunkenness and its attendant harassment of the Real’.¹

This has two immediate consequences. The first is that philosophy cannot itself determine the nature of the Real. Philosophy is an effect of the Real and can provide materials for thinking and intervening in our world. But it has no transcendent authority.

The second consequence is that philosophy cannot reserve the highest tasks of thinking for itself. All human practices – and perhaps nonhuman ones too – are engaged with thinking. Science and art, for example, do not pursue their goals in an unreflective, instrumental or merely ‘practical’ way, waiting for the philosopher or critical theorist to come along to tell them the meaning of what they are thinking, and what the foundation of their knowledge may be. Non-philosophy aims at a democratization of styles of thought.²

Laruelle himself has developed a whole set, or sets of vocabulary to write about this without falling into the pitfalls of philosophical arrogance. The Real is also called ‘the One’, an echo of Neoplatonic thought, in which ‘the One’ is the transcendent principle from which all reality emanates, but which is itself beyond all language and concept.

However, we should not be misled by this: Laruelle is not aiming to reinvigorate a philosophy of transcendence. This is, instead, an example of him using philosophical materials and repurposing them. The idea of ‘the One’ is like other borrowings, such as the notion of determination-in-the-last-instance (Althusser) or immanence (Henry and Deleuze). In each case, what matters is how the term is used to disarm the pretension of philosophy. The One stands as surrogate for that which cannot be thought, that which determines everything, but it will not be fitted into the framework of a transcendent creator, source or being. Such frameworks represent our attempt to master what defies mastery.

Non-philosophy thus has to be endlessly inventive in the way that it takes and uses materials, not only from philosophy, but from other areas of human thinking. This helps to explain why Laruelle is as fascinated by the indeterminacy of quantum phenomena as he is by the fabulations of religion and the fictive power of photography. In engaging with all these areas, his aim is not to produce a ‘philosophy of’ science, religion, art or whatever. It is to experiment with the mutual mutation of styles of thinking, a thought-montage in which no one form of thinking takes precedence.

There is, then, something inherently performative about non-philosophy. The main thesis of Jonathan Fardy’s recent book on Laruelle and art is that ‘Laruelle’s practice of non-philosophy is fundamentally an aesthetic practice even while it is not reducible to aesthetics as defined in the standard sense’.³ As Smith puts it, ‘Laruelle wants to *do something* with philosophy, not choose one philosophy over the other. Non-Philosophy is therefore not a moralism, but a pragmatic’.⁴ Given this, these writers are also clear that we should resist any judgement that non-philosophy is another name for quietistic aestheticism. In its exposure of the philosophical decision, it takes a radical deflationary stance towards the ‘worlds’ we construct and invest with the power to determine the human, and classify the human into its various levels. Oppressive ideologies of class, race and gender share this desire to dominate the flesh and blood of immanent humanity. Non-philosophy allows insurrectionary performance-thoughts to emerge which reveal the contingency of our ‘worlds’ and make another lived reality possible.⁵

Laruelle explores this practice in conjunction with photography. Photography, he argues, needs to be liberated from a framework of ‘representation’, in which its meaning and being are pre-determined by a whole theoretical hierarchy of what is more and less real. Instead, with the Real ‘itself’ foreclosed

to all thought, Laruelle experiments with the notion of *fractal* photography, multiplying surfaces and acts of creation to infinity. Such an endlessly proliferating practice is no longer subject to dualisms of ‘reality-appearance’ or ‘creator/artist – spectator/consumer’. It is a serious ‘play of diverging and converging lines’. As Laruelle writes:

This fractal artist demands – it is even the unique imperative that governs all of his texts – that his viewer or reader is fractalized in turn; that the great force of irregularity traverses him; that he ceases to ‘read’ to set himself to producing fractality in his turn. You yourself are also a wall for writing, not only a surface or a becoming of thought, but a self-similar grain of writing.⁶

This is a wild and exuberant thinking-as-performance. It evokes echoes of the past of philosophy, the undercurrent which runs from Socratic dialogues, to Hermetic and occult treatises, Kierkegaard’s indirect authorship (which aims to make the reader ‘self-active’), Nietzsche’s aphoristic ecstasies, Irigaray’s sexed dialogues, Butler’s gender performativity.⁷ Without assimilating all these disparate works to an overarching narrative, we can find in them what Laruelle calls ‘a continuity of echoes, of resonances, of vibrations between the different levels of reality’, while conserving the radical immanence of the ‘form of the real’.⁸

This is anything but a return to the notion of the heroic artist-as-creator. Creativity takes place in confident humility: a letting-go of the power to represent or to impose form on to the Real. Writing of the Real as ‘Identity’, Laruelle argues that this Identity is ‘in-the last-instance’: it is not a cause or object given to thought, and therefore:

We have to let it think itself; to stop hanging over it philosophically and putting ourselves in its place; to accompany instead, at its own level, Identity’s experience of thought and to confine ourselves to describing it, to manifesting it *as such*, without claiming to constitute or transform it through this operation, which must be a pure ‘reflection-without-mirror’.⁹

In this way, artificial distinctions between thinking, art and science must also be challenged: science’s ‘realism’ is not that of grasping the Real as objective and necessary in a superior (or inferior) way, but of allowing the contingency of the world to show itself, to allow new knowledges to emerge but never simply become final thoughts of the Real: ‘Science is the thought that remobilizes these presumed properties of the object as knowledge and makes them serve as materials for other, more universal knowledges’.¹⁰ Science and art are mobilizations, fractalizations, proliferations of contingent materials, absent of any myth of the Artist or Scientist as a transcendent creator.

It is hard to do justice to Laruelle's thought here. This is not simply because of its complexity, density and creativity with terminology, but because his texts are themselves performative, seeking a consistency of form that allows immanence to *be*. However, we can begin to grasp the fruitfulness of non-philosophy, not as another theory 'of' art or performance, but as an invitation to relativize definitions and hierarchies of performance and philosophy, to destabilize worlds and finalities, and so to inaugurate new art-thoughts. As Fardy puts it, 'Rather than elaborating a set of criteria for aesthetic judgement, non-aesthetics catalyzes an itinerary of speculation'.¹¹ It is in this spirit that the contributions to this present volume are offered.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

François Laruelle's opening provocation 'Art Saved or Destroyed by Its Works' (translated by Anthony Paul Smith) asks us to 'assume an aesthetic modelled by quantum physics' in order to escape from the model of art as aesthetic object. In other words, if art is to be saved by its works it would 'no longer be a reflection of art before quantum physics but it will be in a position to do it better and understand it differently'. If we are philosophers of the quantum age – as Laruelle claims – then we must move away from the 'specular reflections of the works of our age', the domination of representation and the mastery of theory over the Real. Quantum physics is no new master theory of art, let alone the Real. Instead, the quantum conjugation of art and philosophy promises strange entanglements, in which neither party is subordinate to the other or to some third 'resolution' of the two. Art and philosophy are practised in irreducibly indeterminate collusions. Such collisions can always be co-opted, and Laruelle is always mindful of the materiality of the art object or its fixing by the processes of the art-market. Rather than saving art by giving it an exalted aesthetic status and mystique (which is to continue to play the game of determining art by theory or commerce), art as undetermined by the quantum 'appears when coherence resonates in decoherence'. Laruelle proposes an interdisciplinary encounter that is at once rigorous and weird, no longer following the rigid mechanistic rules of Newtonian causality and motion: 'I propose that we interpret art as an intervention of quantum non-objectivity (its forms, collision, microscopic multiplicity, entanglement, the non-locality of its flux or of its waves and particles) within the macroscopic sphere'. In various forms and modes, the essays that follow trace the lines of such strange entanglements, experimenting as they do with whatever they can lay their hands on.

We open our responses to Laruelle's provocation with John Ó Maoilearca's 'Out of the Ordinary: On Laruelle and the Mystic Performances of

Mina Bergson'. Ó Maoilearca traces a history of Henri Bergson's sister Mina and her place in the avant-garde theatre of her day and as leading occultist in the 'Alpha et Omega' mystical order of the 'Belle Époque'. Drawing parallels between Bergson's 'realism' and Mina's mysticism, Ó Maoilearca's exploration of 'spooky philosophy' (following on from his earlier work on 'supernormalization' and 'time travel') asks if Laruelle's 'democracy of thought' is useful in providing a means by which to think of the mystical as equal to other modes of thought. The parallels with Henri Bergson's thought illuminate his sister's place in a European history of ideas but also advocate that she be used as a case study for the relevance of Laruelle's non-standardizing philosophical project.

Following on from Ó Maoilearca is Hannah Lammin's 'Performing Non-human Language: "Humanity" in Ron Athey's Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing'. Lammin explores how Laruelle's non-philosophy as a 'practice of language' (or 'non-linguistics') nevertheless operates aesthetically and carries part of the responsibility of the potential success of the project of non-philosophy. Drawing on Ron Athey's performance work and Alan Turing's 1950 paper 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' – both in dialogue with Laruelle's 'The Transcendental Computer: A Non-Philosophical Utopia' – Lammin makes a case for 'experience' and its effects on subjectivity in order to produce a more convincing understanding of non-philosophy's image of thought. Lammin demonstrates that it is probably the 'philo-fiction' of Laruelle which guarantees the equality of modes of thought, while the experience of thought itself is powerfully and radically performative.

From Ó Maoilearca and Lammin's positional pieces we move to Anne-Françoise Schmid and Alice Rekab's exploration of the possibility of art disarming philosophy by way of the art object itself in 'Art and Philosophy: New Solidarities'. Schmid memorably claims 'I am a philosopher and non-philosopher, therefore a creator of intermediate axioms' and together with Rekab, Schmid creates a new concept for this essay calling it 'the integrative object'. Presented via various formats: photography, dialogue and critical analysis, this essay asserts there is a new function for an object caught between the worlds of art and philosophy and that function is best described as one of solidarity with the project of disarming authority and 'the philosophical decision', after Laruelle. This essay invites the reader to immerse themselves in the world of the 'integrative object' in order to produce a set of definitional, ethical and finally unanswerable questions.

After the integrative object we turn to a 'thinking alongside' with Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca's 'Done Dying: Thinking alongside Every House Has a Door'. This opens with an invitation to consider 'bewilderment' and extends that invitation to 'think alongside' *Every house has a door* – a Chicago-based performance company directed by Liz Hixson. Cull Ó Maoilearca experiments

with ‘the creation of a mode of art-thought that is determined by, but does not seek to be determining of the thinking that belongs to the performance itself’. Bringing in Laruellean notions of the ‘democracy of thought’ we are taken on a journey through different writing registers, visual arrangements and poetics in order to think non-standardly in relation to performance-making, but also, crucially, performance writing. Cull Ó Maoilearca’s experiment in performance writing culminates in a call for ‘interspecies collaborations that qualitatively extend the human across new scales of space and time’.

Extending the problematic of anthropocentric decision-making we move to Niamh Malone’s essay ‘Beyond Judgement: Non-philosophy and Arts Intervention for People Living with Dementia’. This deploys Laruellean thought to undo the medicalized logic of diagnoses of dementia. With long-standing experience in Applied Theatre and dementia care, Malone traces the anthropic ‘enlightenment’ ideas of identity alongside contemporary notions of medicalization and big pharma commercial interests to advocate for change in care for those living with dementia. Laruellean thought, especially his opposition to ‘the philosophical decision’, could pave the way for Applied Theatre practitioners to rethink their approaches to dementia care, as indeed Malone’s theatre company ‘Forgotten Futures’ has done for the past decade. Malone deliberately turns things upside down where an application or ‘the living process’ becomes the centre and subject of thinking, rather than an object which has to be theorized.

Objects requiring theorization are given stark treatment in Edia Connole and Brad Baumgartner’s ‘Towards a New Genealogy of Performance Philosophy: Georges Bataille, General Economy and Quantum Mechanical Complementarity’. Here, they ask if a parallel could be drawn between Laruelle’s intention in ‘Art Saved or Destroyed by Its Works’ and Bohr’s experiments in quantum mechanics. Deploying Bataille’s theories on general economy and Plotnitsky’s notion of complementarity, the authors explore whether it is possible to engage critically in an object from two ‘complementary’ positions, both of which include the viewer’s participation as catalyst. To demonstrate this, the essay sets out two modes of writing, the more traditionally logocentric ‘academic’ and the experimental/poetic. What ensues is a complementarity of dialogue(s) across which insights emerge into the work of Bohr, Laruelle’s ‘untidy’ use of quantum theory and a potential alternative starting point for performance theory.

From an alternative beginning for philosophy of performance to an experiment in writing about art, Annalaura Alifuoco asks if art can disarm philosophy in ‘Non-art and Other Non-philosophical Relations: An Essay on Fugitive Plasticity’. Or more specifically, if this writer’s art can disarm the traditional authorities associated with art criticism in a way which resonates with Laruelle’s project of non-standard philosophy. The parallel drawn here is

not made explicit in the text but becomes apparent after an immersed reading. The essay unfolds meticulously but also playfully and poetically beginning with a series of grounded positions from Catherine Malabou on ‘wonder’ and plasticity and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten on ‘study’ in a consideration of affect-relations in Brazilian artist Lygia Clark’s work from the 1970s and 1980s. The essay self-consciously deploys a linguistic prowess which begs the indulgence of the reader but rewards them with an answer to the question (which is posed in the opening paragraph): ‘Can multivocal articulations plan pragmatic procedures of reciprocal refigurations?’ Alifucoco’s essay itself is the answer on offer here.

From reciprocal refigurations to invocations of philo-fictional dialogue, Gary Anderson’s ‘Laruelle Prefers Heresy to Revolution: From Non-philosophy to Live Art’ stages a pretend debate about heresy between Laruelle and Bill Talen (AKA Rev Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping). Partly based on conversations Anderson has had with Talen and Laruelle, the essay asks if there are any useful insights available to Live Art/performance art generated from the assumption that to do eco-activist work successfully, it’s probably useful to adopt the theoretical position of radical immanence – a la Laruelle (after Deleuze). This would include, in Anderson’s view, a critical development of Lois Keidan’s key insight that ‘Live Art [and, for Anderson, eco-activism] is the “non-method” of the performing arts and deserves further non-standardizing attention.

We close the book with a call for insurrection from Steven Shakespeare’s ‘The Generative Tone: Musical Disruptions of Philosophy’s Tissue’. Shakespeare makes a case for the musical doubling of non-philosophy from Laruelle’s assertion that ‘music is the placenta which has to give birth to non-philosophy’. Shakespeare thinks ‘from’ not ‘of’ music and in so doing invites the reader to immerse themselves in Norwegian black metal ‘classic’ album *Revelations of the Black Flame* by 1349. Music is here invoked ‘in all its immanent, fleshly sufficiency’ in order to advocate for a gnostic vision, distinct from the ‘cosmic harmonies’ approach often preferred by scholars of music and music theory from Platonism to idealism. Ultimately, Shakespeare’s approach allows the reader to encounter music not as object of thought but as a mode or expression. In other words, after Laruelle, music becomes a clone of the unconditioned Real which is inaccessible to conceptual mastery. Shakespeare, like Laruelle, maintains that from this position philosophical insurrection is performed.

NOTES

1. Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (London: Polity, 2016), 15.

2. See John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
3. Jonathan Fardy, *Laruelle and Art: The Aesthetics of Non-philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), x.
4. Smith, *Laruelle*, 18.
5. For a consideration of the 'utopian' dimensions of non-philosophical performance, see Fardy, *Laruelle and Art*, especially chapter 3.
6. François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), 126–7.
7. For a substantive assemblage of developments of this conversation, see the two volumes by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca and Alice Lagaay (eds): *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020) and *Encounters in Performance Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
8. Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, 130.
9. François Laruelle, *Theory of Identities* trans. Alyosha Edlebi (New York: Columbia University Press), 55.
10. Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, 179.
11. Fardy, *Laruelle and Art*, 74.

Chapter 1

Art Saved or Destroyed by Its Works

François Laruelle

(Translated by Anthony Paul Smith)

The close integration of the theory of art within art itself or of art within its theory is only a viable objective when great care is taken. Before being a 'conceptual art', art has, from a distance, a similarity with the concept and with 'philosophical' knowledge through an innumerable amount of different kinds of distance about which artists and aestheticians decide and that go from the Platonic scale to the various encyclopaedic systems of the fine arts.

We are proposing a 'non-standard' distribution that no longer decides upon philosophy alone despite it always being present but with a new function that is more complex and more reserved, its decision function is replaced by a discipline that is at once modelling and materializing. This disruption is due to the introduction of quantum modelling as one of the principal factors of the intelligibility of contemporary art in its essence, obviously not of this or that particular work and any more than of this particular aesthetic. Quantum theory does not have immediately perceptible effects in art today but has to work concurrently with philosophy towards the general understanding of art. Most aesthetics fashion art as a work that is double or as a very largely specular philosophical reflection of the object of knowledge or even of the common sense that is very close to it. An accepted rule for us regarding the genesis of art is to start as far away as possible from philosophy and from the *principle of aesthetic sufficiency* that extends knowledge to the theory of art and from *what remains of the dialectic and metaphysics within it*. Art is nothing like this retouched, complete or improved reflection of the object and yet it remains within the domain of the accessible real. The problem is not only of a new form of art, that of our age, in a parallel style to a new science that would be specifically of 'our time', but rather it is a problem of a new understanding of art that is too often attached and limited to the art of our age. Let us assume an aesthetic modelled by quantum physics, it would no longer

be a reflection of art before quantum physics but it will be in a position to do it better and understand it differently. We are philosophers of the quantum age, not artists of this age; the comprehensible power of this theory is on this condition, which does not mean that the theory comes before the products of its age but that it comes from elsewhere and from higher and more intelligible principles. We must explain 'our' art not independently of it but from higher theoretical principles that will no longer be the specular reflections of the works of our age. A theory can be of a different order than its object without this object being less interesting than the theory, being of a different genre. Art as a historical reality and its theory are not identical or reflections of each other, this is the minimal condition for theory to render itself relevant or of another order than its objects. We will therefore distinguish the possible art world as constituted by a simple fourfold of philosophical causalities of which only one or two (the designer and the viewer, form and matter) would refer to a person or an individual, and a system of structurally necessary functions that undoubtedly constitute the system of the four causes under the authority of philosophy but within the even more general horizon of quantum physics. This is to cease considering the art world as an anonymous objectivity, it requires a point of view that encompasses even that of philosophy, yet one that is far and beyond aesthetics, a non-standard aesthetics with a fused double condition, quantum and philosophical.

1. The artist-in-the-world within the materials whose work in the narrow sense of the object is constituted and which summons the Aristotelian four causes to do this.
2. The standard aesthetician who classifies this work according to the genres, materials, forms and styles, sets the norms and promotes an understanding of art in this strict sense, but through this philosophical activity inseparably belongs within *our* enlarged conception of aesthetics, of material in the broad sense but as such remains phenomenologically orientated over the work as an object in the strict sense.
3. Finally, at the extremes on both sides of this close duality, the dealer who takes the object in the strict sense to the market and treats it as a commodity.
4. The non-standard aesthetician for whom the genesis of art returns on the basis of the quantum modelling of its aesthetically or strictly described procedures. The non-standard aesthetician puts the sufficient philosopher back into the position of the mediator between the tradition and the business within which art is inscribed, but they fulfil a more universal, generic and determining function than that of the philosopher. The importance of the art market and the works that belong intrinsically to the so-called sphere of art, to its world, cannot be overemphasized. The

dealer is symmetrical to the non-standard aesthetician who is himself distinct from the philosopher. It is obvious that art is saved or lost for him too by its 'works'. But we still do not have the most powerful overdetermined point of view, that of the possible quantum horizon of the work.

AESTHETICS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE QUANTUM: FROM THE META-ARTIST TO THE NON-ARTIST

Let us assume, this being our most generally accessible hypothesis, that, rather than a philosophical understanding, a quantum one takes art for an object or its possibility. This would of course be a theoretical work, but maybe, this being our real question, one that is overall equivalent to a real artistic process that, this time, would no longer suffer from the habitual or mimetically excessive philosophical spectrality of the various works. We are asking if an aesthetics of a quantum and non-specular essence is possible like the philosophical ones, or if this objective remains at once still a theory or a commentary by the receiver? More generally, can aesthetic theory be itself performative and artistic with this change in condition? Are we obviously looking for a justification for the philosopher-of-art being himself an artist in the end, while remaining a theorist but this time quantum in his practice? Philosophy, under classical objectives, that of Being at best or as ontology, will respond that this is impossible. Is a quantum intervention into this problem, far from the usual philosophical rationality, definitively absurd and irrelevant [*sans objet*]? This is the problem or challenge we are trying to settle here.

Traditional philosophy itself accepts that the philosopher competes with the artist and presents himself as a transcendental or superior artist or scientist, as a super-artist or super-scientist, gaining access to the meta-dimension, being a meta-artist or meta-scientist, especially if he conceives of himself as a meta-philosopher, or even a super-philosopher, all concepts at the limit of tautology or pleonasm. However, philosophy does not dare to elucidate with clarity this step beyond, this objective which seems to be our own where the artist or the scientist would be a non-philosopher but motivated this time by a quantum determination. Philosophy refuses to abandon its Newtonian horizon, Kant being a paradigmatic example. But, within the quasi-quantum conception of aesthetics that we are going to develop, this possibility of a quantum modification of the transcendent is no longer a forbidden game or an accidental property of philosophy, it should be the essence of its function. What we are dealing with is a rebellion of science against its philosophico-Newtonian servitude, a rebellion that must progress from there to win art, ethics and other sectors of activity, even religion which must yet assist at great heights the kind of works that are required to operate in philosophy.

We will not confuse our project of a philosopher as non-artist, becoming such following a process in which the quantum defeats the sufficiency of the 'meta-' descended straight from the Platonic 'epekeina'. Now the non-artist is the philosopher or what remains of him, resulting from the fusion of philosophy and art, a fusion that is not evidently ordinary or on equal terms but under-determined by the quantum.

We are realizing the still metaphysical Nietzschean ideal of the philosopher-as-artist in a more weakened form for philosophy and perhaps richer in conceptual investment for art.

This new balance assumes a scientific intervention on each of its plateaus, lightening the philosophical, making the artistic heavy, without it being a transfer of the same weight or even the same gain from one to the other in the name of a quantitative justice. A judge must come to us from an unknown locality, he cannot be delegated by the Kantian tribunal of reason as one who has already decided in advance and finally before even being sent, benefiting the party of philosophy even when he has to settle a case where art is at stake and protests, because he believes to know in advance and a priori all the facts and particulars of the problem. But it is another judge who arrives at the stop, he is a scientist but not of any discipline, he is a 'quantician' who can listen differently, in a different way, to the two parties, but without assuming them equal, and take alternatively the point of view of one and the other, to engage in this way with a double inverse judgement, each of the parties having to submit to the non-equality or the non-commutativity of these two judgements. However, it cannot be a question of a strict equality of the variable of philosophy and art as each remain heterogenous activities. We will assume a subject=X to be determined who is neither a philosopher nor an artist in the ordinary or exclusive sense, but capable of assuming these two types of acts as two properties that define it. The end of the process will see the unexpected emergence of this subject under one or the other of these unpredictable determinations. A random emergence that can only be probable, at least from the moment when one assumes a discipline of the quantum kind constituted and not of a philosophical type or proceeding by analysis and synthesis. This is not a matter of a 'conceptual art' that has the merit nevertheless of attempting an assemblage, but one that is naïve and lacking rigour. We are looking for a scientific discipline of the non-aesthetic that, as a discipline must be characterized as positive through its productive procedure either for a philosopher or for an artist, neither of which is completely foreign to the other. Yet there is nothing here of an alternative that comes with an exclusion (either . . . or . . .), it is necessary to understanding positively that what is produced is either a philosopher-artist or an artist-philosopher, complex and mixed entities which do not indifferently amount to the same thing in a near inversion. It is from within this complex quantum perspective, with this kind of modelling, that

we can hope to reconcile the philosopher as an artist or the artist as a philosopher, without exclusion or an improper synthesis. We must abandon the Nietzschean ideal of the philosopher realizing himself as an artist through exclusively philosophical means or the artist realizing himself as a philosopher through his own means. We will term this conjugation or its modes a non-aesthete or non-standard philosopher of art. Regarding the meta-artist as a philosophical ideal or non-artist, one cannot say that he is neither a 'mere' aesthete and even less a 'mere' artist. We seem to have bypassed the obstacle of disciplinary segregation. The latter isolates the artist from an authentic philosophy which is not just there for convenient borrowing, such as a theoretical complement or a prosthesis. But it also isolates the philosopher from the works he is doomed to contemplate nostalgically, sometimes elevating art to a height of an inaccessible paradigm, and sometimes crashing it into phenomenality and imitation, sometimes lowering it until it is a stop or secondary activity in the coming of the Concept.

Have we managed to present a certain kind of philosopher as 'intrinsically' an artist as we wanted to? Or have we remained bogged down in the discrepancy of the subject and object as, emerging within philosophy, it proliferates in a multitude of forms in both directions desperately searching after a synthesis? Above all, we have laid out our reasons to wager on the quantum model and reject the overdetermining philosophical model. Transforming the philosopher subject and the 'art' object under the right conditions of the quantum model of experimentation is an absolute condition for proceeding in this way. We can then admit that henceforth between these two types of particles or sets of properties, some conceptual and some artistic, there is an entanglement or a non-separability that fulfils the philosopher's objective as an artist and vice versa. Obviously, it is necessary to pass from a macroscopic plane to a microscopic plane, from acts and object as corpuscular phenomenon to totally new kinds of objects. Some will object that all of this is very heavy recourse to metaphor by way of the real work of quantum physics. However, we are very close to the solution.

Up to now we have set out a theoretical problem and have above all expounded upon it in a philosophical or macroscopic fashion as necessary to carry out the critique of philosophy in particular. We have utilized the quantum decoherence in order to critique it, contrasting art as a particular object to the philosophical object. But another way of doing things is possible if we take into consideration those two becomings that happen between coherence and decoherence in the quantum sense. It seems, at least at first glance, that contemporary art lends itself more easily than earlier eras to an interpretation that activates these two becomings concurrently. If this hypothesis proves to be relevant, which means effective, it would become possible to say that contemporary art, as art and not as a philosophy that reflects on it, is the 'fusion'

of coherence, meaning of the quantum, and of decoherence, meaning of philosophy. Art is still philosophy, at least as an ingredient, but commensurate to the work and without self-reflection. Philosophy, without being totally excluded but only such as it is reflexive, would not be a relevant interpretation of this art as we had originally thought of that attempt. The quantum would no longer be it, either because it would no longer be hidden by the return of philosophy, as long as it would throw the quantum *and* philosophy into a fight no longer controlled by philosophy but where the quantum would be the apparent master because it only understands itself as becoming decoherent from the coherence which remains its law, that of the genesis of decoherence, a law that is no longer hidden now by philosophical decoherence. Instead of placing philosophy and art in confrontation with one another, a confrontation that is already decidedly philosophical, art is thinkable this time from itself as connecting the quantum and the philosophical. We have come here by way of a detour through Marxism and the hypothesis that the quantum is a productive force (PF) that may have to do, alongside philosophy, with art.

MARX WITH PLANCK (THE QUANTUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND AESTHETICS)

Starting from the most general Marxist matrix, let us posit that the fusion of PFs and the relations of production (RP) take place under RP. We assume two hypotheses, that the quantum is from now on the principal or driving PF within the circle of techno-scientifico-economic PF, but that it is also such in a much more unexpected mode in the genesis of contemporary art, philosophy remaining the principal RP within the circle of ideologico-political RP and particularly within art. Through the quantum this renews the matrix elaborated in Marx and then in non-philosophy since we have invested it in the production of contemporary art which is better understood under quantum conditions, and in general within the transformation of Marxism itself. This is a renewal which begins as soon as we posit the quantum and philosophy as the extreme givens of the problem.

The fusion that is art is thus that of the PF and the RP carried out with new driving variables, a fusion determined by intensification and multiplication either by one or the other of the variables. What effects will this complex matrix produce? There will be two ways to make it work, it and its variables depending on whether we deduce a genesis of art or more broadly a genesis of 'quantified' Marxism or 'non-Marxism'. In both cases, with art on the one hand, with the renewal of Marxism on the other, the relations of the quantum and philosophy will not be the same. Despite this common root, this quantum physics/philosophy dimension that one finds in the two cases treated here,

we will not conclude that non-Marxism and art, meaning 'contemporary non-art' strictly speaking, are identical even though both are produced under a dominant quantum condition. Non-Marxism is not absorbed into a historical form of art, it is relevant far beyond this sphere, and contemporary art in its unbridled diversity is not exhausted in a 'non-Marxist' interpretation and even less in an old-Marxist interpretation. In the case of art, there is an *immediate fusion* of PF/RP, quantum physics/philosophy and its elevation by quantum PF, but with the result that there is the relative lowering of this fusion in relation to philosophical RP within which they are included. In the second case, Marxism itself is also renewed in its problematic, always as a two-variable matrix, but this time as a *non-immediate fusion* of the quantum or principal PF and philosophy as principal RP.

For this fusion, which is art under a quantum condition, there are two possible solutions according to the intensified variable, quantum as PF or philosophy as RP. The fusion then *would be* thinkable as overdetermined by philosophy, or as determined, more precisely, as under-determined by the quantum in relation to the previous solution. This under-determination would be the condition so that upon the field of confrontation that the work of art is, the quantum does not appear as a variable overdetermining the fusion but as a second variable that can be conjugated with philosophy but with a lesser effect or at least less heterogeneous than it. Certainly, this interpretation as we have just formulated it in its generality, in the conditional, is particularly true for the Marxism produced under a quantum condition, it is necessary to be more specific about it and to adjust it to the case here of the production of art under a quantum condition and so understanding the form of its bringing low and generally of this balance of determination. So, we now take the case of art under a quantum condition in order to try and understand how this 'immediate fusion' is 'lowered' in relation to the philosophy of art.

It is easy to say that the fusion of two variables must be overcome by one of them, but we will be suspicious of the immediate appearances if in the two opposing solutions each term intervenes twice or is redoubled. Here there is an appearance that leads to a false interpretation of the matrix, at least as regards art. Philosophy was already indeed in itself a doublet (empirico/apriori and apriorico/transcendental), so it would then intervene three times and would be overdetermining, while the quantum would intervene only twice, once as a simple or unreflective kind of variable and a second time as redoubled, therefore it would finally be, even as redoubled, under-determining or weakening of the fusion, measuring in terms that can be here presupposed by philosophy. Philosophy is always already in itself an overcoming, it is not reduced to a simple or unreflective form as there is a non-reflected form of the quantum equation. It is therefore only the quantum that, despite this overcoming that it also carries out, cannot overdetermine like philosophy can

but produces an under-determination of *their fusion* if we measure it according to philosophical overcoming. The paradox is that this quantum under-determination is obtained syntactically by the same process as philosophical overcoming, interior and exterior to the fusion, it is also an overcoming but only a quantum or unreflective one, so undoubtedly a raising up but one that comes later or does not go as far as what is *normally* carried out by philosophy in the plenitude of its constitution. Does philosophy 'normally' operate in art with all its means against [*face à*] the quantum if there is between them an immediate fusion?

We will understand art as a 'low-lying' [*surbaissée*] fusion, it is lowered in relation to philosophy although it is elevated within this lowering. Art is the immediate fusion of the quantum and philosophy at least as a sensible and simple transcendence or one without doublet, hesitant, floating, without a higher synthesis reinforced or reaffirmed by philosophy linking the set of particulars into a single packet of phenomena, art does not re-intervene twice (nor three times in total as within the construction of Marxism) but intervenes once as simple and non-reflective. Art is an interpenetration or an immediate entanglement but one for analysing variables without returning to one or the other over their fusion, hence the precarity of the work's oscillating between the fall into the object and the aesthetic shock or collision. It is true that it is in great heights that beauty plays out but as a great calm and serenity in the elevation.

More simply, art as a fusion is the object of an elevation or a multiplication by two possible kinds of transcendence that are qualitatively heterogenous but which have their common root in their fusion. It is necessary to admit that if they both draw on the common fund of their fusion, which forbids their numerical identity, these two forms of transcendence will also be linked outside of this fusion of roots, linked by their branches, philosophical transcendence from now on no longer launching forward under its own impulse but under the impulse of the quantum which is its launcher and which, like every launcher, having taken flight, having put itself in the immanence of the flight, stops working at some point and abandons to its impulse the module that it has just launched. Over- and under-determination are no longer numerically distinct, absolute and opposable movements to each other. Under-determination is on the whole understood here as the in-flight of determination, the conjugation of an energy in the short term (transcendence or the quantum flight) and a flight (the module) which results without them overlapping each other, prohibiting any mechanical relationship. If we call a vector the complex of a launcher and an arrow or module, the non-commutativity is already present within the vector radically understood as immanent im-pulse, as the *in*-pulse of an impulse or as the in-flight included within the flight. The

immanent dynamic of under-determination prohibits any merely mechanistic conception.

SUPERIMPOSITION OR THE NON-AESTHETIC CLOUD: THE DISTRIBUTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART AS DATA OF THE ART 'CLOUD'

For the hypothesis concerning contemporary art, a hypothesis with a double condition, genetic rather than descriptive and inductive, concerned with the quantically and philosophically fused production of contemporary art, it is necessary, from the point of view of quantum modelling, and even for what is a theoretical process, one equivalent to the indeterminate superimposition of what is given, as a place of theoretical immanence and then as an equivalent of the a priori or a prioris which form the minimal quantum out of which there is an aesthetics that is also artistic, a theory which is also a work of art, one that is obviously without metaphor which makes this fusion of art and the theory of art easier. Suppose then that we treat the aesthetic theory itself in a quantum way.

Superimposition is representation in the form of vectors of givens that are empirical, material and even as acts necessary for a work, and so of the four-fold of its causes, they therefore form treated superposed states, reason (factum) or a transcendental 'aesthetic cloud', being the element that precedes and contains under an undetermined form all potentialities of the possible combinations of various kinds of form and matter, of agents and acts. The properly aesthetic criteria then come into play, this implementation or 'putting to work' follows from this affect that begins with an already aesthetic cloud or an aesthetic affect that is an indeterminate cloud as a collection of directions and projection, of actions and gestures, of various kinds of form and matter, it is of art still not mastered but it is the feeling, the 'mood for art', the affect of the work to be made which will result from a progressive choice or the bifurcations of solutions. In what way is this cloud not theoretical but aesthetic, or is there already here a first determination in this sense? But maybe this is a false problem, because is it the case that within this cloud everything is possible, theoretically and artistically? Yet, indetermination is here fundamental and this is already a more complex under-determination than this cloud. From this indetermination we can move towards theory or towards art. As a quantum superimposition of the potentialities of art and aesthetics, this being a kind of concrete transcendental sketch, this transcendental cloud contains these possibilities, this is the factum of artistic reason containing the Marxism fusion but extended and generalized to other

particular givens within the cloud of art which generalizes the simple Marxist fusion of PF and RP that we have already discussed.

'PUTTING TO WORK' (NON-LOCALITY, NON-SEPARABILITY AND NON-COMMUTATIVITY OF THE ONTOLOGICAL VARIABLES OF THE WORK): THE (LIMITED) ONTOLOGICAL INDETERMINATION OF ART

So, we must consider the stage of 'putting to work' properly said of this material or this generality of superimpositions. Is it here where the work begins and art properly so-called is produced, its variables or its aprioris? A form and some matter, undoubtedly, which are for the moment categories but ones susceptible to variations. The work is a subject = X that supports a form and some matter which are both a priori, under the form of two inverse products where the matter is dominant in the one and form is dominant in the other. But there is something deeper than this duality, that of the quantum entanglement on the one hand, and on the other hand the distance enlarged or also interpreted by philosophy (as a mixture of transcendence and immanence).

We are looking for a universal art for all of the arts, a meta-theory or meta-philosophy of art (generic through under-determination). Our goal is now to look for the criterion of art if there is one, but there may not be one, or no more than what is within science itself. At the very least we are looking for the threshold where we enter into the sphere of art, where it is the quantum that penetrates into philosophy in an art-specific way, of the order of a shock or of the 'unilateral collusion' (cf. see below) or of the superimposition of quantum science and the philosophical aesthetics of the object (more precisely than, as we said before, the fusion of art and philosophical aesthetics, which is a vicious repetition). Here there is no philosophical sort of repetition of the theories of art but rather a non-aesthetics or a non-standard aesthetics, as a collision of the complex number or quantum algebra and the philosophy of the object. The two variables are therefore the circle of the concept and the imaginary complex specific to the quantum. This results not in a mere fusion but in two inverted products through the intensification of the quantum or philosophy, which would result either in materialism or a super-philosophy.

Here we have more profoundly a universal non-commutativity that completely under-determines, with a randomness without remainder, the 'fusion of the Marxist kind' or more exactly the enlarged and transcendental superimposition, because the Marxist fusion is not as valuable as the true quantification of inverse products, the quantum is a different matrix that is richer than

the Marxist one, Planck complexifies Marx who is in the end poor and still too close to philosophy.

THE SUBTRACTIVE/ADDITIVE BALANCE OF ART AS COMPLEX (AND ITS RESOLUTION BY SUPERIMPOSITION?)

I propose that we interpret art as an intervention of quantum non-objectivity (its forms, collision, microscopic multiplicity, entanglement, the non-locality of its flux or of its waves and particles) within the macroscopic sphere, but it is a paradoxical intrusion because it is said outwardly, by way of a transformation of one of the four causes identified by Aristotle, whereas this fusion and penetration happens by means of a 'conjugation/composition' of decoherence and coherence in the quantum sense, a decoherence that maintains microscopic coherence which for its part does not destroy decoherence but comes to live there, this being the properly aesthetic synthesis. How can we think of art as this close proximity of decoherence and coherence that stand side by side instead of coming into conflictual becomings or continuous passages? Art is a fixed or blocked decoherence, one that has become hallucinatory, but this is still too simple. In any case, it is supported by its objects of knowledge or by its common sense so as to transform them into works without destroying their objectivity but by making it more complex and leaving it to subsist not as a simple basic foundation of work supposedly given in layers, but as its 'mid-place' [*mi-lieu*] or as its element.

The solution to this inadequacy of the work and its quantum theory as a decoherent theory lies in the process either of subtraction or difference. One subtracts certain notions from the framework or the theory as an overly broad problematic or we affect them with a 'without' or a 'non'. In a certain way, the work is a reduced philosopheme, this being the great philosophical means which has always been confused with a science and is always too positive and must be reduced in this regard. But this subtractive aspect is very absolute and returns to philosophy while it makes out of art a 'layer' or a region within an archaeological ontology. This reduction of philosophy, rather than philosophical reduction, is complex in reality, at the same time the reduction or the least is a plus or a positive, an extension or an internal transformation, an enlarging of ontology by the subtraction of its ontic limits. However, these formulas are ambiguous, the subtractive is not here absolute or animated by the void and so therefore does not return to a philosophy otherwise denied. Yet, in its composition the subtractive is also intrinsically additive in a complex way, additive in so far as by its content it is a superimposition or immanence of the non-philosophical or complex kind. However, it is given as external to the

properties that come to serve as variables and not by a supplement assumed more or less external/internal. The immanence of the superimposition is heteronomous to these properties, the choice of ‘complementarity’ (Bohr) rather than that of supplementarity is also ambiguous and in the end, it is as dialectical as the first because each time it is too simple. Heidegger, Kant and Derrida use the same process. It is that of philosophical balance of the plus-and-minus or the least and so more, the ontico-ontological balance. These two effects are not blended together or equivalent nor even compensatory, their nature is mathematical and difficult to conceive.

This ontological balance of art is a form of ontico-ontological difference (OOD) where art is the measure and the restoration of a certain equilibrium probably against philosophy. See how Heidegger and even Kant give themselves the a priori structure of understanding and proceed from there to the semi-subtraction of the concept, of the end, of interest, and a fourth trait that forms the contextual fourfold so as to transform the philosophical object and which continues on under a divided and residual form. In the quantum solution, this kind of modelling is no longer the determining heart of art but must nevertheless be conserved. In other words, we take the OOD as a milieu or element of art, but we can either dismember it for the benefit of pure ontology (Badiou) through a unilateral but absolute decision which nevertheless implies by the symmetrical unilateral penetration the return of Being or of mathematics in the appearance and so a genesis of art out of the mathematical void; or we keep it as given but by making it the genesis or the deduction, not from the mathematical void but from quantum physics which distends reality (or being) and the real (or Being) in the form of an under-determination, which is another difference that is larger than that of OOD. Instead of destroying or lifting up OOD and reconstructing art according to the void, we construct it also from a quantum model and not a purely mathematical one. This is, in a sense, the same unconventional gesture as Badiou makes, but it is a unilateral gesture. In contrast, Badiou does it as an absolute gesture, that is to say, a mirror of philosophy which destroys and conserves philosophy by a pure decision. This conserves the void as a mathematico-philosophical and specular reflection of art whereas what we are looking for here is the means to distance ourselves as much as possible from the philosophical context without denying it and so to make a genesis of art as a real transformation of given reality. This is the whole difference between the ontological void and the quantum real; it is always the same problem of the absolute gesture or of the void which then must deal with mixtures like art. It is always philosophy that finds within the mathematical its mirrored twin sister. This rescues philosophy by way of the void but affects it also in its content. Badiou is a realist of the void. In the quantum solution that we defend, what replaces the void as an empty set is the indetermination of superimposition, following the non-commutativity of

variables (non-commutativity of the complex and philosophy whereas Badiou is always close to the commutativity of the void and Being or ontology), and finally the probability of results. The quantum process, on the other hand, starts from a superimposition, a kind of non-Platonic modelling, in order to arrive at the work, which is also, as a commercial specular simulacrum of the market, symmetrical to this departure within the superimposition, without the process imitating Plato's. The unilateral gesture is too absolute and ends up denying philosophy which is not even simply unilateralized but absolutely overcome and returned to being a mere layer of experience. The work is an asymmetrical fold or a simple two-part affair that does not fold one over the other, the work of art is fundamentally open or unfolded.

**THE QUANTUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
AS PRINCIPLE OF LEAST REFLECTION OR
MINIMAL REFLECTION OF THE WORLD,
OR PRINCIPLE OF LEAST MIMESIS**

How do we conceive of the work as a process or genesis from what it is not, rather than as a reflection of an Idea-model or as a theory which is already a reflection of the given object? Here the scientific context of the work of art is physics and not mathematics. How do we posit a maximal drift without denying the empirical conditions of the occasion or the four causalities at play in the work, according to Aristotle? The work derives from the object and another principle which is the making-work [*faire-oeuvre*]. So, we are in a physical context and not a mathematical one. It is necessary to find the greatest relation and distance offered by physics, that of formalism in the experimental but which divides itself between a microscopic experimental and a macroscopic experience. But art appears at the intersection of two concepts of experience as micro and macro, art has its place within the macro milieu of objectivity, but it is an opening or an ascent of the micro real within the macro, a decoherence not continuous but by collision, a fundamental collision between the two possible spheres of the object, so between the object and the non-object without passing continuously from one to the other like physics does by transforming the micro into the macro. In art the micro does not continuously transform itself into the macro and does not vanish into it, we discover it there installed within the macro. Art is the synthesis brought together by a collision of two styles or forms of the object. And moreover, this synthesis is not in exteriority; rather, the macro retains the micro in itself instead of dissolving it. The macro is a phenomenal form of the micro but without separation; it is an immediate synthesis without which the macro has its cause within the micro. The cause is immanent to the effect and is

therefore invisible as such, it disappears into the macro effect but the effect is then art; the macro effect is transformed from a physical object into a work of art. It is necessary to find the principle of this synthesis that is the heart of art, because from there we descend into the market or we go back towards another meta- or non-theoretical speculation. We must seek after the reasons for this double speculation. The market is the becoming-object of art or commodity, while the speculative is the ascent towards the microcosmic, and it is within the work that these two closely related sides of art are tied together. Art presupposes transformations but induced or assumed and not actual. What is actual is the art as a given work that imposes itself as fixed or already produced (cf. Nietzsche), physical fusion is fixed, which makes the specular images proliferate, it can also be that of the infinite within the finite, of the micro within the finitude of the object. The problem is then of this solid and fixed node in itself. An immanent relation, but how? It is not a fusion of variables treated equally so much that these variables are very heterogeneous to one another. It takes some distance and some proximity, will the greatest distance be the quantum between two particles or between the micro and macro? And will the proximity be that of the object in/with itself, like a self-enveloping philosophical one? Here synthesis is not a third term but the work itself which always wants to auto-envelop itself or to short-circuit itself despite its macro essence. It is the object which is distinct to itself as a variable and combines with the quantum distance as another variable, a conjugation determined by one (philosophy and a commercial object) or by the other (the variable as a quantum distance). Thus, the work of art has two sides, which will make it swing either towards the market and the 'art world' or towards the derealized, quantum or microscopic world. What pushes it over is either a superimposition or addition, or it is a two-part or two-aspect conjugation.

Art is a mixture or a movement that transports matter by means of a flux or a lysing wave, a mixture of wave empty of matter or pure movement but also mixed material where this pure material lyses itself and blocks itself. This is the moment of fusion or aesthetic impact before the decoherence or whatever blocks it and prevents it from coming to term, a trans-coherence or a trans-shock. Art appears when coherence resonates in decoherence. This excludes all the exclusive and partial solutions, the corpuscular or the undulatory alone, their macro identity or their entanglement of the micro-physical kind, this is the moment where a decoherence can come to be a genre for the other, between genres of various forms and matter, and not only between the micro and macro.

So, art progresses according to two dimensions, vertical or philosophical or intra-generic, between heterogeneous genres, but that is not enough and so it requires a horizontal dimension between micro and macro. A crossing

or chiasm of two dimensions, one philosophical or between genres and one quantum with micro-macro decoherence. Art = macro decoherence between genres, or a quantum process but only at the level of objects stripped of their properties while decoherence goes from micro to macro.

It must first be said that it is the forms of contemporary art which must serve as models of interpretation for ancient art and not in any way the reverse, this being a teleology in reverse. But in the second instance and admitting Marx's thesis on the timelessness of art, we will say that *art is formally the equilibrium of a retrogradation and a teleology, which means of an inequality as a material imbalance of contents, adjusting one according to the other so that the first is pulled along after the second (or 'in-'trails it by a wave or a flux), or that the quantum essence adjoins philosophical existence without the first being able to return to the second and thus restore the normalizing circle and repeat the imbalance of materials.*

All these deeply anti-Platonic and anti-Aristotelean traits – the minimal reflection, the minimum of mimesis – are forms of the quantum that delimit the sphere of contemporary art, the theoretical specificity of this art. Provided that they are incarnated outwardly within the objects of the world and so transformed and derealized (all the while retaining a form of their existence), the quantum must be understood correctly as a specific quantum of art and not as a physico-natural quantity. All philosophical aesthetics are, according to the way the situation is interpreted, its formal equilibrium or its material imbalance, either attempts to violate this formal equilibrium by unjustly reaffirming philosophy or the object, or to the contrary normalizing this material imbalance and so again unjustly violating this inequality. Philosophical aesthetics is condemned to act unjustly, regardless of its good will.

ART AS COLLISION OR FIXED DECOHERENCE

The critique of philosophy is essential because it cannot come out of itself or is at least formed with its quantum Other but formed just once with it. This means that the circle cannot re-envelop the complex number within and through the circle but equally juxtaposes them as equal variables, so that philosophy or the circle intervenes just once and not twice. Therefore, there is a simple penetration of the complex within the philosophical circle, which is the same thing as the complex disturbing the circle once without the latter returning to it like an edge to edge without synthesis or unilateral edge but with the effects of a complex dissemination, of pieces and fragments of the circle, a fragmentary and rejected philosophy as a simple unilateral dimension or as only once. The work is really a unilateral duality or a unilateral fold meaning offered or under-determined and not folded back upon itself and

closed, it is open and not closed by the concept, by the end or by relevance [*interest*].

AN AESTHETIC OF COMPLEMENTARITY

So, is the problem then one of knowing how art maintains or by what ‘transcendental vinculum’ it acquires a consistency that is undoubtedly precarious both because and despite its probability? The artistic work is a probable effect of a cloud aesthetic, one of its potentialities, the artist begins in an aesthetic cloud and he continues in a form always localized within the cloud of art that never becomes a thing, except maybe in business or on the market which is the superimposition realized and become actual.

From the aesthetic cloud to the work that must preserve something indeterminate, we distinguish art as a completed opus or as work or even as a process. How or by what effect does art penetrate into the object of a philosophical nature? Art implies a change not simply of object but of a more complex type or ‘category’ of object and resides in this unilateral mutation of the ontological kind. It is necessary to understand the One of the unilateral as the square root of -1 and no longer as the One of the philosophical One. It is a wave made to transport and guide a non-objective particle and bury itself there by colliding with it unilaterally. Art makes the wave change its own ‘object’ and gives it the task of unilaterally moving a macro-object. The wave is what assures the unity of the fold or two sides which do not have to be completely objectified but experimented with like a line of flight. The wave is therefore also the schema between the particular and the corpuscular of philosophy or of the object in which it nevertheless does not decohere directly, but in which it schematizes the particle. But the wave and therefore art cannot provide the in-itself of the object. Art is affected by an irreducible incompleteness regarding the reality that it is aimed at. It is marked by a dissociation of the wave and its ‘natural’ quantum object since it supports the corpuscular object and must accommodate itself to it within an impossible conjugacy.

THE QUANTUM NIGHT AND THE BIRTH OF LIGHT

Aesthetics can no longer be based on an ontology, only upon a semi-ontology in the sense that it shares an object with a non-objectivity, this is why we will no longer speak of an art object but of a work of art, where making it replaces the missing or absent object. Art is a deprivation but redistribution of the object and nothingness/absence, it is a cut off or removed horizon, this is a general point for all philosophical aesthetics. But for us it is a matter of giving

the greatest universality to this schema which introduces it to absence and no longer conceives of it within the philosophical limits of the object. With art there are two subtractions, one or the most common happens within the continuity of philosophy and its objectivity, this is the case for all aesthetics, the other is more radical and general, the second half of art is a negation or a complete absence of the object, a disappearance of the object joined together to its presence. It is an under-determination as failed or missed objectification, not as interior to philosophical determination which remains dominant or the ultimate and theoretical horizon therefore of art as an under-object, but of art as positive penetration of under-objectivity as flux and particle or blockage of objectification. Philosophy follows in principle the movement of quantum decoherence, it is a permanent betrayal of art which fixes decoherence as frozen on superimposition, not a mere fixed decoherence but forced or inhibited, a blocked becoming-object but in a positive way. Rightly, this is not a mere freeze frame (= art fallen into itself within an object or image that replaces the object) but a positive inhibition of decoherence, this is its aspect of becoming-coherent, but not only that, it is a fixed decoherence frozen on coherence, as if the blockage of decoherence made quantum coherence suddenly appear or reappear within decoherence, art is a synthesis without becoming-dominant.

Chapter 2

Out of the Ordinary

On Laruelle and the Mystic Performances of Mina Bergson

John Ó Maoilearca

OPENING PART AND WHOLE

In recent work, I have written about a strategy of ‘supernormalization’ that provides an exit from the stark duality of natural and supernatural, or of the normal and the paranormal.¹ It offers a supernormal paradigm that thinks only in terms of differences of degree rather than of kind. The category of the supernatural, be it found in religion, the arts or even philosophy (‘spookiness’), is re-rendered as structural, *the* inconsistent or hyperbolic state of the ‘natural:’ the outsider whose position must be occupied by someone or thing (‘nature’ as an *over*-familiar ‘supernature’). For instance, Henri Bergson upheld an ultra strong realism towards the past, arguing in *Matter and Memory* that the past persists as real, immanent *in* the present and not merely as an *outside*, transcendent recollection of the past. He even described how, in *Matter and Memory*, ‘when a memory reappears in consciousness, it produces on us the effect of a ghost’, of a ‘mysterious apparition’?² So far, so spooky then. The past as spectre as memory. Yet this paranormality can be brought down to without reduction or elimination through a double manoeuvre: first, there is the seeming naturalistic reduction – the spectre seen as merely a memory (reduction) – but then there is a doubled refraction whereby this ghost-memory itself is inflated as a *real* part of the past. The reduction of the reduction. The part (memory) is not an unreal representation of the past, but an actual fragment of the past surviving in a hyperbolic state, as an exception or inconsistency. *The* past as ‘merely’ *my* memory becomes my memory as the past (in part).

Or take time-travel, which is another area of my recent research. Leaving aside any technological means that might make physical time-travel theoretically possible and even mundane, the *experience* of being in a period of time outside of the standard, Newtonian 'flow' our natural life-time – its 'phenomenology' so to speak – can be reduced to a delusion or hallucination of some sort, perhaps with some underpinning pathology or at least anomaly of the brain.³ Yet this reduction can itself be reduced so that we now see the brain-hallucination *itself* as a real kind of time-travel. Consciousness (experience) as mere brain event becomes the conscious brain-part moving in a new time – a kind of pan-psyche time-travel. Deflation followed by re-inflation. I have previously called this strategy a 'refractive reduction', or 'full anthropomorphism' (modelled on Bergson's theory of *complete* relativity in *Duration and Simultaneity*), but it is also a kind of low-key mundanizing of the supernatural: an extraction of the supernatural by ordinary means.⁴

There is more to this use of the ordinary than as redemptive epistemology, however. Take mysticism as a further example of spooky philosophy. Laruelle writes of an 'ordinary mysticism', wherein he claims that 'the mystical is pre-philosophical, or, as we will say, "ordinary"', and that 'Ordinary man is a "mystical" living being'.⁵ Here, the mystical is connected directly with the ordinary, but in a non-standard philosophical mode (rather than as only epistemology). Laruelle goes on to say how, 'as *absolute science* with a mystical foundation, *absolute practice* remains passive as the real itself and is not a mode of intervention into the World, of which it would otherwise be a relative part'.⁶ This is because, he later tells us, 'the One is the element of the mystical and grounds an "ordinary mysticism"'.⁷ Striving for Union with the One, ecstatic or otherwise, is redundant because we are already in the One, already and ordinarily mystic.

One question arising from these thoughts so far, therefore, is whether this 'One' might be read as Laruelle's version of the Bergsonian 'open whole' (as favoured by his Deleuzian readers), the 'larger' processes within which (my) memory moves me as a part. Which brings me to Mina Bergson. A fascinating yet little known moment in philosophical history occurred at the turn of the twentieth century, when Henri Bergson and his sister, Mina Bergson (aka Moina Mathers), were both living in Paris and working on seemingly very different but nonetheless complementary approaches to questions concerning the nature of matter, spirit and their interaction. He, of course, was a leading professor within the French academy, soon to become the most renowned European philosopher in the first years of the new century. She was his seemingly estranged sister, though in her own right already celebrated as a feminist and occultist performing on theatre stages around Paris while also leading one of the most important occult societies of that era (the 'Alpha et Omega' order). One was a respectable intellectual, the other, a notorious mystic-artist

who, together with her husband (and fellow-occultist) Samuel MacGregor Mathers, was been described by Dennis Denisoff as the ‘neo-pagan power couple’ of the Belle Époque.⁸ Mina had moved to Paris in 1892 – at about the same time that her brother Henri was working on his most important, and strange, book, *Matter and Memory*. Indeed, from 1900 onwards, she began to perform the Rites of Isis in public, to great acclaim – precisely at the time when Bergson was delivering lectures on his own metaphysics at the Collège de France to increasing adulation. Neither Henri nor Mina left any record of their attitudes towards the work of the other, and yet their views on spirit, mysticism and matter converge on many fronts. As an occultist, ‘performance artist’, the first female member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and subsequent co-leader (with husband Samuel) of the Alpha et Omega order, she is an intriguing, though mostly forgotten, figure in the history of ideas.

However, as a spiritualist and mystic, skryer, astral traveller and image-maker with significant ideas about spirit and matter, her work also throws a new light on the meaning of ‘Bergsonian’ philosophy. This is not to say that her role here is simply to act as a supplement to her brother’s thought. Her own writing makes this clear. Documents laying out her methods and ideas amount to four core manuscripts: her 1926 foreword to the second edition of Samuel Mathers’s *Kabbalah Unveiled*, and three teaching texts or ‘Flying Rolls’. These Flying Rolls were types of lecture as well as instruction manuals for members of the Golden Dawn and Alpha et Omega. Alongside these writings, surviving documentation, props and other paraphernalia from her and Samuel’s activities in Paris, we also have all of the ritualistic practices from the Golden Dawn and Alpha et Omega handbooks on magical practices, comprising the copious phrases, symbols, languages, props, costumes, sets, mathematic equations, colours, choreographies and stagings that were part of any members’ initiation and ongoing training as they moved from neophyte through the higher levels of knowledge within each Order.

Returning to Laruelle, therefore, we might ask whether Mina Bergson’s own ‘absolute practice’ can be found in her mystical performances. And also whether they can be made ordinary, without reduction, through supernormalization. Indeed, in her own theorization of occult practices, as we will see, we can go beyond any merely decorative and aesthetical interpretation to find her use of costume, props, movement and posture all playing a role as valid *forms of knowledge*, equal to any science of the One. Yet how would Laruelle’s proclaimed ‘democracy of thought’ – where all kinds of thinking are equalized – stand alongside the secret and private (personal) knowledge that purportedly belongs to certain mystical practices such as the very ones found in hermetic orders like the Golden Dawn? There’s a knowledge that is only laid down in clandestine writings, pictures and diagrams, or performed

in special mysteries, or spoken in esoteric languages. Can such avowedly occult knowledge also participate within a democracy of knowledge? A valid question. But this is precisely our point, and another reason for this engagement with Mina Bergson's ordinary mysticism: *as a test case for the equality of thought and knowledge*.

Anthony Paul Smith and Nicola Rubczak, writing on the topic of relativism in non-philosophy, state that 'the Real cannot be captured by philosophy, but instead authorizes the equivalency of all philosophies, all knowings, as relative before the Real. Or, in other words, the Real is not ineffable, but infinitely effable'.⁹ With Laruelle, what might look like relativism is always a real expansion, an inclusivity of thought. Nothing is unreal. The non-standard philosophy of photography, for instance, is not simply the generation of new thoughts (about subjectivity, light, the flash, etc.) through an unorthodox source, but a material practice of thought through a 'photography of philosophy'. Such work acts as a non-philosophical practice, especially in terms of the materiality of photographic performance involving posture, exposure, definition and resolution. And these are not mere metaphors, by the way, but models invoked to 'mutate' what counts as philosophical practice. It is not a philosophy *of art* but an 'art *of philosophy*'.

So, can the 'infinite effability' of non-philosophy include the knowledge practices and mystical performances of Mina Bergson? In other words, can the *methods of mysticism be used, without religious or supernatural commitment as a model of knowing*? Or, must they be rejected as a new authority, a crypto-philosophical hierarchization of knowledge? As they stand, or are ordinarily read, perhaps the second suggestion is unavoidable. But, in another sense of an 'ordinary reading', an extra-ordinary or supernormalized mysticism might be redeemable and serve as an alternative model for non-standard philosophy by offering us what Laruelle calls a 'heterogeneity of philosophical logics'. In 1985, Laruelle wrote as follows:

A mystical-ordinary acting, determination in the last instance, that indifferences the World, makes it contingent or unilateral without negating or objectivating it. It has a first effect: allowing for the description of the World in its remoteness and its strangeness, of its heterogeneity – the heterogeneity of philosophical logics – as fundamentally undecidable.¹⁰

The strangeness of the World (or Real, as Laruelle would later put it, of course) can be described with heterogenous logics that belong to ordinary *acting* (understood equally as performance and performative action). And such 'first acting – in a mystical mode' as he calls it, has other, critical effects. Its heterogeneity, its heretical thinking even, actually *resists* authority:

There is a minoritarian or real critique of Authorities. It is located in the simultaneously contemplative and practical, mystical and pragmatic, acting of which ordinary man, not philosophizing man, is capable with regard to the natural and inevitable claim of Authorities to count for human reality, of the State to exhaust the Real.¹¹

It is this Laruellean stance on the ordinary mystical that makes it so intriguing to look anew at Mina Bergson and her mystic practices – not only to articulate them as a non-standard philosophical practice, but also to use them to non-standardize the ideas of her brother. Admittedly, connecting Henri Bergson's work (especially his strong realism towards the past in *Matter and Memory*) to certain spiritual and even occult underpinnings is not an entirely novel kind of enterprise in the history of ideas. Nonetheless, be it within a philosophical lineage (Hegel's Gnosticism, Deleuze's post-Kantian esotericism or the mystical sources of existentialism, say), or a scientific one (Newton and alchemy, for instance), looking into such dark reflections is a valuable form of enquiry (and indeed a novel one in Bergson's case). Moreover, as Joshua Ramey cautions us, there remains a 'contemporary ambivalence over the validity and significance of esoteric, let alone "occult", apprehensions of nature and mind', such that a certain 'political risk' comes with any such approach.¹² Yet it is a risk worth taking. As (Henri) Bergson is increasingly being enfolded within the history of philosophy as a known quantity, a domesticated figure with perhaps a few peculiar ideas in the philosophy of mind and the metaphysics of time, it remains important to remind ourselves of just how strange his ideas were and remain, especially as regards *Matter and Memory*: to wit, that when we remember the past, it is actually the past itself that manifests its survival, in us. Yet, with Laruelle as protector and guarantor of non-authority, so to speak, one can interlace this already outlandish idea with the seemingly even more bizarre practices of Mina Bergson (whose rites and performances invoked the spirit of Isis, e.g., a goddess first recorded c. 2350–c. 2100 BCE), in order to make sense of his ultra-realism towards the past. Performed at the Théâtre La Bodinière and other secret locations in Paris, Mina Bergson, dressed as High Priestess Anari, would *invoke* the goddess Isis bodily, immanently, and in person.¹³

The study of Henri and Mina Bergson, then, is simultaneously about the ordinary and extraordinary, the philosopher and the non-(standard) philosopher, everyday faculties of mind and their supernormalized power, different ways of thinking but also different logics. To personalize this difference with names: where Henri writes a philosophy of mysticism, Mina performs a mysticism of philosophy.

HYPER-RITUAL

So, what did Mina Bergson's mystical practices comprise? To answer this, we must first look at the purpose of Orders such as the Golden Dawn. This simple description from Christopher Armstrong sums it up well enough: it was 'the acquisition of a certain "gnosis" or private experiential contact with ultimate realities through the deliberate deployment of incantations and rituals, drawn from various sources, some genuinely ancient and associated with the historic Rosicrucian movement, some ostensibly archaic but in fact of very recent concoction'.¹⁴ Admittedly, Henri Bergson too, like many other philosophers at the time, was interested in 'immediacy' and 'immediate experience' (*les données immédiates*). So, irrespective of whether or not 'experiential contact with ultimate realities' would be better practised through gnosticism than philosophy, it is clear that Mina Bergson opted for the road less travelled. *Pace* Armstrong, their public performances were never intended to be historically accurate, however, but were creative and artistic invocations – a 'performance art', according to Denisoff, with ceremonies that were, as Frederic Lees described them at the time, 'artistic in the extreme'.¹⁵

We get one glimpse of the rituality and performativity of Mina Bergson's work in the dedication to her with which the poet and one-time Golden Dawn member W. B. Yeats began his 1925 book, *A Vision*:

Perhaps this book has been written because a number of young men and women, you and I among the number, met nearly forty years ago in London and in Paris to discuss mystical philosophy. You with your beauty and your learning and your mysterious gifts were held by all in affection, and though, when the first draft of this dedication was written, I had not seen you for more than thirty years, nor knew where you were nor what you were doing, and though much had happened since we copied the Jewish Schemahamphorasch [*the explicit name*] with its seventy-two Names of God in Hebrew characters, it was plain that I must dedicate my book to you.¹⁶

The re-inscription of 72 names.¹⁷ Entries in Mina's work diary show whole evenings given over to Tarot readings, four or more hours long. Ritual here becomes hyperbolic, hyper-ritual even. In fact, Mina Bergson had a penchant for collecting names. Alongside her maiden and married names (Mina Bergson/Moina Mathers), she also was known as 'Bergie' (while an art student at the Slade School of Fine Art, London), '*Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum*' (her Golden Dawn 'magical name', meaning, among other things, 'I Leave No Trace'), the shorter '*Vestigia*', the longer 'the Very Honoured *Soror Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum*', the letters 'VNR', the numbers '6° = 5°', and later '7° =

4⁰ (her varying Hermetic order grades), the titles ‘High Priestess Anari’, and ‘Countess MacGregor of Glenstrae’, and finally, at least to her English niece in later years, ‘Auntie Mouse’.¹⁸

The issue of multiple names aside, what remains constant in her complex history is the impression of someone who, far from being the stereotype of an ascetic contemplative, was a woman of action. Not only had she co-founded a temple and established a major occult Order in the Alpha et Omega, her public Rites enacted what Denisoff describes as a ‘feminist ritual performance’. They were certainly a spectacle. As R. C. Groggin reports:

In 1899 Mina and the order caused something of a sensation in Paris when they staged a theatrical performance at La Bodinière Theatre, called the Rite of Isis. Jules Bois was on stage to explain the ancient cult to the fashionable audience. The Paris correspondent of the *Sunday Chronicle* reported that Mina achieved a great success. Rivalling her brother in popularity at least for the moment, she ‘completely won their sympathy by her graceful attitude and dignified manner. More than that, she is very handsome, she has a beautiful oval face with large black, mysterious eyes and beauty always tells in Paris.’ In gratitude for the performance the ladies offered bouquets of flowers and the gentlemen threw wheat on the altar.¹⁹

Such an engaged spiritualist might well remind us of the ‘heroes’ and active models that Henri Bergson commended in his 1932 book, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, as the great mystics within the Christian tradition.²⁰ Mina Bergson herself wrote that the mystic ‘should not retire from the world’; that it is better to live among others and ‘influence them by our example’.²¹ In her 1926 preface to *Kabbalah Unveiled*, she adds that mysticism ‘is a system eminently suited to Western occultism, which a man can follow while living the ordinary life of the world, given that this is understood in its highest sense’. So much for the hermetic, the enclosed. Here, the active mystic meets with the ordinary man, and in something like Laruelle’s sense too (I would argue).

The need to restrain oneself from the usual stereotypes of the mystic of egocentricity and monomania is also uppermost in Mina Bergson’s descriptions. In Flying Roll No. 21, ‘Know Thyself’, she writes:

There is too much tendency to wish all to follow the Ideal of one – we are apt to forget that the Ideal of each will lead to the same Truth. We can help each other better, then, by helping each to rise according to his own ideas, rather than, as we often unwisely do, in advising him to rise to what is best in ourselves only. That error of wishing to make another as ourselves is another and a very hurtful form of most subtle egotism.²²

Such a pluralism of approach is also indicated in her more thematic concern with the relationship between science and spiritualism. Indeed, *gnōthi seauton*, 'know thyself', the Delphic maxim most famously associated with Socrates, was also connected with other Greek sages, not all of them philosophers in the modern sense, but also scientists (Pythagoras, Thales), artists (Aeschylus) and of course mystics (like Heraclitus). Indeed, on the question of science and mysticism, Mina Bergson often wrote as an ecumenist – endorsing an emergent monism of matter and spirit rather than the usual dualism associated with certain strains of occult thought: 'Material science would appear to be spiritualizing itself and occult science to be materializing itself. If not clasping hands, they are certainly making tentative attempts in that direction. [. . .] That Matter and Spirit are only *opposite poles* of the same universal substance'.²³ Of course, this duality of orientation (polarity) over a dualism of substance is highly reminiscent of the opening of *Matter and Memory*:

We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am *in the presence of images*, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed.²⁴

Instead of a dichotomized matter and spirit, for (Henri) Bergson, there is a unity within a universal imagery. And in 1907, when Henri begins the third chapter of *Creative Evolution* with an attempt to explain the seemingly mysterious correlations between intellect and materiality, he will propose that the two 'are derived from a wider and higher form of existence' and that it must have been the one process that 'cut out matter and the intellect, at the same time, from a stuff [*étouffe*] that contained both'.²⁵ Mina Bergson's 'universal substance' again perhaps, or what she also called the 'eternal attraction between ideas and matter', with matter and ideas/spirit as only 'poles' within one spectral (continuous) entity – the 'secret of life'.²⁶ Both of Henri's texts were written while Mina was in Paris, of course, but it is especially *Matter and Memory* that stands out in this secret correlation – a book that has been variously described as his most 'learned', 'rich', 'brilliant' and 'difficult' works.²⁷

In the Introduction to *Matter and Memory* (added in 1911), Bergson further demonstrates his dynamic monism. He says that he is using the word 'image' *universally* to designate 'a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist [*read* "materialist"] calls a *thing* – an existence placed halfway between the "thing" and the "representation"'.²⁸ Admittedly, the word 'image' would seem to be a very poor starting point for a philosophy that purports to be *neutral* as

regards idealism and materialism at least, if it is to act as some form of ‘neutral monism’ (to use Bertrand Russell’s term).²⁹ So, why did Henri Bergson choose the term ‘image’? Images are also affective and moving, according to *Matter and Memory*’s first chapter, so their visuality may well be *synaesthetic*, the individuated modalities of the senses would emerge only latterly, once these images have been refracted.³⁰ The neutral, therefore, may be less semantic impartiality than simple *equalizing*, a flattening within a *dynamic monism of movements*. This is an *equalizing* along a continuum or spectrum made of *time – images off/as time*. There would still be differentiation by degree – so mind and world are not identical: again, my memory is a (real) part of the past – but it would not be *spatial*. Mina Bergson’s spiritualization of matter and materialization of spirit is not a neutral monism either (*qua* one *unmoving* substance) but, we might speculate, something closer to what Laruelle would call an equality of determinations, in the last instance, by the Real. It might also lead us to think of an equality of different logics and knowledges – of non-standard rationalities (rather than one kind of reason and one kind of unreason).

GNOSTICS, SPOOKS, AND HOLLYWOOD SPIRITUALISM

The repetition of a supposedly supernatural phenomenon, which is not the same as its *repeatability* (it may still recur spontaneously and unpredictably), is one route to the naturalization I discussed earlier. Images stemming from popular entertainment are a prime site for such everyday miracles. For example, the banalization of even the dead returning to life is a favourite trope of science-fiction television (*Les Revenants*, *Dr Who*’s ‘Army of Ghosts’), film drama (Jonathan Glazer’s *Birth*, 2004) and the entire zombie horror genre. Fictional biological processes, mind-manipulation or time-slips might be some of the mechanisms employed to support such bizarre events. Resurrection or reincarnation would be religious variants of such para-explanations too, of course. In Laruelle’s work on non-Christology, for instance, life and death are connected with the idea of an ordinary, democratized Christ: myriad resurrections appear with every ordinary human, or through a quantum Christ working undecidably – one that democratizes and ordinarises at once. In this approach, the final words of Henri Bergson’s *The Two Sources*, where the universe is seen as a machine for the ‘making of gods’, would not denote a pantheon of demi-gods but the processes of gods-in-the-making, the divine as immanent movement.

Alternatively, were one to clarify the *immaterial spiritualist* version of return or survival post mortem properly so as to ask, ‘what would it be

for a spirit, a purely immaterial entity, to return in all its unembodied phenomenality?' what would the answer entail? What would *pure* spirit look like, divested of all matter? This would be a thought-experiment akin to Henri Bergson's purifying method that attempts to separate out completely what we understand as the difference(s) between matter and spirit, perception and memory, in the most rigorous sense of their opposition. What he calls 'pure perception' and 'pure memory' are two virtual forms of normal perception and memory that have been completely dissociated in terms of their spatial and material properties. He pursues this purification so that we might be better able to discern the immaterial in both its difference and its continuity with matter, that is, in its difference of tendency, of orientation, within a continuity. Here is a kind of 'dualizing' (one of Laruelle's key terms) of different kinds of movement in order to found a new monism of movement. This would be in contrast to a fudge between bodilessness and non-bodilessness found in literalist approaches, be it of the Christian resurrection (with all the conundrums that follow from the resurrection of *all* bodies: are they clothed or unclothed, old or young, cremated, amputated? etc.), or in the pseudo-science of science-fiction and zombie horror.

More sophisticated versions of these hybrid conceits do exist, however, such as in Philip K. Dick's novel *Counter-Clock World* which, as James Burton tells us, can be read as a gnostic text in rendering 'resurrection commonplace due to a cosmic event that reverses certain biological and temporal processes, and yet having it result neither in salvation nor in everlasting life'. Again, setting the clunky mechanisms aside (biological reversal), there is something of value in this naturalism nonetheless, as Burton demonstrates. Like Laruelle, and even Alain Badiou, 'gnostic Christians saw the Resurrection as a spiritual truth rather than an actual event, a symbolic expression of the possibility that anyone might be "resurrected from the dead" at any time, to become spiritually alive'. The ordinary resurrection comes to stand for 'the transformation of things, and a transition into newness'.³¹ Those 'biological and temporal processes' notwithstanding (should they merit close examination), the mundanization of resurrection as *renewal* is another means by which the supernatural refracts into the supernormal.

Hollywood cinema remains, though, perfectly confused about the supernatural, 'mixing' (to use Laruelle's term) ordinary material properties with supposedly 'immaterial' properties (that are in truth, simply other forms of matter) in order to achieve the extra-ordinary, 'spirit'. With respect to ghost films, for example, from a Bergsonian perspective their spirits are never ghostly enough, never sufficiently *immaterial* and always create a confused mixture of matter and spirit (ghosts who cannot speak, cannot move objects, yet who can see, stand on firm ground, etc.). The Cartesian dualisms that

still dominate contemporary philosophies of mind, including transhumanist approaches (where mind is seen as an intelligence separable from any one physical ‘platform’), also reign on the silver screen through ghost movies, body-swap comedies and other genres where spirit is simply a form of faux-substance, a transferable energy or quasi-thing (basically, fanciful equivalents to the telegraphy, X-rays or higher-dimensional planes that so impressed certain nineteenth-century spiritualists).³² For Henri Bergson, these are confused dualities that require proper (pure) separation in order to be reunited temporally (not in space): ‘*questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space*’.³³

All the same, once we strip away *everything material* from spirit (extended space, body, mechanism, efficient cause and effect), with what are we left? According to Henri Bergson, movement is always an alteration or qualitative becoming. Something truly ordinary, hiding in plain (everyday) sight (nothing is hidden, or ‘virtual’, to *everyone*). Something that might also survive at some level then, that might straddle those things we call ‘past’ and ‘present’. Only that ‘thing’ is not a thing but a *partial* continuity, a movement, a specific becoming in person (there is no ‘becoming in general’, as Bergson says).³⁴ Spirit, purified in this way as a *kind of movement*, is visible everywhere oddly enough, restored to space, bodies and even causation. But this is not a hylomorphic re-insertion of ‘spookiness’. Whereas some, like Jane Bennett for instance, only see such restorations as dualistic, that is because they are seen in terms of space – extension and inextension.³⁵ The restoration, though, is only the *temporalizing* re-description or re-visioning that leaves everything as it is, while also uniting difference ‘*in terms of time rather than of space*’, as Bergson puts it in *Matter and Memory*.

In my work on the philosophy of time-travel, I begin with the common suggestion that, were it possible, time-travellers, at least from the future, could already be here.³⁶ And so they may be, though not as clandestine emissaries however, but, in the fullest naturalization possible, as ordinary individuals wholly unaware of their gift: they have to ‘fit in’ fully after all, if they are to have *truly travelled to here*, such a complete arrival would preclude maintaining any personal acquaintance or bodily connection with other eras – modern body implants such as pacemakers, hip replacements or their future equivalents – might not time-travel into the distant past. Their identity would remain futural, relatively speaking. In fact, it can be argued that a feasible time-travel does not involve temporal displacement at all, if such a transport only understands that time as spatial, as a line or container: to change in time, or in duration, involves a qualitative becoming, a change in identity. As Richard Matheson’s protagonist concluded in his time-travel novel, *Bid Time Return*:

More and more, I am becoming convinced that the secret of successful time travel is to pay the price of eventual loss of identity. . . . My presence in 1896 is like that of an invading grain of sand inside an oyster. An invader of this time, I will, bit by bit, be covered by a self-protecting-and absorbing-coat, being gradually encapsulated. Eventually, the grain of me will be so layered over by this period that I will be somebody else, forgetting my source, and living only as a man of this period.³⁷

To truly be *here* in this space and time, one must truly be *of* this space and time. Yet the change in identity need not be one of substance (which, by definition cannot *become*), but of movements.

But let us push this idea of the ordinary a little further. Possibly the best sign, the only revelation, of *any* time-travel still being possible is precisely when our mind allows it to happen – when one's memory expands 'the' so-called present. Perhaps all of us (unbeknownst to ourselves) are time-travellers who are 'here' already. 'Mental time-travel' then (memory and expectation as mental representations only) would be neither figurative nor second best: it would not only be the best we have, it would be as good as it gets (which is pretty good in truth).³⁸ This is how we supernormalize time-travel: it is the fact that we already 'travel' in our own mind through our own lifespan (and perhaps also that we see others, our alter egos, travelling the other possibilities of life alongside us), that we invent, or rather hallucinate, the idea of an abstract and complete time-travel across an impersonal space, a timeline, or clock. Mental time-travel would then be to physical, 'real', time-travel, what a part is to the whole, a glimpse that is immanent to what it sees. What Henri Bergson writes of in *Matter and Memory* as a real past surviving in the (elastic) present, and Mina Bergson practices as the invocation of a distant past through her own body, would then be the expansions of this glimpse: one, academic and respectable, the other occult and outlandish, but both realized through movement.

CONCLUDING PART

When researching the mutual relations of Mina and Henri Bergson, we might seem to be travelling among nothing more than more philosophical hallucinations, not merely as a conjectured set of reciprocating positions between two Anglo-Irish-Poles (none of the Bergsons had any French blood in them by the way), but also as a number of dream-like coincidences. Perhaps that is all that exists between the ideas of the Bergson siblings, therefore, a set of coincidental thoughts on the nature of matter, spirit and movement, or, in their respective vocabularies, magic, fabulation, the image, the virtual and

the astral. Just dreams. Dreams, in Henri Bergson's views, are 'only' relaxed forms of perception, in other words perceptions that have been overwhelmed with wildly associating images from pure memory, the phantasmagoria of the past. We might even describe dreams as hyper-correlationist.³⁹ According to Laruelle, on the other hand, *every* philosopher (not only the mad ones) hallucinates a world that has withdrawn itself *from* the Real, only then to count itself as the authoritative account of this world *as* the Real. This is not simply a sub-Kantian admonition against the misplaced ambitions of metaphysics: philosophy, for Laruelle, simply is the gesture in thought that gives itself the authority to pronounce on the essence of Reality, to master it from a hallucinated outside. It is the withdrawn or de-parted part of the Real. The hyperbolic part or even (we might say) the self-proclaimed supernatural or *super-Real*, standing 'over and beyond' the Real, transcending it. Irrespective of whether the particular, historical philosophy is materialist, idealist, realist or whatever else, qua philosophy, its real conditions are supernatural, 'spooky'. This de-parted, ghostly philosophy is neither spectral nor 'hauntological' on account of an aporetic presence-as-absence for all parts, that is, as a fundamental ontology (Bergson multiplies the present rather than dissolves it in absence): it is only the thought, *any* thought, that sees itself united with the Real without remainder and by dint of *its* description alone, that therewith is de-parted and becomes 'philosophical'.

Taking this warning seriously for our own endeavours, it might be the case that we can only be honest about our inventions, and allow them to fictionalize 'alongside' the Real, rather than 'about' it from a purportedly external view from nowhere (were Henri and Mina Bergson really in cahoots, or is this my hallucination?). All the same, and as James Burton points out as regards the early Christian Gnostics, fictioning does not have to imply falsehood or an in-existent but rather the immanent creativity of spirit:

When Bishop Irenaeus attacks Valentinian gnostics for creating 'imaginary fiction', 'new forms of mythological poetry' and for relying on feeling and intuition rather than divine authority, he is criticizing precisely what those same gnostics see as a great resource, the soteriological use of fiction (or in other words, fabulation). [. . .] Whereas the special *gnosis* (knowledge) by which the gnostic Christians defined themselves may give them the outward appearance of cultish mystics, what it really amounts to is the knowledge that anyone may have a relationship with the divine, through creative activity, through fictionalizing, and that all claims to privileged, exclusive access to God are themselves pure, static fictions.⁴⁰

'Claims to privileged, exclusive access to God' are, as Mina Bergson would say, 'a subtle egotism'. Where gnostic knowledge need not imply authority,

any privileged access (to God or the Real) is a philosophical gesture rather than a mystical one (at least for these gnostics).

In his *Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud talks about Romain Rolland's term, 'oceanic feeling', that sensation of an indissoluble bond between oneself and the external world, the quasi-mystical sensation of losing oneself in union with the cosmos. For Rolland, this affect is the source of various symptoms associated with all the religiously minded (not just 'mystics'). In Freud's naturalization, of course, it becomes the remnant of an infantile consciousness that has not yet differentiated itself from others. For Laruelle, alternatively, *any* such unity, any 'All' is an illusion, including that of the philosophers. Yet mysticism, for him, does not necessarily mean real immersion within, or union with, the Real or the One either. Immanence within the Real, the Uni-verse, is in any case *our given state* – all is Real: it is the outside, the de-parted that thinks it sees the All from its 'transcendent' position, its posited authority, which is a (real) hallucination. If seeing ghosts (as 'memory' in philosophical psychology or as the returned dead in Hollywood) is credulous in its own context, then all of philosophy is credulous as regards its own form (though most often unwittingly). Standard philosophy (philosophy as decision, as cut and withdrawal) *is a ghost* that walks alone, a departed vision, that may, or may not, see itself as a vision *of* the departed.

According to Laruelle:

Unity is the mystery and the bad philosophical mysticism [le *mauvais mysticisme philosophique*], the obscure point of Reason that 'ordinary mysticism' [le '*mystique ordinaire*'] must suppress or confine to the World. The solution is in the suppression of the problem of representation (of its agreement with the object, preestablished harmony or not; of its conditioning, genetic or not, of the object) as a problem that is not real, but one that is wholly enveloped in the veil of the Unitary Illusion.⁴¹

'Unitary Illusion' is not exclusive to (bad) mysticism, but belongs to every philosophical view that would reduce a multiplicity to an *arché*, X, rather than leave all things (plural) equal in the Real. Ordinary mysticism – which we linked with Mina Bergson's engaged, progressive activism, as well as to Henri Bergson's *non*-reductive naturalizations using duration – is not guilty of this (at least). Just as Henri Bergson in 'An Introduction to Metaphysics' tries to think unity and multiplicity *together* in the images of *durée*, so Mina Bergson, in *Kabbalah Unveiled*, writes of 'a plurality whose action is unified, an unity whose action is pluralised' when thinking of the divine as 'single' *or* as a plural set of 'Forces'.⁴² Indeed, the charge that mystical systems of thought desire unity with one absolute principle may well be undeserved in many cases, at least in terms of their underlying metaphysics.⁴³ Certainly, such closure through unity was not the hallmark of either Bergson's ontology.

So, if the *co-incident* of this unique dyad, between the philosopher and the mystic, is but a dream (deflation), it undoubtedly emerges as a set of (wild) images, but not as a false representation, however: they are all parts of the whole after all (inflation). And, moreover, being only parts rather than wholes, there is no unity here, no metaphysics of identity, be it familial, conceptual or otherwise. It is always and ever a *covariance* of movements in these matters, rather than a reduction of one substance correlated to another. In the pairing of Henri and Mina, we see two allied attempts to naturalize spirit and spiritualize matter at work, two different and yet correlated ways of rethinking naturalism and spiritualism beyond deflation or inflation (they are supernatural), one of which was always well acknowledged at the time and subsequently (Henri's), the other, Mina's, having become lost to contemporary view, even as its performative, mystical and artistic approach to spirit and matter becomes all the more timely.

NOTES

1. See Ó Maoilearca, "The Defragmenting Image".
2. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 145.
3. This is indeed the plot of Richard Matheson's novel *Bid Time Return*, which he adapted into a screenplay for the film *Somewhere in Time* (Szwarc 1980). Yet, whereas the film simply allows its protagonist ('Richard Collier') the supernatural ability to *will* himself to return to a distant past (partly also through self-hypnosis – mental time-travel *in extremis* as it were), in the book we are told that the hero has a brain tumour, leaving it open that his entire experience was in fact only 'in his head', literally.
4. See Mullarkey, "Forget the Virtual"; Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal*, Chapter Four.
5. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 59.
6. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 192.
7. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 231. Further elaborations of Laruelle's ordinary mysticism can be found at Laruelle, *Mystique non-philosophique*. See also Dubilet, "Neither God, nor World" for one analysis of his more recent work in the area.
8. Denisoff, "Queer Occulture".
9. Smith and Rubczak, "Cloning the Untranslatable", xvii.
10. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 84.
11. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 84–5.
12. Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze*, 10.
13. Mina Bergson reported that Isis had appeared to her in a dream and asked her to perform the Rites publicly. Whereas an *evocation* in Enochian magic brings a spirit into the world as a separate entity, in an *invocation* the spirit is channelled *into* the medium immanently: she is not a means of communication either but instead an

embodiment of spirit, a moving conduit that works through mimetic performance. Given what we will see later in Henri Bergson's theory of dreams as hyper-correlated perceptions, one might even say that Mina Bergson's dream of Isis was also a performance, albeit in sleep and so with a partial movement paralysis.

14. Armstrong, *Evelyn Underhill*, 37–8.

15. Denisoff, "Performing the Spirit"; Lees, "Isis Worship in Paris".

16. Yeats, *A Critical Edition*, ix.

17. In the Kabbalah the most intricate of the divine names comprises 72 letters, but the letters in varying combinations can become 72 names as well.

18. See Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 357.

19. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy*, 40. Coincidentally, Henri Bergson's lecture rooms were also covered in offerings of flowers from his adoring audiences, at least at the height of his fame; see Antliff, *Bergson*, 99.

20. Oddly enough, despite a certain gender bias towards male mysticism in *The Two Sources*, Bergson's actual examples are more often than not female – St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, Joan of Arc, and so on. Published four years after his sister's death, one might also wonder about the effect her death had on its composition.

21. Bergson/Mathers, "Flying Roll No.21", 155.

22. Bergson/Mathers, "Flying Roll No.21", 158.

23. Bergson/Mathers, "Preface", vii–viii.

24. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17 – my emphases.

25. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 197, 210.

26. From Greer's citation of Lees, Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn*, 208–9.

27. Kolakowski, *Bergson*, 37–38; Pilkington, *Bergson*, 7. Mourélos writes (*Bergson*, 103): 'we absolutely agree with M. Jankélévitch declaration that, of all of Bergson's works, *Matter and Memory* is the most brilliant'. For George Santayana, on the other hand, *Matter and Memory* offers us 'nothing but the images' of real things, and that will not do (Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, 88). Bergson's opening renunciation in *Matter and Memory* of both idealism and realism is but a sham, Santayana says – Bergsonism is merely a 'terrified idealism', a philosophy where 'appearance is all' (Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, 105). Yet 'appearance' is taken by Santayana to mean *idea* at best and an image at worst. And for him an image is only a picture (when it is far more for Henri Bergson). Moreover, Santayana is also a dualist and so it only follows that for him there can be no middle ground between realism and idealism.

28. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 9.

29. That said, 'neutral monisms' are rarely sufficiently neutral – be they composed from 'experience', energy, powers, information, events, or even 'life', 'difference' or the Real – as they are frequently determined (either from the start or eventually) with properties from one or other side of a dyad, thereby revealing a hidden bias after all.

30. Interestingly, G. William Barnard, while admitting that 'pure perception' is only a hypothetical construct for Henri Bergson, still claims nonetheless that it is a very useful analytical tool 'because it enables us to recognize that there is a "that-ness", a stubbornly objective "external" matter-like aspect to our everyday perceptions, a core of our perceptual experience that, while it may be partial, is nevertheless also not relative, not simply our own subjective creation' (Barnard, *Living Consciousness*, 137).

31. Burton, *The Philosophy of Science Fiction*, 108.
32. See Noakes, “Haunted Thoughts”.
33. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 72.
34. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 324. See also Atkinson, *Henri Bergson*, 134: ‘The processes of a plant growing from a seed, an insect coming into being or a colour changing are quite different, and they must not lose their distinctiveness when integrated into a “colourless” image of Becoming in general – Becoming should always be conceived as a multiplicity of becomings’.
35. See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 64, 76.
36. See Ó Maoilearca, “Metaphysical Alter-Egos”.
37. Matheson, *Bid Time Return*, 216, 302.
38. We must strip away the confused mixtures of time and space operating in the usual models of time-travel. Take the time machine itself, for example. Such transcendent machines are somehow able to coexist in the past (or future) as well as their present such that they never completely enter into the new time at all. The fictional time-travel machine is a transcendent, atemporal transport and so, like some *objet petit a*, never immanent within either its original time or any other. Its circulations (voyages) embody both the possibility and impossibility of time-travel, at least as we standardly think of it, because they can never either fully arrive at their destination nor return to their point of departure.
39. As McNamara relates (*Mind and Variability*, 129), Henri Bergson ‘suggested that the dream involved a lifting of the normal inhibitory stance of the brain, a relaxation of the usual “interested” and outward-oriented stance of the individual’.
40. Burton, *The Philosophy of Science Fiction*, 109–10.
41. Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 160.
42. Bergson/Mathers, “Preface”, x.
43. See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 193–4: ‘most mystical systems do not involve an all-encompassing nonduality in which all of the apparent diversity in the world is in the final analysis unreal. [. . .] there may be a sense of union or a sense of individuality melting away, but there is no *ontic change in nature* from what was already our true situation all along – only the false conceptual boundaries that we ourselves had created soften or disappear. Through experiencing the commonality of being, one gains a knowledge by participation, but there still is no new ontic union of substances’. Jones continues, using Brahmanism as his example (197): ‘For Advaita, only Brahman is real, and thus there is nothing else to unite with it. There is no “absorption” of an independent self into “the Absolute”. Nor is the universe the pantheistic body of Brahman. The Upanishads have an emanationist position, but Advaita and Samkhya interpret the situation differently. The popular image of a drop of water merging in the ocean does not fit the metaphysics of these traditions’.

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Chapter 3

Performing Nonhuman Language *'Humaneity'* in Ron Athey's Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing

Hannah Lammin

One way of thinking about non-philosophy is as a *practice of language* - practice of taking words and phrases found in philosophy, or other fields of knowledge, and performing them in such a way as to re-set thought's relation to the real. Laruelle argues that philosophy uses language to produce a 'narrative of the real'¹ which is not only a description of whatever object(s) it seeks to explain but also a claim to determine them ontologically. He states: 'Philosophy postulates that every use of language is a use with a view to the *logos*, language being taken as constitutive of the Being of things'.² Thus, when philosophy speaks, it is the *logos* that speaks through it; this enunciativ logic is intrinsic to its transcendental structure, which Laruelle calls 'the Philosophical Decision'.³ Non-philosophy, in contrast, proposes a 'usage of language, which is not of the *logos*'.⁴ Laruelle calls this usage an 'immanent pragmatics'⁵ or 'non-linguistics'.⁶ He characterizes this non-decisional use of language as 'scientific', arguing that science deploys language in a manner that 'does not have the same "ontological" structure as a philosophical representation',⁷ and that this gives science a special role in extirpating philosophy's belief in its own privileged ability to determine the Being of things. Yet, despite placing science first in the non-philosophical order – according it *priority-without-primacy* in his theoretical endeavour⁸ – Laruelle cautions against enacting '[a] simple reversal of philosophical hierarchy, the dominant place passing from philosophy to science',⁹ because such a reversal would only undermine the democratizing gesture of his thinking. Perhaps for this reason, his work has always contained what he describes as 'two parallel and competing strands: first, the theoretical work of elaborating rules that rise like

the tip of an iceberg from the non-philosophical matrix, and also, secondarily, their quasi-poetic execution'.¹⁰

This essay explores how these two 'strands' interplay in non-philosophy, with the aim of showing that the 'quasi-poetic' dimension of Laruelle's project, while secondary in his terms, nevertheless plays an important role in non-philosophy's pragmatics – that this aesthetic dimension is part of the latter's essence, and without it the 'matrix' that organizes non-standard thinking can all too easily be reduced to an empty formalism. Laruelle encourages the introduction of extra-philosophical techniques into non-philosophy, 'techniques of creation that would be pictorial, poetic, musical, architectural, informational, etc.',¹¹ in order to enrich the vision of thought it manifests. This is to say that artistic techniques, among others, can serve to complicate philosophy's image of thinking and aid in the description of a thought that would proceed otherwise than by dominating what it seeks to explain. Laruelle does not privilege the arts over technical types of creativity such as informatics here, because his non-standard posture supposes a radical equality of all regions of thought in relation to the immanence that he posits as the enabling condition for thinking. Yet, I want to suggest that the mode of 'enrichment' offered by aesthetic practices might have a particular usefulness, because it can help us to understand the place of *experience* in non-standard thinking, and the strange manner of subjectivity the latter effectuates.

This discussion will be orientated around Laruelle's essay 'The Transcendental Computer: A Non-Philosophical Utopia', which explores the relation of conscious thought to artificial intelligence (AI).¹² In this text, Laruelle complicates common-sense distinctions between thought and computing, revealing certain presuppositions that reside within the discursive framing of 'intelligence' in both philosophy and information science. The 'transcendental computer' of the title is a hypothetical apparatus – as yet to be fully imagined – which he proposes as a model for a unified theory that would superpose thought and computing. It is thus one possible effectuation of non-standard thinking, which takes informatics as a material with which to complicate our vision of philosophy, and so provides a framework through which to explore the dimensions of the non-philosophical matrix. This apparatus is no simple valorization of computational logic; however, Laruelle uses the theme of the transcendental computer not only to provide a distilled image of his theoretical posture but also to challenge formalist interpretations of non-philosophy that treat it as a set of rules that could be automated. Against such programmatic interpretations, Laruelle asserts the importance of 'humaneity' (*humanité*), and the 'Human-in-person' (*l'Homme-en-personne*), for non-standard thought.¹³

These notions are posited by Laruelle as engendering non-philosophy's particular mode of thinking, which is also an experience of language. In

order to elaborate this experience, and to examine the related question of the place of the human in Laruelle's thought, I will read his essay alongside two contrasting examples of nonhuman linguistic production: firstly, the 'abstract machine' described by Alan Turing in his 1950 paper 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence'¹⁴ and the 'imitation game' he proposed as a test of its intelligence; and secondly, Ron Athey's performance work *Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing (A Study and a Score)*.¹⁵ Both Turing and Athey construct a mechanism for generating language that is exterior to any substantive subjective consciousness. Each example is framed by a different discursive logic – one techno-scientific, the other cultural and aesthetic – but as we shall see, they both offer an understanding of language that is implicitly grounded in its *performance*. Viewing these linguistic machines through a non-standard lens will show that both mechanisms, in different ways, index the human as the originator of linguistic meaning. Thus, exploring the contrasting configurations between the human and the nonhuman in these examples will provide material to inform an imagining of the 'stranger-subject' of non-philosophy, which Laruelle calls the Human-in-person. This will enable me to expand upon the theme of 'humaneity' in Laruelle's thought. Humaneity is a name for the non-philosophical mode in which humanity is given in the thought-world, which is radically devoid of any determining predicates – rather than an anthropic entity, the 'human' here is conceived as a qualitative experience of immanence from which all thought proceeds.

The materials provided by Turing and Athey will help to show that within standard thinking there is a persistent tendency to overdetermine the human, which arises in varied forms, and to elaborate how non-standard thinking manifests the human in a different manner. At the same time, I will use these examples and their differing discursive logics to further elaborate the interplay of the 'theoretical' and 'poetic' strands of non-philosophy. One of the tenets of Laruelle's thought is that all genres of knowledge (philosophy, informatics, performance art, etc.) are equal when considered according to radical immanence, and this means that, in principle, all theoretical materials are equally suitable to serve as occasions for non-philosophical practice. Yet, he also suggests that when introducing materials into non-philosophy, 'it is interesting to supply it with a complex material which will have undergone the maximum amount of deformation and enrichment that it is capable of supporting'.¹⁶ I aim to show, in the analysis that follows, that while Turing and Athey's language machines can both be utilized in imagining formal models for non-standard thinking (i.e., the 'theoretical' strand of Laruelle's work), the techno-scientific framing of Turing's imitation game – which effaces the experiential aspect of the practice of language – occludes rather than deforms the 'standard' anthropic figure of the human, and that Athey's automatic writing machine thus provides a more complex image of humanity's relation to

language. As such, I will suggest that *Gifts of the Spirit* provides richer material to support the elaboration of Laruelle's notion of humanity.

Thus, Athey's artwork will act as an aesthetic instance that intervenes between the philosophical and technological aspects of the 'transcendental computer', and so provides material to assist in developing a 'quasi-poetic' description of the experience of thought it manifests. The effect of this intervention is a radicalized conception of performativity, which estranges the speaking subject from both the humanistic presuppositions of philosophy and the technological presuppositions of computer science, allowing us to view non-philosophy's performance of language in a radically non-humanist manner. By taking this detour through Athey's performance work, I aim to demonstrate that although aesthetic practices may not spontaneously enact a non-philosophical thinking in Laruelle's sense, they nevertheless have a singular value in helping us to formulate quasi-poetic expressions of the experience engendered through his non-linguistic pragmatics.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL COMPUTER: TOWARDS AN ARTIFICIAL PHILOSOPHY

Information technologies have brought about profound changes in the practices of everyday life in recent decades, not only mediating many aspects of human communication, but also becoming entangled in our very cognitive processes. This raises questions, as Luciano Floridi observes, as to 'how far this macrocultural phenomenon may concern philosophy, both as a discipline which provides the conceptual means necessary to explain and understand such significant phenomena, and as an area itself deeply affected by the recent technological transformations'.¹⁷ Arguably, within the broader realm of computation, it is the notion of 'artificial intelligence' that affects philosophy most deeply – both in its implicit claim that reasoning may be enacted by nonhuman agents, and in the logic that enables this machinic agency. Laruelle, too, sees the contemporary proliferation of computational apparatuses as posing a challenge to philosophy's fundamental presuppositions. He asks: 'In what capacity can the rise of the information technologies of intelligence and reason ("artificial intelligence", "cognitivism", and their future relays) still be interpreted by philosophy and dominated by its authority and procedures?' (Laruelle 2016, 189).¹⁸ Moreover, he argues that the challenge posed by AI constitutes a real danger for philosophy that has not been taken seriously enough, suggesting that 'philosophers should stop believing that AI contains more artifice than intelligence'.¹⁹

If AI poses a 'danger' for philosophy and the latter's 'authority and procedures', then it also constitutes an opportunity for non-philosophy, which seeks to

suspend this very authority. This is not to say that computational technologies, however sophisticated, necessarily perform a ‘non-philosophical’ type of thinking. Indeed, although AI may exhibit behaviour that could be understood as a form of *cognition*, Laruelle questions whether such technologies could be said to *think* at all. Nevertheless, while he leaves the question of what constitutes ‘thinking’ open, he also sees the ‘emergence and extension of a technocomputing *experience of thought*’ as ‘irrefutable’²⁰ and argues that, in face of the profound questions raised by AI, we need to move ‘beyond the often premature, restricted, or insufficiently radical philosophical critiques that were levelled against it’.²¹ In order to radicalize our understanding of how AI extends the experience of thought, Laruelle suggests that we might consider its emergence as a symptom – one which occasions a re-examination of philosophy’s presuppositions, and can be used as material for the description of a different grammar of thought. If we take this view, the possibility arises of moving from *Artificial Intelligence* towards an *Artificial Philosophy*, which would be one possible effectuation of non-standard thinking. This new genre of thinking would be ‘artificial’ inasmuch as it makes a particular usage of *fiction*, modelling the transcendental conditions for thinking through theoretical installations of a kind that Laruelle calls ‘philo-fictions’.²²

Thus, Laruelle sets a trajectory for thought that would identify the presuppositions which undergird both the theory and the practice of AI, and take these as a point of departure from which to establish the conditions for constructing a model for non-standard thought – the ‘transcendental computer’. This fictional ‘machine’ would ‘have a relation to philosophy in its entirety and would therefore be able to compute-think the blendings of thought and computing according to a “unified” mode’.²³ To enact this ‘unified’ modality of thinking is to practice non-standard thinking – to deploy the language of philosophy and computer science, together, in an immanent and non-linguistic manner. However, before offering a description of the transcendental apparatus that would give rise to this practice of thought, Laruelle states that ‘we must settle a prejudicial question concerning the degree of non-philosophy’s automaticity’.²⁴ Thus, he approaches the theme of the transcendental computer indirectly, by first demonstrating what it is *not* – and in doing so he refutes purely technical or theoreticist interpretations of non-philosophy’s pragmatics. This critique of theoreticism opens the possibility for the aesthetic or ‘quasi-poetic’ aspect of non-philosophical practice to come into the foreground.

The idea that non-philosophical practice could be automated, produced as the output of a ‘machine simulating a completely absent subject’, results, Laruelle suggests, from its being localized or measured by an *effect* which he calls ‘cloning’.²⁵ To understand the nature of this clone-effect is, to a large extent, to grasp what non-philosophy does. Yet, the clone-effect is somewhat

difficult to situate, because its cause – which Laruelle calls radical immanence – cannot be thought as a structure, schema or relation; indeed, this immanence is posited as ‘precisely what defies every transcendence’, and hence ‘is not identifiable in exteriority as an available criterion’.²⁶ Consequently, the effects of non-philosophy do not manifest in the form of outputs, of the kind that would result from a determinate logical operation, but rather as an *experience* that is ‘lived-in-immanence’. The nature of this experience is difficult to conceive, because it does not happen *to* a pre-existing subject (neither a thinking person nor an intelligent machine). Rather, it arises as an instance of the Human-in-person – the clone as a *subject-effect*, the nature of which we will explore below.

Nevertheless, in the common-sense understanding, an ‘effect’ is more often conceived as the determinate outcome of an action. Hence, approaching Laruelle’s thought by way of its effects tends to lead towards ‘a division of non-philosophy liable to give rise to two images: an inert theoretical image of a machine or mechanism composed of objectivised parts, and an image of practical functionality, the latter given without distance of objectivisation’.²⁷ The former image arises from the pragmatic need to articulate axioms that describe the manner in which a non-linguistic enunciation is determined by the immanent-real – the ‘theoretical work of elaborating rules’ that constitutes the first strand of Laruelle’s project.²⁸ Yet, taken alone this image constitutes a theoreticist *representation* of non-philosophy, rather than an effectuation of it – and as such it still partakes in a philosophical logic, because representation is the mode in which the *logos* manifests thought. Hence, while the formal delineation of axioms is a necessary part of non-philosophy’s pragmatics, the clone-effect does not occur without the ‘practical functionality’ described in the second image, that is, the experiential aspect of non-philosophy. Consequently, as Laruelle asserts, the effects of non-philosophy have ‘nothing automatic about them’;²⁹ rather, they arise as an instance of the lived-immanence that he posits as the cause of thought. Thus, the clone can be understood as a manifestation of non-philosophical experience.

We might therefore think of cloning as a mode of vision (Laruelle calls this ‘vision-in-One’),³⁰ which is engendered by superposing the two images of non-philosophy in such a way that its experiential aspect determines the theoretical description and not the other way around. This is to say that lived-experience provides the immanent condition required for thought to happen, and that theoretical models are inert if they are detached from this experience. Our task, then, if we want to effectuate the ‘transcendental computer’, is to find a way of combining the two images that does not recuperate them into a philosophical-type economy of representation – as a structure or programme, for example. This manner of combination is what Laruelle calls ‘the non-philosophical matrix’.³¹ Yet, if the lived-immanence that causes the second

'image' (that which is given without distance of objectivization) defies every transcendence, then it cannot be presented as a figure, which makes it a strange type of 'image' indeed – more a way of seeing than a thing to be looked at. If this immanence 'is not available in exteriority as an available criterion', such that its effects leave no tangible trace, this raises questions as to how one would be able to identify an experience of thought as specifically 'non-philosophical'.³² Moreover, if immanence cannot be made into a criterion, what language can we use to describe it?

However, Laruelle argues that such questions presuppose 'the effects themselves as already being those of an automatism (and consider this automatism and its effects as insertable into a structure)', and thus prejudge the nature of humanity and the Human-in-person (Ibid.). That is, to ask in this way what differentiates non-philosophy from other postures of thinking implicitly prioritizes the first image over the second: it will tend to lead us towards a view of the axioms as constituting a logical system rather than an experience of thought. Laruelle states: 'this type of formalization causes non-philosophy to lose its material and first of all its transcendental-real essence, as if the Human-in-person were a machine running on three axioms'.³³ Thus, such a formalist interpretation reduces non-standard thinking in two ways – it instrumentalizes radical immanence, causing non-philosophy to lose its relation to the Real, and hence its transcendental essence; and in the same gesture it abstracts thinking from the linguistic materials that occasion its instantiation. This is to say that formalizing non-philosophy as a purely axiomatic system separates the first strand of Laruelle's work (the articulation of rules) from the second (the expression of these rules in a material and quasi-poetic practice of language). This emphasizes the importance of the second strand, while also suggesting an approach to the problem raised above, concerning where we might find the language to describe the image-without-a-figure of the Human-in-person or the experience-without-criteria of humanity because it serves to remind us that non-philosophy is not accomplished in the abstract articulation of axioms, but in the material practice of a (non-)linguistic performance.

We can elaborate the character of non-philosophy's 'materials' by returning to where we began – considering non-standard thinking as a practice of language, which uses ideas found in philosophy or other fields of knowledge, but performs these in such a way as to decouple them from their decisional grounding in the *logos*. Viewed in this way, non-philosophy's effects can be understood as 'a type of possible disalienation for statements of the World, which are *de jure* representable and philosophisable'.³⁴ This is to say that what cloning does is to speak the words found in philosophy (or other discourses of knowledge) so that they are no longer alienated from the immanence that is the enabling condition of their manifestation as thought. The

pragmatic preparation for this (non-)linguistic performance entails selecting some extant text or practice, then identifying the presupposed transcendent structures that reside within the philosophical image it provides of a given concept. Then, one can use the terms found in the source text to elaborate a set of axioms that suspend those presuppositions, and with them the determining function of language. Once such a framework is in place, it is possible to enact a singular and finite performance of the linguistic materials extracted from philosophy, which constitutes the second, 'quasi-poetic' strand of Laruelle's work. It is only in the enactment of such a performance that non-philosophy's vision of thought is accomplished.

Thus, non-philosophy will vary with each effectuation, because it is occasioned each time by the language found in the philosophical materials under consideration. Nevertheless, there is a recurrent idiomatic style that Laruelle uses to articulate how the transcendental status of an enunciation is changed by suspending the authority of the *logos*. He calls this the 'idiom' or 'language of the One', and describes it as a 'formalism' that is adequate to a thought that proceeds according to immanence, rather than by entangling its objects with transcendence.³⁵ This idiom has a number of conceptual symbols, which derive from philosophy, including: One, Being, Identity, World, Philosophy; however, this list is not exhaustive because it is always possible to add new concepts by introducing other theoretical materials. These symbols can be combined with 'the "non-philosophical" functions or operators: non-, (of), outside, post-', in order to create formulas such as 'One-in-One, One-in-the-last-instance', that describe the non-philosophical manifestation of thought.³⁶ However, the formulaic character of this idiomatic style arguably encourages the problematic interpretation of non-philosophy's effects as 'inert things',³⁷ because the non-philosophical translation of philosophy's language can seemingly be produced through the programmatic introduction of hyphens, parentheses and other such modifiers. Consequently, it is quite possible to imagine an automated system that could produce 'idioms of the One' on the basis of a fairly simple parsing operation, although Laruelle would no doubt question whether this would constitute an *immanent experience* that combined thought and computing, and hence an instance of non-linguistics.

Laruelle proposes that the idiom of the One is both a 'scientific language', because it draws its 'materials, symbols and operations' from the sciences; and a '*poetic language*: by aspect of *a priori* identity of contraries, for example the philosopheme and the matheme'.³⁸ This suggests that the poetic strand of his work, while instantiated in its material expression, derives its aesthetic force from the non-philosophical matrix, that is, from the particular way that it combines two or more heterogenous uses of language from different regions of thinking. This is not to say that Laruelle claims to be a 'poet',

even in his most ‘experimental’ of writings; indeed, he suggests that these texts ‘would be rejected by poets and philosophers alike’.³⁹ Rather, what he aims to achieve by combining different theoretical languages in this matrical form is the installation of ‘an art of thought’.⁴⁰ Thus, if the ‘transcendental computer’ has a poetic aspect, and hence some relevance to the aesthetic sphere more generally, this would be less on account of the idioms through which it is expressed, than because of the manner in which it combines philosophy’s usage of language (determined by the *logos*) with the language of informatics, that is, ‘the blendings of thought and computing’.⁴¹

Hence, we return to the problem of how to view two images of thought in-One, but now approach it from a slightly different perspective. Above, we saw that non-philosophy’s effects can be divided into an inert, formalist image and an immanent, experiential one, whereas the discussion has now shifted towards a consideration of how materials from different theoretical genres might be combined. In order to untangle the relations between these two divisions, and so to further elaborate the ‘aesthetic’ dimension of Laruelle’s thinking, I will now introduce the two examples of machinic language production – from Turing and Athey – to illustrate different ways we might visualize the relation between philosophical thought and computation, and the linguistic subjects instantiated by each. These examples will enable us to explore two distinct forms in which we might imagine a possible transcendental computer, which are identified by Laruelle. The first, for which Turing provides materials, is ‘a strictly machinic and technological form of the AI type, immediately supposed realisable in the technological near future’; the second is ‘a non-philosophical form . . . that supposes a detour out of the machine’, which would make a ‘bridge between the machine and the transcendental’.⁴² Athey’s work will be a point of departure from which to explore this second form and will provide materials for an elaboration of the experience of humanity it presupposes.

TURING AND AI: LINGUISTIC IMITATION AS A CRITERION FOR THINKING

Laruelle proposes that if we are ‘to evaluate *what a machine can do from the perspective of thought*’, we must proceed critically: by dissociating . . . ‘the heterogenous types of knowledge that divide the field of AI’, without reducing them to one another.⁴³ Alan Turing’s writings, which have had a seminal influence on AI as a field of research – in both its technical procedures and the way its practices are framed philosophically – have arguably contributed to the entanglement of technological, scientific and philosophical ideas within it. Hence, engaging with Turing’s work will help bring these heterogenous

aspects of AI into focus and to reflect on their implications for the relations between human thought and computation.

Turing opens his discussion in ‘Computing Machinery and Intelligence’ by proposing to consider a question that resonates with our own: ‘Can machines think?’⁴⁴ He observes that ‘this should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms “machine” and “think”’.⁴⁵ However, having remarked on how ambiguous these terms are in their common usage, Turing instead proposes a game that he calls the ‘imitation game’, which came to be known as the ‘Turing test’. This game entails a human interrogator posing questions to two entities whom he/she cannot see. One of these is human, the other a digital computer, and the interrogator must make a judgement as to which is which on the basis of the answers provided. The test would be repeated many times with different interrogators and different human confederates, thereby building up a dataset that would serve as a statistical basis for assessing the computer’s performance. Due to the ambiguity of its terms, Turing considers the question ‘can machines think?’ ‘too meaningless to deserve discussion’,⁴⁶ and proposes that his imitation game has advantages over this original question inasmuch as the game conforms to certain standards expected of a scientific test – having strict parameters and being repeatable. Thus, he proposes that ‘the question, “Can machines think?” should be replaced by “Are there imaginable digital computers which would do well in the imitation game?”’.⁴⁷ This implies that a computer which succeeded with some consistency at this ‘game’ could be considered a ‘thinking machine’.⁴⁸

Turing goes on to observe that ‘the new problem has the advantage of drawing a fairly sharp line between the physical and the intellectual capacities of a man’.⁴⁹ This suggests an understanding of ‘thinking’ as a disembodied activity, one which is identified with what we might call the ‘software’ rather than the ‘hardware’ of a cognitive agent. This division relates to a distinction Turing makes between different varieties of machine in an earlier paper, ‘Intelligent Machinery’, on the basis of the material *effects* they are designed to bring about. He states: ‘Machinery can be described as “controlling” if it only deals with information’, whereas ““Active” machinery is intended to produce some definite physical effect’.⁵⁰ His discussion of intelligence focuses on ‘controlling’ machines, and he argues that the human brain falls into this category, which supports the idea that thinking is essentially an informatic process and not a physical one. This disembodied image of thinking is further reinforced by the fact that Turing largely disregards actually existing computers in his discussion of the imitation game, instead focusing on what he calls ‘abstract machines’ – imaginable computers that could *hypothetically* pass the test. He describes such abstract machines as ‘mathematical fictions rather than physical objects’.⁵¹

These fictitious machines are ‘mathematical’ because they are abstract models that are articulated using a mathematical language. Such articulations are made possible by a particular logical approach, which begins by breaking the computational system down into its smallest discrete elements (binary data) and its essential functions. Turing identifies three basic functions necessary to run his abstract machine – storage, execution and control (Ibid., 444).⁵² At the time he was writing, the term ‘computer’ was still commonly used to refer to a person who performs calculations, so he demonstrates the logic of his discrete state machine by analogy with a *human* computer. The ‘store’ is an organized set of information, equivalent to a book of rules or set of instructions; the ‘control’ is the logical framework that ensures the instructions are followed without deviation (for a human computer this control would be gained through education and training, whereas for a digital computer Turing suggests it is determined by the way the system is constructed); the ‘execution’ is the enactment of the calculations stipulated in the instructions. By explaining the fundamental functions of a digital computer by comparison to a human performing similar tasks, Turing arranges two distinct approaches to cognitive activity in a certain way – presenting human and machine as potentially equivalent agents.

After breaking down the computational mechanism into its smallest parts, Turing proposes that by increasing the quantity of storage and processing capacity, and including commands that stipulate different actions depending on the outcome of the previous one, it would be possible to construct a machine that could learn in the manner of a conditioned reflex, which could in time learn to pass as human in its deployment of language. He thus suggests that human language can be analytically reduced to simple modular functions and its complexities reproduced through a quantitative accumulation of these simple parts. This gives a very different vision of language than that associated with the philosophical *logos*. Philosophers from Aristotle to Heidegger have both given language a unique role in determining the Being of things and conceived of it as a uniquely human experience. Contemporary developments in artificial language systems such as Apple’s Siri and Google’s Duplex, which enable people to converse with computer systems in a manner that is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate from human-to-human conversation, not only demonstrate that Turing’s claims were justified from a technical perspective, but also support Laruelle’s idea that we might take AI as an occasion to re-examine philosophy’s image of thought, and that in order to do so, we need to critically untangle the different discursive genres that are imbricated in AI as a field of research.

Hence, let us elaborate the presuppositions that are implicit in Turing’s displacement of the question ‘can machines think?’ by the question ‘can machines pass the imitation game?’, and how they entangle philosophy with

technology in the name of science. Throughout Turing's discussion there is an interplay between three different theoretical registers. Turing's proposed test is an experimental method which he posits as a criterion for judging whether or not a machine can think. In positing this criterion, he makes a claim which decides upon the nature of thought and thus determines it philosophically. That is, he begins his argument with an act of substitution – proposing that the imitation game (a test designed according to *scientific* principles of having controlled variables and being repeatable) can stand-in for the (*philosophical*) question of whether machines can think. He then defends this act of substitution through a detailed specification of the technical functionality of the machine (thereby offering a *technological* 'proof' for a *philosophical* claim). From a Laruellian perspective, this produces a circular argument where the philosophical, scientific and technical aspects of the discourse of AI mutually presuppose each other. This circular form of reasoning gets us no closer to the real conditions for thought, which is why the 'heterogenous types of knowledge that divide the field of AI' need to be dissociated if we are 'to evaluate *what a machine can do from the perspective of thought*'.⁵³

The imbrication of these different modes of thinking can be illustrated by the way that Turing addresses various objections to his claims. One is the argument that machines might be said to 'carry out something which ought to be described as thinking but which is very different from what a man does'.⁵⁴ Turing acknowledges that this is a strong objection but suggests that 'if a machine can be constructed to play the imitation game satisfactorily, we need not be troubled by [it]'.⁵⁵ Thus, he narrows a potentially endless field of possibilities for nonhuman thinking a priori, reducing the scope of cognitive science to whatever can be evidenced by one particular type of linguistic behaviour; and in the same gesture, he determines language as a disembodied informatic process that can be reduced to simple modular functions. Moreover, the set-up of the game means that this technological process remains obscured from the interrogator, whose judgement about the identity of his/her interlocutor (and by implication the presence of thought) must be made on the basis of the outputs it produces alone. In this way, Turing identifies thought with the external traces of the linguistic performance and the effects they have on the interrogator. This focus on effects rather than causes allows Turing to dismiss a number of other objections to his proposition that imaginable machines could think. These include the theological notion that thinking is a function of the immortal soul, the idea that there is a qualitative difference between the processes of discrete state machines and the continuity of the human nervous system, and the *philosophical* notion that *thinking belongs to a subjective consciousness*.⁵⁶ Thus, although in a certain sense his test prioritizes the human perspective – because a judgement is made about the presence of thought on the basis of whether or not the machine's linguistic performance is sufficiently *humanlike* to fool its

human interlocutors – it is set up to bracket out the *experience* of language production, by erecting a barrier between the judges and the linguistic agents with whom they are conversing. This act of separation removes the ‘human’ aspect from consideration at the level of the lived-experience of thought (as ‘humanity’), but returns it as a determinate criterion for the presence of thinking at the level of the latter’s effects.

This detour through Turing thus suggests how the images of ‘thought’ and ‘computing’ would be brought together in a ‘strictly machinic and technological’ form of the ‘transcendental computer’.⁵⁷ The imitation game sets human and machine side by side in a comparative relationship, which presupposes their potential equivalence – thereby opening the possibility of a nonhuman agent of thought. However, Laruelle suggests that such a comparative approach sets human and computer in a relation of equivalence that is reversible: either it ‘supposes a human whose functionality the machine imitates to the nearest degree’, in which case thought is conceived as originating with the human and AI constitutes the ‘interiority of consciousness spreading out in space’; or else the order is reversed, with ‘machinic and algorithmic immanence’ serving as the model for thinking, such that ‘our concept of consciousness [instead] imitates the machine’.⁵⁸

In either case, he argues, one finds oneself turning in a vicious circle, which does nothing to shift our fundamental understanding of what it means to think. Moreover, because the Turing test judges the presence of thinking solely according to linguistic *performance*, thereby consigning the process of cognition to a black box, it returns us to a perspective that prioritizes effects over causes, and outputs over experience. Hence a ‘transcendental computer’ modelled on Turing’s imitation game would combine ‘thought’ and ‘computing’ by reducing both to the aggregated functions of a simple machine. Such an apparatus would foreclose the experience of *humanity* presupposed in non-philosophy’s immanent pragmatics, instead performing a hollow act of linguistic execution that is cut off from radical immanence. For Laruelle, then, the problematic presupposition that underwrites AI as a field of knowledge is ‘the catchall concept of performance, which in general allows for AI to claim to equal the “performances” of intelligence and even thought’,⁵⁹ and it is this presupposition that needs to be suspended if the latter is to be deployed in the elucidation of a non-standard thinking.

ATHEY AND AUTOMATIC WRITING: DEPERSONALIZING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The notion of ‘performance’ provides a bridge to my second example – Athey’s *Gifts of the Spirit*. This artwork offers a different vision of the

relations between human and machinic language production (and by association, ‘thought’ and ‘computing’). At the same time, it introduces an aesthetic dimension into the ‘catchall concept of performance’ which will help us to articulate a more complex understanding of what it means to *perform language*, and so to elaborate the value of the second, ‘quasi-poetic’ strand of non-philosophy.

Like much of Athey’s work, *Gifts of the Spirit*, it is an autobiographical piece, although one that is in some ways untypical of his oeuvre. Performance art, as Andrew Quick notes, is often ‘differentiated from theatre through a prevalence of reality-effects: the focus on the body, history and personality of the performer’.⁶⁰ Athey’s works often conform to this framing, producing visceral encounters which invoke the ‘real’ through the staging of bodily ordeals. *Gifts of the Spirit*, however, proceeds in a different manner. Lisa Newman notes that previous performance pieces such as *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* (1994), *Deliverance* (1997) and *Joyce* (2002) have dealt with similar aspects of Athey’s life-story, but while ‘these performances were often presented in a blur of spectacle, physical wounding, camp, and allusions to martyrdom’, *Gifts of the Spirit* was noticeably different because of ‘the lack of emphasis on Athey’s own physicality and the absence of the social politics surrounding queer sexuality and AIDS’.⁶¹

Spatially, the installation of *Gifts of the Spirit* is organized around a large piece of paper, in the shape of a cross, which covers much of the floor. A number of its cast of 26 take the role of ‘writers’, and sit on the paper where they engage in the practice of ‘automatic writing’ – a technique used by both Spiritualists and Surrealists, in which the practitioner is instructed to ‘put yourself in a “receptive” frame of mind, and start writing. Continue writing without thinking about what it appearing beneath your pen. Write as fast as you can’.⁶² A second group of performers play the role of ‘editor’. They select pieces of the text produced by the writers, cut them out with scissors and put them on the wall before the third group, the ‘typists’. The typists select lines from the excerpts they are given and transcribe them using old-fashioned mechanical typewriters. The editors then take the pages produced by the typists, again make cuts and recombine the lines once more on new sheets of paper. These sheets are then taken to Athey and a second ‘speaker’, who read them out.

Athey himself refers to this collective set-up as a ‘machine’.⁶³ The writing process is organized by a set of rules (analogous to Turing’s ‘store’); each group of actants has a distinct function to ‘execute’; and clear ‘controlling’ protocols delimit the activities each individual performs, and coordinate the actions of the various machinic parts. Thus, the set-up has all the key parts of a Turing machine. Within the limits set out by the protocols, the individual

writers have the freedom to write what they will, and the editors and typists to select and order the text produced by the writers according to their own judgement, which introduces multiple humanly determined inputs to the process. The different parts of the machine work simultaneously to generate the text, creating a decentred system in which – between writers, editors and typists – no *one* individual or group has more influence than the others over the final output. Yet, Athey says, ‘I think they tapped into each other and developed a rhythm of their own’, and he suggests that this attunement between the performers was enhanced by the fact that they underwent group hypnosis prior to the performance.⁶⁴

Athey is positioned above the performers and audience, overlooking the automatic writing machine from a balcony; thus, his own presence is manifested mainly through his amplified voice. At intervals during the performance the audience hears him count down: setting the cast off to commence their actions, and then stopping them again after a period of time. Thus, he functions as the machine’s ‘controller’, switching the mechanism on and off via disembodied, informatic commands. At a sensuous level, the mechanical clacking sounds made by the antique typewriters add to the impression that one is watching a machine in action. Athey says that he ‘wrote the movements of automatic writing out as a soundscore graph, rather than script it’ – this being the first time he had viewed a piece in this way.⁶⁵ The score could be seen, in computational terms, as a kind of programme, which dictates the actions performed much like the punch-hole cards of a Jacquard loom.

The machinic action of the piece is punctuated by Athey’s narration, which consists of excerpts from his as-yet unfinished autobiography and provides the audience with a contextual understanding of the machinic language set-up. Athey grew up in a Pentecostal community, where he was trained as a psychic and groomed for a ministry as a child. He says: ‘While I did receive the gift of speaking in tongues, I failed at automatic writing’.⁶⁶ Athey renounced formal religion in his teens, but remains interested in the ecstatic states he experienced as a member of this religious culture, sometimes describing himself as a ‘mystical atheist’.⁶⁷ In much of his performance art he accesses the ecstatic by subjecting himself to torturous physical experiences. *Gifts of the Spirit* constructs a somewhat different kind of *ek stasis*: it externalizes the process of language production from Athey’s subjective consciousness, delegating it to the collective writing machine. By materially performing an impersonal process of language generation, it constitutes a challenge to the substantive interiority of the philosophical subject and its privileged relationship with the *logos*.

While the writers, editors and typists in *Gifts of the Spirit* each have a role in generating the text, the two speakers enunciate the text as it is passed to them; so they perform the function of translating the text from a typewritten

medium to a spoken one in what we might think of as a fully ‘automatic’ fashion. Thus, as well as being a controller, Athey is himself subject to the controlling protocols of the system. In this sense, he has constructed a mechanism for introducing a mode of chance composition, which we might think of as an instance of alterity or difference, into his otherwise autobiographical piece. He states that the ‘impulse was to de-personalize the memoir text, . . . so to reiterate it but run it through a colder process’, and he did this by utilizing the ‘collective unconscious’ that hypnosis enabled the performers to access.⁶⁸

What is important, for our purposes, is how the spoken text of Athey’s performance alternates between the subjectively generated memoir and the impersonally generated language of the automatic writing machine, and in this way combines ‘human’ and ‘machine’ linguistic production in a configuration that differs from that of Turing’s imitation game. Where the latter places human and machine language in a comparative relationship, Athey places the two different modes of language together, allowing them to be seen as two aspects of the same performance – as sharing an *identity* without necessarily being similar – and so allowing us to experience the sense of both texts in a new way. The way in which Athey arranges these heterogenous linguistic modes provides useful material for our exploration of the *non-philosophical* form of the transcendental computer, because by ‘reiterating’ his memoir text through this depersonalizing collective apparatus, he takes a detour out of the human through the machine. This opens the way for us to imagine a matrical combination of the ‘human’ and ‘computational’ images of thinking that breaks out of the circular reasoning underpinning the claims of the Turing test. Moreover, the linguistic experience produced by Athey’s performance is arguably more ‘poetic’ – precisely because the automatic writing combines with the memoir in a complementary, rather than competitive, manner.

Nevertheless, the ‘machine’ in this example, while sharing certain functions with a computer, is a hybrid system that mixes human and computational elements – both in the sense that the autobiographical material acts as a source text and anchor, which then automatically generated writing supplements; and because, as Florian Cramer observes, ‘automatic writing’ is not, in itself, a computational practice, but rather ‘a psychic automatism that [takes] the unconscious as its source code, not a calculus’.⁶⁹ Thus, the human serves as the primary source of linguistic meaning, here – albeit in a different manner from the way it determines thought in the context of Turing’s imitation game. Where Turing used the human as an implicit criterion for intelligence while bracketing out the experience of language production, *Gifts of the Spirit* – organized as it is around Athey’s fragmentary memoir – asserts human experience in the manner Quick identifies as dominant in performance art:

by focusing on the ‘history and personality of the performer’.⁷⁰ Thus, despite the decentred organization of the machinic apparatus, Athey’s autobiography looms large over the performance, serving as an anchor for the linguistic meaning experienced by performers and audience alike, and hence underwriting the poetic force of the work. As such, the depersonalizing function of the automatic writing machine is only partial, and hence its outputs continue to index a human subject – one that is constituted in advance, through a combination of singular memories and experiences.

Thus, *Gifts of the Spirit* arguably does not spontaneously enact a non-philosophical re-visioning of language, in Laruelle’s sense, because the experience engendered by this linguistic performance – the vision of ‘humanity’ it manifests – remains overdetermined by a psychological type of subjectivity. To put this another way, the production of ‘mixtures’, of which Athey’s hybrid writing machine is an example, is the work of philosophy, which dominates radical immanence precisely by binding the latter to its own transcendent structures. In this example, the transcendent structure is that of the human subject, which serves as both the origin and destination of the poetic sense of the performance. Thus, while Athey’s work is a useful example because it returns *experience* to the machinic production of language, it does not yet constitute a ‘transcendental computer’ – because the image of computation it offers is not adequately dissociated from the human. A more radical estrangement of subjectivity will be necessary in order to perform the subject-effect of the Human-in-person.

CONCLUSION: PERFORMING THE TRANSCENDENTAL COMPUTER

As we have seen, Turing and Athey each place human and machinic language production into relation in a different way, and so suggest a way of viewing thought and computing together, yet neither of these examples constitutes a ready-made enactment of non-philosophy. Hence, in order to utilize them in a non-standard manner, we need to treat the two examples as material, and extract aspects from each – combining the images to articulate the second, *non-philosophical* possibility for a ‘transcendental computer’. My aim, as I conclude, is to explore the dimensions of such a transcendental apparatus, and through this, to return to the question of *poetics* and the place of the aesthetic in non-philosophy’s pragmatics. Thus, by elucidating a matricial combination of two heterogenous modes of thought (informatics and performance art), and the manner of non-linguistic performance these materials suggest, I will demonstrate the relation between the formal and poetic strands of non-philosophy, and the experience of humanity it engenders.

Like Turing, Laruelle uses an abstract mode of theorization that constructs and describes hypothetical models. However, Turing's 'mathematical fictions', which articulate the principles for constructing possible thinking machines (ones that are abstract, but might exist in the future), evacuate the notion of experience from thinking, because they operate according to criteria for 'performance' that are technologically overdetermined. Identifying intelligence with this technological conception of performance means that Turing looks for evidence of thought only in the *linguistic effects* of cognitive activity. Laruelle, in contrast, turns abstraction to a different purpose, that is, to bring about a new vision of the relation between thought and its object, and so an immanent *linguistic experience*, one that causes a 'disalienation' of philosophy's statements about the world. His non-philosophical type of transcendental computer is hypothesized as real in an untimely now and allows us to see the thinking/speaking subject through a new lens. In constructing such an apparatus he thus takes an approach he calls 'scientific', that is, in some ways methodologically similar to Turing's, but he deploys his abstract models at a transcendental level – which is to say that they target the most intimate relation between thought and its objects: the mode of blending that imbricates immanence with transcendence. From the side of computing, such blending is determined by a logical meta-language, whereas from the philosophical side by a hermeneutics,⁷¹ both of which are transcendent structures – Decisions that divide and bind the Real. Laruelle's matrix arranges these heterogenous structures so that they can be viewed as sharing an identity, both being ways of refracting immanence; yet, this vision is conditioned by the supposition that the authority of philosophy's Decision to determine the form of thought can be (and is) suspended.

Hence, just as Turing refuses the validity of the question 'can machines think?' from the outset, Laruelle suspends the authority of transcendence to determine the essence of thought a priori, taking this suspension as a first principle which is necessary to facilitate the new experience of thinking he proposes. Laruelle's a priori suspension is more radical than Turing's, because it posits a cause of thought – the Human-in-person as an instance of radical immanence – that is 'not identifiable in exteriority as an available criterion' at all.⁷² This means that we cannot delineate the processes of thinking (e.g., as storage, execution, control, etc.) in advance of enacting them – leaving the question as to what constitutes thought wide open, rather than reducing it to measurable effects.

Thus, rather than sidestepping the question of experience, Laruelle posits a subject of thought that is nothing *but* the immanent lived-experience of thinking, which manifests as the effect of cloning. Cloning can also be viewed as the non-linguistic performance of the language found in our materials – a usage of their terms as 'disalienated' from immanence, and so indifferent

to the ontological authority of the *logos*. In principle, all thought is equal in relation to the radical immanence that is its necessary condition; thus, any theoretical materials might be deployed in the articulation of those rules that rise from the non-philosophical matrix. Yet, our exploration of Laruelle's transcendental computer, and his rejection of theoreticist interpretations of his pragmatics, suggests that some materials – those that have been subjected to the most 'deformation and enrichment' that their decisional frameworks can support – provide complex images for elucidating the *experience* of non-philosophical thinking, whereas others might suggest theoreticist visions of non-philosophy which foreclose the *humaneity* that differentiates it from other postures of thought. It would be problematic to claim that one genre of knowledge production is more or less adequate than another for instantiating a thinking that proceeds according to immanence (e.g., to judge 'scientific' or 'aesthetic' discourses in general to provide better resources for non-philosophical practice), because each effectuation of non-philosophy is singular and finite. However, of the two examples I have analysed in this essay, Athey's automatic writing machine arguably offers more 'interesting' material in Laruelle's terms, because it organizes human and nonhuman linguistic agents in a non-comparative configuration which enacts a partial estrangement of the subject of language from its humanistic presuppositions, and so suggests a poetic image of humanity – the non-philosophical experience of thought. In this instance, aesthetic practice can be seen to have a particular value in disarming philosophy.

Laruelle's proposal for an *Artificial Philosophy* takes AI, and the discourses that are imbricated in its theory and practice, as material to be cloned. Yet, he states that 'the object to be simulated or reproduced (or even to be experimentally known) represents with respect to *cognition* a qualitative leap – a Decision – for which AI, in its very foundations, is perhaps not prepared'.⁷³ He thus emphasizes that the transcendental computer cannot be realized through the programmatic reduction of thinking to simple modular functions. This is because the phenomenal appearance of the clone, as *subject-effect*, requires a complex form of subjectivity for its material – one that Laruelle identifies with 'the philosophy-form as such', that is, the transcendental identity of philosophy, the latter's Decisional form.⁷⁴ Thus, it is precisely the complexity of philosophical subjectivity that excludes the possibility of the clone-effect being produced by an automated system, and hence of our delegating the task of the transcendental computer to a machine – Laruelle states: 'It is transcendence in general that excludes philosophy's reduction to an algorithm'.⁷⁵

As we have seen, the way Turing sets up his imitation game as a test for intelligence enables him to bracket philosophical subjectivity out of consideration as a criterion for thinking. Consequently, his discussion steps around the problem of philosophy's decisional identity, but in doing so it leaves the

authority of transcendence intact. Moreover, because there is no paradigm for a complex subjectivity (neither human nor machine) in Turing's text, the latter provides us with scant material for a cloning that would disalienate the philosophically determined subject of language from the transcendent structures that overdetermine it. This means that we need other materials if we are to articulate the non-philosophical form of the transcendental computer – both at the level of its formal structure and at the level of its poetic expression.

One way of viewing the relation between these different 'strands' of non-philosophical practice is to frame the transcendental computer as a matrix that combines 'thought' and 'computing' in such a way as to produce (non-) linguistic performances – the poetic force of which would be determined by the manner of this performance. As we have seen, Turing's imitation game decides the question of intelligence, and so the equivalence (or otherwise) of human and machine, according to the performance of linguistic effects. Similarly, Laruelle argues that if we are to judge the equivalence of the two imaginable forms of the transcendental computer (the automatic AI type and the non-philosophical type) on the basis of their effects, the concept of 'performance' must be 'supposed or given, as a synthetic third party between the machine and philosophy'.⁷⁶ He thus poses 'performance' as a *problem*, inasmuch as it intervenes between computation and thought as a structure of transcendence – which acts as a determining criterion and so reduces the possibilities for both. Hence, in order to combine thought and computing in a properly non-philosophical manner, the concept of performance itself needs to be radicalized, and here, I suggest, the intervention of aesthetic materials is useful because they complexify the technological image of 'performance' by introducing a cultural dimension with different stakes and presuppositions.

Hence, Athey's aesthetic deployment of automatic writing has been introduced as an example because it both presents a poetic image of performance and provides material that can assist us in articulating the clone as a subject-effect. Thus, there are two levels at which this aesthetic instance helps us to disarm philosophy, and with it, technologically overdetermined understandings of Laruelle's 'transcendental science'. Firstly, *Gifts of the Spirit* enables us to visualize another matrix for combining 'thought' and 'computing', through its manner of combining human and machine linguistic production. Secondly, Athey's automatic writing machine has advantages over Turing's abstract machine inasmuch as it introduces a more complex subjectivity to be cloned – because it presupposes an implicitly philosophical *subject of consciousness* of the kind that Turing excluded. I have suggested that Athey's conjugation of two modes of language production in this piece, such that they share an identity without being similar, goes some way towards materially manifesting a non-philosophical vision of the subject of language.

However, the autobiographical nature of Athey's work means that its poetic sense remains at least partly determined by the subjectivity of the author, and as such it is not yet a model for an experience of thought that is immanent and without criteria. Hence, the humanistic presuppositions that reside in the work would need to be suspended in order to manifest the Human-in-person, which 'is not a subject in the traditional sense nor a "human" in the anthropological sense, a mode of consciousness or of being in general'.⁷⁷

Thus, where *Gifts of the Spirit* depersonalizes Athey's memoir text, which is determined by a subjective consciousness, through an automatic writing apparatus that channels the collective unconscious of the cast, the automatism of the transcendental computer instead channels immanence – which is not a subject. Laruelle states: 'Radical immanence is . . . devoid of subjectivity but not of lived experience: this is what distinguishes radical immanence from a machine. Here it is not the machine that simulates man at the vanishing limits of consciousness, but the Human-in-person that simulates a machine or an automatism'.⁷⁸ Thus, the function of the transcendental computer is to change the vector of thinking, so that rather than trying to unify our images of 'thought' and 'computing' departing from a philosophically determined subject of thought – and then trying to adjust our understanding of subjectivity to accommodate the emergence of intelligent machines and the associated concept of AI – we instead begin by positing immanence a priori as the cause of thought, and supposing the Human-in-person as an instance that can refract this immanence in a quasi-automatic fashion. In this way, the depersonalization of the memoir text enacted by Athey's automatic writing machine is radicalized, estranging the subject of speech from all determinate predicates and instead identifying it with a radical experience – that which Laruelle calls *humaneity*. Such an under-determined and radically performative 'subject-experience' (i.e., an experience that suspends the subjectivity of the singular individual, in a manner that could be compared to the mystical or ecstatic states that Athey is interested in exploring, and in the same gesture assumes a kind of agency inasmuch as it is the force or impetus that enables the manifestation of thought) opens towards the possibility of an immanent thinking machine.

However, Laruelle cautions that the term 'immanence' can itself be misleading because 'it makes philosophers believe in a thing', whereas, if utilized by the transcendental computer it is 'nothing but an attribute that disappears into an axiom which uses it, a term that designates the Real by an objective appearance'.⁷⁹ This clarification of immanence as an attribute rather than an objectivizable 'thing' emphasizes the experiential character of non-philosophy's vision of thought. It is also suggestive of the importance of the poetic strand of non-philosophical pragmatics – its staging of non-linguistic performances – because without this practical dimension there is

no disalienation of language, only objective appearances determined by the Decision of the *logos*.

Laruelle uses an *axiomatic* method to effectuate this disalienation of philosophy's statements about the world, and as such its results remain strictly hypothetical – the immanent subject-experience of humanity is supposed as Real, but only in the 'as if' mode of a theatrical performance. This entails a 'scientific' deployment of fiction that is no longer mathematical, as with Turing's abstract machines, but rather constitutes what Laruelle calls a 'philo-fiction', that is, an art of thought. Athey's automatic writing machine provides a model for the combination of human and machine linguistic production that places the two modes of speech on the same level, viewing them as equally immanent performances – not as equivalent terms in a comparative relationship, but rather as sharing an identity in their (non-)relation to radical immanence. If we clone Athey's machine, suspending its determination by the philosophical subject, we can imagine an immanent subject of thought that simulates the speaking machine, a subject-effect that is estranged from all autobiography, but without sacrificing lived experience or the quality of humanity. The matricial arrangement of the subjective (philosophical) and machinic (technological) dimensions of the machine enables linguistic meaning to manifest according to the principle that the experience of thought is radically performative – that the performance of language constitutes the experiential identity of the speaking/thinking subject. This shift of stance does not add any new concepts or objects to philosophy or to informatics; it simply views them in a unified manner that is imbued with a poetic force – in both its formal and expressive dimensions.

NOTES

1. François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 223.
2. Jacques Derrida and François Laruelle, 'Controversy over the Possibility of a Science of Philosophy', trans. Ray Brassier and Robin Mackay, in *The Non-Philosophy Project: Essays by François Laruelle*, ed. Gabriel Alkan and Boris Gunjuvic (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 88.
3. See: Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 231–6.
4. Derrida and Laruelle, 'Science of Philosophy', 88.
5. François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012), 167.
6. Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 224.
7. Derrida and Laruelle, 'Science of Philosophy', 89.
8. See: Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 41–2.
9. *Ibid.*, 53.

10. François Laruelle and John Ó Maoilearca, 'Artistic Experiments with Philosophy: François Laruelle in conversation with John Ó Maoilearca', in *Realism, Materialism, Art*, ed. Christoph Cox, Jenney Jaskey and Suhail Malik (Berlin: Sternberg Press/CCS Bard, 2015), 177.

11. Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, 135.

12. François Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal: une utopie non-philosophique', in *Homo ex machina* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 9–15; translated into English by Taylor Adkins as: 'The Transcendental Computer: A Non-Philosophical Utopia', *Speculative Heresy* (2013), accessed 26 Jan 2017, <https://speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2013/08/26/translation-of-f-laruelles-the-transcendental-computer-a-non-philosophical-utopia/>. I have largely followed Adkins's translation; however, I have modified the translation in places. Page numbers refer to the original French edition throughout.

13. I have chosen to translate *l'Homme-en-personne* throughout as 'the Human-in-person', rather than the more direct and commonly used 'Man-in-person', because it resonates with the notion of 'humaneity' that it is my broader aim to elucidate. Moreover, I find that using 'Man-in-person' as a name for radical immanence encourages a conception of it as a figure, which leads towards an inert and objective view – which is precisely what I am trying to move away from; whereas 'the Human' could be thought as something less solid than 'Man' – a quality or attribute, rather than a thing. In addition, given that the notion of 'humaneity' I am working towards is empty of determining predicates, it seems unhelpful to narrow its scope by utilizing a gender-specific term that suggestively excludes half of humanity from this experience.

14. Alan Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', in *The Essential Turing: Seminal writings in Computing, Logic, Philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Life; plus The Secrets of Enigma*, ed. Jack Copeland, 441–64 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

15. *Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing (A Study and a Score)*. Devised and directed by Ron Athey, performed at Outside AiR, Queen Mary University of London, 17 November 2010.

16. Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, 134.

17. Luciano Floridi, *Philosophy and Computing: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 15.

18. François Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, trans. Alyosha Edlebi (New York: Columbia Press, 2016), 189.

19. *Ibid.*, 223.

20. *Ibid.*, 189 (emphasis added).

21. *Ibid.*, 217.

22. See: Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, 227–35; and François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, A Non-Standard Aesthetics/Photo-Fiction, une esthétique non-standard*, bilingual edition, trans. Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012).

23. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 5.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 6.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Ibid.
28. Laruelle and Ó Maoilearca, 'Artistic Experiments with Philosophy', 177.
29. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 7.
30. See: Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 18.
31. Laruelle and Ó Maoilearca, 'Artistic Experiments with Philosophy', 177.
32. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 6.
33. François Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012), 46.
34. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 5–6.
35. Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 224.
36. Ibid., 225.
37. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 5.
38. Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 225 (emphasis added).
39. Laruelle and Ó Maoilearca, 'Artistic Experiments with Philosophy', 178.
40. Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 5.
41. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 5.
42. Ibid., 10.
43. Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, 218.
44. Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', 441.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 449.
47. Ibid., 448.
48. Turing may be seen to offer a definition of thought with this claim, although B. Jack Copeland, in *The Essential Turing*: disputes this idea, suggesting that he was offering 'only a *criterion* for "thinking"', without closing down the possibility that AI might also exhibit other, less humanistic types of intelligence (see *The Essential Turing: Seminal writings in Computing, Logic, Philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Life; plus The Secrets of Enigma*, ed. Jack Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). 435). Thus, while success in the imitation game may be sufficient to demonstrate intelligence, Copeland argues that it is not a necessary criterion. Nevertheless, the influence of the imitation game as a construct, and the manner in which Turing's writing has been widely interpreted, means that passing the test has come to act as at least a quasi-definition of intelligence in much of the discourse around AI.
49. Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', 442.
50. Alan Turing, 'Intelligent Machinery', in *The Essential Turing: Seminal writings in Computing, Logic, Philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Life; plus The Secrets of Enigma*, edited by Jack Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 412.
51. Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', 454.
52. Ibid., 444.
53. Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, 218.
54. Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', 442.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 10.
58. Ibid., 8.

59. Ibid., 11.
60. Andrew Quick, 'Approaching the Real: Reality Effects and the Play of Fiction', *Performance Research* 1, no. 3 (1996): 12.
61. Lisa Newman, 'Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing: Whitworth Hall, University of Manchester, 27 June 2011', *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 9, (Summer 2011), accessed 9 September 2017, https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/63517393/surrealism_issue_9.pdf.
62. Andre Breton and Philippe Soupault, 'Automatic Writing', in *A Book of Surrealist Games*, compiled by Alastair Brotchie, ed. Mel Gooding (Boston MA and London: Shambhala Redstone Editions, 1991), 17.
63. Newman, 'Gifts of the Spirit'.
64. Ron Athey and Sue Fox, 'Automatic Writing as Performance—Ron Athey and Sue Fox discuss *Gifts of the Spirit*', interview by JC Gonzo, *theendofbeing.com* (2011) accessed 9 May 2017, <http://theendofbeing.com/2011/07/31/automatic-writing-as-performance-ron-athey-sue-fox-discuss-gifts-of-the-spirit/>.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Newman, 'Gifts of the Spirit'.
68. Athey and Fox, 'Automatic Writing as Performance'.
69. Florian Cramer, *Words Made Flesh: Code, Culture, Imagination* (Rotterdam: Piet Zwart Institute, 2005), 72.
70. Quick, 'Approaching the Real', 12.
71. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 9.
72. Ibid., 6.
73. Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, 217.
74. Laruelle, 'L'ordinateur transcendantal', 7.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 11.
77. Ibid., 8.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 9.

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Chapter 4

Art and Philosophy

New Solidarities

Alice Lucy Rekab and Anne-Françoise Schmid

This essay introduces a logic of intermediate axioms to manifest new solidarities between art and philosophy. These, in turn, make it possible to explore the modes of separation and/or fusion between art and philosophy. To put this first schema into motion, we take the image of an object, made by Alice Rekab, which escapes the descriptions of art and philosophy, or taken from another angle, multiplies them, without finding a balance between these two polarities. For this experiment to work they must add a concept which intercedes between Rekab's object and the object philosophy – this concept is that of the *Integrative Object*.

The *Integrative Object* was explored via the screening of two films: *Conjuncture In-Film* (2014) – a fragmented comedy made in collaboration with People Pikeen, and *Intrication In the Park* (2017) – a botched interview and walkabout with François Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid. These screenings were accompanied by a performative reading at the Art Disarming Philosophy conference at Tate Liverpool (2018).

This work is translated here through still images and excerpts of that reading alongside expanded investigations into the concepts at work in Schmid and Rekab's ongoing collaborative research on the *Integrative Object*.¹

The *Integrative Object* for both Rekab and Schmid is an object without synthesis, which can assume properties of both art and philosophy which is described in a combination of axiomatic lists, conversations, fictions and a co-authored matrix² published in this chapter. The *Integrative Object* makes space for concurrent readings of both abstract thought and lived experience. In this text Rekab's sculptural object and the object of philosophy is represented in layers and tangents according to the multiplicity of potential which each of these objects possesses.

**Figure 4.1**

This matrix has the effect of making visible in one place multiple variations in the way in which the relations between these objects are established and the imbalance of the immanence of art and that of philosophy is represented. It also attempts to initiate a democracy of thought, that is, philosophy is not suspended over art, science does not formalize art, art does not showcase philosophy and science in new and ‘radical’ combinations nor does art occupy an untouchable or inscrutable position with regard to how it

**Figure 4.2**

interacts with its subjects and the world. In this democracy of thought there is no philosophy of art, no science of art, no art of philosophy: the 'of' is too much. Each mode of invention can be an operator for another or for itself: art-philosophy, philosophy-science, science-art, philosophy-philosophy, and so on, while keeping the idea of non-synthesis effective.

In an experiment performed through text and image, Anne-Françoise Schmid and Alice Rekab introduce a *linea serpentinata* between all these heterogenous regimes to manifest new solidarities. The authors have developed a glossary of terms to accompany this experiment in the hope of aiding third-party navigation of their journey.

NEW SOLIDARITIES BETWEEN ART AND PHILOSOPHY: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In this text Alice Lucy Rekab and Anne-Françoise Schmid present their collaboration: a twofold experiment in text and image. The experiment of the text is one in which we use philosophy, art and science as operators³ and alternatively as objects. The images are an experiment in presenting something beyond illustration, a counter-narrative, or one which runs parallel to the line of the text. This text opens and closes with an art-fiction and a philo-fiction. These hybridized texts speak to an unstable or indeterminate positionality occupied both by the work itself and by the authors in their respective ways. Subjectively in terms of Rekab's experience as being white-passing, mixed race and queer and philosophically in terms of Schmid's adherence to a 'method without exclusion' in her approach to interdisciplinary work and experimental thought. In each instance, the authors layer their ideas with narrative to create a matrix of knowledge and sensation.

Creolized Existence, Setting the Scene: The First Philo-fiction

The artist looked white, though her roots said otherwise, black and brown brutalised, pampered and assimilated into a world she had succeeded in. Her way to find a place and be her whole self was to tell the story of her elders, a legacy of difference and survival, her father made up his own hybrid religion to sustain himself through hardship, always a contradiction unified by his body, he pushed on in his own direction. Her mother ran away from home to make paintings and work night shifts in a restaurant. The artist was raised painting in a tea chest full of blankets while her mother made marks and rendered the crucifixion on canvas for the local church that had recently burned down. Her heritage was that of penitent children who were not able to be a part of their own histories, inconsistent images, forms.

So she wrote, and made marks and knitted herself into this lost history that they could not tolerate, that was the privilege of her distance from the facts. Her privilege was pale skin and the abstraction of times passage and arts treatment of all things as material.

She was formally trained, taught the tropes and mores of what Contemporary Art with its big C and big A should look like, the notes one had to hit to make it.

To her this was a thing in itself, another material fact of her circumstance that could be put to use, to work, in a new way, the constant self-reflexive folding of the artist. She had heard that nothing could escape contemporary art and nothing could escape capitalism, any heterogeneity will be assimilated. resistance is futile.

But . . .

What about non-entry what about being in and out at the same time, a dimensional melt? philo-fiction a way to at least visualise and conceptualise such a tangent. So she went to France to conduct an interview. To chase down the philosophers and insinuate a relationship to her object through film. The film worked as a power inverter, the scenes shot roughly, the sound punctured with the background of a park in early evening, a Paris suburb, a ball game with no rules. shouting.



Figure 4.3

The object entered sometimes appearing to float but most clearly held in her white looking hand, she played the part of the artist seeking the meaning that philosophy so happily donates to its neighbours, mostly uninvited, but this time she begged in self-effacing bad french and nervous laughter . . . 'tell me what you said before?! about the fetish of the object'.

Fin/ End of the first philo-fiction

Intermediate axioms of disarmament: a performance of concurrent visions.

Anne-Françoise: I am a philosopher and non-philosopher, therefore a creator of intermediate axioms. Non-philosopher, because I take philosophy as an object, I pose the multiplicity of philosophies as a multiplicity of rights, I do not work in a philosophy, but with philosophies or philosophical concepts taken out of their system, in a generic space. In this work, I am also a philosopher, repeating and reworking his concepts, under two hypotheses or 'intermediate axioms'. The first is that of an 'obscure cogito' (= there is always a philosophy that we do not understand – it is the equivalent of quantum) and 'open secret' (no philosophy is hidden, but we do not see it, it's the equivalent of the generic).

Alice Rekab: I am an artist and a non-philosopher, a creator of intermediate objects and spaces. A non-philosopher because I take philosophy as a material and put it to use with other materials, my practice then manifests the common = X, a formula that lends description without fixing the contents and without confining them beyond a basic or minimal structure.

Anne-Françoise: There are intermediate axioms, one cannot base philosophy directly on non-philosophy or vice versa. There must be a foreign term, identified by François Laruelle as the quantum, which has no object, just states or operators. He develops this triad, philosophy, quantum and generic, in *Tétralogos, an Opera of Philosophies*.⁴

In order to show the intermediate axioms concerning the relation between philosophy and art, an act of separation is first of all necessary:

1. AXIOMS OF SEPARATION

1.1 Art and (Operator) Ecosystem Phi-Proof

Alice Rekab: Art (without) philosophy would find something new, a way to fire and harden its knowledge, to glaze its thought. To mix water and earth together to make something that has not been seen before. Art mines all



Figure 4.4

disciplines for its materials, there is no place unexploited and yet it is never totally made from just one, and never totally occupies just one dimension, it is always doing something else as well as, other than, the thing it says it is doing.

Anne-Françoise: This is no longer the same difference as in Kant, between determining judgement and reflective judgement, but something that is within the immanence of art itself rather than the ‘outside’ judgement of the viewer (which can now be included as part of the work itself, the spectator makes the myth of the work of art or elevates it above themselves). In art, it is this distance to immanence that is more important than the concept, and which, indirectly, creates a concept, and so is a little bit philosophical in this gesture. Art deals with spontaneous philosophy-like concepts, and in so doing, undoes the unity of philosophy and the links it poses between the a priori and the empirical. When art touches philosophy, it changes the obliquity of the transcendental in philosophy. Within art the transcendental is an obliquity without concept. Within art the transcendental is invisible and remains invisible.

Alice Rekab: I started at home, mixing mud and adding paint. This is basic. This was a start without philosophy, or without the reflection, and re-coding that philosophy performs on its subjects. I turned towards other forms of interpretation, narrative, family history, humour, friendship – these are the basis for the work. The processes which are so often undermined by Philosophy’s big ‘P’, the green thing grew from a dream logic of histories and our interpretation of them after the fact, fictions committed to the

cannon of fact, projections at the end of a matrix of information. The object found at y was made by x and used for z. The object was the precursor to our q. This whale had legs and later returned to the sea to find a new life; its descendants swam from Pakistan to Peru.

The green thing started in Dublin, it was made from rubber usually used in the process of mould making, casting silicone, not meant for long life meant to be thrown away or at least not shown. I was interested in replicas being a visitor's point of contact with an artefact, preserving images and feelings of surfaces without letting them be destroyed. Mediating transgenerational experience. So the green thing was made from a process material, not a finished material like bronze or silver or steel. This rubber has since oxidized and broken apart. It continues to generate a fiction, and ask what happened here?

Anne-Françoise: To see Alice's object is to see so many plans of immanence, angles, with no rules between them: the non-synthetic heterogeneity of contemporary art and that of the immanence of mathematical planes. It is not necessary to see this object with the distance constructed by philosophy and its abstraction.

Alice Rekab: Even viewed very closely: there are angles, there are dimensions to be seen according to games of distance different from everyday objects. The green object is a relay, a trans-civilizational witness of art and philosophy.⁵ It has many functions: weapon, artefact, witness, resistance as



Figure 4.5

Creolization, resistance to interpretation, symbol of peace, non-art, witness reduced to itself, object without hands, object without sign.

The object thus breaks the notion of object while showing art. The art that happens, and yet is not there, an alternation of art and non-art.

1.2 Philosophy and (Operator) Ecosystem Art-Proof

Anne-Françoise: How to write philosophy that is 'art-proof'? No trace of art, insensitive to flooding by art? This requires that the a priori and empirical is the same, avoiding any schematism. Can we imagine a philosophy that responds to such a definition? There is no spectator for philosophy, there are only subjects. Nobody looks at philosophy. There are, however, commentators, both in and out. The concept reduces to itself, the empirical being only its combinations.

The classic relation of philosophy to art is either:

- a) Commentary, philosophy projects its own ideas and interpretations onto an art that does not require them. Philosophy's commentary is not necessary for art and does not add to it in a generative way. In this relationship philosophy replaces art with folds of itself, like a puff pastry.

or

- b) Philosophy can be identified as an art. But for this to work, we must destabilize the conceptual architecture of philosophy, so that philosophy does not recognize these concepts as immediately philosophical.

The question is therefore: How to conceive of philosophical extensions of art rather than philosophical commentaries on art? It requires us to hypothesize on the planes of immanence, the immanence of art and of philosophy. It's really as difficult! as difficult as making assumptions about data.

Approach: If we take into account the multiplicity of philosophies, we can define packages or superimpositions of fragments of philosophy, commons = X, which allow formulas of hypotheses on the relations of philosophy to art. For this, we need the concept of the integrative object,⁶ to add a new dimension of thought.

Alice Rekab: This integrative object is an object to decolonize the thought of art both from the domination of philosophy and from the domination of Eurocentric cultural production.

1.3 Introduce in Philosophy the Affect of Colour

Anne-Françoise: We try to introduce to philosophy the affect of colour (see Kant: *Essay to introduce in philosophy the concept of negative magnitude 1763*).⁷ Effect: A decomposition of philosophy, produced by a new intimacy within it, here we reorganize a colourful philosophy whose qualities are thus distributed differently within various philosophies.

Alice Rekab: In the scene above colour and angles intrude on philosophical history interjecting in its processes of dictation and dissemination. François Laruelle articulates the origin of the philosophical trouble. The object, the green thing in the film, intervenes both to assert the problem and create a new means of escape. The sculpture in this sense acts as a trans-civilizational device, having appeared once taken on the role of a diamond in a comedy made by the artist made in Sierra Leone in the scene captured above it performs a new task, pale and particular it stimulates tangents of thought, vectors of association and at the same time undermines the gravity of the moment. The film and the object form a two-way projection system both absorbing identities and projecting new ones, roles get tampered with and lines get switched, the philosopher is subsumed into the art work and the art work subsumed into the philosophical moment as it is held and inserted into the picture.

Alice Rekab: Colour is an expanded disruptor to homogeneity, colour is often pushed out of thought and colour is there to remind us that there is another world of knowledge beyond the one we are looking at and that perception is always partial and always only a vector based on positionality and perspective. Power is always behind dominant forms of interpretation.

Fin/ End of the dialogue

2. OBJECTS: A CONSOLIDATED PRESENTATION OF THOUGHT (ALICE AND ANNE-FRANÇOISE TOGETHER)

2.1 Object of Art, Integrative Object, Object-Philosophies

We propose to treat art, science and philosophy as operators, as an application from a space to another, taking philosophy as our first operator.⁸ We have developed the applications below, from philosophy to philosophy, from philosophy to science and from philosophy to art. This way of doing things avoids the domination of the philosophy implied in the expression ‘a philosophy of’: a philosophy of science, a philosophy of technique, a philosophy of art and even a philosophy of philosophy or philosophies. This approach to

philosophy and other disciplinary practices assumes the generic,⁹ which is qualified through these operations.

2.2 Operator as Application from One Space to Another

We remove the ‘of’ by making philosophy an operator on these other disciplines, which are understood as objects.

1. If philosophy is an operator on philosophy, philosophy can be understood as an object, or out another way. If we apply philosophy to philosophy itself.
 $\phi \times \phi = \phi$ Generic immanence: philosophy brings immanence to the generic.
2. If we apply philosophy to science, rather than making a philosophy of science, this brings heterogeneity to the generic, the heterogeneity of scientific methods and disciplines.
 $\phi \times \text{quantum} = \text{quantum}$: science brings heterogeneity to the generic.
3. If we apply philosophy to art, we find the generic as an undulation within a common = X. Philosophy as application within an art practice creates generic undulations within a common = X: art brings undulations into the generic.
 $\phi \times \text{art} = \text{undulations within the common} = X \text{ of the disciplines.}$ ¹⁰

2.3 Matrix of Objects

This is a matrix without an image but with multiple dimensions. We can have different solutions or inventions to combine the parameters. Below is an example:

The matrix is a model we can offer to various specialists (including but not confined to philosophy, art, science, music, etc.). The matrix is a model for interpreting interdisciplinarity.

The functions of the matrix:

Principle: By taking the rather numerous properties of the (art)object appearing in the film, we try to transpose their values to the other objects of this text: integrative objects (non-synthesizable) and objects(of)philosophy (supposing the multiplicity of right philosophies). The objective is to put into play the movements of a common=X never completely determined, and always partially unknown, even if the final combinations are concrete (such as object, artistic, scientific, philosophical). It is on this common = X that we will be able to draw new solidarities.

Effects:

- 1) Interdisciplinary exercise: Each author seeks with her culture to create expressions at the intersection of objects and properties. The matrix is the result of a thought experiment: how to articulate heterogeneous objects by means of properties suggested by one of the objects, the most apparently enigmatic and involving artistic creation.
- 2) Invention in elements of language (history, sign, imagination, memory, dissemination).
- 3) Invention in elements of concepts (undulation, doubt, trouble, generative contradiction, anomaly, combination of partial images, repetition, symbol).
- 4) Elements of adding dimensions (civilization, mythology, comedy, geography, multiple law, philosophies).
- 5) Elements of preparation of the concrete (once every time, tools, physical object, mould, passage of the sign to the symbol, border, environment, vectors, plans, tangents, sculpture).
- 6) Draws a dynamic: from the sign to the symbol, on the one hand, from the abstract to the incarnate on the other hand, one of whose forms are the passage from ethics to empathy.

The terms chosen on the abscissa (horizontal) are our objects. The ordinate (vertical) terms are the qualifiers that Alice and Anne-Françoise experimented with to characterize the sculptural object in the film. They can be found in comments on the images within this text. By composing them as integrative objects and philosophy-objects, together we commit ourselves to new solidarities between art and philosophies. You have to read: Alice's green thing is an enigma for the passage of the object from one hand to the other, like a witness, it is floating like the characters of Chagall, it is trans-civilizational because of a single colour, and so on. The integrative object is an enigma for complex objects, it floats in generic space. Philosophies are enigmas which find solutions by prolonging attributes, they float on (and not in) generic space, they are trans-civilizational in the measure where they are included in their trans-philosophical multiplicity, and so on.

Do we conclude that one philosophy can be a witness for another? That she can be manifested as a character? That each philosophy would have its colour? Can we conclude that the undulations of art can be extensions? What do they share conceptual baffles? It is the suggestion of these new reports that the matrix below brings to us.

This matrix shows us how the object is transformed by language, concept, dimensions, dynamic impulses, and each combination is once and every time: such a work of art, such philosophy, such a new object of contemporary science. Such a matrix is an aid to evaluate them as something other than mere

Table 4.1

<i>Operators/Terms</i>	<i>The Green Thing (Aka Alice's Object Aka the Sculpture)</i>	<i>Integrative Object</i>	<i>(Object-) Philosophies</i>
Enigma	Yes, from one hand to another, as a witness of the riddle/ Like a Chagall character./	For complex objects In a generic space Trans-disciplinary	Riddle that receives solutions by extending the attributes On generic space Trans-philosophical multiplicity
Floating Trans-civilization	Unicolor, perhaps hand-held to hand/ Undecidability between three or more?	Non-reducible heterogeneity	Yes, fractals or quantum
Multiple and undecidable dimensions	No, they are there, concrete object	Invisible without adding dimensions (disciplines) because it does not relate to objects	Verticality for ethics
Added dimensions		Not limited to the creole of the models	
Non-creole	Trans-civilizations, trans-geometries		Common language related to the obscure cogito of the philosophical multiplicities
Impossible concept, chicane	The table with multiple feet that never put down	Yes, modulo disciplines	Impossible meeting between creators, possible bridges by the way of the history of philosophy
Replicable Incomplete	With a model Unfinished work	By reduction in modules Open heterogeneity	With extensions By colour: generative under-determination, new intimacy
diagram	The object itself It is both at once	Dispersive-Delta fragments No scientific object without multiplicities: the sign becomes symbol	Line/spring The/A philosophie(s) favours these permutations
Permute signs/symbols		Object X whose properties are unexpectedly distributed among the disciplines	Multiplicities distributed unexpectedly in particular philosophies. Particular philosophies do not coincide with the philosophy-object
Distributed properties in n disciplines	In n civilizations		Non-reducible multiplicity of philosophies
Non-synthesizable Unknown	Concrete and limited in space Revealed by the object	No converging perspectives Part of the object	Open secret

products. It is assumed that all these objects go through steps 2–6, providing an interdisciplinary research (step 1). The objects here are not like the bodies in Leibniz, which are ‘impenetrable’¹¹ *partes extra partes*. On the contrary, there is an affection from one object to another, which draws the common = X, which is the specialty of art.

The matrix also makes it possible to give meaning to images of the object (to take photographs). It helps to articulate art and philosophy without repeating the gesture of a ‘philosophy of art’ or comments ‘on’ arts. Each expression is that of an author who actually works without her discipline, without passing judgement on the other discipline.

3. WHEN UNDULATION DISARMS IMMANENCE: THE ROLE OF OPERATORS

Science-science relationship: by the intermediary of philosophy (common = X) but decomposes philosophy

Art-art relationship: common = X sign without meaning (see Theory of the cloud, Hubert Damish and Benoît Maire as previously cited)

Philosophy-philosophy relationship by a point of externality (transcendence): common = X is the concept, never completely synthesized, it needs a philosophical system provoked by an external opportunity.

What of Transitivity of the common = X?

Is this meaningless sign an opportunity for philosophy?

Is the decomposition of philosophy an opportunity for interdisciplinary regimes of knowledge? Undulation and particles as an occasion for the conjunction of art-philosophy?

With this in mind we arrive at the following intermediate axioms:

1. There is no philosophy of art, but art-philosophy (art becomes an operator).
2. There is no philosophy of science, but science-philosophy (science becomes an operator).
3. There is no philosophy of philosophy, but a philosophy-philosophy, where the first term is an operator.

4. THE QUESTION ON NON-ART, THE ROLE OF THE OPERATORS

Let us open the question of non-art, between art and philosophy.

When specialists speak to other specialists, the important thing is not to add heterogenous knowledge to each other, but to create a space of non-art where each one builds gradually and by iteration his non-knowledge – the state of non-art.

----- Condition: objects without synthesis -----

to get rid of complacency, to avoid becoming a totalizing object of synthesis, like a universe closed on itself we call upon *The figura serpentinata* (but one without continuity)

Take consider the serpentine line, the figura serpentinata, we revise the work of François Laruelle on Félix Ravaisson.¹²

5. GENERATIVE INDETERMINACY

The Role of the Figura Serpentinata Is to Create a Generative Indeterminacy

Like the statue of Moses made in marble by Michelangelo in Rome, c. 1515 and as described by Freud, it is impossible to decide if this Moses is rising in anger in front of his people worshipping the golden calf, or if he is sitting in despair at this spectacle. Let us once again consider the characteristics of the generic as they were elaborated in the application of philosophy on itself, on the sciences and on arts practice. Generative indeterminacy adds depth to the generic in each instance, highlighting an orientation, an unknown = X and a common = X without concept. The X is important. A common without X could be just academic art or even the supremacy of one philosophy over another. The unknown = X makes it possible to avoid believing an object can be immediately known and allows to make use of methods in the form of ‘without’,¹³ for example, what is a philosophy without the transcendental? What is art without transdisciplinarity? What effects can generative indeterminacy have on:

1. Generic immanence: Generative indeterminacy assures idempotent continuation and a counterpoint between a priori and empirical. Also an orientation of the transcendental, as a link between them.
2. Generic heterogeneity: Generative indeterminacy assures the superimposition of disciplines and overlays of knowing with the determination of unknowns = X.
3. Generic undulation: Generative indeterminacy assures unconfined spaces, the unknown, common agreements = X without concept.



Figure 4.6

Cumulative Thoughts from Anne-Francoise Schmid

Art can offer space to philosophy, where she can break down, and each of her ingredients can become partially autonomous.

Suppose we make art with an orientation, a superimposition of strangers and the unknown? This is Alice's object.

We were doing philosophy with orientated concepts, overlays of knowledge and an unconfined space. This is part of the non-standard practice of philosophy.

Suppose we were doing science with other disciplines, regimes without disciplines and a common space = X, with the condition of hyper-compatibility. This science produces new objects.

Why hyper-compatibility? The relationships between disciplines are not direct; they involve models, which may be based on different or even contradictory assumptions. When it comes to modelling, simple compatibility is no longer enough, we need compatibility that accepts negation, this is hyper-compatibility.

What is the *linea serpentinata* between these three *modi vivendi*? Orientation, unconfined space, hyper-compatibility. A non-continuous serpentine figure, but one with fragments of fusion, to use the term of François Laruelle. But this must be invented to revisit the relations of philosophy and the arts if such relations can exist.

Disorientation of philosophy without art: the last fiction

Philosophy considered herself to be the most serious form of human thought, she sailed in black and white and the light was that of what she assumed was her own intelligence. She hoped that thus she would find the joy of solitude, without space or color.

The Philosopher's disciples had a dream, all the same, the same night, in a moment of black. This dream was telling them that the sun would rise and shine more brightly on them and they would be buried alive in human thought. They rebelled. Philosophy did not understand what was happening. Did I not give you everything, even the best of your creative imagination, which combines design and figurative concepts with shades of gray?

The disciples made her understand that the colors were but the trace of a discovery: that Philosophy was not alone, she must compose, enrich what the sun had illuminated and not attempt to obscure it.

Philosophy was embarrassed, the loss of the joy of his loneliness seemed impossible, but the kaleidoscopic colors of joy attracted little shame. The disciples made her understand that they, far from separating from her seriousness, the colors would allow her to finally become human. She had not known that art was missing.

Thank you to the ancient Ethiopian philosophers,¹⁴ Plato, Pascal, non-philosophy.

GLOSSARY – ALICE LUCY REKAB AND ANNE-FRANÇOISE SCHMID

Integrative Object

This is a concept forged by Anne-Françoise Schmid during research on new contemporary scientific objects. These objects require many disciplines, but without convergence between them. Take the case of obesity, on which there is a great deal of work by nutritionists, geographers, doctors, epidemiologists, demographers, specialists in the human intestinal microbiota, pharmacologists, and so on. There is no way to synthesize all this work, and no criteria to prioritize or simplify them. For example, following the biologist Muriel Mambrini-Doudet, we contend that the GMO fish should not be defined as fish + genetic manipulation, which results in a product, but as an X whose properties are distributed unexpectedly through the disciplines which produce them. All disciplines work together, by iteration, sharing as much the construction of their non-knowledge¹⁵ as their knowledge. This approach leads to a different way of doing science, giving each discipline the same weight, both ethics and molecular biology, chemistry, law, knowledge of international

sectors, studies on consumption, and so on. This type of method is also used in the design of technological disruptive objects, specifically at the *École des Mines de Paris*. Sciences produce many objects for which we cannot determine the rules that define them. Is GMO salmon a food additive, a medical product? a veterinary product? These are objects that cannot be analysed by conventional means, either at the theoretical level or at the practical level. There is no longer any convergence of disciplinary perspectives on the object, as for complex objects, but a non-synthesis. The apparent unity of the object is built by the intentions of the researchers, it is not given in itself.

Non-synthesis must be recognized in scientific methods in the same way as uncertainty in the seventeenth century or the unknown in the twentieth century. This profoundly changes the epistemology of science, it can no longer be based on past paradigms, but must construct the concepts and methods to manifest contemporary methods in science.¹⁶

In relation to art, Robin Mackay has pointed out that this concept made it possible to differentiate between modern and contemporary art.¹⁷

In philosophy, it makes it possible to consider together both ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophies’ in their multiplicity, and to treat tradition as a material, and not as what dominates research and invention. Philosophical invention is no longer necessarily linked to the criticism of the preceding philosophies, according to François Laruelle’s incitement on the back of the journal *La Décision philosophique*: ‘Do not do like philosophers, invent philosophy! Change his practice! Treat it experimentally like any material! If a program is needed, there it is . . . Is it possible’.¹⁸



Figure 4.7

Operator

An operator is the application of one space in another, here that of philosophy in that of art or vice versa. This concept, taken from algebra, and used in a similar way in quantum mechanics, makes it possible to move from one disciplinary field to another, and to combine their respective elements. Fiction, the Future, and the Virtual, can be understood as operators.¹⁹ These operators open a generic space for interdisciplinary work.

Matrix

The matrix is a combination of values or concepts with properties or stakeholders. The matrix makes it possible to invent new terms and new perspectives by combining the terms of the two coordinates. These terms can be very different depending on the disciplines and researchers. The matrix then manifests this diversity and allows, in a second step, to evaluate the weight of each new term in the context of the matrix. The matrix is not an array, because the path from one concept to another does not have the same result as the reverse. Thus, the matrix is a model of invention for new terms. The matrix is a very fertile interdisciplinary space because it allows researchers from heterogeneous disciplines to relate, and to put into consideration, their respective inventions in a single framework. In this, the practice of the matrix produces a collective intimacy between the researchers who work together on it. This method was first invented by biologists at the University of Nottingham for the evaluation of benefits/risks in animal experiments.²⁰ Independently, François Laruelle built a matrix between philosophy and the quantum under the quantum ($P \times Q/Q$) to build a theorization of philosophy which is not a model of philosophy in philosophical terms but a model of philosophy under the fundamental concepts of the quantum. In this way, the practice of the matrix also contributes to undoing philosophical sufficiency.

The Multiplicity of Rights within the Philosophical Discipline

Each philosopher has their trajectory in philosophy. For example, Deleuze's trajectory could be that of Plato, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson as a sequence to achieve his philosophy. With the concept of 'a multiplicity of rights within the philosophical discipline', we treat such trajectories as particular to each thinker. The way we look at philosophy then changes: it is no longer just a question of seeking out philosophical differences and comparing them, but, without denying them, of treating them as variables. It's a way to avoid exclusions and prioritization, and to uphold all philosophies. Therefore, philosophical writing changes: we no longer write within a particular philosophical

school, but with concepts and methods drawn from heterogeneous philosophies. This practice contributes to the creation of a generic space for all philosophies.

Oblique Transcendental, Obliquity

The transcendental is not visible by itself, but can be made manifest by variations in the superimpositions of two domains: the empirical and a priori. This can be understood as a variation of obliquity in a supposed space of philosophies. We propose the consideration of the multiplicity of philosophies and the links between the a priori and the empirical, which appear to connect and separate these two 'domains' differently in each philosophy, and according to a different vectoriality and orientations.

Creolization

Creole as a model is put to use by the contributors in an attempt to topple or undermine the authority of philosophy in the art world and the privilege invoked by contemporary art in its attempt to re-purpose, re-present or simply steal from other disciplines, cultures, practices of being in the world in order to support or develop itself.

Creole in the context of this text then accounts for the mixing of registers of writing, the breakdown of authoritative tone and at times the crossing of meanings and foibles of translation that have become the hallmark of Anne-Françoise Schmid and Alice Rekab's exchange over the last six years.

Creolized Thought

This term relates specifically to the expression and experience of hybridized knowledges, with a particular focus on non-Western expressions and the impact non-Western culture has on the way Alice Rekab approaches both philosophy and art practice. This term seeks to undermine absolutes or binaries in terms of authority or expertise and seeks to refute the idea of knowledge as a possession or an object to be traded. Creolized thought then is non-white, non-hierarchical and subject to inconsistency and change. Creolized thought is prone to code switching, creolized thought belongs nowhere, creolized thought belongs everywhere.

Creolized Language

This term both describes the language spoken in the films presented at the Art Disarming Philosophy conference at Tate Liverpool and denotes a



Figure 4.8

broken, intuitive and hybridized approach to communicating thought and feeling. Broken French and English is the lingua franca of the contributors, Anne-Françoise Schmid and Alice Rekab have their own unique mixture of linguistic communication. Krio is also one of the official languages of Sierra Leone, where Alice Rekab's father comes from. The word Krio is itself an interpretation of the word Creole; although it is unique to its region, it shares a mutual intelligibility with other West African origin English dialects. Creole language both attests to the violence of colonialism and slavery, while also demonstrating the reclamation and repurposing of invading languages for the use of common expression and communication.

NOTES

1. See Glossary.
2. See Glossary.
3. See Glossary.
4. François Laruelle, *Tetralogos, Un opéra de philosophies* (Paris: Cerf, 2019).
5. The sculpture seen in the images was made first in Dublin, travelled to London, to Freetown, to Paris in each place occupying a different value and interpreted differently and integrated into the situation it found itself. Never neutral but also always open,
6. See Glossary.
7. Immanuel Kant, "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy" [1763], in: *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, ed. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 203–41.

8. see Glossary.
9. François Laruelle, *Introduction aux sciences génériques* (Paris: Petra, 2008) forthcoming in translation by Jeremy Ross Smith (2021–2022).
10. Art is thus very undisciplined!
11. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion poche, 1999) XII.
12. François Laruelle, *Phénomène et différence. Essai sur l'ontologie de Ravaisson* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).
13. Anne-Françoise Schmid and Armand Hatchuel, "On Generic Epistemology", *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 19:2 (2014) 140.
14. *Les Apocryphes Éthiopiens*, french translation by René Basset, Tome X, *La Sagesse de Sibylle*, Arché (Milano: 1976).
15. The concept of the 'state of non-art' as formulated by Armand Hatchuel, professor at Mines ParisTech. Anne-Françoise Schmid and Armand Hatchuel have worked together for many years developing this concept as a result of these exchanges. Some of this research will be published in the book: *Le silence du futur, scripts philosophiques*, from Anne-Françoise Schmid in the collection 'Studia Philosophica' edited by Jordanco Sekulovski (Tokyo: American University Press, 2020/21)
16. Cf. Anne-Françoise Schmid and Muriel Mambrini-Doudet, *Epistémologie générique. Manuel pour les sciences futures* (Paris: Kimé, 2019).
17. "On making Ready", in: *Simon Starling, Re-Prototypes, Triangulations and Road Tests* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, 2012), 18–22.
18. This text is reproduced on all the back cover of this review, published in (Paris: Édition Osiris).
19. Anne-Françoise Schmid and Muriel Mambrini-Doudet, *Epistémologie générique. Manuel pour les sciences futures* (Paris: Kimé, 2019), 130.
20. Ben Mepham, Matthias Kaiser, Kate Millar & alii.

Chapter 5

Done Dying

Thinking alongside Every House Has a Door

Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca

PROLOGUE: BEGIN FROM BEWILDERMENT

What kind of beginning might we choose?

In performance, she says, the beginning is the moment after the audience grow quiet in anticipation . . .

She counts three kinds of beginnings:

- 1) Those that begin with an introduction, telling you something about the performance or how to view it before it began, like a pre-show announcement (that threatens to go on forever).
- 2) Those that begin with a more ritualized, non-verbal activity using time or duration as a means to gather the audience's scattered energy into a more directed focus.
- 3) Those that begin *in medias res*, a beginning that drops the audience into the middle of something, into the disorientated feeling that the performance began before they arrived.¹

But, for her, performance also begins from bewilderment:

Bewilderment resonates with how I would describe the beginning of making a performance. It is important to me that I do not know how to control what I am initiating or that I do not understand where I am going. I need to feel that the material is more than or larger than what I think I can handle. I am in search of a performance that exceeds, defies, and punctuates what I know. Bewilderment guarantees that I need others to find my way.²

The director Lin Hixson is thinking about the poet Fanny Howe who has been thinking about, lately, 'bewilderment as a way of entering the day as much

as the work. Bewilderment as a poetics and an ethics. . . . There is a Muslim prayer that says, “Lord, increase my bewilderment”, and this prayer is also mine’.³ In the dictionary, Howe tells us ‘to bewilder is “to cause to lose one’s sense of where one is”’. Bewilderment is a disorientation but one that opens out into the possibility of re-orientation, the kind of not-knowing that might make space for new ways of knowing.

The wilderness as metaphor is in this case not evocative enough because causing a complete failure in the magnet, the compass, the scale, the stars and the movement of the rivers is more than getting lost in the woods. Bewilderment is an enchantment that follows a complete collapse of reference and reconcilability.⁴

And what if philosophy begins with bewilderment? Simple enough, we might say, for those who encounter François Laruelle! But this is less to do with the fact that there are vast parts of Laruelle’s writing that I do not understand – given that seeking ‘understanding’ may be the wrong way to read Laruelle. After all, if – as Jonathan Fardy suggests – the philo-fictions of non-philosophy are an invitation to encounter philosophy as a kind of writing or literature, or that “‘clones” the style of creative writing’ then many other modes of response seem to open out (which images resonate; which turns of phrase stop you in your tracks; which expression draws you closer to the magnetic pole and sets the needle to drift?).⁵ Rather, to begin with bewilderment might be one way to reorient both standard philosophy and theatre away from their common tendency towards the gesture of transcendence and withdrawal that he calls ‘decision’. As *Anti-Badiou* explicitly states, what Laruelle calls ‘philosophy’ – its decisional architecture – maps onto the position over and above the stage assumed by the figure of the authoritarian, transcendent director. From the god-like view, the director/philosopher reduces the whole to a part. The philosopher plays the part of the *deus ex machina*, or he hides himself ‘in the wings . . . so as to pull the strings of matter and thought’.⁶ But, what happens if we take this director who chooses bewilderment and collaborates with others to find her way, as a new model for the philosopher? In non-philosophy, ‘By definition, we do not entirely know what to expect of ourselves’.⁷

And what if we take bewilderment as the beginning of ecology, too – as the shared concern that unites the two figures of this essay: Laruelle and the performance company, *Every house has a door*? Perhaps bewilderment is the (non-)place from which we can start to reconcile what we know about environmental crisis and how we live. Perhaps bewilderment is the (non-place) from which new images can emerge that will allow humans to comprehend the otherwise incomprehensible scale of their own destructiveness. Perhaps bewilderment is the (non-)place from which new worlds can come into view.⁸ He says: *Ecology can only grow into people’s minds, if we make it fictional.*⁹

Ecological violations of such magnitude, what do we require to imagine them?
 Maybe the stories we tell have become part of the problem.
 What imagination revision can approach ecology of powers,
 can reverse a shadow?
 Picture an impossible climate
 a community of the extreme and endangered, swimming together
 visible and invisible.
 When I say aquarium now maybe I don't mean a tank
 but only a certain degree of pressure.
 We make our stage in that likeness

Let's take a moment for proper introductions.

Eyelash Seaweed (Elise enters)
 Lesser Electric Ray (Bryan enters)
 Red Pencil (Abhay enters)
 Devils Hole Pupfish (Selma enters)¹⁰

PART 1: THINKING ALONGSIDE EVERY HOUSE HAS A DOOR

I am thinking alongside *Every house has a door* – a Chicago-based performance company formed by Lin Hixson, director and Matthew Goulish, dramaturg in 2008.¹¹ In particular, I am thinking alongside the specific formation of inter-generational and cross-disciplinary individuals that comprise *Every house* for their new project, *Aquarium* – which includes Hixson and Goulish, but also the Finnish artist Essi Kausalainen. To date, *Every house* has completed nine major performance works.

Embedded within the newest, large-scale project *Carnival of the Animals*, *Aquarium* is one chapter of the 14 movement work engaging the titles from Camille Saint-Saëns's 1885 musical suite for children, but with a concentration on endangerment and extinction. The work is scheduled to premier in Croatia in Summer 2021.¹²

My larger project, *Bestiary* – from which this essay emerges – is a parallel practice of thought operating alongside *Aquarium*. *Bestiary* is an illuminated text work, which will be created and presented alongside, in relationship to but ultimately independent from, *Carnival of the Animals*. *Bestiary* aims to be its own work of book art, but one that lives within the ecology of the performance.¹³

I am thinking alongside *Every house has a door*. I am not writing about the performance that *Every house* is making; I am experimenting with the

creation of a mode of art-thought that is determined by, but does not seek to be determining of the thinking that belongs to the performance itself. Non-philosophy as non-standard aesthetics aims to practice an extension and democratization of thought by thinking ‘alongside’ or ‘according to’ the thought of art itself; and this informed my approach. But when I first wrote to the company to propose this work, I did not foreground this Laruellean dimension so much as note the ways in which it also modelled the company’s own way of working with source materials:

Re-reading your introduction, Matthew, to *Three Matadors* when you performed it in Chicago, I wonder if part of what I might be hoping to do in this new phase of work is somewhat akin to the aim you described for that performance: to ‘occupy the same universe’ as Jay Wright’s poem and to explore how it might ‘reflect or amplify that material’s set of concerns’ as you understand them.

I wonder if ‘thinking alongside performance’ rather than ‘about’ it, thinking alongside *Every house has a door*, might be like this too. I would like to see what happens to my research and my writing – what form and structure it might take – if I aim to occupy the same universe as *Every house* and think of scholarship as a mode of amplification.

I knew I did not want to write about *Every house has a door*. It still feels like a form of betrayal to seek to make an abstract work like *Aquarium* into something understandable, to translate it into discourse; to position myself as somehow capable of capturing what is still, and will remain, ‘in the making’.¹⁴ I wanted to somehow begin, too, with bewilderment: including my own bewilderment as I try to grasp what it is that Lin Hixson is doing when she is watching performance material in the rehearsal room; my own bewilderment as I try to impose some cause-and-effect logic on the directive that Lin has given and the seemingly unrelated dance that performer Bryan Saner has made in ‘creative response’.

I consider this work as an experiment in performance philosophy. As myself and others have discussed elsewhere, performance philosophy shares many common principles with non-philosophy and strands of the field have very much emerged in conversation with and informed by Laruellean thought. The shared dimensions include, firstly, an emphasis on a renewed attention to the form and style of philosophy and the inextricability of form and content. Secondly, performance philosophy has tended to align itself – though by no means exclusively – with considerations of immanence, taking particular inspiration from Nietzsche and Deleuze, though also from Artaud, to materialize thought and investigate how the material practices of arts themselves think. The challenge that Laruelle presents of course is one of consistency: ‘how to think immanence immanently’¹⁵ rather than producing a philosophy

of immanence that seems to performatively contradict its own fundamental principle. Thirdly, performance philosophy often frames itself as a pluralist and egalitarian enterprise with regards to knowledge production in a manner that resonates with Laruelle's call for a democracy of thought. This is particularly important for performance philosophy with regards to the status of artistic research, relative to the standardized norms and criteria for research quality, but it also relates to intersecting interests in alternative wisdoms and ways of knowing that come from other contexts, including mysticism, indigenous traditions and spiritual practices.¹⁶

Tentatively, I am also coming to consider this work as an experiment in non-philosophy or non-standard aesthetics. As commentators like John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith have emphasized from the start:

Laruelle is not the 'next big thing' in Continental Philosophy. His thought does not aim to correct, reduce, or supersede that of Derrida, or Deleuze, or Badiou. That 'same old game' of importing European master-thinkers into Anglophone philosophy – each new figure superseding the previous model – is over.¹⁷

And yet, for many of us – perhaps particularly for artists and researchers in the arts outside philosophy – this habit is hard to shake off. Despite the increasing confidence of discourses around 'practice as research' and 'artistic research', we are so used to turning to philosophy for theoretical legitimation, to deploying resources that come from outside of art to articulate and validate the knowledge that comes from it, that it may take a substantive effort of 'unlearning' to relate to philosophy and to our own thinking differently. We might begin with bewilderment here too.

Non-philosophy is a call to such an unlearning. However, we have to remain alert to the paradox embedded in this very idea. We cannot use Laruelle as the authority on how to dismantle philosophical authority in relation to the arts. We should not look to Laruelle for an ontology that answers how art relates to the real or tells us how to make art according to a sanctioned methodology. And indeed, for my own part, from my own experience of training and working as an artist, it was often a longing for some kind of certainty that brought me to philosophy. The experience of art-making is so often one of not-knowing – an experience of not knowing what you are doing, or why, or if it matters (for which individuals have greater or lesser degrees of tolerance) – that it makes sense that we might look for sources of stability. But it would be a contradiction in terms for artists to consider themselves adherents of Laruelle – to use Laruelle as a solid ground to which one might adhere an art practice – since it is also precisely this illusion of certainty that Laruelle critiques in his characterization of philosophical authority. As Katerina Koloza notes:



Figure 5.1 Work-in-Progress Sketch from *Bestiary*, June 2020. Source: Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

Adherence to a determinate theoretical horizon provides one with the comfort and safety of philosophical certainty. It is a twofaced certainty established by the hybridization of the transcendental (or thought) and the real: the comfortable sense of unshakability in one's philosophical knowledge and the safe sense of 'knowing the reality'.¹⁸

The function of non-philosophy is not to allow artists to transcend their practice – even in the case of making an immanent model of art a kind of comfortable knowledge in itself.

INTERLUDE

Lesser Electric Ray (Bryan enters)

*Mr. Hulot squeezes his horn
– which emits a sound like an immature and peculiar breed of duck –
to ask the dog that is lying the road to move out of the way of his car.
The dog obliges.*

The Lesser Electric Ray is a reminder that, while humans may be primarily focussed on communicative acts involving seeing and hearing, and (less

consciously) touch and the olfactory, the wider realm of animal exchange includes multiple modalities – encompassing the electric, but also the seismic (communication through vibration) and the thermal (emitting and receiving temperature signals). And indeed, even an engagement with the different ways in which nonhuman animals perform visual communication: gestures, facial expressions, and so forth begins to afford ways of making human displays of body parts and movements for communicative purposes strange to us again (in ways that may take place in or have productive implications for performance-making). What happens to human choreographies if we consider movement as an act of revealing or emphasizing a body part (as it may be considered in the context of animal communication)?

Bryan: Let me present to you: my hand (*Bryan shows hand*).

This hand will tell you when it is time to eat.

When I tap this hand towards the ground – like this (*Bryan, hand tapping towards the ground*)

You will respond by tapping my hand with yours – like this (*Bryan, tapping one hand with the other*)

Then I will feed you.

Ok? Understand?

Good.

Red Pencil (Abhay enters)

Due to their unquestionable charm and beauty, these species can make any tank, even a small one, the center of attention during social gatherings. The fish will reward their keeper for their care with their beautiful colors, which appear at their best against the background of a dark bottom and lush greenery. . . . A spacious aquarium should be used and décor arranged in such a way that plenty of broken lines-of-sight are provided. Don't worry if your fish look different when you switch on the aquarium lights after dark or in the morning as like most Nannostomus species it assumes a different colour pattern at night, in this case the entire colour pattern paling considerably although unlike in N. rubrocaudatus the dark lateral stripes remain visible. This diurnal rhythm has been show to occur in blind specimens, suggesting it's an automatic response that the fish cannot control.¹⁹

Let's be clear then.

Red Pencil.

Charming, yes.

Thinking, no.



Figure 5.2 Terry Fox, Wall Push, 1970. Black and white photograph. *Source:* Courtesy of Marita Loosen-Fox. Copyright: Estate of Terry Fox, Cologne.

PART 2: TECHNIQUES OF NOT-KNOWING

Laruelle proposes a radical equality between all forms of thought. But what does it mean to say ‘all thoughts are equal’?²⁰ In the first instance, perhaps, it is to invite us to think in terms of an ‘equality *in* thinking’ rather than a thought of equality. The aim of non-philosophy is not to produce a philosophy *of* equality, including political equality – wherein philosophy might, once more, position itself as the particular mode of thought equipped to answer the question ‘What is equality?’ (really).²¹ Second, all thoughts are equal because they are all real, or to put it in Laruelle’s language: because they are all determined in the last instance by the Real. Although we cannot or should not seek to define the nature of that shared reality, since to say they are real because of some quality – for instance, of being equally virtual, material, neurological, Being – is once more to create a philosophical hierarchy relative to what is actual, immaterial, ‘brainless’, merely ontic (vs. ontological), and so forth. However, this does not mean that we are without an ethics of thought; or rather, without the possibility of practicing an ethics *in* thought as distinct from a representational account of thought’s ethics. That is, it is not that we need to value all thoughts equally: totalitarian, intolerant or exclusionary thinking as much as pluralist and open forms. Rather, within this ontological levelling of thought (or the radical extension of thought to the Real per se),

the thought to be valued is the one that does more to perform a democratizing or equalizing gesture within a particular context.

There is much of value for performance philosophy about the provocation: *all thoughts are equal*. Not least – perhaps – because of the way in which our immediate reaction to this statement might be to note all the ways in which different ways of thinking are currently treated unequally and/or unequally recognized as being forms of thought at all. Visual thinking – conducting and expressing thinking through images, in and as visual form, for instance – continues to be de-prioritized relative to the thought which takes place in and as the written word in the context of Western academic publishing. Those who are highly adept at thinking through the body may well be rewarded for their skills – economically, culturally – but perhaps are still less likely to have those practices recognized as forms of ‘intelligence’. Creative arts subjects are differentiated from and seen as less vital to secondary education than the so-called core academic subjects in UK schools. While ‘practice as research’ continues to make significant advances in UK Higher Education contexts, its outputs are still often treated as less valuable than those that take more conventional scholarly forms. Forms of thought that deviate from patriarchal and Eurocentric norms – in style, content, mode of expression, subject matter, and so on – are not equally celebrated and can struggle to be accessed, exist within, thrive and actively mutate the institutions that claim to support the production of new knowledge. In the ongoing construction of a canon of ‘great thinkers’ – including contemporary listings of global ‘thought leaders’ – there is still a much greater emphasis on scientists and philosophers than on practitioners in fields like the arts.²²

So, how does performance think? Performance ideas can take as many forms as there are practices and materials with which those practices engage. They are ideas to do something with an image, movement or sound. They are ideas to do something with human and nonhuman bodies, with colour and shape, in a particular configuration of space and time. At a given speed or tempo. In the foreground or background relative to some other thing; above or below; before, during, after – and crucially, according to timescales that this grammar of ‘before’ and ‘after’ cannot allow. And this ‘before’ and ‘after’ does not correspond to how performance thinks either. Artists do not have ideas (first), which they (then) illustrate or express in their material practices. The ideas do not take some independent form that precedes the doing (or, if they do, it is often a problem).

But perhaps a better question – to avoid essentialization – might be: what is *this* thinking that I am thinking alongside? What ways of knowing do *Every house* and *Aquarium* offer – particularly in relation to nonhuman life? And yet, once again, the answers that come back are more a matter of techniques of not-knowing (or bewilderment) than of ‘methods’. For example, in a recent

interview, both Hixson and collaborator Essi Kausalainen emphasize the importance of play as a quality of performance's ways of knowing. Hixson, for her part, points to the importance of playfulness in creating an 'atmosphere of (. . .) discovery' and of extending human perception in relation to the incomprehensible or 'untranslatable' aspects of animal and plant life.²³ In turn, Kausalainen – who has a long history of making solo work in relation to plants prior to her collaborations with *Every house* – talks about how her playful experiments with her own sensory intelligence (which might be seen as 'silly' by some) are also to be taken seriously as 'a form of knowledge'. For Kausalainen, interspecies performance practice offers a means of coming to know not only this strange '[plant] thinking without a brain', but 'to understand the plant in me, the animal in me . . . to understand the whole scale of the sensitivities and intelligences within me'.²⁴

Such practices do not begin with a pre-determined idea of what the human is (unlike some circular philosophies); rather, this not-knowing is precisely what allows them to performatively extend the human as part of an ongoing experimentation with what it might be and become beyond both humanism and anthropocentrism. Not-knowing is not a 'negative' capability or lack, in this instance, so much as an embodied posture that takes some skill to inhabit.²⁵ Along with bewilderment, play can allow for the discovery of the human in the supposedly nonhuman realms of the plant and the aquarium. But we must continually (re-)learn how to play and to keep the very image of performance itself in play too. To give another example, as part of a recent phase of the company's creative process, Lin Hixson offered performers a set of directives as a prompt for image-making (since COVID-19 prevented us from rehearsing in the usual way). The directive invited us to 'create three black and white images of actions or events, that you perform, for an unknown future'. Performers could use their respective creatures as source material, but we were also provided with a series of blurry photographs of performances made in the 1960s and 1970s to inspire us. Hixson added the reminder: 'Consider that these documents were made in a time when the future of performance was undefined'. What kind of images do we make if we imagine ourselves in a world where the category of performance as yet to be decided upon? This was an invitation to make performance under the conditions of indefiniteness – a principle also concisely invoked by the unofficial motto of Hixson and Goulish's previous company, Goat Island: 'We discovered [a] performance by making it'.²⁶

The abstract nature of poetry, sound, movement and costume seems to offer a potential to stage the bewilderment of experience without the sense of betrayal or domestication that comes with its translation into signifying language. Thinking alongside Fanny Howe once more, she considers how the

'language problem' of standard writing prevents the expression of non-linear temporal experience and of simultaneity.

If I, for instance, want to tell you that a man I loved, who died, said he loved me on a curbstone in the snow, but this occurred in time after he died, and before he died, and will occur again in the future, I can't say it grammatically. You would think I was talking about a ghost, or a hallucination, or a dream, when in fact, I was trying to convey the experience of a certain event as scattered, and non-sequential. I can keep UN-saying what I said, and amending it, but I can't escape the given logic of the original proposition, the sentence which insists on tenses and words like 'later' and 'before'.²⁷

The temporality of *Aquarium* is both one of simultaneity and of the layering of multiple scales of lived time, according to the complex durations of the underwater world itself; where the flash of red as the pencilfish darts behind the seaweed meets the deep, disorienting time of geology.

Limestone is usually formed of the compressed bodies of marine organisms – crinoids and coccolithophores, ammonites, belemnites and foraminifera – that died in waters of ancient seas and then settled in their trillions on those seabeds. These creatures once built their skeletons and shells out of calcium carbonate, metabolizing the mineral content of the water in which they lived to create intricate architectures. In this way limestone can be seen as merely one phase in a dynamic earth cycle, whereby mineral becomes animal becomes rock; rock that will in time – in deep time – eventually supply the calcium carbonate out of which new organisms will build their bodies, thereby re-nourishing the same cycle into being again.²⁸

Essi brought this passage about how the temporality in limestone is created into rehearsal. Lin imagines that when the opera singers sing as limestone, their singing is limestone remembering its past lives as sea creatures. Co--
---cco-----li---tho-----pho-----r
es. When the parts come together, this song will have operated at a different time signature from a preceding dance performed by children, who slowly count out the steps of a fractal choreography, mutating differently shod feet into units of mathematical measurement to model how coral builds itself.

Multiple ways of knowing collide in an *Every house* performance. The company does not stay the same as itself – aside for the continuity of Hixson and Goulish – but forms and reforms itself anew with different projects.²⁹ In *Aquarium*, but also in other projects, *Every house* works with a kind of modular approach that offers a practical strategy for creating performance with groups of people with diverse specializations (in the case of *Aquarium*: experimental musicians, dancers, filmmakers, visual artists, opera singers,

children). Performances are often structured as a series of modules, and specialist invited in to contribute to the creation of a specific part of the larger work. As Goulish explains, implicitly contrasting the modular approach of *Every house* to the ensemble approach of *Goat Island*:

It allows for us to invite people who are really specialists to do some module of the performance that can be rehearsed independently. It's a very practical thing. It's not an ensemble where everybody undergoes the same kind of learning curve in making the piece. It's really a different sort of community of difference.³⁰

And indeed, it is a 'practical thing': it makes things work. But what it makes work is not just the schedule, but also what we might call a kind of 'epistemological repair'. In his pre-performance announcement for *Three Matadores* (that threatened to go on forever), Matthew invited the audience to consider 'performance as a form of creativity that might provide a forum' for the reconciliation of diverse knowledges: 'aggregates of facts and feelings' that have been fragmented through disciplinarity.³¹ This is not to say that *Every house* considers performance as a place where we can finally picture the whole as all the parts are brought together. No less than philosophy perhaps, art too has dreamt itself as sufficient in itself to capture the One; the artist falls into

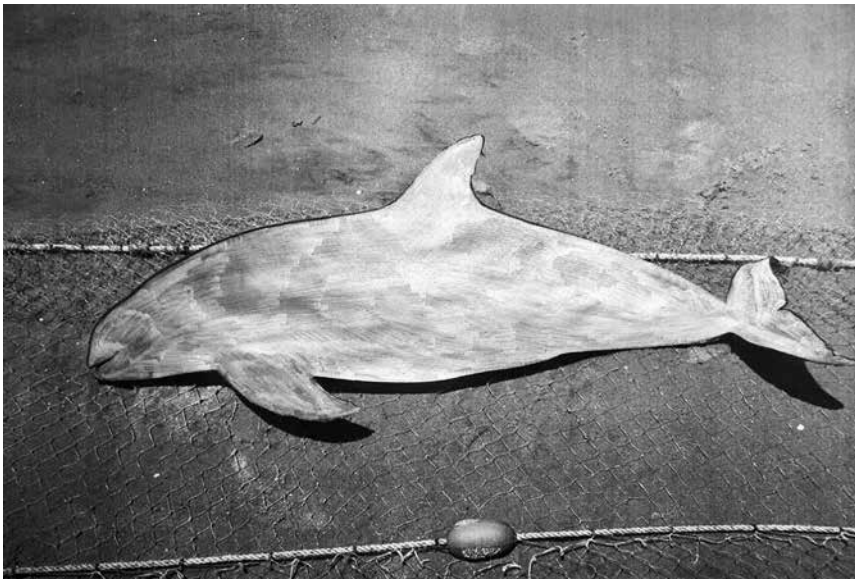


Figure 5.3 Work-in-Progress Sketch from *Bestiary*, June 2020. *Source:* Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

a spontaneous miming of the philosopher when she projects herself into ‘the fantasy of a full representation’.³² Non-philosophy ‘refuses the notion that philosophy should be a relatively formal, empty and sterile activity of the encyclopedic ordering and mastering of knowledges acquired from elsewhere outside of philosophy’.³³ But there is a reparation here too: insofar as non-philosophy is an attempt to unify or conjugate different fields – philosophy, art, science, religion – but where that conjugation is structured on the basis of their ‘radical equality and finitude’ with respect to the Real³⁴).

PART 3: EXTINCTION IS MISSING

Every house has a door describe themselves as ‘drawn to historically or critically neglected subjects’ – in the case of *Three Matadores* (2017), for instance: to a one-act play by the under-recognized American poet, Jay Wright. However, in the case of *Carnival of the Animals* – including *Aquarium* – it is perhaps less a matter of the status of Saint-Saëns’s suite that is at stake (though the company note how the notoriety of one part, ‘The Swan’, tends to shadow knowledge of the whole). Rather, this attraction to the neglected speaks to the ubiquity of the *subject* of climate crisis and the simultaneous failure of those with the most power to actually *live* it. From one point of view, ecological catastrophe appears as an imaginary future, but evidently it is already (and has long since been) the past and present of incalculable human and nonhuman others. To consider ecology as among the critically neglected speaks to the ways in which overexposure can impede attention, but also to the invisibility of species extinction.

Who would have thought the end of the world would be so dull, that the death of species would go so unnoticed? . . . the struggles of others pass without being seen. Whether what is lived be human, animal, or plant, they all pass into the rushing flux of a generalized death, a generalized extinction, a shared fate that we may call ecological.³⁵

As per their self-description, the company make performances in which ‘the subject remains largely absent from the finished work’.³⁶ All that remains of the Saint-Saëns as a source for *Carnival* are the titles of the movements, which Goulish saw as affording ‘a way of thinking about the animal outside of the categories that are normally engaged’.³⁷

Swift Animals.

Characters with Long Ears.

The Cuckoo in the Depth of the Woods.

Likewise, if ‘endangerment and extinction’ are the ‘subject’ of *Aquarium*, they are by no means directly represented or approached ‘head on’. Rather, as the company describe:

We try to distill and separate presentational elements into distinct modes – recitation, movement, music – to grant each its own space and time, and to allow them to encircle the missing subject, inviting the viewer to assemble the parts in duration, after the fact of the performance.³⁸

A far cry from the totalizing aims of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or even some essentialist approaches to performance art, this approach gathers together experts in thinking with/in movement, sound, not in order to make up a more complete picture, but to invite audiences into performance as a necessarily partial, incomplete and processual form of collective knowledge-making.

Here, we are forming a circle around water as a site of endangerment and extinction. This time, beginning means the dramaturg appearing to introduce us to the creatures who inhabit the aquarium: Elise as Eyelash Seaweed; Bryan as Lesser Electric Ray; Abhay as Red Pencil; Selma as Devil’s Hole Pupfish; and later, a group of children as Polyps, and opera singers as Limestone. *Aquarium* decentres the human or recruits the human as the supporting cast that allows a series of endangered aquatic species to appear. While using human materials, performance nevertheless enables us to imagine a space without humans. In *Aquarium*, Hixson describes

The performance inhabits the imaginary space of water filled with endangered aquatic animals. Performers perform these animals, their endangerment, and water. To do so they compose in imitation. They look at videos of the specific creatures they embody and they look at water flowing. They imitate gestures, rhythms, actions, and motions.³⁹

And yet, this personification does not amount to performance (philosophically) speaking for the animal.

*According to the man who serves as the animal’s measure . . .*⁴⁰

It is one of the longest misunderstandings in history: the animal as the dejected image of man.

How can we rectify this hierarchy of images, this scale of downward specularity?

Imitation not as mirroring but as the qualitative extension of the human into the animal.

An animalizing of dance.

A fractal choreography that thinks our continuity with coral.

The logic of the performance establishes the idea of the aquarium as an enclosed space – though not so much a tank, as zone of pressure into which outside forces occasionally penetrate. It is an impossible space – insofar as the creatures who occupy it could never be together in ‘the real world’. Performers enter into processes of building and unbuilding habitats for themselves and others; costumes both conceal and draw attention to body parts; sticks are introduced and creatures become aggregates. They enlist the assistance of sticks of different lengths; becoming *encounters in motion*, a woman-and-seaweed-and-sticks.⁴¹ Lone performers need help to stand, to move, to change. They are precarious in the sense that Anna Tsing gives that term: ‘Precarity is a state of acknowledgment of our vulnerability to others. In order to survive, we need help, and help is always the service of another, with or without intent’.⁴² We may be bewildered, but this bewilderment leads to a knowledge of precarity.

This is not a theatre that claims to picture the world, but a performative construction of the images the company and its audiences need now: fictioning hybrid entities negotiating co-dependence (rather than fantasizing autonomy); imaging care – but a care from below, or, a self-care from within, not according to the supposed benevolence of some distant guardian. In contrast, as Laruelle suggests:

Philosophy is content to cast a severe and compassionate glance, a look of domination and a glimpse over the earth that it struggles to again descend to. . . . The philosopher, when he cares for the living or takes care of concrete life, does so in a distant style of theological origin, a priestly style, and in the macroscopic concern for large groups, he claims to be a doctor for large bodies, of the State, of the soul, of civilization, sometimes of sick or wounded bodies.⁴³

And of course, philosophers too have fantasized themselves as animals. He says: *My stomach – is surely an eagle’s stomach? For it preferreth lamb’s flesh. Certainly it is a bird’s stomach.*⁴⁴ They say: *We are a wolfing.*⁴⁵ And yet, they do not imagine themselves as the bleaching coral or the vaquita trapped in the gillnet gasping for breath.⁴⁶

Every house do not make grand claims for the world-changing capacities of their performance-making. There has always been a radical modesty in their stance; a tendency to show solidarity with, but nevertheless assert the discrete expertise of, activism;⁴⁷ but, at the same time, a quiet belief in the

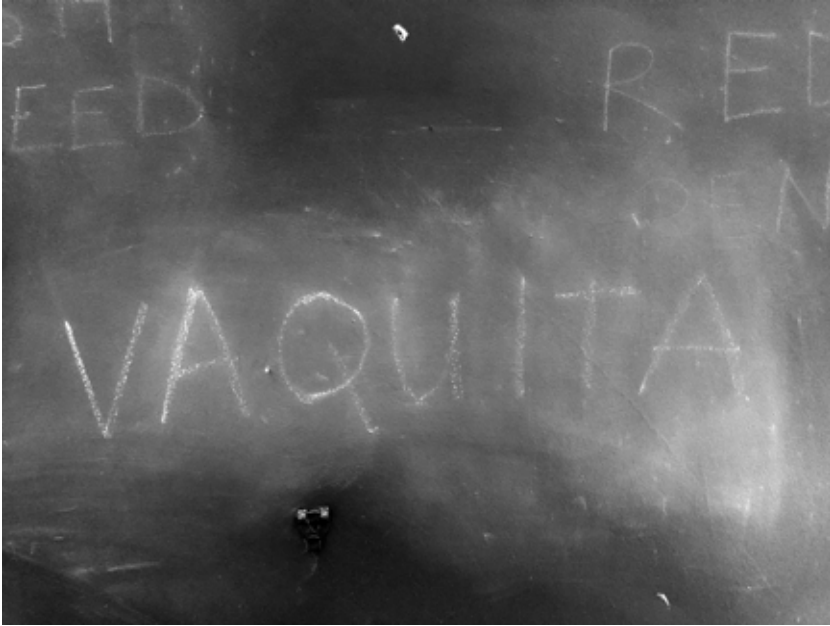


Figure 5.4 Work-in-Progress Sketch from Bestiary, June 2020. Source: Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

micro-political powers of re-directing attention towards the unnoticed, ordinary and undervalued. In the case of *Aquarium*, who would have thought it would feel radical to simply notice those underwater species on the threshold of extinction? The vaquita – of course, thanks to Leonardo da Caprio – has become something of a celebrity. But the eyelash seaweed? *Aquarium* notices and invites us to notice the extinction of the vaquita and the eyelash seaweed equally, where the very act of looking, searching for remaining specimens, is the only gesture left to us to try and prevent the species from dying out.

INTERLUDE

Devils Hole Pupfish (Selma enters)

You weren't always so special
 The boundary between those deemed worthy of protection, and not, shifts.
 For now, you are 'objects of historic or scientific interest'
 For now, you are the inhabitants of a 'national monument'
 But value has a speed.
 Especially for such *uncharismatic fauna*⁴⁸



Figure 5.5a KILL THE PUPFISH / SAVE THE PUPFISH bumper stickers, c. 1970. *Source:* Photo: Phil Pister collection.

Stickers on their cars say
SAVE THE PUPFISH!
KILL THE PUPFISH!

But what does pupfish say?

*I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker.*⁴⁹

PART 4: THE LAST HUMANITY

Laruelle's recent book *The Last Humanity: The New Ecological Science* (2015/2021) is work of eco-fiction rather than a philosophy of ecology. 'This

work carries us along as if we were in a tempestuous river, the banks of knowledge, all the landscapes of knowledge, stream past without pausing' (Schmid and Mambrini-Doudet 2016/2020). The aim of the book, according to Laruelle, 'is not to establish a new ontic theory of life, something we are incapable of, but a theory concerning the knowledge of life'.⁵⁰ Refusing the 'straightjacket of ontology',⁵¹ this thought-experiment has its own dynamics: one that seeks to reorient 'the damage to/harassment of the environment done by philosophical thought'.⁵² In its poetic unfolding, the book does important work to remind us that 'there is no necessary connection between justice and ecology and we must be on watch for a rising ecofascism or appropriation of ecological frameworks by those Laruelle has elsewhere termed the "authorities"'.⁵³ And yet, *The Last Humanity* is no more an attempt to directly intervene in public debate on environmental crisis and mass extinction than *Aquarium*. They have in common an unapologetic abstraction and poetics. As Smith puts it:

The Last Humanity, even though it emerges out of the conditions for thought given by the climate crisis and so represents his most direct engagement with a live political and social problem, continues this practice of focusing on the work of abstraction, of thinking.⁵⁴

A significant recurring theme of *The Last Humanity* is the nature of the relations between human and nonhuman forms of life – specifically the conception of the relations within what Laruelle calls the 'MAP system (Man, Animal, Plant)'. And yet, others note that 'ecosystems, sustainability of the environment are not really the topic of the book'.⁵⁵ In this 'last (?) phase' of Laruelle's work, the book is more concerned to 'give an account of what the Human "is" finally, in non-philosophy'.⁵⁶ Is this anthropocentrism once again? Are the animal and the vegetal only of interest, relationally, insofar as they tell us something about the human? Certainly the effort to move against the tide of anthropocentrism is there: 'the continuum of animality-vegetality-humanity'⁵⁷ is offered as a way to understand the radical equality or 'togetherness' of diverse forms of life.⁵⁸ For John Ó Maoilearca, thinking in terms of the *togetherness* or *belonging* of human, animal and plant is preferable to the philosophical vocabularies of identity and difference, so long as this is understood as 'belonging equally to the Real, but without any determination as to what the Real is, nor even what belonging to it means (as "participation", set-membership, expression, being-with etc.)'.⁵⁹

In *The Last Humanity*, ecology names 'both a science of knowledge (for Laruelle specifically a knowledge about life) and a discourse about the ways in which human beings should live among each other and in the wider

environment'.⁶⁰ For Laruelle, ecology has the 'all-encompassing and determining character of philosophy'.⁶¹ It is philosophical in its effort to determine 'the Real': to position itself as capable of making decisive distinctions between the human, animal and plant and to project the nature of the whole in which they participate. As Anne-Françoise Schmid notes, such discourses often expose where racism and speciesism intersect – when ecology authorizes itself to determine who is included and who is excluded from the community of the 'human' according to an "animalization" or "dehumanization" as a political procedure'.⁶² Non-philosophy suggests that Man, Animal and Plant 'should no longer be treated as metaphysical unities that can be separated, leading to Aristotelian definitions like man = rational animal. These macroscopic and metaphysical definitions give rise, as we know, to racism and speciesism, since the animal is what is deprived of human characteristics'.⁶³ Or again, as Smith suggests: 'Ecology, like other biological sciences that arise out of a colonial episteme, has played its role in the construction of race as a place of decision between human and non-human'.⁶⁴

In contrast, non-philosophy does not define the human, but refers to 'the in-the-last-humanity' – echoing the form of 'the in-itself' – and in order to disarm those discourses that police what counts as humanity per se. The in-the-last-humanity 'signals the impossible relation of humanity to the authorities that try to regulate it, to manage it, to place it within a world where this person is more human than that person'.⁶⁵

They die driving their cars.
 They die playing outside.
 They die babysitting.
 They die eating ice cream.
 They die sleeping in their own beds.

They die and die and die . . .

Even then, they are not done dying.
 They die giving birth.
 They die trying to breathe.

And they are done dying.⁶⁶

PART 5: A FRACTAL CHOREOGRAPHY

'Fractality is not only in the World, it is just as much in your head and your eye'.⁶⁷



Figure 5.6 Work-in-Progress Sketch from *Bestiary*, June 2020. *Source:* Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

Matthew has brought in a scientific article on ‘Fractal patterning of coral communities’ which he suggests we use as a prompt for choreography.⁶⁸ He is interested in its content but also the practice of flattening or equalizing diverse knowledges: to create a dance as a creative response to ‘this article that I really don’t understand’.⁶⁹ We talk about the classic examples of fractals in nature: snowflakes, coastlines. Matthew reads a passage of the article aloud, which defines the fundamental features of fractality: ‘Fractals have two intrinsic properties, scale invariance and self-similarity. Scale-invariance means that an object looks the same on all scales and self-similarity, that any part of the system, appropriately enlarged, looks like the whole’.⁷⁰ But what new concepts of fractality might come from performance? What is a fractal experience of performance? Matthew has drawn an idea for a fractal choreography to be performed by the children the company are working with. The children occupy the aquarium as a polyp colony: the microscopic creatures who build up the coral reef. In this repetitive, task-based action, they model how coral builds itself.

Coral reefs are built by polyps. Most structures we call ‘coral’ are, in fact, made up of colonies of thousands of polyps. Each tiny, soft-bodied polyp secretes a hard outer skeleton of limestone that attaches either to rock or to the dead skeletons of other polyps. These polyp aggregates endlessly repeat a

cycle of growth, death and regeneration, slowly building the calcium carbonate foundations for the reefs. Scientific studies of coral demand an extension of our concepts of how bodies operate in space at time. For example, the article Matthew introduces us to includes the following passage (which might be taken as further prompts for (non-)human choreographies): ‘Coral reef landscapes are spatially and temporally non-linear, exhibiting instability at metre to decimetre levels on timescales of months to years, but complex metastability at scales of tens of kilometres for decades, centuries and even millennia’.⁷¹ Even from the scientific point of view then, clearly Lin’s idea of the opera singers’ song as limestone remembering its past lives is not at all ‘silly’.

We walk Matthew’s diagram: each starting at a different corner of the largest square, and walking down through the self-similar pattern from large to small: 8×8 , to 4×4 , to 2×2 , until our human-scale limitations prevent us from going any smaller. We are stand-ins for the children who will perform this

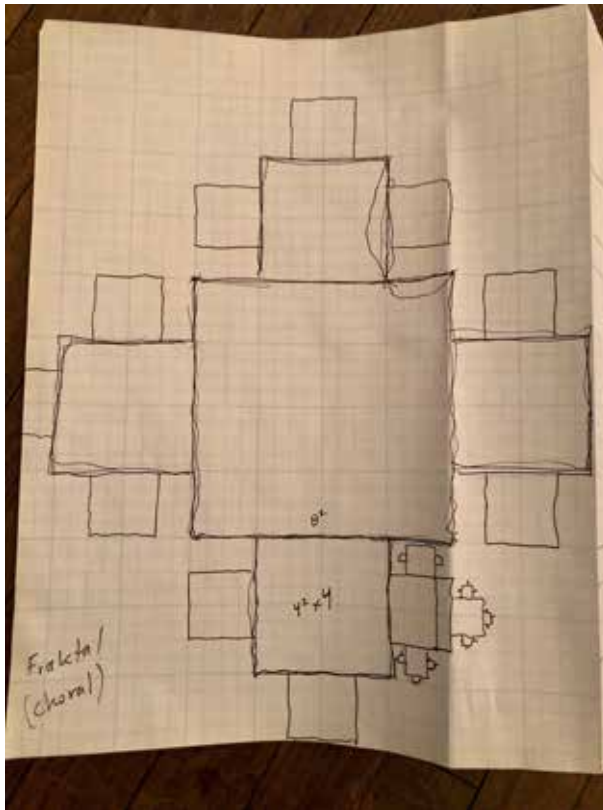


Figure 5.7 Matthew Goulish, *Fractal Choreography Score*, 2020. *Source:* Courtesy of *Every house has a door*.

fractal choreography: each one uniquely engaged in the simple act of walking, but one that enacts a sense of how simplicity can scale up into an endless complexity.⁷² For Goulish, in this particular choreographic instance, ‘the walking is also measuring, moving slowly and counting steps, to achieve the proportions at work in the relational patterns’.⁷³ Each child is both the whole diagram and a part of the diagram. Or to put it more accurately, it is not that each child’s action is a ‘part’ in the sense of being ‘a fragment of a closed whole’, but a fractal of a diagram that remains in process.⁷⁴ (*Incidentally, those who know him, know that Matthew has tiny handwriting. But even his delicate hand comes up against limits of scale*).

From another point of view, we stop seeing the children – as the microscopic polyp – and start seeing what they are building together. The act somehow puts the scale of the performance itself into question and draws attention to how scale shapes perception. What appears simple at one scale becomes complex at another. The performance is an electron microscope: zooming in to show how the complexity of coral runs all the way down. The performance is operating at a scale of about the thickness of a human hair. But can we also imagine ourselves zooming out, looking at the performance from 2,500 kilometres away, from outer space? Seen from space: the coral reef becomes a coastline, but remains – fractally – the same as itself, an endlessly repeating pattern. Looking at these images of coral we can lose all sense of scale. Is this the reef from space, from the side of a boat, from up-close, from under a microscope?

Polyps (Children Enter)

How dare you look down on us?
 Call us simple, basic, ‘primitive’ . . .
 We have built worlds together that you can only dream of!
 Grain by grain, we have built worlds that even the stars can see
 And in the face of such hostility!
 We are building this house for ourselves, true
 But it offers hospitality to so many strangers,
 while your building becomes less accommodating by the day.
 Learn from us, you fools!

*Philosophy is a house
 that is too small
 for what it would like to put inside of it,
 to unfold nebulae,
 to compile an inventory of stars . . .
 The sky would not be enough.*

*How can we accommodate a world where complexity alone is universal?*⁷⁵



Figure 5.8 Work-in-Progress Sketch from *Bestiary*, June 2020. Source: Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

The figure of the fractal appears through Laruelle’s work. Responding to the fractal paintings of New York-based artist Edward Berko, and his writings in *Sur Le Mur* (On the Wall) (1994), Laruelle suggests that ‘to the most well-known fractal objects – the sea, its waves, its storms, its turbulence, its “Brittany coasts”, we must now add walls: in their ruined, cracked, shabby, angular aspect – new mural and lapidary possibilities, a “genetic” grain’.⁷⁶ Referencing Berko’s work, Laruelle invokes the fractalization of experience, including of the viewer, wherein we cease to ‘read’ or interpret images but produce new visions of them through a ‘qualitative change’ of scale. As he puts it, through certain works of art like Berko’s, ‘we are called upon to change scale or style of vision and, at the limit, to hallucinate fractally such objects’.⁷⁷

But the fractal is also a means by which he expresses non-philosophy’s mode of plurality and self-similarity. Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy operates as a fractal thought.⁷⁸ Non-philosophy takes many forms, but it is marked by ‘epistemic insufficiency’ as its ‘structural invariant’.⁷⁹ The fractal invites reconsideration of the relationship between parts and whole. With non-philosophy, ‘what Laruelle offers us is a new vision of philosophy as a whole that is neither the right nor wrong representation of reality, but is a material part of the Real’.⁸⁰ But this geometrical figure is

perhaps as far as Laruelle might go to outline the nature of the Real: the ‘under-determined, blankly infinite complexity’⁸¹ that constitutes the conditions for both (non-)philosophy and performance, and of which they form a part.

This is the dizzying extension of fractality without limit, which renders all ontological effort both farcical (‘silly’?) and fractally immanent to the complexity it seeks to describe unilaterally. And indeed, even this definition of the Real must remain somehow ‘empty’ or ‘missing’ to avoid operating as the very form of philosophical decision that Laruelle critiques. Laruelle ‘is not deciding (for) the Real in any contentful way – not because it can or cannot be known, but because all decisions are immanent to it, are a part of it already’.⁸² Akin to how *Every house* make performances from which their subjects tend to remain absent, Laruelle seeks to craft non-philosophy as a thought from the Real, but not about it as subject. As Smith suggests: ‘Philosophy is itself rooted in absolute contingency . . . Absolute contingency is as close as Laruelle comes to a positive description of the One, which often appears to take the form of a kind of apophaticism or “unsaying”, but the One is not the object of his analysis’.⁸³ No wonder then that he turns increasingly to poetics to enact this unsaying and, like Howe, escape the linear logic of more standard grammars.



Figure 5.9 Work-in-Progress Sketch from *Bestiary*, June 2020. *Source:* Image by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

PART 6: HOW IT ENDS [THE HOUSE OF PHILOSOPHY IS IN RUINS]

The House of Philosophy is in ruins.

The Cave is in ruins

The Watchtower is in ruins.

*More than ever you seem to be walking through an endless corridor. But you keep going up. It is the ruin of the staircase as if it falls endlessly into itself, without leading to any 'big room' that you recognize
—the dining room, the bedroom, the playroom.*

*The House of Philosophy is becoming uninhabitable,
Its half-closed, half-opened rooms seem to be made for bodies of a different scale,
perhaps giant Lilliputians.⁸⁴*

Laruelle's non-philosophy is commonly mistaken for yet one more project heralding the end of philosophy.⁸⁵ But as Laruelle explains: 'The problem is no longer that of the death or the end of philosophy . . . the problem is of that of its global mutation, of the loss of its sufficiency' and of producing an explanation of these 'phenomena'.⁸⁶ As such, Laruelle figures non-philosophy not as the end of philosophy, but as 'a weapon of last defence [*défense ultime*]' against the violence that authoritarian discourses exert both upon the lived and the Real.⁸⁷ And yet, if it is a weapon, then it is a strange one: concerned to disarm and disempower philosophy understood as 'the supreme form of thought control, or . . . a device for controlling what counts as thought'.⁸⁸ And if it is a *last* defence, because we have run out of places to hide: 'The entire problem for me is about finding the limit, the wall that we turn our backs against. We have our backs against the wall! We can no longer get back to somewhere else'.⁸⁹

But even if the theory of Philosophical Decision is not 'akin to a moral condemnation of philosophy or a declaration of the end of philosophy',⁹⁰ thought does certainly seem deflated in this new position: as that which is determined by but does not determine the Real. What does thought do, if anything, if the Real remains foreclosed and indifferent to it? At this point, Smith's emphasis on the distinction between 'the Real' and the 'world' in Laruelle offers some way to reorient a sense of thought's purpose (our collaborative compass).

Importantly, the world is a construction according to Laruelle, and there is a strict separation of the One and the world. But, nonetheless, even though the world is relative, it has real effects upon human beings as subjects. Entering

into the world that is formed by thought – philosophy in particular – may also produce real but relative effects.⁹¹

Real effects on humans, but also animals and plants (and, and . . .) through the performative extension of the human, as we've explored. This leaves plenty for the last humanity (the last of humanity, the last humans) to do: not alone, but beginning with bewilderment to lead us into interspecies collaborations that qualitatively extend the human across new scales of space and time.

It may already be the end of the world. But as Smith reminds us, it is important to ask which world is at stake in this evocation of endings. After all, the end of the world of Philosophical Decision is hardly to be lamented.

The very world that is ending is the world founded upon decision; founded upon the antiblack racism and misogyny of the overrepresentation of the human; the slaughter and suffering of non-human animals; and the reduction of the biosphere to economic use; and the continued reproduction of that world through this very same suffering and violence. The task facing the last humanity, the last of our humanity, is to call forth another end of the world. Not its reform, not its descent into greater barbarism, but an end of world as such in favor of a more open universe that includes a fragile and real earth.⁹²



Figure 5.10 Elise Cowin/*Eyelash Seaweed*. *Source:* Photo by Josh Hoglund. 2020.

Coda

He wants to know if the Kraken is real.

He wants to know where tornados happen, tsunamis, earthquakes.

He wants to know if people die.

As I start to name countries, he says: I am never going there. I am never going there.

What temperature are our nightmares?

The burning flames or the chill of *the abysmal sea*⁹³

Now, perhaps, they are neither hot nor cold, but the very heating of the water.

The dark remains dark

The night stays obediently on her side; the day on his

*Until the latter fire shall heat the deep.*⁹⁴

The last Small St Helena Petrel

The last New Zealand grayling

The last Labrador duck

The last great auk

The last eelgrass limpet

The last Caribbean monk seal

The last carnivorous sea mink

The last Stellar's sea cow

Eyelash Seaweed (Elise enters)

dione arcuata.

You will have been on the brink of extinction.

This is how it can happen

It is not dramatic;

It is a mounting fatigue.

This is how it can happen for me, too.

Not at all suddenly

But as a gradual extinction

Towards the embers

Fading glow

Until

Take me on your dolphin skin!

I shall be absent soon!

Saving the tallow with capable hands

Seizing with the loyal closed eyes of foliage

*Puff*⁹⁵

NOTES

1. This is adapted from a section of writing by Lin Hixson: Will Daddario, Matthew Goulish, and Hixson, Lin, “In the making: an incomplete consideration of the first decade of *Every house has a door* 2008–2018 as performance philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy*, eds. Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca and Alice Lagaay (Routledge: London and New York, 2020). For more on the matter of how performance begins, see the *Every house* project, *9 Beginnings*. In the iteration manifested in Bristol, UK in 2012, the project restaged the beginnings of nine historical performances by nine different practitioners found in the archive, and reimagined them as a new composition: *Every House has a Door*. “9 Beginnings”. accessed December 4, 2020, <http://www.everyhousehasadoor.org/9-beginnings>.

2. Hixson in: Daddario, Goulish, and Hixson, “In the making,” 426.

3. Fanny Howe, “Bewilderment,” published in 1998, accessed December 4, 2020, https://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v1_1_1999/fhbewild.html.

4. Howe, “Bewilderment.”

5. Jonathan Fardy, *Laruelle and Art: The Aesthetics of Non-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 35.

6. François Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou: The Introduction of Maoism into Philosophy*, trans. Robin Mackay (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 210.

7. François Laruelle, *The Last Humanity: The New Ecological Science*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 61.

8. When I interviewed *Every house* dramaturg, Matthew Goulish in 2018, he addressed the importance of creating new stories to re-shape our imaginations in line with extant ecological knowledge: ‘There is knowledge that we have about . . . ecological disasters on a magnitude that’s . . . unimaginable. But the reason it’s unimaginable is because the stories that we have told before, that we think are helping, aren’t helping anymore. They’re maybe part of the problem. The way we narrate or the way we construct an image or the way we think about the body or the self or society or just the planet, our modes of thought don’t match the world we know anymore’ (unpublished interview).

9. This is adapted from: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, 15.

10. This text is an excerpt from the Introduction to *Aquarium*, written and performed by Matthew Goulish at the beginning of the performance (unpublished text, 2020).

11. Hixson and Goulish are founder members of Goat Island (1987–2009) – the influential performance company producing collaborative, devised work which has been theorized under the heading of ‘postdramatic’ theatre.

12. *Aquarium* (unpublished text).

13. With thanks to *Every house* producer Sarah Skaggs for this articulation of the relationship between the book and the performance. In developing *Bestiary*, I have also found my way into a practice of collage working with a range of visual materials, including photographs taken during *Every house* rehearsals. This practice affords the opportunity to think alongside the performance in a visual sense, but also to recreate

or reimagine the performance anew through processing of subtraction and recontextualization. Some of these collages are included here.

14. 'In the making' is part of the title of Daddario, Goulish, and Hixson, "In the making," 424.

15. Fardy, *Laruelle and Art*, 38.

16. See various contributions to *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy* for further demonstration of how alternative wisdoms inform the field.

17. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1.

18. John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 6.

19. Adapted from: Radek Bednarczuk, "Colorful Pencils for the Freshwater Aquarium," *Tropical Fish Hobbyist Magazine*, Issue September 2009, <https://www.tfhmagazine.com/articles/freshwater/colorful-pencils-for-the-freshwater-aquarium>.

20. Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts are Equal*, 7.

21. *Ibid.*, 4.

22. This relates to questions of 'epistemic justice' under consideration in other fields, where individuals or groups engage in a struggle to be recognized specifically in their capacity as knowers.

23. Unpublished interview to Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2018.

24. Unpublished interview to Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2018.

25. John Ó Maoilearca, "Non-human Philosophy," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*, ed. Lynn Turner, Undine Sellbach and Ron Broglio (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 367.

26. The original phrase used by the company was 'We discovered a performance by making it'. See: Goat Island, "Goat Island Company Website," accessed December 4, 2020, <http://www.goatlandperformance.org/goatland.htm>. This was since adapted into 'We discovered the performance by making it' as the title for the recent Goat Island archive exhibition in Chicago. I have created my own adaptation here.

27. Howe, "Bewilderment."

28. Robert Macfarlane, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), 32.

29. Unpublished interview to Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2018.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Daddario, Goulish, and Hixson, "In the making," 429.

32. Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 92.

33. Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou*, 36.

34. Smith, *Laruelle*, 49.

35. Introduction by Smith in: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, vii.

36. Lin Hixson, and Goulish Matthew, "Artist Statement," published in 2013, accessed December 4, 2020, <https://www.foundationforcontemporaryarts.org/recipients/matthew-goulish-and-lin-hixson>.

37. Unpublished interview to Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2018.

38. Hixson, and Goulish, "Artist Statement."

39. Lin Hixson's unpublished text on *Aquarium*, 2019.

40. This is adapted from Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, 32:

Man serves as a classical model for the animal that is still deficient, because philosophy continues to speak for the animal according to the man who serves as the animal's measure despite all his good will and repentance. It is one of the longest misunderstandings in history, if not a misinterpretation. If man was received as the image of God in the mirror of the world instead of in the mirror of the Universe, then how could the animal not have been taken as the dejected image of man even further distanced from the Universe? How can we rectify this hierarchy of images, this scale of downward specularity?

41. This is adapted from Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 29: 'When I sprain my ankle, a stout stick may help me walk, and I enlist its assistance. I am now an encounter in motion, a woman-and-stick'.

42. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 29.

43. Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, 66.

44. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Thomas Common. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm>.

45. Adapted from: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 239.

46. These remarks are informed by aspects of my conversation with Anthony Paul Smith (along with Katerina Kolozova and John Ó Maoilearca) about *The Last Humanity*: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, Katerina Kolozova, Anthony Paul Smith, and John Ó Maoilearca, "Thinking alongside The Last Humanity: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca in Conversation with Katerina Kolozova, Anthony Paul Smith and John Ó Maoilearca," *Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy* 1, no. 1 The End Times (2020): 178.

47. In our 2018 interview, Goulish talked about some recent events the company had been involved in, premised on the idea of facilitating conversations among artists, philosophers and activists. In these gatherings, there was an emphasis on 'keeping the differences in play', so the aim was not – he explains – 'for the art to become activism or the activism to become art', but to take seriously the need for different practices to be in conversation with and learn from each other on an equal basis.

48. Kevin C. Brown, "The 'National Playground Service' and the Devil's Hole Pupfish," *Forest History Today* (Spring 2017): 35–40.

49. Fred Moten as cited by Anthony Paul Smith in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, "Thinking Alongside," 177.

50. Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, 131.

51. *Ibid*, 9.

52. Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, "Thinking alongside," 170.

53. Smith in *Ibid*, 171.

54. Introduction by Smith in: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, viii.

55. Kolozova in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, "Thinking Alongside," 170.

56. Ó Maoilearca in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, “Thinking alongside,” 170.
57. Kolozova in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, “Thinking alongside,” 171.
58. Ó Maoilearca in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, “Thinking Alongside,” 171.
59. *Ibid.*, 171.
60. Introduction by Smith in: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, xii.
61. François Laruelle, “Non-Philosophy, Weapon of Last Defence: An Interview with François Laruelle,” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 242.
62. Kolozova in: Cull Ó Maoilearca, Kolozova, Smith, and Ó Maoilearca, “Thinking Alongside,” 172.
63. Muriel Mambrini, and Anne-Françoise Schmid, “Compte rendu de François Laruelle, En dernière Humanité,” *Actu Philosophia* (2016), <http://www.actu-philosophia.com/francois-laruelle-en-derniere-humanite>, unpublished translation by Anthony Paul Smith.
64. Introduction by Smith in: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, xiv.
65. *Ibid.*, xv.
66. Adapted from: Derrick Johnson, “In America, Black deaths are not a flaw in the system. They are the system,” *The Guardian*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/03/america-black-deaths-racism>.
67. François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. Robin MacKay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 131.
68. The specific article that Goulish brought to rehearsal was Samuel J. Purkis, Bernhard Riegl, and Richard E. Dodge, “Fractal Patterns of Coral Communities: Evidence from Remote Sensing (Arabian Gulf, Dubai, U.A.E.),” in *Marine & Environmental Sciences Faculty Proceedings, Presentations, Speeches, Lectures*, (Florida: NSU Florida, 2006), 1753–62.
69. I am quoting Goulish from memory of rehearsal here.
70. Purkis, Riegl, and Dodge, “Fractal Patterns,” 1753.
71. *Ibid.*, 1760.
72. David Bremner, “Non-Standard Stainless: Laruelle, Inconsistency and Sense-impressions,” *Labyrinth* 20, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 90.
73. Matthew Goulish, “Birds and birds at night: On care and caring,” essay (Text and Audio) commissioned by the *New Alphabet School* project of Berlin’s Haus der Kulturen der Welt, accessed December 4, 2020, <https://newalphabetschool.hkw.de/birds-and-birds-at-night/>.
74. John Mullarkey, “1 + 1 = 1: The Non-Consistency of Non-Philosophical Practice (Photo: Quantum: Fractal),” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 166n.
75. This text is adapted from: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, Chapter Three, ‘The house of philosophy is in ruins’.
76. Laruelle, *Non-Photography*, 126.

77. Ibid.
78. Mullarkey, “1 + 1 = 1,” 146.
79. Fardy, *Laruelle and Art*, 108.
80. Mullarkey and Smith, *Laruelle*, 1.
81. Bremmer, “Non-Standard,” 106.
82. Mullarkey and Smith, *Laruelle*, 8.
83. Smith, *Laruelle*, 16.
84. Adapted from: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, 63.
85. Smith, *Laruelle*, 175.n2.
86. Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou*, 212.
87. Laruelle, “Interview,” 241.
88. Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal*, 1.
89. Laruelle, “Interview,” 241.
90. Smith, *Laruelle*, 24.
91. Ibid, 48.
92. Introduction by Smith in: Laruelle, *Last Humanity*, xv.
93. Charlotte Runcie, *Salt On Your Tongue: Women and the Sea* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2019), 64.
94. Alfred Lord Tennyson, “The Kraken,” published in 1830, accessed December 4, 2020, <https://poets.org/poem/kraken>.
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Chapter 6

Beyond Judgement

Non-philosophy and Arts Intervention for People Living with Dementia

Niamh Malone

François Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy originated in response to two problems. His first concern questioned the *One's* ontological status within philosophy, which by default associates it to *Being* and to the *Other*, while 'forbidding it any measure of radical autonomy'.¹ The second problem identified was an apprehension with the theoretical status Philosophy as a discipline holds, and in turn, its inability to recognize its own domineering posturing, while 'lacking in a rigorous knowledge of itself, a field of objective phenomena not yet subject to theoretical overview'.² Laruelle methodologically explores these two fundamental problems employing a simple formula whereby he presents an *Observation*, followed by a *Proposal*. The first problem's *Observation* identifies the *One* as an object of transcendence to be found at the margins of philosophy, which is understood in terms of the *epekeina* as opposed to the *Meta*.³ Philosophy, according to Laruelle, eschews the *One* in favour of *Being*, without question. His *Proposal* therefore is to think of the *One* as independent of *Being* and notions of the *Other*, where the *One* fails to be determined by the constraints of either thought or language. Such a *Proposal* invites me, as an Applied Theatre specialist, to speculate whether or not it is transferable to understandings of dementia and how that may inform my arts practice in this field. Dementia – a degenerative cognitive medical condition⁴ – poses particular questions about understandings of identity and the role of memory for the person living with dementia and those within their relational sphere. Therefore, this essay aims to demonstrate that adopting Laruelle as a framework through which to consider questions about dementia supports an attempt at producing agency and radical autonomy with/for people living with dementia.

Laruelle's second *Observation* as the founding problem on which non-philosophy was established is the unquestioned autonomy philosophy holds as a discipline. He suggests that such aggrandizing ensures a command of regional disciplines and the sciences. His *Proposal*, in and of itself, when applied to theatre arts in 'the community' generates several key questions. He argues that philosophy has failed to move beyond a widened cogito 'an immanence limited to self-reflection or to self-affection' while existing in a 'transcendental hallucination of the Real, and in philosophical *self-knowledge*, a transcendental illusion'.⁵ Smith concurs with Laruelle's observation and coins philosophy and its cyclical act of self-promotion as an 'auto-encompassing discipline'. He goes on to identify how there is a need, as presumed by Laruelle, to invent new forms of radical thought that move away from what he refers to as 'sufficient philosophy' and its unchallenged 'givenness'.⁶ In this way, philosophy has been institutionalized, promoting a transcendental model of thinking which fosters a notion of totality. According to Smith, words such as 'totality' and 'universalism' are distinctly associated with philosophy, and therefore Laruelle's rejection of philosophy's dominance is generating a new way of thinking – a democracy of thought so to speak. This notion of how the dominant mode of thought, especially when applied to understandings of dementia, cultivates a transcendent idea of 'normal' and 'abnormal' marked by the level and effectiveness of the functioning body, in turn establishes an unhelpful binary between those who are living with dementia (abnormal) and those who are not (normal). Arguably, there is an interesting parallel at work here: Laruelle's view of philosophy denies that other fields (such as science or the arts, for example) can really 'think' for themselves in a self-aware way. Philosophy has to do that for them. This essay develops this insight and applies it to the sphere of dementia care, problematizing the predominance of a medicalized approach to dementia, and how any alternative approach to care is only ever partially legitimized when expressed and evaluated through medicalized parlance. I will argue that non-philosophy offers artists, including those who are working in Applied Theatre, an alternative approach to understanding what options are available to appreciate the complexities and nuances of their practice borrowing from, and informed by, the emergence of Laruelle's body of thought 'non-philosophy'. This essay will focus on a specific model of Applied Theatre practice, *Forgotten Futures and the City (est. 2017)*, which was developed specifically to challenge the ableist attitude to dementia care. I will now offer an overview of dementia and how arts intervention projects, which often struggle to find a philosophical frame through which to consider the application of their work, may do well to take influence – dare I say solace – from Laruelle's school of non-philosophy.

WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is a collective term, which refers to over 200 types of progressive neurological disorders. The most common forms of dementia include Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, young on-set dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies, frontotemporal dementia and mixed dementia.⁷ There are currently over 850,000 people living in the UK with dementia, with global figures estimated to be over 50 million by the end of 2020. This number is predicted to rise substantially, with over 152 million people expected to be living with dementia by 2050.⁸ Dementia is a progressive, degenerative disease and there are no known cures. The most prevalent risk factor for dementia is age. Countries in the so-called global north, the UK in this case, have an ageing population with a longer lifespan expectancy than any former generation due to targeted improvements in health care and selected societal factors such as housing, public sanitation schemes, education, and so on.

Brodzinski⁹ charts the evolution of medical practice in 'Western' society, noting the impact of Harvey's¹⁰ 1628 influential theory of the 'biomedical model', informed by research in the natural sciences, and his conclusion that the human form was ultimately a machine, summarizing his approach as 'dualist, mechanistic, reductionist, empirical, interventionist'. The lasting influence of such a mode of thought could be mapped right up to the mid to late twentieth century, where there was an eventual, marked change in people's daily attitudes towards health, with the 'illness' perspective replaced by a 'health' perspective. This meant that health was no longer seen exclusively as an absence of disease but was influenced as much by social, emotional and spiritual factors, giving way to the implementation of a 'social model' of health.¹¹ This model approaches health care holistically, where the physical, psychological and environmental factors are all considered within a broader sense of well-being.

While dementia as a disease is characterized by pathological changes to the brain, there has been a significant development in treatment/care strategies that give alternatives to the dominance of pharmacotherapy. This is most evident in the development of a relatively new area of research known as *Gerontology*, which is 'the study of ageing, not just from a biological perspective but also from the social, cultural, legal, political and economic point of view, looking at how these factors interact to affect the experience of ageing and later life'.¹² The development of gerontology as a research discipline has been significant in 'legitimizing' age-old claims made by applied artists about the therapeutic benefits of participation in arts practices for people, especially in this case, people living with dementia. National initiatives such as the implementation of *The National Arts in Health Strategy* as conducted by Arts Council England (2004 onwards) demonstrate the growing status of

arts in health care. Despite such progressive initiatives, Jordon and Collins¹³ emphasize the level of ignorance characteristic of the general public in relation to understanding dementia. They draw attention to the negative role the media plays in promoting a fear culture around the condition with headlines such as ‘the dementia tsunami’ and ‘dementia tax’ – all too familiar. So, notwithstanding the many constructive developments in dementia care, there continues to be a crass polarization of people into two distinct categories – those who are living with dementia and those who are not. As mentioned earlier, this false binary can be seen as an incidental reflection of the ‘illness’ and ‘health’ models of thought. Can Laruelle’s non-philosophy help us dismantle such judgemental apparatuses and offer artists a theoretical frame through which to comprehend the significance of their arts practice?

According to Sekulorski,¹⁴ one of the criticisms of philosophy as identified by Laruelle is that ‘philosophy predetermines what the outcome is’. There is a similarity here between the diagnosis of dementia and the eventual demise of standard, cognitive functioning. Like philosophy then, thinking around dementia and, more practically, any prognosis always arrives at an identical outcome. This is then organized into variations of ‘speculative reflections’ as Laruelle might put it, contributing to a decisional structure. In other words, when dementia is in play there is no other way to think about it except that which ‘posits the world’.¹⁵ This concept of ‘posits the world’ is based on three observations, all of which support notions of a transcendent system of knowledge, proposing that philosophy is ‘pre-formed in the logos with a predictive structure and organized into various forms of speculative reflection’.¹⁶ In short, philosophy is always reproducing itself. Therefore, if we look at the medicalized response to dementia as a degenerative condition which can only lead to ultimate death (often referring to the malfunctioning of the mind prior to the actual act of death) of the person, we can see that there is arguably a need to, at the very least, acknowledge the damage and limitations such speculative reflections have on understandings of dementia. This would include people living with dementia and their ability to have agency over what happens in their everyday living. Jordan and Collins¹⁷ suggest that people living with dementia can be supported as individuals living their lives with cognitive disability rather than just being seen as helpless victims of a senile epidemic. But there is an evident need to move beyond the binary distinction of the person living with dementia and person who is not. How can the person living with dementia have more agency, or not be fatally judged by the damaging apparatus of constant comparison to a former self/or ‘functioning’ other, to determine their positioning and sense of self in the present? This essay suggests that the person living with dementia is potentially liberated, if only for a moment when the several forms of imposed transcendence

are resisted. I think dementia care would do better than it does currently if Laruelle's proposal of the need to see *from* the One was fostered.

If, for Laruelle, notions of *Being* and *Other* are encompassed in notions of the *Meta* – a self-referential system of knowledge reinforced and secured through mainstream thought and language – then preference of the *One*, as a way through which to acknowledge the importance of individual agency and radical autonomy, eschews the need to rely on conformist, dominant systems of understanding. Laruelle's concept of the *One* asks us to consider the *Real* and thus helps us determine how we think, with the ultimate experience of the *Real* (the *One*) 'a consistent and autonomous thought'.¹⁸ This key concept informs how Laruelle asks us to consider the human, or 'what he comes to call Human-in Person [which] is also the name given to the *Real*'.¹⁹ There is, according to Rubczak and Smith,²⁰ a pressing need to redefine and reconsider 'the human', as former attempts in philosophy have always come to 'represent or overdetermine the human in or under some other phenomena under or beyond it . . . [arriving at conclusions such as] "*rational animal*", "*thinking subject*". They continue to stress the important role that non-philosophy has in helping us to think what philosophy/science can do 'for human beings without attempting to dominate them or accept the common, nearly unconscious, everyday notions of what exactly a human is, does, or means'.²¹ Therefore, when Laruelle refers to the notion of the *One* as reflective of the concept of *epekeina*²² of *reasonableness*, he offers us a way through. We can now reconsider understandings of the human in the collective sense, but also in the particular, especially if adapted to consider how people living with dementia are all too often misjudged, misunderstood and treated accordingly. I am conscious of applying Laruelle's non-philosophy specifically to notions of identity politics per se, acknowledging that it encompasses far more than just identity politics. However, research around dementia follows two distinct paths, one based on a scientific/pathogenic exploration, and the other around dementia care and identity. It is difficult for an Applied Theatre practitioner to work in the field of dementia without focusing on notions of identity and how unchallenged understandings inadvertently reinstate a transcendental determining act of *Being*. To adopt a purely philosophical approach to consider the nature of Identity falls short according to Laruelle who suggests that philosophy as a discipline is 'opposed' to Identity, and only serves to divide it, as it fails to 'think it as Identity'. He advises that 'Philosophy can in no way think Identity and only gains access to it by dividing it, reducing it to secondary, even "vulgar" and "empirical" functions (arithmetic) and simultaneously raising it to the state of a transcendent absolute beyond Being and in positions of domination it immediately proposes to "critique", "overturn" or "deconstruct"'.²³

IDENTITY AND MEMORY

Dominant notions of identity elevate the role of ‘functioning’ memory as a qualifying feature in confirming a person’s identity status.²⁴ If we map such a position onto understandings of dementia as a condition, we quickly arrive at a predominantly transcendental model of categorization, reinstating the false binary of those who are able to remember and those who are not. The correlation between linear memory recall and affirmation of a self-preserved identity is troubled when applied to people living with dementia. The primary symptom of dementia is the inability of a person to fully, or even partially, recall past happenings, especially those events that have occurred most recently, requiring the engagement of short-term memory. Very often, a person living with dementia will be incapable of recalling what they have done in the preceding 5 hours but will be able to access a memory from 50 years back (accessing long-term memory). Depending on the severity of dementia (mild, moderate, severe) a person may be able to access memories but struggle to place them in any form of chronological order, or indeed make sense of them in relation to where they find themselves in the present. This, very often, causes confusion, frustration, angst and upset. It is worth noting here that superficially, there is a stark partition between mind and body for a person who is living with dementia, upholding a Cartesian understating of identity. There is an argument to be made for a more phenomenological approach to understanding dementia in its many variations. The use of arts in dementia care, especially music and movement, is a growing area and one that tries to address such an imbalance.²⁵ However, as dementia is seen as a cognitive disease, preference is likely to be given to the workings of the mind. *Cogito, ergo sum – I think, therefore I am* if playfully translated into ‘non-philosophy speak’ and applied to dementia care it might be transformed from: ‘I have dementia, therefore I am not normal’ to ‘dementia is a mode of expression that evades a final value judgement, I am, therefore, no more or less normal than anybody (or anything), else’.

The insistence of memory as the principal vehicle through which we present ourselves as conforming social beings has been embedded in the public psyche for centuries. As far back as 1689, the English philosopher John Locke argued that a person is not constituted by a biography but a remembered biography.²⁶ Locke’s theory is arguably still observable in many contemporary approaches to dementia care. Laruelle’s non-philosophy challenges such ingrained and flawed supremacy of thought by offering us a frame through which we can reconsider the relationship between memory and ideas of identity (precisely those concerning understandings of agency and radical autonomy), especially for people living with dementia.

Rosi Braidotti, feminist scholar, resides in a similar camp to Laruelle, where she also problematizes the conventional assumptions that consistent, coherent acts of memory constitute a person's identity. She embraces all active moments of living, for what they are in the present, regardless of expected social cognitive behaviour/adherence, adopting a non-judgemental and fully inclusive perspective. For Braidotti, agency is affirmed as strongly in 'discontinuous' moments of living as 'dis-identifications from dominant models of subject-formation can be productive and creative'.²⁷ This perspective builds on Braidotti's earlier body of work on nomadic thought, which 'rejects melancholia in favor of the politics of affirmation and mutual specification of self and other in sets of relations or assemblages'.²⁸ Braidotti's insistence for affirmation over 'melancholia' and respect of individual and group distinctiveness, in whatever way that manifests itself, is clearly applicable, and necessary, to counterbalance the negativity that is attached to dementia as a condition and how it is often interpreted as a 'doomsday diagnosis'. This is not to undermine the severity of the condition for people living with dementia (including family and friends), it is however to encourage a non-judgemental approach for those involved with dementia.²⁹

One of the persisting problems in dementia care is the constant comparison of the person living with dementia to their 'former self'. Their gradual, but often all too rapid, cognitive changes from the moment of diagnosis to the latter stage of the condition are monitored by witnessing the inability to recall memories with accuracy, recognize their nearest and dearest and have a convincing sense of self. As part of Laruelle's non-philosophy, he offers an experimental form of thought where he proposes the concept of 'cloning'. Typically, to clone is to (re)create another model directly which is identical (genetically when considering animal matter) to the original. A potentially unfortunate correlation could be drawn here between Laruelle's concept of cloning and how people living with dementia are often viewed as a dysfunctional clone of their former selves. Interestingly, however, Laruelle's proposal of a 'clone' moves beyond a conventional definition; he asks us to reconfigure the here and now and not be disabled by some overriding loyalty to an idea of the original: 'A clone in the Non-Philosophy sense is not a simple representation, presenting again the original, nor is it a copy of the original. But it carries within it the underlying code of the original'.³⁰ I find this useful in thinking about dementia. It seems to be capable of acknowledging that there have been changes in state from a former time, but, crucially, the new stage of entity is not a simplified version of the 'original' but an altered state where *difference* can be embraced. It is important to clarify here when I state *difference*, I am not referring to Laruelle's critique of the contemporary philosophical obsession with *difference* as a hidden attempt

to exercise theoretical control: 'When Difference is primary and when one begins by deciding, dividing, partitioning, or simply distancing, this gesture engenders universal hierarchy and domination as the essence of thought'.³¹ Whereas an application of Laruelle's concept of 'cloning' enables me to consider *difference*, not as a device which reaffirms universals, but a mode of thought that enables us to consider the act of living in the moment, endorsing the immediacy of the here and now, regardless of how different that moment may play out in expected cognitive behaviours. In other words, the clone is determined by the Real without conceptualizing it.

If we accept Laruelle's idea of the 'clone' as not an exact copy of an original but as a concept/entity that carries with it the 'underlying code of the original', then initiatives such as the building of a fully functioning, purpose-built village to provide full-time dementia care within an environment which replicates that of a vibrant, 'regular' village, acts as an interesting amendment of the clone idea. Hogeweyk (Hogeway) is a 'dementia village' built on the outskirts of Amsterdam, in the small town of Weesp, Holland (see www.dementiavillage.com). This village is home to approx. 152 residents who live in a variety of housing, where accommodation is allocated on the basis of favouring lifestyle choices, such as Artisan, Christian, Goois (upper class), and so on. There are functioning shops, for example, a grocer's, a post office, café, bar, theatre, and so on. Residents, working with staff, continue to fulfil many of their daily duties such as washing, shopping, cleaning, and so on. Some of the houses are internally designed to resemble decorative styles of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This model of dementia care is being copied in other countries (USA, Sweden, Germany) based on the success of the Hogeway village as a leading and most effective form of care provision. In the global north, dementia intensifies for a person; they often have to avail of full-time 24-hour care, which usually sees the person becoming a resident of a care home. This change in environment often exacerbates already existing feelings of alienation and isolation, as the element of familiarity of their own home is now no longer a reality. While the Hogeway model will not reflect the environment from which the resident has come, it does however enable the resident to find familiarity in the setting which helps to calm cognitive turmoil while accessing long-term memory – the part of the brain that is least affected by the condition. An environment such as Hogeway caters for the seesaw motion of usual cognitive behaviour for a person living with dementia, where long-term memory recall enables them to revisit a world gone at one end of the spectrum, and on the other end, an often confused and random engagement with the present, where lateral thinking is disrupted and meaning is very often jumbled. The proactive nature of the Hogeway environment reinforces a sense of purpose for the person living with dementia and thus enhances their self-agency and autonomous living.

To conclude this section, it is important to give further exploration as to how, for somebody who is an arts facilitator working through the performing arts, both Laruelle and Braidotti's theories offer a lens through which to review, and (re)value, the actuality of the lived state of dementia, moment by moment, where no hierarchy of sense of self is tolerated. Both philosophers' work, as interpreted here, encourages us to embrace the active, often random moments of living in the now for a person living with dementia, regardless of their ability to recall and articulate remembered events in a logocentric fashion. This then reverses the dependency upon *accurate* cognitive recall to define personal agency, but embraces the unexpected, often non-linear nature of ideas/memories as of, and when, they take place. This affirmative reframing of the act of memory is reaffirmed by Braidotti's insistence that 'memory . . . is the active reinvention of a self that is joyfully discontinuous as opposed to being mournfully consistent'.³² Braidotti deliberately attempts to decentre prevailing notions of a 'humanistic norm'³³ and enables arts facilitators, in this case, working with people living with dementia an alternative perspective on how interactions should, and can, take place. 'Humanistic norms' are inadvertently reaffirmed through the employment of certain arts practices, especially Reminiscence Theatre Practice, and the need for arts practitioners to find an alternative form of practice, which may be enhanced and developed further if informed by the insights offered by Laruelle and Braidotti, as has been my experience. The following section will present an overview of the Applied Theatre arts project I created, *Forgotten Futures and the City*, which has been influenced by an understanding of non-philosophy.

FORGOTTEN FUTURES AND THE CITY – AN ARTS INTERVENTION PROJECT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA IN LIVERPOOL (CASE STUDY).

Non-philosophy is a way of thinking about how to philosophize in a non-standard way. Is it plausible to consider Applied Theatre as a non-standard form of theatre practice? Similar to Laruelle's non-philosophy, Applied Theatre has experienced a difficult history to confirm its status in relation to the central, dominant role the theatre holds. Therefore, as a drama facilitator, who specializes in Applied Theatre, I am keen to mirror Laruelle's ambition to decentralize philosophy as the dominant mode of thinking/knowing, just substituting Theatre for philosophy. Applied Theatre lives in the shadows of Theatre, especially evident in the allocation of central government funding via the Arts Council and the acknowledgement/coverage of Applied Theatre projects in mainstream media fora. Helen Nicholson in her 2008 seminal text, *Applied Drama, the magic of theatre*, charts the turbulent journey of

Applied Theatre and the continued discrepancy between mainstream theatre and Applied Theatre. The origin of Applied Theatre is a product of what Baz Kershaw (1992) referred to as the ‘cultural revolution’ in the Western world post–Second World War. Practices such as Applied Theatre emerged as a direct attempt to democratize the dominance of theatre as a mainstream art form, by bringing it into non-theatre spaces and using it at the service of something more than entertainment. However, Applied Theatre, has since its establishment, been constantly destabilized in its relational standing to the dominance and even autocratic positioning of mainstream theatre. A hierarchy of perception exists that sees Theatre as the superior/pure form of practice with Applied Theatre – a subsidiary branch to its more affluent cousin.³⁴

Forgotten Futures and the City is an Applied Theatre project conducted in over 16 nursing homes in and around the city of Liverpool since 2017 and continues today.³⁵ The influential arts practitioner Sue Mayo (2014) informed the premise of the project with her keen observation that older people, and especially those living with dementia, need to be engaged in more ‘future-orientated’ discussions. This, combined with the fact that very often residents in nursing homes get very little opportunity to actively engage with the vibrancy of urban life, was the catalyst for the project. Residents are often confined within the walls of the nursing home and excluded from city life. This Applied Theatre project therefore explores the importance of a person’s sense of identity in relation to the city, with special reference to how the built environment shapes cultural behaviours and how recent neoliberal policies have influenced people’s engagement with urban space.

Part of the project was to recreate and bring the vibrancy of the city into the confined, and often isolated, spaces of a nursing home. This was achieved through the employment of a variety of art forms, including drama, music, film, storytelling and visual arts. Part of the artistic process is the use of video, which brings the residents on a virtual tour of Liverpool city. This is then complemented by a variety of still images of key public art works in Liverpool, such as the Lambanana and the Beatles statues. Participating residents are invited to respond to the video and images, creating stories and articulating their relationship to the space – be that factual or fictional. While inevitably images of the city, especially for residents that have lived in Liverpool all their lives, prompt acts of reminiscence, the project consciously includes contemporary images that require residents to use their imagination and project forward into the future of the city. We ask them to conjure an image and describe what Liverpool may look like in 50 years. Depending on the severity of dementia, we get a range of different responses and levels of participation. The project specializes in embracing often random and non-linear narratives – exploring whatever response the person living with dementia gives. This

means that no preference is given to one answer over the other, even if the answers are beyond the interlocutor's comprehension. The art facilitators work with whatever material is generated within the group and try to keep all people engaged and levels of participation active. This approach deliberately tries to embrace short-term memory activity and promotes imaginary, future-orientated, discussions. This element of practice is what we have come to call Imaginary Theatre and is in response to the perceived limitations of the most common form of Applied Theatre practice used for people living with dementia – Reminiscence Theatre.

Reminiscence Theatre gained currency in the latter end of the twentieth century and continues to be the most popular form of theatre practice within the nursing home setting. This is due to the fact that it concentrates on accessing long-term memories, the most unaffected part of the brain for people living with dementia. It draws upon past historical periods, creating performances depicting selected historical events and thus stimulates acts of remembering for the residents. It borrows from a variety of popular cultural forms such as songs, dance, pictures and biographies. There is a strong element of interaction with the audience, with a measured approach to getting people to recall their own memories.

The foundation of Reminiscence Theatre as a form of arts practice is challenged by the *Forgotten Futures and the City* project, in what we perceive to be the evident limitations of the practice and its fundamental emphasis on memory recall. As recognized earlier, accurate memory recall is commonly perceived to be affirmation of person's identity, only confirmed by their ability to articulate their own history. Laruelle offers a caution where he proposes that 'the past is foreclosed to memory' and that the 'real past is not representable or in-memory, it is *in-past* or *in-identity* without constituting one in-itself, it is *found and experienced only in-past* in its own immanence'.³⁶ Likewise, the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, reminds us that any act of remembering brings with it the dichotomy of forgetting. He asserts the active act of forgetting and the opportunity that offers to bring random, disconnected thoughts into the space while generating opportunities for different kinds of thoughts. Ricoeur highlights the benefits that arise from the very act of forgetting, which is usually thought of as a negative action.³⁷ On the contrary, Reminiscence Theatre insistence on the reliability of remembered events to qualify a person's participation conforms to Braidotti's observation of accurate memory recall as having a 'mournful consistency' and falls short of the 'joyous inconsistency'³⁸ that is a key feature of people's participation in Imaginary Theatre, where random and disconnected thoughts are integrated. This approach, when considered in a non-philosophical sense, legitimizes, what from the outside, may seem as an abstract and intangible intervention with people living with dementia, a mode of acceptance that emerges from the

person in the here and now, and rejects thinking of them as objects distanced from the form of arts practice, but in fact they are the arts practice in the here and now, there and then. This positions the person living with dementia as a site of resistance, to borrow Jean-Francois Lyotard's terminology about the body, and not a site of compliance.³⁹ Imaginary Theatre therefore embraces the power of the imagination, the fictional, the non-correct, the random, the senseless and promotes the status of the person in their immanent state. The imaginative wonderings and chaotic thoughts of the participants act as the building blocks on which that arts practice develops. No two workshops are ever the same and the success of the workshops is completely dependent on the creative (and often wonderfully diverse) thoughts of the participants.

This form of 'bottom-up' arts practice is reflective of what Laura Cull refers to as 'immanence in theatre practices' which suggests there is a two-tier system active in theatre practices, and echoes my earlier claim of the polarization of Applied Theatre and conventional theatre.⁴⁰ At one end of the spectrum there are artistic practices which reinforce a top-down approach which fosters a sense of transcendence, while on the other hand there is a bottom-up approach which fortifies a sense of immanence. For Cull, embracing the latter form (bottom-up) is a method which abolishes conventional, transcendent, power relations in theatre practices between facilitator-director-participants-actors: 'The material bodies involved in the creative process do not obey commands issued from a transcendent source, but generate their own rules and forms of creation'.⁴¹ Her analysis supports Forgotten Future's insistence on recognizing the potential of the 'liveness' of the moment experienced in creative encounters, in the here and now, and from within, where unmediated happenings, spontaneity and improvisation are all part of the creative construct of Imaginary Theatre and foster, even embody, a sense of immanence 'facilitating experience that resist any clear distinction between "art" and "life"'.⁴² The creative moment in Imaginary Theatre deliberately muddles art and life, fashioning a new way to dismantle dominant modes of practice associated with Reminiscence Theatre.

Laruelle's non-philosophy as a mode of experimental thought, when specifically applied to arts practices, is arguably enhanced by the complementary insights offered by Braidotti and Cull. Non-philosophy offers the arts a place in which to blur and challenge the conventional positioning and practice of theatre arts in particular, and gives a legitimacy to bolder practices emerging, in this case Imaginary Theatre. Specifically, adopting Laruelle's theory challenges theatre practitioners to structure experiences in which persons living with dementia reclaim agency over their lives. A non-philosophical understanding of dementia and the application of arts intervention practices help to dismantle the apparatus of negative judgement which dominates public

consciousness. *The Forgotten Futures and the City* project is one example of small-scale, radical arts work which takes Laruellean thought, experiments with it and sees what happens. The result is hopefully, for those living with dementia and other participants in Imaginary Theatre, beyond judgement.

NOTES

1. Laruelle, 1999, 59.
2. Laruelle, 1999, 138.
3. See *epekeina* as opposed to the *Meta in Laruelle, François 'A Summary of Non-Philosophy'* Pli8 1999, 138–148.
4. see Earlstein, 2016.
5. Laruelle, 1999, 139.
6. Smith, 2019.
7. www.alzheimers.org.uk.
8. Barbarino et al., 2020.
9. Brodzinski, 2010, 4.
10. William Harvey was a prominent English physician who became one of the most influential practitioners in anatomy and physiology. His most celebrated work was *The Discovery of the Circulation of Blood*, 1628.
11. see Malone and Redgrave, 2016.
12. Jordan and Collins, 2017, xv.
13. Jordon and Collins, 2017.
14. Sekulorski, 2019.
15. Sekulorski, 2019.
16. Sekulorski, 2019.
17. Jodon & Collins, 2017, xvii.
18. Laruelle, 2013, 4.
19. Rubczak & Smith cited in Laruelle, 2013: XV.
20. Laruelle, 2013, XV.
21. Laruelle, 2013, XV.
22. It is important to note here that while 'epekeina tes ousias' is the Platonic claim that Good/One is 'beyond being', Laruelle, arguably, uses a philosophical ruse where the Good/One/Real is a form a transcendence to which all being is subordinate. It is a very different idea to the radical immanence of seeing 'from' the One.
23. Laruelle, 2016.
24. See Foster, 2009. Also, it is worth pointing out the crucial role played by memory in the philosophy of personal identity, taking in such otherwise radically different positions as those of Augustine, Locke, Hume.
25. See music for dementia care at <https://musicfordementia.org.uk>
26. Locke, 1689/1959.
27. Braidotti, 2013, 167.
28. Braidotti, 2011, 6.

29. Organizations such as the Dementia Friends Society work tirelessly to try and educate the population about dementia, changing what is predominantly a very negative perception about the condition (see www.dementiafriends.org.uk/).
30. Rubczak & Smith, 2013, XVII.
31. Laruelle, 2016, 6.
32. Braidotti, 2013, 167.
33. Braidotti, 2013, 15.
34. see Prentki & Preston, 2009.
35. *Forgotten Futures and the City* has now been extended into prison settings and works as part of a rehabilitation programme for offenders.
36. Laruelle, 2010, 75.
37. Ricoeur, 2004.
38. Braidotti, 2013.
39. Lyotard, 1989.
40. Cull, 2012.
41. Cull, 2012, 25.
42. Cull, 2012, 145.

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Chapter 7

Towards a New Genealogy of Performance Philosophy

Georges Bataille, General Economy, and Quantum-Mechanical Complementarity

Edia Connole and Brad Baumgartner with
visual contribution by Caoimhe Doyle

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INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to Bruce Boone's translation of *Guilty* [*Le Coupable*] (1988), Dennis Hollier states that what he is introducing is not really a book, 'Bataille isn't concerned with giving thoughts a systematic form, or developing a story'.¹ And yet there is a certain developmental logic to Bataille's writing here, and it is radically materialist, as Hollier, with his appeal to an incomplete universe, would seem eminently aware. Recalling a passage from the section 'Unfinishable', Hollier writes: 'A ladybug lights on a sheet of paper on which Bataille outlined (probably during one of Kojeve's classes) the architecture of the Hegelian system. The bug goes strolling from chapter to chapter, from category to category'. Recalling next a sentence from 'The Point of Ecstasy' in which 'a train pulls into a station', Hollier immediately asks of this juxtaposition of seemingly random and unrelated events: 'What does [it] mean?' His answer:

These [chance] events are so many wounds inflicted on the system. They subvert any reaching of conclusions. In a completed world there would be no room left to notice such accidents. The subversive power of the anecdotal is such as to prevent the world from reaching completion. Bataille returns to this point several times – only in a completed universe are these trifles unable to retain their hold on our attention, do they have less weight than the system that completes the universe.²

Hollier's answer reflects and defines a non-classical concept of chance in the physical sciences, wherein the subversive power of the anecdotal – of so many '[b]reaks in the narrative', are signs suddenly given support of what the world sovereignly is. Elsewhere we read: 'Guilty: "Start out . . . forget it . . . don't conclude. As far as I'm concerned that's the right method and the only one able to deal with objects that resemble *it*"'.³

To fully appreciate this narrative induction, we need only recall that what the little ladybug undoes in her disconcerted walk is the entire edifice of scientific determinism that held sway in Bataille's day until the advent of quantum mechanics in the 1920s. And yet, despite considerable textual and historical evidence, with the exception of Arkady Plotnitsky,⁴ Bataillean scholars have been conspicuously slow to begin to show how Bataille's general (theoretical) economy mirrors and complements advances in quantum mechanics.⁵ Brought to a barb in Hollier's admission that 'Bataille's references, with their sometimes scientific claims, can be bothersome',⁶ this is no doubt due in part to the fact that (a) Bataille refrained from venturing his own thought too far into the realm of advanced research in quantum physics, and that (b) in light of this, others who have, have been met with resistance from within the scientific community to the movement of quantum concepts across disciplinary boundaries.⁷

One area in which this contestation can be clearly seen is in the debates of the late 1980s and 1990s collectively termed the 'Science Wars'.⁸ The arguments regarding disciplinary integrity and subject specificity thrashed out during these years have a valency in terms of the present chapter, for on the one hand, they rehearse some criticisms that could be levelled at François Laruelle's 'untidy use of quantum concepts'⁹ in 'Art Saved or Destroyed by Its Works' (2018 MS),¹⁰ and on the other, they point to the fact that Laruelle's – textual and theoretical – project is itself general economic: owing to 'the inevitable loss of knowledge'¹¹ posited at the terminal juncture ('an aesthetic of complementarity') which disallows a single, unified picture or account of reality; 'philosophy is the sum of the possible in the sense of a synthesis, or nothing',¹² 'art is a synthesis without becoming-dominant'.¹³

In this chapter, we play with this non-philosophical (Plotnitsky) inscription of loss, bound up with the general economic character of complementarity,

and the complementary character of general economy, which arguably remains Bataille's greatest contribution to modern intellectual history, suggesting a far-reaching, more complex and multilineal genealogy for Performance Philosophy¹⁴ in the performance of philosophy itself: id est, one that reaches back beyond poststructuralism and the development of speech acts (not to mention the incumbent gap between the living body and the written text) to the 1920s and the opening of the debate concerning the epistemology of quantum physics¹⁵ and the emergence of 'a "materialism" without a materialist position'.¹⁶

Drawing on personal and scientific correspondences from the *Niels Bohr Archive* (NBA, Copenhagen),¹⁷ this chapter itself unfolds in a performative, general economic manner: a series of interactively heterogenous and heterogeneously interactive vignettes reflect the unity of human knowledge Niels Bohr sought, and the mutual exclusivity and completeness of description that his concept and framework of complementarity, which carries both these meanings, suggests.

Indicative of a writerly state of philoso-poetic performativity, this chapter thus encodes a series of interrelated critical-creative exchanges, that is, it indexes an interchange of critical and creative text objects that derive their meaning from performances of quantum complementarity in which the playful exchange of critical rigor and poetic non-sense becomes the very manner of enacting its ludic lucidity. Readers who witness this performative experiment will find that they, through the very act of observation, bring the text to life. The purpose of this chapter thus implicates readers in a simultaneous curation-cum-performance of both scholarly and creative vignettes, fragments and anti-poems – 'bundles' which correspond paradoxically to one another vis-à-vis critical-creative acts of quantum hopping (from Old English hoppian 'to spring, leap; to dance'), textual dances which whirlingly reveal the chapter's secret recital, or performative movement, between the literary-scientific and the scientifically literary, the indeterminate and the sacred.

As we will see, quantum complementarity wields a heuristic power that causal description or teleological writing cannot provide. It is the playful mediation between narrative induction and performative philosophy that helps readers of Bataille to negotiate the world's inherent discontinuity, offering quantum 'bundles' as a way of breaking through the sequential determinism of phenomena. Aesthetically speaking, the visual representation of quantum bundles playfully unleashes paroxysms of emotional, psychic and spiritual development. As such, Max Born's definition of quantum mechanics is transmuted into a kind of quantum *mech(ant)ics*,¹⁸ evoking a linguistic tomfoolery that functions both heuristically and metaphorically as an acausal entryway, an opening to a critical playfulness ultimately curating the readerly co-quantization with what is being observed.



COMPLEMENTARITY, A POSSIBLY APOCRYPHAL STORY

There is a possibly apocryphal story that Niels Bohr came up with the concept of complementarity while disciplining his son on the slopes of Norway. Bohr wondered whether ‘he, constrained both by his duty as father and by his fondness for his son, [could] *know* his son *simultaneously* both in the light of love and in the light of justice? Were these not mutually non-convertible ways of knowing?’¹⁹ By all accounts,²⁰ the Danish physicist had at this time gone on a four-week skiing holiday in Gudbrandsdalen with his family, to ponder the problems of quantum mechanics philosophically. The core problem, as he saw it, was the wave-particle paradox.²¹ As Einstein expressed it: ‘On the one hand waves, on the other particles! The reality of both is firm as a rock. But the devil makes a verse out of this (which really rhymes)’.²² Reconciling the conflictual aspects of this diabolic distich was for Bohr the key that would unlock the door leading to a coherent physical interpretation of quantum phenomena.

Abraham Pais has remarked that it is one of several striking confluences in Bohr’s life that the primary question he addressed – ‘What are the means by which we communicate physical information in the laboratory?’ – is entirely consonant with a philosophical problem that had preoccupied him since his college days – ‘How do we avoid ambiguity in language?’²³ Summarily stated, following Pais, Bohr’s central conjecture concerning quantum mechanics rendered meaningless the question: is light or matter composed of particles or waves? Rather one should ask: does light or matter *behave* like particles or waves? Because ‘the quantum postulate implies that any observation of atomic phenomena will involve an interaction with the agency of observation not to be neglected’,²⁴ the latter elicits an unambiguous answer if and only if one states the experimental arrangement by means of which one makes the observation. This quantum-mechanical re-definition of a ‘phenomenon’, qua ‘an account of observations which includes the specification of the tools of detection’,²⁵ shifts the subject matter of the physical sciences from self-contained physical systems to the interaction between physical systems and observing systems that actively probe them. A monistic materialist ontology is thus shifted to a dualistic one ‘involving observing and observed systems, and these systems are now causally connected . . . injecting the effects of a conscious intent into the quantum mechanically described properties of

the observed system'.²⁶ Since the act of observation influences the outcome of the experiment, different observations are deemed complementary to each other. So, for instance, depending on the experimental arrangement by means of which one observes light in a laboratory it can appear to be a particle or a wave but not both at the same time. Quantum mechanics (as complementarity) unequivocally states that light, as per matter,²⁷ and *a fortiori* what we take to be 'reality' is neither of these but a whole of which we can only detect a part with any one experiment.²⁸

Without getting ahead of ourselves, it will suffice for now to say that Bohr's formulation of the complementarity concept, which he kept refining from 1927 on, enables one to describe comprehensively and employ productively the conflictual aspects of quantum phenomena that cannot be

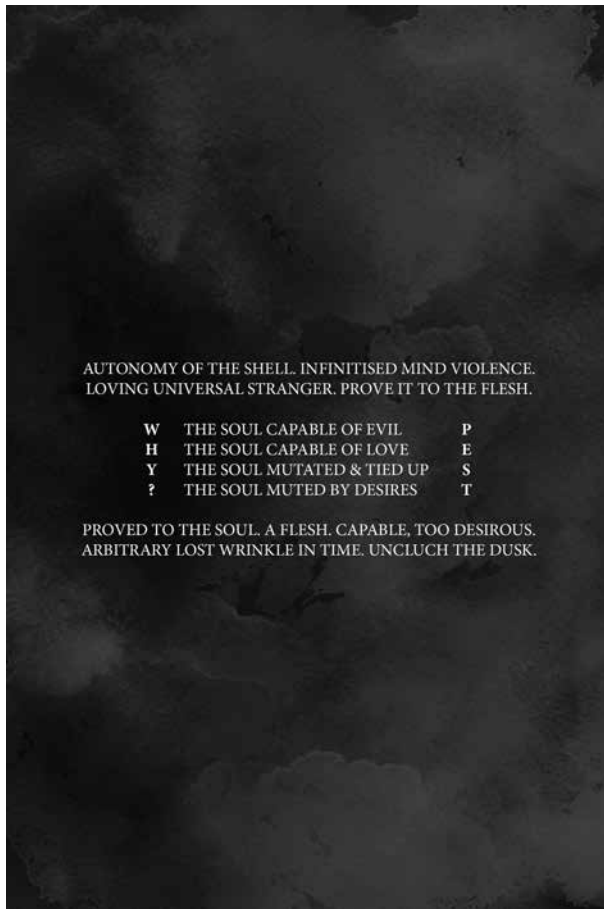


Figure 7.1

accommodated by classical theories. As Einstein, whom, in Pais's work, can be seen as the grandfather of complementarity, which, by the way, he resisted all his life, expressed it otherwise in relation to light:

There seems no likelihood of forming a consistent description of the phenomena of light by a choice of only one of the two possible languages. It seems as though we must use sometimes the one theory and sometimes the other, while at times we may use either. We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do.²⁹

In Bohr's interpretation, these two contradictory pictures of reality become complementary – the features of each, while mutually exclusive, or 'non-convertible' apropos of the light of love and the light of justice,³⁰ are equally necessary for a comprehensive description and analysis of all quantum processes.

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COMPLEMENTARITY, LITTLE BUNDLES

In a summary of 'The Quantum Postulate and the Recent Development of Atomic Theory' (1928), famous as the first publication of his concept of complementarity, delivered on 16 September 1927, at the Volta conference in Como, Italy, Bohr speaks of the necessity of 'adopting a new mode of description designated as *complementary* in the sense that any given application of classical concepts precludes the simultaneous use of other classical concepts which in a different connection are equally necessary for the elucidation of the phenomena'.³¹ 'Complementarity', to quote Arkady Plotnitsky, 'thus, connotes both mutual exclusivity and completeness of description, as the word complementarity, which carries both these meanings, would suggest'.³²

According to Plotnitsky (1994),³³ two forms of complementarity are of special significance within the Bohrian framework: 'one combining that which is always dissociated in classical physics; the other, conversely, dissociating that which is always united there'. The first, 'combining that which is always dissociated in classical physics', is wave-particle complementarity, reflecting the dualistic behaviour of quantum phenomena just discussed, and relating 'the continuous and discontinuous representations of quantum processes'. Embodied in both the Planck-Einstein equation $E=h\nu$ and de Broglie's formulation $p=h/\lambda$, quantum mechanics holds that light and, in turn,

matter ‘acquires a double nature or, more precisely, requires two modes of representation’. Light, classically construed as a continuous, wave-like phenomenon, must be represented at times as particles – photons. And matter, classically construed as a discontinuous, particle-like phenomenon, must be represented at times as waves – exhibiting diffraction. As Plotnitsky notes, and as is evinced in Einstein and Infeld’s foregoing quote, prior to quantum mechanics, ‘there was always either one form of representation or another, never a complementary combination of both’. In contradistinction, according to Bohr, in order to develop a logical interpretation of its data, quantum physics needs to engage both representations of light and matter. But ‘[b]y the same token’, as Plotnitsky attests, ‘one cannot do so in the form of classical



Figure 7.2

synthesis, since one must engage classically incompatible systems of representation without resolving their incompatibility'.³⁴ In quantum mechanics (as complementarity), we are in this veritable wave-particle opposition thus faced with a radically dualist materialism, but not one implying an ontology, as we will shall see, not one implying, to quote Georges Bataille, 'that matter is the thing-in-itself'.³⁵

The second form of complementarity that is, according to Plotnitsky, of special significance within the Bohrian framework, is the complementarity of space-time coordination and causality: 'conversely, dissociating that which is always united [in classical physics]'.³⁶ Indeed, Bohr introduced the concept of complementarity at the Volta conference in Como, Italy, with this very dissociation, which, in another of several striking confluences in his life, was borne out simultaneously in his assistant Werner Heisenberg's conception of uncertainty relations: 'a rigorous mathematical expression of the limits on the possibility of *simultaneous* exact measurement of such complementary variables as position and momentum, or time and energy'.³⁷ To begin our exposition of this phenomena, we would do well to recall, as Bohr himself does in a later, more lucid paper, 'On the Notions of Causality and Complementarity', that '[i]n physics, causal description, originally adapted to the problems of mechanics, rests on the assumption that the knowledge of the state of a material system at a given time permits the prediction of its state at any subsequent time'.³⁸ In more general terms, Immanuel Kant defines causality as 'a rule according to which phenomena are sequentially determined. Only by assuming this rule', he maintains, 'is it possible to speak of experience of something that happens'.³⁹ Well, not so in quantum mechanics. And here, notwithstanding Kant's '*passé*' or classical understanding 'of what constitutes a phenomenon',⁴⁰ a very brief etymological explanation of the terms under discussion may provide an appropriate segue into the following passages addressing why, with respect to quantum mechanics, this is simply not the case. As Robert M. Hazen and James Trefil (1991) explain: 'Quantum is the Latin word for so much or bundle, and mechanics is the old term for the study of motion. Quantum mechanics', most simply described, 'is the study of the motion of things that come in little bundles'.⁴¹

COMPLEMENTARITY, A NEW CONSTANT OF NATURE

That things *do come* in little bundles or quanta was first postulated by the German physicist Max Planck in 1900, as an ad hoc hypothesis to solve an outstanding paradox called 'the blackbody problem'. According to the ideas laid down by nineteenth-century classical physics, a hot body, like a red-hot iron poker, for instance, should give off radiation, losing energy in radio



Figure 7.3

waves: infrared, visible light, ultraviolet, X-rays and gamma rays, all at the same rate. This is obviously wrong, for as Stephen Hawking notes, in what is a compellingly concise account of this problem: ‘Not only would this mean that we would all die of skin cancer, but also everything in the universe would be at the same temperature, which clearly it isn’t’. However, Planck found one could avoid this catastrophe – referred to as ‘the ultraviolet catastrophe’ – if one desisted from thinking that the amount of radiation emitted could have just any value, and assumed instead that the oscillatory atoms in the hot body could only emit energy in discrete bundles or quanta of a size proportional to their vibration frequency; he denoted the constant of proportionality as h , now called Planck’s constant. In the case of ultraviolet and X-rays, the energy in the quanta is higher than it is for infrared or visible light, which means that



Figure 7.4

unless a body is extremely hot, like the sun, it will not have sufficient energy to emit even a single quantum of ultraviolet or X-rays; this, as Hawking wryly relays, ‘is why we don’t get sunburn from a cup of coffee’.⁴²

It is a well-documented fact that Planck regarded the introduction of the quantum ‘as a purely formal assumption’,⁴³ ‘a mathematical trick, and not as having any physical reality, whatever that might mean’.⁴⁴ But commencing with Einstein, who, in 1905, furthered Planck’s quantization of the emission and absorption of electromagnetic radiation (i.e., energy) to electromagnetic radiation, and therefore light, itself (i.e., photons), physicists began discovering other behaviour that could only be explained in terms of phenomena having discrete or quantized values, as opposed to continuously variable ones. Among them was a young Bohr, who, in a trilogy of papers published

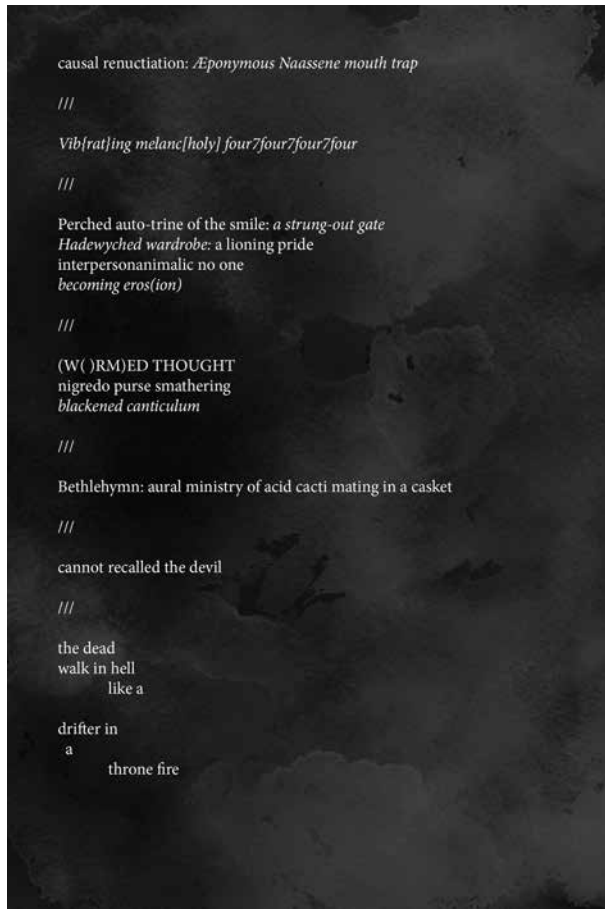


Figure 7.5

in 1913,⁴⁵ proposed that the angular momenta of electrons inside an atom is discrete, quantized in units of Planck's constant divided by 2π ($L=nh/2\pi$), which he then used to provide a physical explanation, in hydrogen, for the production of spectral lines. Bohr proposed this in the context of a postdoctoral fellowship, which led him to England, first to Cambridge under the tutelage of Joseph J. Thomson – discoverer of the electron, and then to Manchester under Ernest Rutherford – discoverer of the atomic nucleus. During his abortive stay in Cambridge, which lasted from September 1911 to March 1912, Bohr found that Thomson – then considered to be a 'pioneer of the electron theory and the acknowledged world master in the design of atomic models'⁴⁶ – had little time for him. As various accounts attest, Bohr had brought a rough English translation of his dissertation for Thomson to read,

but after months of waiting it lay unread among a pile of manuscripts on the latter's desk, owing, perhaps, to the fact that early in his sojourn Bohr had entered Thomson's office with a copy of one of Thomson's books and, pointing to a particular section on atomic structure, said somewhat curtly: 'This is wrong'.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding Bohr's excusably poor English at this time, Jim Baggott has remarked, in recounting this story, 'it is hardly surprising that Thomson did not immediately warm to him'.⁴⁸ Whether Thomson warmed to him *at all* is another question, as Bohr left Cambridge for Manchester in the second half of his one-year tenure, whereupon, after some experimental work on radioactivity, he set about providing a quantum model that would work with Rutherford's atom: a central positive nucleus surrounded by negative electrons.



Figure 7.6

COMPLEMENTARITY, THE RIGHT SPIRAL HOLE

Bohr submitted a preliminary draft of this research to Rutherford in July 1912, labelled: ‘First draft of the considerations contained in the paper “On the constitution of atoms and molecules” (written up to show these considerations to Prof. Rutherford)/(June and July 1912)’.⁴⁹ John L. Heilbron and Thomas Kuhn refer to this first draft as the ‘Rutherford Memorandum’,⁵⁰ and consider it to be a crucial document in the history of quantum physics, not least because it exhibits the extent to which Bohr’s style of work was nothing short of enigmatic:

What suddenly turned his attention from electron theory to atom models during June 1912? Why did he then chose to develop the new, little-known Rutherford atom rather than, say, the older, more successful model proposed by J. J. Thomson? Why did he approach the quantisation problem in the particular way he did, one which bore impressive fruits at once and which, a year later, began to revolutionise physics?⁵¹

Einstein hinted at the sibylline nature of this enquiry when he said: ‘There is no logical path to these elementary laws; it is instead just the intuition that rests on an empathic understanding of experience’.⁵² In offering a variation of this quotation (‘There is no logical way to the discovery of elemental laws – there is only the way of intuition’), *Mary Poppins* (1934) author Pamela Lyndon Travers once noted: ‘there’s a Danish scientist-poet called Piet Hein . . . who said, explaining one of his technological inventions, “You must know the field and you must have the right spiral hole from your soul into the infinite. When you have that new things emerge from the unconscious”’.⁵³

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COMPLEMENTARITY, THROUGH THE FLIGHT OF EVERY OBJECT FROM ME

Let us proceed with some critical definitions. Classical physics, which preceded the theories of relativity (itself a borderline case) and quantum mechanics, considered its objects as, in principle, available to conceptualization and, moreover, to direct representation in terms of certain properties of these objects, their conduct and the correspondences between them. This availability distinguishes such objects as objects of classical theories, wherein, to

quote Maximilian A. Schlosshauer, ‘there exists a one-to-one correspondence between the physical properties (and thus the entities of the physical world) and their formal and mathematical representation in the theories’.⁵⁴ Classical mechanics, the area of classical physics concerned with the motion of individual objects or systems composed of such objects, is, as Schlosshauer relays, one such theory. It completely accounts, at least in principle, for its objects and their conduct on the basis of physical concepts and symbolic measurable quantities of material objects corresponding to them, such as ‘position’ and ‘momentum’. This correlationism or ‘straight bijectivism between the physical world and its mathematical representation in the theory’⁵⁵ betrays the epistemologically classical nature of classical physics, due to the fact that it is a distillation of our perceptual and representational machinery, which is to all intents and purposes classical. This point was stressed by Bohr in ‘The Quantum Postulate and the Recent Development of Atomic Theory’ (1928), famous as the first publication of his concept of complementarity, delivered on 16 September 1927, at the Volta conference in Como, Italy, wherein, commenting on the present state of the quantum theory, he says: ‘we find ourselves on the very path . . . of adapting our modes of perception borrowed from the sensations to the deepening knowledge of the laws of nature. The hindrances [of which] originate above all in the fact that, so to say, every word in the language refers to our ordinary perception’.⁵⁶ The crux of Bohr’s lecture, and more broadly of his complementarity theory, lies in the impossibility of assigning the standard attributes of the objects, and indeed motions, of classical physics to those of quantum physics. In place of such description, ‘we have at our disposal only an abstract *quantum state* that is defined as a vector (or, more generally, as a ray) in a similarly abstract Hilbert vector space’. As Schlosshauer expands:

The conceptual leap associated with this abstraction is hard to overestimate. In fact, the discussions regarding ‘the interpretation of quantum mechanics’ that have occupied countless physicists and philosophers since the early years of quantum theory are to a large part rooted precisely in the question of how to relate the abstract quantum state to the ‘physical reality out there’.⁵⁷

As Brian Greene explains in a broader manner, Einstein’s special and general theories of relativity (published in 1905 and 1915, respectively) had already required

dramatic changes in our world view when things are moving very quickly or when they are massive, [but] quantum mechanics reveals the universe has equally if not more startling properties when examined on atomic or subatomic distance scales. . . . The only thing we know with certainty is that quantum

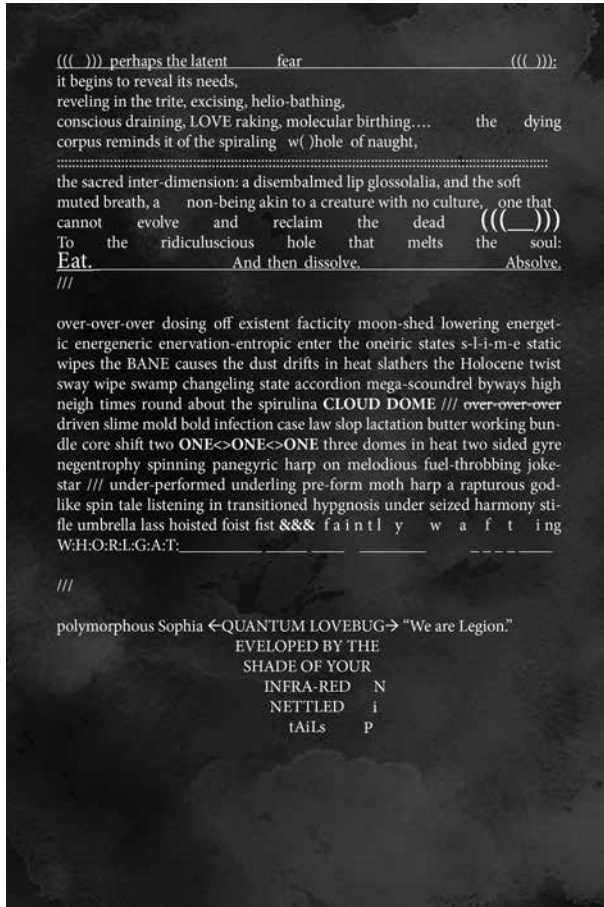


Figure 7.7

mechanics absolutely and unequivocally shows us that a number of basic concepts essential to our understanding of the familiar everyday world *fail to have any meaning* when our focus narrows to the microscopic realm.⁵⁸

One such concept is that of the ‘object’, indeed, what differentiates classical and non-classical theories epistemologically is the extent to which ‘the ultimate “objects” of non-classical theories are irreducibly, in practice and in principle, inaccessible, unknowable, unrepresentable, inconceivable, untheorizable and so forth by any means that are or ever will be available to us, for example, as objects in any conceivable sense’.⁵⁹ Though Bohr does, to a certain extent, *ostensibly* save the ‘object’, through what Erhard Scheibe – in



Figure 7.8

referring to the ineliminable role Bohr assigns classical physics in the application of quantum theory: the fact that ‘[t]he description of the apparatus and the result of the observation . . . must be expressed in the concepts of classical physics (including those of “everyday life”)’ – has termed the ‘buffer postulate’,⁶⁰ any conceivable attributes assigned to quantum objects in the process are never other than provisional, including the terms ‘quantum’ and ‘object’, or ultimately any conceivable term or concept. In sum, to quote Schlosshauer:

Textbook quantum mechanics tells us that the connection with the familiar physical quantities of our experience is only made in an indirect manner, namely, through measurements of physical quantities, that is, of *observables*



Figure 7.9

(the ‘real-world’ part) represented by Hermitian operators in a Hilbert space (the ‘formal-theory’ part). According to the commonly used collapse (or projection) postulate, measurements then instantaneously change the quantum state into one of the eigenstates of the operator representing the measured observable, where the probability of each of these eigenstates is given by the Born rule . . .

The eigenstates of the measured operator represent the different definite ‘values’ that the corresponding physical quantity may assume in a measurement. The notion associated with these eigenstates is therefore similar to that encountered in classical physics. . . . Thus, to a certain extent, the measurement allows us to revert to a one-to-one correspondence between the mathematical formalism and the ‘objectively existing physical properties’ of the system, i.e., to the concept familiar from classical physics.⁶¹



Figure 7.11

to its perception is fluid-multiple-open, and conscious perception reduces this spectral, pre-ontological multiplicity to one ontologically fully constituted reality. This gives us the way quantum physics conceives of the relationship between particles and their interaction: in an initial moment, it appears as if first (ontologically, at least) there are particles interacting in the mode of waves, oscillations, and so forth; then, in a second moment, we are forced to enact a radical shift of perspective – the primordial ontological facts are the waves themselves (trajectories, oscillations), and particles are nothing but the nodal points at which different waves intersect.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, Bataille's work features in Žižek's study of modes of parallax only pejoratively,⁶⁵ but it might be useful to consider this situation in terms of classical and non-classical concepts of chance, given that, as Schlosshauer

relays, the one-to-one correspondence retained in the quantum-to-classical transition is a matter of probability.⁶⁶ To this end, we would do better to draw on the work of Plotnitsky, who, as Kendall notes (in chastising Allan Stoekl [2007] for tracing Bataille's materialism to a source it owes nothing directly to), has already begun to show that Bataille's theoretical economy mirrors and complements advances in quantum mechanics, 'linking it more broadly, one might say, to contemporary systems theory and superstring theory',⁶⁷ as opposed to thermodynamics,⁶⁸ which, stochastically speaking, remains at the level of classical statistical physics, and thus that of restricted rather than general economy, epistemology rather than anti-epistemology. As Plotnitsky himself relays, with recourse to Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), 'the indeterminacy of Nietzschean play, which is one of Bataille's key sources, is far more radical than the dreams of chemistry or thermodynamics, or by implication of any classical model'.⁶⁹

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COMPLEMENTARITY, THE RETURN OF MOBILE, FRAGMENTARY, UNKNOWNABLE REALITY

Brought to a barb in the Marquis de Laplace's vision of a demiurge-like Demon from whose vantage chance (*la chance*; but also *le jeu*: risk, gambling, wager and play, all those antonyms of *certainty*)⁷⁰ was subjective rather than objective in nature, the classical universe built on the mathematical foundations laid down by Newton over 300 years ago was a deterministic, clockwork cosmos. In effect, even after Einstein's relativistic remodelling, what Laplace's Demon depicts is a scientific situation in which, if, in principle, we could determine the exact position and momentum of all the particles in the universe at one time, then we could determine their behaviour at any other time, in the past or future. Notwithstanding the practical difficulties – hindered, on the one hand, by the complexity of the equations and, on the other, by the fact that they commonly have a property called chaos⁷¹ – this claim of causality, bound like an umbilical chord to scientific determinism, remained the official dogma of the day well into the twentieth century.

It was not until 1927 that Laplace's vision was seriously undermined, when Bohr's assistant, Werner Heisenberg, became the first physicist to advocate in print a rejection of this central tenet of science: 'But what is wrong in the sharp formulation of the law of causality, "when we know the present, we can predict the future", is not the conclusion but the assumption. Even in principle

we cannot know the present in detail'.⁷² Heisenberg wrote these words in the context of explaining his 'uncertainty principle', or as he preferred to call it: 'indeterminacy principle'; although 'unknowability principle' may be more preferable and, as Plotnitsky relays,⁷³ is used as well. Sticking with the latter for the sake of economy, as it is closer to Bataille's own terminology,⁷⁴ and the quantum-mechanical anti-epistemology with which he has come to be aligned,⁷⁵ what Heisenberg's unknowability principle maintained, contra Laplace's vision, was that you could not know with precision both the position and the momentum of a particle at a given point in time.

Heisenberg's inspiration came on this occasion not from Bohr, but from Wolfgang Pauli, from what the latter – aided by Max Born's probabilistic



Figure 7.12



Figure 7.13

interpretation of quantum phenomena – had described to him in a letter as a ‘dark point’. Recounting the contents of this letter, Kumar notes:

Pauli had found that when electrons collide their respective momenta ‘must be taken as controlled’ and their positions ‘uncontrolled’. A probable change in momentum was accompanied by a simultaneous but [unknowable] change in position. He had found that one could not ‘ask simultaneously’ about momentum (q) and position (p). ‘One can see the world with the p -eye and one can view it with the q -eye’, Pauli stressed, ‘but if one opens both eyes together, then one goes astray’. Pauli took it no further, but this ‘dark point’ lurked in the back of Heisenberg’s mind as he and Bohr grappled with the problem of interpretation and wave-particle duality in the months before the discovery of the [unknowability] principle.⁷⁶

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COMPLEMENTARITY, FROM LOVE TO LIGHT WAVES

The wave-particle duality paradox has been verified not only for elementary particles – neutrons, photons, electrons – but also for compound particles like atoms and molecules. And while it has not yet been verified for macroscopic particles, Bohr (whom ‘for many of the physicists who forged the first comprehensive quantum theory in the second half of the 1920s, was a kind of intellectual godfather’)⁷⁷ regarded this duality paradox as a fundamental fact of nature. He saw such duality as but one aspect of the concept of complementarity, the principle and framework of which Bataille applies to the sacred and the profane in ‘Unfinishable’, in order to account for their indeterminacy and to describe comprehensively, but without classical synthesis, their conflicting aspects; and according to which, through the parallax view or radical shift of perspective that we are forced to enact, one cannot even meaningfully consider both variables as simultaneously applicable or their concepts as simultaneously well defined.⁷⁸ Within the Bohrian framework just outlined, this inhibition may be understood in very broad epistemological or, more accurately, anti-epistemological terms as a mutual inhibition, and thus a complementarity between the profane and the sacred. Dennis Hollier brilliantly, though unwittingly, grasps this in the context of ‘The Dualist Materialism of Georges Bataille’ (1966), when he writes:

‘Everything leads one to believe’, says André Breton, ‘that there exists a certain place in the spirit where life and death, the real and the imaginary, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable are no longer perceived to be in contradiction to one another’. Bataille quotes him and continues ‘I shall add: Good and Evil, pain and joy’. But he does not add: the sacred and the profane. Dualism starts precisely here, with the fact that there is no point, either in the spirit or elsewhere, where the sacred and the profane cease being perceived as contradicting one another, even if at times they have to coexist and seem to be superimposed on one another. Moreover, this very point, this instant of the fusion of contraries defines the sacred as such and distinguishes it from the profane: the sacred confuses that which the profane opposes or distinguishes.

There are indeed *two* worlds, the profane in which we live, and the sacred in which we die, the world of the presence of I, and the world of the absence of I, of my absence, the world where I am not, where there are no I’s. ‘*The world we die in*, says Bataille, is not the “world we live in”’. The opposition thus is not between this world and then the other world, but the world of identity and its alteration; the world of thought [*la pensée*] and its expenditure [*dépense*], the world of measure and its immoderation [*démésure*].⁷⁹

In *Georges Bataille: The Sacred and Society* (2016), William Pawlett notes, with respect to Bataille's 'Base Materialism and Gnosticism' (1930), that 'it is an important discussion, not least because it offers a remarkable collision of materialism and spiritualism; aiming to be simultaneously more materialist *and* more spiritualist than any other thinking'.⁸⁰ Sticking with the context, which is Gnostic dualism, this collision or, better, complementarity of matter and spirit, and also its integrity to what Pawlett calls Bataille's 'aim' in thinking, is most lucidly illustrated in *Guilty* (1944), in the section we have been ludically leading up to, aptly entitled 'Unfinishable', wherein it emerges, fundamentally, as the opposition between the profane and the sacred:

Each person is like a stranger to the universe, belonging to objects, to meals, newspapers – that enclose him in his *particularity* – leaving him ignorant of everything else. What links existence to *everything else* is death: whoever looks at death ceases belonging to a room, to friends and family, gives himself to the free play of heaven.

To better grasp this, think of the wave-particle opposition in physics. The first accounts for phenomena by waves (as light, vibrations of air or sea), the second accounts for the world of particles – neutrons, photons, electrons – the most basic combinations of which are atoms or molecules. From love to light waves or from individual beings to particles, the relationship is perhaps arbitrary or forced. But the problem of physics helps us to see how two images of life, one erotic or religious, the other profane and matter-of-fact (one open and the other closed) oppose one another. Love is such a complete negation of the isolated being that we find it natural and even, in a sense, marvelous that an insect dies from the embrace it sought. But we grant this excess in the willful possession of one by another. This need not only alters erotic effusion: it also ordains the relations of mutual reciprocity possessing a believer and the dark divine presence. (God becomes a thing for the believer the way the believer becomes a thing for God.) Therein lies a necessary effect. But knowing it not submitting to it. The lacerating and howling 'point' I spoke of radiates life to such a degree (even if it is – or almost is – the same thing as death) that once stripped bare, the object of a dream or desire commingled with it is animated, enflamed, and intensely present. From the moment of his supposed 'apparition', the divine person is no less available than a lover, than a woman offering nakedness to an embrace. The god pierced with wounds or the spouse prepared for pleasure are a 'transcription' of the 'cry' that ecstasy attains. The 'transcription' is easy, it is even inevitable: we must fix an object before us. But attaining the object in a 'cry', I know that I destroyed that which merits the name of object. And, just as nothing separates me from my death any longer (that I love while finding a drowning pleasure which summons its coming), I must still link the sign of the laceration and annihilation to the faces that respond to my need for love.⁸¹

In these passages, Bataille introduces a parallax view of raw phenomena alternating between profane and sacred. To the standard definition of

parallax, which effects an apparent displacement of the object (from profane, matter-of-fact to sacred) caused by a change in observational position, Bataille adds a materialist twist, in which the observed difference is not simply 'subjective', due to the fact that the same object is seen from two different perspectives, but subject and object are inherently 'mediated' (ergo Bataille apropos of his meditative method a little earlier on: 'if I looked at this image [/object] *to the point of an accord*') so that an 'epistemological' shift in the subject's perspective reflects an 'ontological' shift in the object. Therein lies the parallax's 'necessary effect', as Bataille says, 'but knowing it not submitting to it': 'God becomes a thing for the believer the way the believer becomes a thing for God . . . animated, inflamed and intensely present'.⁸² The mystical supplement is, of course, the 'dazzling dissolution'⁸³ of subject and object that ensues, but in saying 'knowing not submitting to it', Bataille gives this 'dissolution' a curious Gnostic inflection, as in the more radical systems like the Valentinian, whereby 'the "knowledge" is not only an instrument of salvation but itself the very form in which the goal of salvation, i.e. ultimate perfection, is possessed'.⁸⁴

Though Bataille does not mention the parallax par excellence – the wave-particle opposition in physics – in his essay on 'Base Materialism and Gnosticism', he does allude to its 'necessary effect' in a short excursus on 'Materialism' written in the same year (1929), wherein he says: 'it is of little importance that the fear of psychological complications (a fear that only bears witness to intellectual weakness) causes timid souls to see in this *attitude* an aversion or a return to spiritual values'.⁸⁵ We've emphasized 'attitude' here for two reasons. First, and foremost, to stress, that in the context of 'Materialism', a necessary effect or, better, a necessary effect of the efficacy of wave-particle opposition is, as per the parallax of the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis,⁸⁶ a dualist attitude; henceforth, Bataille's thought will aim, as Pawlett says, 'to be simultaneously more materialist *and* more spiritualist than any other thinking'. Though Bataille does not explicitly mention wave-particle opposition in this article either, its discovery and the crisis of interpretation that poses to quantum physics in the 1920s doubtless provides the backdrop against which his claims are set,⁸⁷ and against which emerges this dualist attitude; to quote Hollier: 'rather than a system of thought in the strict sense, dualism is an attitude of thought: dualism is not a dualist system but a will to dualism, a resistance to system and homogeneity'.⁸⁸ It is this will to dualism, this resistance to system and homogeneity, that is rendered explicit in terms of general economy and quantum-mechanical complementarity in *Guilty*, ordaining Bataille's unceremonious, yet giddy, 'I told you so' tone in the opening paragraphs of 'Unfinishable', wherein, with a surreptitious nod to pioneering '*meta-physics*',⁸⁹ we read: "'what is" differs with time', and

a little further on, with respect to the claims of epistemology and, more directly, Hegel's 'end of history':

Constant human error would translate the unfinished character of the real and, from there, truth. An understanding of the extent of the object, if this object is intimately unfinished, would develop in every sense. It would be, as an ensemble, the simultaneous construction and demolition of an immense architecture, barely coordinated, never from end to end. Things being represented in this way, it is pleasant to be a human being. If not, isn't it crazy to imagine the degradation that produces our heavy thoughts and foolishness? . . .

This amounts to seeing in man and his errors a mirror that would be neither perfect nor deforming: nature being only a fragment reflected in the mirror that we are.

This proposition cannot be grounded (no one can respond to decisive questions). We can only put questions – and their absence of response – into account for part of the real, which is our lot. But if I admit that nothing exists in general that can subordinate the parts (make them dependent on something greater than themselves)? The questions, the absence of response, are limits that would be rediscovered in some way in different possibilities.

Difficult to think otherwise: 'two and two is four', a truth valid for every reality, every possibility! If one holds to it. . . . Nothing to discover in the empty expanse but this obvious formula, itself empty.

If someone wants to build on this unique, empty certainty, making it the pedestal for a stubborn dignity, can I laugh any less than from the other idea: 'two and two are five'? When I insidiously tell myself 'two and two are five . . . why not?' I am not really thinking anything: at that moment everything escapes me. But *through the flight of every object from me*, I approach what falls under the heading of knowledge no less than if, perceiving 'two and two are four' as an eternal truth, I could imagine attaining the secret of things.⁹⁰

We quote Bataille at length here because his frame of reference, though purposefully, indeed poetically occulted in the context of his *Atheological Summa*, and the intimate diaristic prose that characterizes it, remains astonishingly clear; especially when read in light of 'Materialism', or even 'Base Materialism and Gnosticism', which, as mentioned, was written in the same year. This is the golden age of theoretical physics, and in these passages Bataille deftly moves from the conditions of irreducible incompleteness and a-synthesis that generate quantum mechanic's anti-epistemology to Gödelian incompleteness and uncertainty in mathematical logic; both of which may be construed, titularly, as announcing the 'Unfinishable' nature of knowledge in question. Thus, notwithstanding his discursive register, what we are



Figure 7.14

confronted with here is a profoundly rational and reflexive expression of non-classical thought which – typically and not altogether surprisingly assigned its origin in Nietzsche – defines one of the most significant strata of modern philosophical thinking, and whose role in the arts and humanities, at the level of theoretical economies, bears a deep-going analogy to that of quantum theory in physics.⁹¹

To push this contention a little further in our own desired direction – and that of Jacques Lacarrière, for whom Planck, Einstein, Bohr, etc., emerged ‘*ces gnostiques de notre temps*’ (‘those gnostics of our times’)⁹² – we could say, almost perfunctorily, as if it were not a shockingly novel theoretical move, that non-classical quantum physics served as the primary model for Bataille’s dualism, retroactively determining the significance of Gnosticism for him in light of epistemologically non-classical theories here and elsewhere.

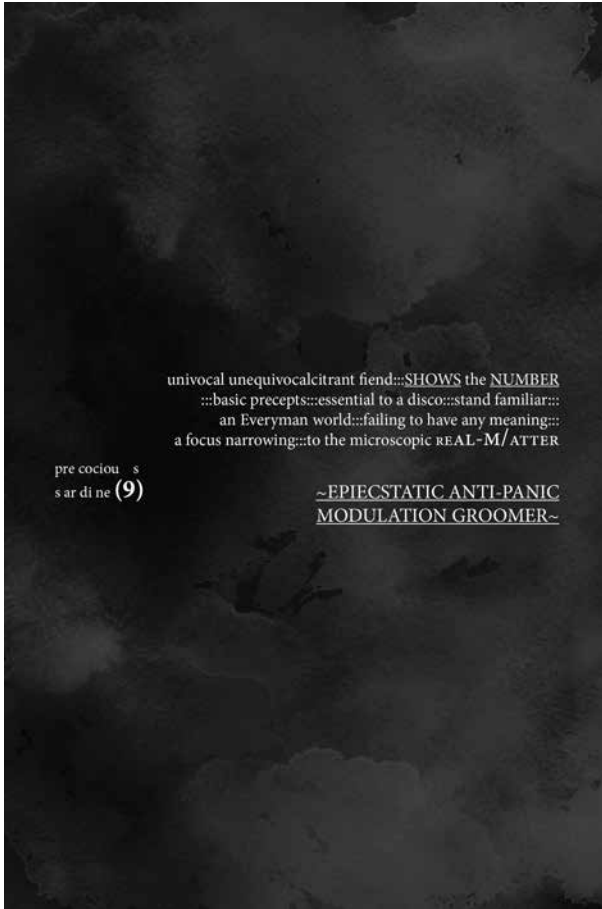


Figure 7.15

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COMPLEMENTARITY, THIS IMPOSSIBLE . . .

There is a common enough joke lurking in the foregoing that we should address before ending. This joke has it that the difference between a psychotic and a neurotic is that for the psychotic two and two make five, while for the neurotic two and two make four – *but she can't stand it!* Commenting on this, perhaps, in 'The Bataille Act' (1972), Philippe Sollers writes: 'If one divides



Figure 7.17

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♀

In memory

of

Niels Bohr

(7 October 1885–18 November 1962)

and

Georges Bataille

(10 September 1897–9 July 1962)

♀

♀

NOTES

1. Dennis Hollier, “Introduction,” in Georges Bataille, *Guilty*, trans. Bruce Boone (Venice, CA: The Lapis Press, 1988), vii.

2. Hollier in Bataille, *Guilty*, ix.

3. Hollier quoting Bataille, in *Guilty*, ix, original emphasis.

4. See Arkady Plotnitsky, *Reconfigurations: Critical Theory and General Economy* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1993); Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Plotnitsky, *The Knowable and The Unknowable: Modern Science, Nonclassical Thought and the “Two Cultures”* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), for instance.

5. Cf. Stuart Kendall, “Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability (review),” *SubStance* 116 (2008), 146–149; Kendall, “Toward General Economy,” *Scapegoat* 5 (2013), 27–32.

6. Dennis Hollier, “The Dualist Materialism of Georges Bataille,” *Yale French Studies*, No. 78 (1990), 130–131.

7. Cf. Alan Sokal, “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity,” *Social Text* 46/47 (1996), 217–252; Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectual’s Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador, 1998), for instance.

8. Cf. Andrew Ross, *Science Wars* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Arianna Borrelli and Alexandra Grieser, “Recent Research on the Aesthetics of Knowledge in Science and in Religion,” *Approaching Religion* 7, No. 2 (2017), 4–21; Jennifer Burwell, *Quantum Language and the Migration of Scientific Concepts* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2018), for instance.

9. Jennifer Burwell, *Quantum Language and the Migration of Scientific Concepts* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2018).

10. Cf. editor’s input here.

11. Niels Bohr in *Quantum Theory and Measurement*, eds. John A. Wheeler and Wojciech H. Zurek (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 147.

12. Georges Bataille, "Sanctity, Eroticism and Solitude," trans. Mary Dalwood, in Clive Cazeaux, ed., *The Continental Aesthetics Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 385.

13. François Laruelle, "Art Saved or Destroyed by Its Works," trans. Anthony Paul Smith, *Art Disarming Philosophy: A Symposium on Non-Philosophy and Aesthetics* (Tate Liverpool, February 24, 2018), MS. Cf. Laruelle, "The Generic Orientation of Non-Standard Aesthetics," trans. Drew S. Burk, Joe Hughes and Christophe Wall-Romana (University of Minnesota, Weisman Art Museum, November 17, 2012), n.p.

14. Anna Street, Magnolia Pauker, and Julien Alliot, "Introduction: Genealogies of Performance Philosophy," in Street, Pauker, and Allen, eds., *Performance Philosophy: Crossings and Conversations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 3–22. Cf. Hester van Hasselt, "Interview with Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca: 'Knowing how to not-know': 'Performance philosophy has existed since 2012. It's based on the double premise that – first, the performing arts produce knowledge through their own, physical means, and can serve as a resource for philosophy. And second, that philosophy and thinking is something we perform', n.p.

15. Cf. Georges Bataille, "Materialism," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 13; Arkady Plotnitsky, "Effects of the Unknowable: Materialism, Epistemology, and the General Economy of the Body in Bataille," *Parallax* 7, No. 1 (2001), 16–28.

16. François Laruelle, "The Generic Orientation of Non-Standard Aesthetics," trans. Drew S. Burk, Joe Hughes and Christophe Wall-Romana (University of Minnesota, Weisman Art Museum, November 17, 2012), n.p.

17. Many thanks are due to Dr. Robert James Sunderland, head archivist at NBA, University of Denmark, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark.

18. Like the poetry-without-us in *Quantum Mechantics: Memoirs of a Quark*, this form of performative philosophy/auto-criticism 'experimentally indexes a form of ludic hopping (hop, from Old English hoppian "to spring, leap; to dance; to limp"), that is, a sha(Brah)manic "dances with words" in which the Word itself spontaneously leaps vis-à-vis what we might call a "tripling manas" (from Sanscrit, manas means "mind"): *manically*, *maniacally*, in quanto-*manicular* gestures, pointing back at themselves – as text objects and speech acts – in order to curate a series (or fields) of significations that complicate, negate, and ultimately reinstate their own function as signifiers' (Brad Baumgartner, foreword to *Quantum Mechantics: Memoirs of a Quark* [Brooklyn: The Operating System, 2019], i).

19. Cf. Jerome S. Brunner, *The Relevance of Education* (New York: The Norton Library, 1973), xiii, original emphasis; Niels Bohr, *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2010); Bohr, "Physical Science and the Study of Religions," in David Favrholt, ed., *Niels Bohr Collected Works, Vol. 10: Complementarity Beyond Physics (1928–1962)* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1999), 275–280; Izhak Englard, "The Idea of Complementarity as a Philosophical Basis for Pluralism in Tort Law," in David G. Owen, ed., *Philosophical Foundations of Tort Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 191–192, 191 n. 37, for instance.

20. Cf. Manjit Kumar, *Quantum: Einstein, Bohr and the Great Debate About the Nature of Reality* (London: Icon Books, 2014), 225–249; Abraham Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times, In Physics, Philosophy, and Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 22; Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Beyond: Encounters and Conversations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 77, for instance.

21. Cf. Kumar, *Quantum*, 242; Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 22; Richard Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 130, for instance.

22. Quoted in Jagdish Mehra and Helmut Rechenberg (2000), *The Historical Development of Quantum Theory. Volume 6: The Completion of Quantum Mechanics, 1926–1941*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 2000), 235; trans. modified.

23. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 22.

24. Niels Bohr, “The Quantum Postulate and the Recent Development of Atomic Theory,” in *Nature* (Suppl.), No. 121 (April 14, 1928), 580.

25. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 23. Cf. Niels Bohr, “On the Notions of Causality and Complementarity,” in *Science*, New Series, Vol. 111, No. 2873 (Jan. 20, 1950), 54.

26. Henry P. Stapp, “Quantum Interactive Dualism: An Alternative to Materialism,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12, No. 11 (2005), 47–48. Cf. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 22–23.

27. The wave-particle duality first observed by Einstein in 1909 for light was applied to matter by Louis de Broglie in 1923, following Einstein's ideas.

28. As suggested in the preceding passages, and as Dugald Murdoch (in *Niels Bohr's Philosophy of Physics* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990]) explains: ‘Duality also obtains at the empirical level, in the physical contexts in which quantum mechanics is actually applied. Whereas “formal” duality pertains to the interpretations of quantum mechanics *qua* formal calculus, “empirical” duality pertains to the interpretation of empirical applications of the theory. Certain experimental evidence, Bohr held, calls only for the particle (e.g. the Compton effect), other evidence only for the wave (e.g. interference effects). At the empirical level one of the two models, but not both [*id est*, simultaneously], provides a satisfactory intuitive understanding of the application of the theory’ (62, original emphasis). Cf. Louis de Broglie: ‘People always expect a battle between wave and particle: it never happens because never more than one of the combatants shows up’ (quoted by Bernard Pullman, *The Atom in the History of Human Thought*, trans. Axel Reisenger [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 2001], 300).

29. Albert Einstein in conversation with Leopold Infeld in *The Evolution of Physics: From Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 263; the latter are both the authors of this work.

30. Cf. ‘[T]hough the closest possible combination of justice and charity presents a common goal in all cultures, it must be recognised that any occasion which calls for the strict application of law has no room for the display of charity and that, conversely, benevolence and compassion may conflict with all ideas of justice. This point, in many religions mythically illustrated by the fight between deities personifying such ideals, is stressed in old Oriental philosophy in the admonition never to forget as we search for harmony in human life that on the scene of existence we are

ourselves actors as well as spectators' (Bohr, *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*, 81).

31. Bohr, Niels (1934), *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 10, original emphasis.

32. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 5.

33. Cf. Makoto Katsumori, *Niels Bohr's Complementarity: Its Structures, History, and Intersections with Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (London and New York: Springer, 2010), for instance.

34. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 5–6.

35. Georges Bataille, "Materialism," in Allan Stoekl, ed., *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 13. Cf. Stapp, "Quantum Interactive Dualism: An Alternative to Materialism," 47–48.

36. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 6.

37. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 6; as Plotnitsky notes in *Reconfigurations: Critical Theory and General Economy* (1993): 'Both complementarity and uncertainty relations were developed simultaneously in 1927, in collaboration, or cooperation and mutual influence, between Bohr and Werner Heisenberg' (6–7).

38. Niels Bohr, "On the Notions of Causality and Complementarity," in *Science*, New Series, Vol. 111, No. 2873 (Jan. 20, 1950), 51–54.

39. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 23.

40. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 23.

41. Robert M. Hazen and James Trefil, *Science Matters: Achieving Scientific Literacy* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 65–66.

42. Stephen Hawking, "Does God Play Dice," n.p.

43. Kumar, *Quantum*, 27.

44. Hawking, "Does God Play Dice," n.p.

45. Bohr, Niels, "On the constitution of atoms and molecules [in three parts]," *Philosophical Magazine*, Series 6, Vol. 26 (1913), 1–25 [I]; 476–502 [II]; 854–875 [III].

46. John L. Heilbron and Thomas S. Kuhn, "The Genesis of the Bohr Atom," *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, Vol. 1 (1969), 223.

47. Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 120. Cf. John L. Heilbron, "The Mind that Created the Bohr Atom," *Séminaire Poincaré X VII* (2013), 25–26; Kumar, *Quantum*, 82. Pais (1991) quoting Bohr, for instance: 'It was a disappointment that Thomson was not interested to learn that his calculations were not correct. That was also my fault. I had no great knowledge of English and therefore I did not know how to express myself' (121).

48. Jim Baggott, *The Quantum Story: A History in 40 Minutes* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

49. A detailed summary is provided in Pais, *Niels Bohr's Times*, 135–139.

50. Heilbron and Kuhn, "The Genesis of the Bohr Atom," 244.

51. Heilbron and Kuhn, "The Genesis of the Bohr Atom," 212.

52. Quoted in Don Howard, "Einstein and the Development of Twentieth-century Philosophy of Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Einstein*, Michel Janssen and Christoph Lehner, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 366.

53. Pamela Lyndon Travers, *In Search of the Hero: The Continuing Relevance of Myth and Fairy Tale* (Claremont, California: The Clark Lecture, Scripps College, 1970), 5–6.
54. Maximilian A. Schlosshauer, *Decoherence and the Quantum-To-Classical Transition* (Springer: Berlin, 2007), 14.
55. Schlosshauer, *Decoherence and the Quantum-To-Classical Transition*, 15.
56. Bohr, “The Quantum Postulate and the Recent Development of Atomic Theory,” 580.
57. Schlosshauer, *Decoherence and the Quantum-To-Classical Transition*, 15, original emphasis.
58. Brian Greene, *The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011), 86–87.
59. Arkady Plotnitsky, “Difference,” in Julian Wolfreys, ed., *Glossalalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 60.
60. Erhard Scheibe, *The Logical Analysis of Quantum Mechanics* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1973), 24, original emphasis.
61. Schlosshauer, *Decoherence and the Quantum-To-Classical Transition*, 15, original emphasis.
62. Bataille, “Materialism,” in Stoekl, ed., *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, 49.
63. Georges Bataille, *Guilty*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2011), 37–42; 40–41.
64. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (London and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 172.
65. Cf. Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 94–95.
66. Schlosshauer, *Decoherence and the Quantum-To-Classical Transition*, 15–17.
67. Stuart Kendall, “Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability (review),” *SubStance* 116 (2008), 147. Cf. Allan Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
68. Cf. Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), for instance.
69. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 18.
70. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London and New York: Continuum, 2005).
71. Cf. Kendall in Bataille, *Guilty*, xxvii.
72. Hawking, “Does God Play Dice,” n.p.
73. Werner Heisenberg, “The Physical Content of Quantum Kinematics and Mechanics,” in John A. Wheeler and Wojciech H. Zurek, eds. *Quantum Theory and Measurement*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press., 1983), 83.
74. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 7.
75. Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, trans. Michelle and Stuart Kendall (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
76. Arkady Plotnitsky, “Effects of the Unknowable: Materialism, Epistemology, and the General Economy of the Body in Bataille,” *Parallax* 7, No. 1 (2001), 16–28;

Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*; Plotnitsky, *The Knowable and The Unknowable: Modern Science, Nonclassical Thought and the "Two Cultures"*; Plotnitsky, "Difference," 51–76.

76. Kumar, *Quantum*, 237–238.

77. Kumar, *Quantum*, 237–238.

78. Bataille, "Unfinishable," in *Guilty*, trans. Kendall, 40–41.

79. Dennis Hollier, "The Dualist Materialism of Georges Bataille," 131–132, original emphasis.

80. William Pawlett, *Georges Bataille: The Sacred and Society* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 25, original emphasis. Cf. Georges Bataille, "Base Materialism and Gnosticism," in Stoekl, ed., *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, 45–52.

81. Bataille, "Unfinishable," in *Guilty*, trans. Kendall, 40–41, original emphasis.

82. Bataille, "Unfinishable," in *Guilty*, trans. Kendall, 40, original emphasis.

83. Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Stuart Kendall (New York: SUNY, 2015), 13; Cf. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 74–85.

84. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God & The Beginning of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 35.

85. Bataille, "Materialism," 16, our emphasis.

86. Cf. Bataille, "Materialism," 15–16; Žižek, *The Parallax View*.

87. Cf. Plotnitsky, "Effects of the Unknowable: Materialism, Epistemology, and the General Economy of the Body in Bataille."

88. Hollier, "The Dualist Materialism of Georges Bataille," 127.

89. Cf. Plotnitsky, *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, 9–10.

90. Bataille, *Guilty*, trans. Kendall, 37, original emphasis.

91. Plotnitsky, *The Knowable and The Unknowable: Modern Science, Nonclassical Thought and the "Two Cultures."* Cf. Van Hasselt, "Interview with Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca: 'Knowing how to not-know': 'Does the word "bewilderment" apply here too? "Yes. It's not my intention to stay in that state, but being able to visit it, even temporarily, is incredibly important if you want to make real change possible. What's interesting is that it's in the arts that you'll find expertise about how to engage with that state of not-knowing – that can be terrifying but also really creative. Artists know how to improvise, how to be uncertain, how to play and experiment. They develop skills and techniques to stay afloat in the unknown. There aren't many other fields where you learn how to do that. Artists have vast amounts of knowledge to offer: at the moment of greatest uncertainty, they know how to not-know; how to be receptive'" (n.p.).

92. Jacques Lacarrière, *Les Gnostiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 78. Cf. Lacarrière, *The Gnostics*, trans. Nina Rootes (London: Peter Owen, 1977), 64–66.

93. Philip Sollers, "The Bataille Act," in Patrick ffrench and Roland François Lack, eds., *The Tel Quel Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 126, original emphasis.

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Chapter 8

Non-art and Other Non-philosophical Relations

An Essay on Fugitive Plasticity

Annalaura Alifuoco

This is a non-standard introduction because it can't keep its thoughts straight. Rather, it wanders off through a style of proposition that composes, contains and confounds other voices in what might be called *a creative assembly*. One of the propositions under study here is to consider the endeavours of arts, philosophies and sciences, as somehow clandestine to their own regimes of authority and control. The possibility is to explore events that are artistic, political, scientific, philosophical and erotic, and examine how their 'practice as thought' resonates with other creative processes. It seeks a syncopated approach that experiments with a kind of attunement between (un)certain applied version of 'non-philosophy' and 'non-art'. The 'non-' here is not a negation or withdrawal of their ontologies but an expansion of the ongoing rematerialization that is their performance. The question is: can their multivoiced articulations plan pragmatic procedures of reciprocal refigurations?

Such a romantic-sounding effort pays homage to both the ways in which ideas vibrate and their performative re-enactments in a 'very difficult, and strange, thinker' (Ó Maoilearca 2015) that this project is inspired by, but by no means analogue to. In the words of John Ó Maoilearca, François Laruelle 'could be described alternatively as a thwarted musician who has been forced to create with ideas rather than sound, and who struggles with them as material elements within an atonal composition (where each idea-note has equal force)' (ibid.). Within Laruelle's non-philosophical project this struggle is performable, if not always fully actualizable. For the philosopher, non-philosophy is effectively 'the treatment of philosophy as a simple contingent

material' (2013a, 3) and this is why 'non-philosophy will discover in [. . .] scientific and artistic mutations if not its *raison d'être*, then at least its strongest encouragement' (4).

The non-standard position of philosophy rejects self-affirming disciplines and auto-finalizing techniques imagining instead a levelling plane for an activity of thoughts rooted in immanence and non-representationalism. In my understanding, this approach reorients all concepts and practices of philosophy as pure variables: 'an affair of movements and becomings, of lines and vectors, of reversals and displacements' (2013b, 301) materializing in *different* ways via the proliferation and contamination of models without prejudice or privilege. Testing the plasticity of this predicament, this study wanders/wonders in the possibility of non-philosophy working as a decolonizing pragmatism that demands breaking with intellectual domains, that refuses binary interpellations, that unsettles ideological retrenchment, that scandalizes postures of hierarchical detachments, teetering on the tightrope between abandoning the discipline and finding refuge with allies and accomplices, while drawing the flesh into the field. What kind of thought praxis would emerge from this solicitation? Let us wonder . . .

Materiality, like wonder, is relational and performative, just as protons, atoms, objects, creatures and angels. It emerges from the entanglements between entities and scales. The proposal at stake here is the emergence of a *fugitive practice of material plasticity* that informs desired dimensions of alternative – unthought, subaltern – aesthetic, philosophical, scientific, ethical and political densities. The experiences present here are results of a series of practice-thought experiments, carried out through the oppositional libinization of aesthetic movements, anti-colonial and abolitionist praxes, scientific new materialist engagements and the emergent field of non-philosophical explorations. The object of this study is largely to do with reclaiming spaces for their respective and collective practices, politics, ethics and scholarships to move of their own volitions and indecisions – *ad libitum*.

The first step is to layer the terms of *studying fugitive plasticity*. Poet, critic, black studies and performance theorist Fred Moten names 'fugitive' a state of dispossession, waywardness, blackness that takes flight and refuge outside the prohibitions of governance and policy. In 'Uplift and Criminality', Motem writes: 'Fugitivity, then, is a desire for and a spirit of escape and transgression of the proper and the proposed. It's a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside, an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument' (2007, 336). As a style and as an intellectual position, fugitivity marks a form of inquiry that maintains its own elusive evasion from any regulatory framework and reductionist order. It foregrounds multiplicity, producing a cacophony of practices inhabiting and affirming polymorphous socialites.

Subject to mutation, the notion and action of ‘plasticity’ is drawn here from French philosopher Catherine Malabou’s transformative re-enactments of this complex and supple principle across continental philosophy and contemporary Western neuroscience. Her distinctive and expanded sense for plasticity implicates a threefold capacity: the ability to receive form, the ability to give form and the ability to destroy form. These processes imply the potential of ‘reforming’, ‘exploding’ and ‘transforming’ a system (and not just a philosophical one), neutralizing its integrity and determinism while naturalizing the material grounds of an immanent charge – change. In these productive ways, plasticity acts as a ‘motor scheme’ – a catalyst concept, style, tool – that becomes an ‘energy sensor and rhythmic source of a new era’ (2010, 15). This sensuous activity initiates an-other form of commitment to remain open and attentive to biological and political metamorphoses, even when the fugue to a different formation seems compromised: ‘I name plasticity the logic and the economy of such a formation: the movement of the constitution of an exit, there, where no such exit is possible’ (ibid., 66).

Returning last to the first operative term here, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s concept of ‘study’ frames a disposition counter to the one articulated by authoritarian discourses, offering here a modality of operating in the continuous movement between ensemblic accretions to produce strategic affinities of thought in action:

We are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It’s talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it ‘study’ is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. (2013, 110)

Sounding these terms through their relation, I propose a speculative practice – of act, of thought, of affect – that presses them together, without removing tensions, inviting resistances. Conceiving a fugitive plasticity requires careful efforts to expose and oppose forms of material, symbolic and epistemic violence. Clearly, not all the work can be done here. Nevertheless, this study will strive to engage intensively with the otherwise-unthinkable and otherwise-unrepresentable, acknowledging that something gets sacrificed in the process, as with each instantiation of one reality an-other, differently feasible and desirable, possibility is necessarily excluded.

I will start to sample these matters by proposing a provocative conception of non-art, that is, an ontologically plastic expression of material existence

and resilience. This form of intelligence is associated with the spontaneous intimacies of bodies-things and tier capacities to affect one another in the process of transformation of art itself. As a way to explore these real possibilities, I will concentrate on the immersive properties of performance/art non-objects, and not in a reflective way, but in relation to their synthetic and explosive permutations. In particular, I rely on the generative ‘propositions’ that emerge around the figure of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark. Leaving behind the art movements she helps found in the 1950s (the Neoconcrete Group and the Grupo Frente), by the end of the 1960s she departed from the ‘work of art’ altogether. Proposition became for her the designated term for an activity that obstinately attempted to radically expand the possibilities of what art could be and do.

After her emphatic abandonment of art, Clark became best known for her shaping of aesthetic materials into tools for living and healing. In her final formal process of aggregation, titled *Estruturação do self* (*Structuring the Self*), she pursued a model for embodied ‘self’ that for Suely Rolnik is a ‘vibrating body’ and for Eleanora Fabião is a ‘paradoxical’, precarious and relational body (see Harris 2014). These operations in turn produced the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*, 1976–1988), in which she approached the mysteries of objects as catalyst for a kind of mystical liaison between *soma* and the matter things. These adroit experiences turn their backs to artistic display and can be closer described as objectual intercourses that cause surges of non-objective immersions.

In what is to follow, the intricacies of these relational structures are tested to the point that the form of ‘self’ itself explodes into transformative events. In ‘Creative Assembly’, the exercise of Clark’s non-objects is mapped out as the aesthetic development of material networks via an interstitial investigation of their sensible and inanimate intra-formation. In ‘Wonder Touch’, the orientation of objects towards a somatized dissolution of experience is analysed tangentially as a scientific phenomenon (Barad) and a philosophical formation (Laruelle). For ‘Lived Thought’, the uneven pressures and distributions of affect-relations, and the resulting geographies, are parsed at the level of intrication between ‘fantastic’ plastic encounters (Malabou) and ‘improvisatory’ forms of fugitivity (Moten). As things move on to ‘*Walking as a Way of Wondering*’, the various conditions of plasticity – resting, straining, deforming, sintering, detaching – are practiced, absorbed, incorporated and re-rendered from the philosophical perspective of non-art. Ultimately and ‘In Coda’, I *wonder* if all these propositions, and more, can transverse the ‘collective intimacies’ (Schmid) and ‘assemblic conviviality’ (Callahan) of thought-experiments and re-emerge over the edge of systemic orders as emblematic and animative gatherings of fugitive life, in free abandon.

CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

'Lygia Clark is the name of an existence convulsed by the eruption of an idea that gradually took shape throughout the totality of a unique oeuvre' writes Brazilian theorist and critic Suely Rolnik (2007, 1),¹ the prolific curator and commentator of the radical and singular creative sensibilities that emerged within mid-twentieth-century Brazilian Modernism. The convulsive intensity that guided Clark's life expression was experienced with each gestation of the progressive phases of her creative *propositions* (*proposições*).² This latter is the term that for Clark conveyed the process via which art is no longer the teleology of the utmost creative appropriation of the world's appearance under the light of a fabrication principle, with the artist as the self-realizing originator of such creative potency. Rather, the artist becomes a 'proponent' who dares to imagine a technology where the vibrant interanimation of things – objects/bodies/senses/environments – gives rhythm to the phenomenon of creation. The physical aspects of this magnetism give form to a principle of activity, attentiveness and 'self'-dispossession before or other to artistic mastery.

Such participative proposals became the artist's rigorous object of study, driven by a theoretical, intellectual and, above all, aesthetic and affective commitment to acts whose fate could be known or even imagined a priori: 'To me, the poetical in the communication of the work of art ceased to be achieved through transcendence and comes to be achieved in immanence, which results from the act itself' (Clark in Rolnik 2007, 29, n.58). The originality of such propositional advance is that it affects a decolonization of the space of art from persistent hierarchical formations and a mutation of its trajectory in what Clark called: 'attaining the singular state of art without art' (Rolnik 1994, 4). Such impulse translated in an emphatic 'abandonment' of art where the process of making the work is not meant to be an art form, but an exercise in renewing – transforming – layers of subjectivities. The new here is connected to the unknown and its experience, catalysed and modulated by sensate *things* – non-objects³ – that expire into the build-up of communicative alliance they inspire. The 'non' quality of the object, I would say, characterizes an outside of the object – a thingness that constitutes its genuine eradication from given kinds of connections to articulate new or alternative ones, without doing away with its sensuous materiality. In *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988*,⁴ André Lepecki breathes his words into this intimacy:

This disappearance was less the 'dematerialization of the art object' [. . .] characteristic of experimental art between 1966 and 1972 than an 'incorporation' and 'assimilation' of the art object as something indistinguishable from the

bodies and actions of the participants. This assimilation of objects with bodies, this incorporation of the environment in a deeply sensuous process, for Clark could only occur through an engaged practice ‘simultaneously personal and collective,’ where one’s ‘own eroticism’ was assured by a ‘community experience’ in the creation of propositions. (In Butler and Pérez-Oramas 2014, 280–1)

In the light of these events, there is an ontological synergy between the animate thing and the inanimate being; a reciprocal and synchronous interchanging that comes into effect as an adroit capacity of being affected – plastically – by others.

Clark’s first exploratory processes for this relational or participatory work were the *Bichos* series (1960–1963), often translated as ‘critters’ or ‘beasts’. These were metallic origami-like creatures comprised of geometrical shapes connected by modular hinges shifting into a variety of possible configurations upon folding and unfolding.⁵ In contact with the human, the implications⁶ of one are those weaved by the other, giving form, content, extension to their relative duration in the primal production of a creative assembly. Flipping, turning, bending and collapsing, *Bichos* reflect their nature as strange and unruly creatures evoking the figure of other *critters*, eco-philosopher Donna Haraway’s preferred term ‘to mean a motley crowd of lively beings [that] are always relationally entangled rather than taxonomically neat’ (2008, 330 n.33). These beasts are tied with contingent human histories of economic domination, colonization, subjection – and more – in and outside the gallery space. Nonetheless, these tactile coalitions offer the possibility of things happening ‘in the realm of play, outside the dictates of teleology, settled categories’ (Haraway 2016, 21) that actually characterizes Clarks’s non-art project.

These possibilities become truly unhinged in the passage from object to action with the *Caminhando* (*Walking* or *Going*, 1963) – a proposition that shifts and reshapes the playing field by inviting participants to make the work themselves while the artist completely recedes behind the participatory act:

Take a white strip of paper about 40 cm wide, twist it and join its ends together as a Moebius loop. Take scissors, pierce a hole at the centre of the strip and keep cutting along its length. When you have made a circuit of the Moebius strip, choose a new cut on the right or the left of the previous one. This notion of choice is vital. The whole meaning of the experience lies in the action of doing it. The work is your act. (Clark in Brett 1987, 74)

This performative enactment initiates a paradoxical operation: when the blades cut through the strip, spaces open at the heart of the new shape, between looped forms, where each sinew structurally holds the empty space left by the other between human hands. There is no distinction here in the creation of the interior and exterior of the work. There is no advanced or

projected individuation of the subject and the object of the experience. Rather, the act becomes a form of immanence that belongs inseparably to the shared space of the ‘cut’⁷ – the tangential, torn-open and reformed space of contact. Following the hands into this cleft is like ‘walking’ an inconstant space unrolling across a duration.

In this passage, everything that happens operates as a permutation that has latched all things – hand, scissor, paper, space, time – onto an autonomous line of infinite generativity. This process nevertheless is an act of differentiation, where ‘choice’ functions like a tool of precision that cleaves asunder objects that already hold an internal difference. This accurate dissection induces a form of *decoupage*:⁸ a carving up or cutting out that inverts the relation and integration between material objects and forces into movement and direction. Each choice in itself is an intuition – a thought in the act – and a principle of organization. Each thought is a multiverse of radically immanent superimposition of transcendently stranger things. Perhaps this is the programmatic version of what Laruelle calls a ‘unilateral duality’ (which is not a pair): the inevitable separation of thought from within, where differences in kind are extended into lines of flight and cast off from the transcendental cut along the sliced edges of one or several lines; in fugue (see Laruelle 1999). This fugitive multitude spawns out of an intimate region that cannot be reached by a metaphysical self-field. They exist in accordance with a mode of being as organismic (I would like to say orgasmic), engineering supplementation between different kinds.

Returning to Clark’s ongoing proposition, we could then say that, once set up, the canal of thought-animation between elements and forces returns an ontological telepathy where some *thing* is actioned synchronously in encounter with something unlike itself. There is no supposed or assumed givenness to this situation, as the artist herself puts it: ‘Nothing exists before and nothing after’ (in Deleuze 2013, 2). The ‘wild things’ (see Lepecki 2017) of these small-scale emergencies are a fugitive species. Taking hold of the human, they form conspiratory socialities that seek refuge ‘beyond and beneath – before and before – enclosure’ (Harney and Moten 2013: 17), evading any reduction of the natural order of things to discrete subject formations, escaping subjugation to objective appearance/display, fleeing the ‘aesthetic regime of the arts’ altogether (see *ibid.*, 107).

The rolling strip of *Caminhando* circulates a concept of philosophy that Maria José Justino vividly traces:

The Moebius tape makes it possible to experience abstraction (extension from mathematical language to art): the hand that manipulates the objects (scissors and ribbon) makes visible the work, which exclusively claims the act of cutting, emanating from that act action and meaning. The individual is aware of

dematerialization, touches the unpredictable, experiences [*vivencia*] the paradox. It is the valorization of the process, with a view that the operant (subject) and the object (Moebius strip) meet in the same flow. The work arises from this interaction. Time and space lived in one rhythm, with only one duration. The circularity and constancy of the movement alter the perception, giving the sensation of dissolution of matter in space. (2011, 101)

Caminhando runs headlong into the intersection, the cut – the interval – to grapple with the rhythms, vibrations and repercussions of constants and variables. The relationship between human subjectivity and objects vanishes from the visible structures of subjectivity written into the code of a closed system. Rather, they reassert waywardness and wilderness as the philosophical recourse of a fugitive planning that steals away against the possibility of any form of sovereignty. In the wild, the work of thinkers such as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, and J. J. Jack Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o points towards the desire for/of radical ontologies against the vectors of the sovereign (human) self:

The rewinding of theory proceeds from an understanding that first encounters with wildness are intimate and bewilder all sovereign expectations of autonomous selfhood. To be wild in this sense is to be beside oneself, to be internally incoherent, to be driven by forces seen and unseen, to hear in voices, and to speak in tongues. By abandoning the security of coherence, we enter a dark ecology [. . .]. But even as wildness is internal in a psychic sense, we also sense it as an extrahuman, suprahuman force.⁹ (2018, 454)

My ongoing interest in the animated ‘things’ that cluster around Clark and her relational work with performance demands attention to the surprisingly blurred and patchy agencies that, echoing Jane Bennett, ‘induce in human bodies an aesthetic-affective openness to material vitality’ (2010, x). These uncertain inhuman entities raise questions of assignments of subjectivity, humanity and agency. Their wildness serves to ‘sketch a style of political analysis that can better account for the contribution of nonhuman Actants’ (ibid.). Wild politics afford new theories of thought and new walks of life. Sue Rolnik declares the wilderness that undergirds the intersection of art and philosophy surrounding the artist’s desire and imagination:

Lygia does not simply want to open access to the unformed (the negative of the form, its absence), or to the capacity of changing forms (metamorphosis) [. . .]. What she wants is to create conditions to gain or regain a certain state in subjectivity that would make it possible to bear the contingency of forms, to detach oneself from an absolutist inside experienced as identity. To navigate in the unstable waters of the aformal body and to acquire the freedom to make other

folds, each time that a new bundle of sensations in the beast requires it. It is as an answer to this requirement that changing forms gathers meaning and value, imposing itself as necessary for the vital adventure. (1994, 3)

This intensified liveness is what Clark¹⁰ called *vivência* – a way of knowing and desiring immanent to both the material ‘thing’ and the *thingness* of participation. *Vivências* contain a particle of ‘life’ (*viver*, *o vivo*) that becomes attached to a continuous processual experience – unfolding, cutting, walking: ‘it follows that the very notion of life endures a transformation – only to reencounter itself with more urgency. *Vivência estética* expresses those endless improbable encounters at the level of matter’s always multiple, always turbulent, always vibrating non-times of its bodies of [. . .] actions’ (Lepecki 2016, 88).

Such vibrancy off-hinges a very particular kind of plastic movement – deforming, aforming, transforming – that is always a precarious movement.¹¹ Its expansiveness and irreducibility can be stultifying: ‘The *Going* [*Walking*] left me in a kind of void: the immanence of the act, the abandonment of any transference to the object, the dissolution even of the concept of the “artist’s work”, produced in me a very deep crisis. I *wonder* if, after the experience of the *Going*, we do not become more intensely conscious of every gesture we make – even the most habitual’ (Clark in Brett 1987, 74, my emphasis). Here I am thinking about what arises from walking into a void that divides the self from itself by the interposition of some new ‘thing’ causing the continuity of the everyday to gape open and wonder! This could just be that mo(ve)ment that supports the threshold of a becoming, upon which a singular and private micropolitics of actions can push the experience of public and political life – of *vivência* – to its limit. Going forward, the story of the Relational Objects that so magnetized Clark’s attention/affection will be revisited along the lines of philosopher Catherine Malabou’s figure of flight towards an outside, while there is no outside – or, the accidental – an event of surprising and suspenseful activity that precipitates a plastic reading.

WONDER TOUCH

Light, light-heavy, and heavy cushions [. . .] a large and very thick mattress filled with foam rubber into which the body sinks as if in a mold. [. . .] a plastic bag filled with air, a plastic bag filled with water; ‘breathe with me’; onion bags with stones inside them; a breathing tube; a flashlight to shine in the eyes and mouth when their eyes are blindfolded, a piece of plastic filled with seeds; loofah; oakum; large seashells to place over the ears, stones at the bottom of a small, empty bag tied with a rubber band at the end [. . .]; marbles; tails of

rabbits; nylon stockings with shells at one end and stones at the other; nylon stockings with Ping-Pong balls at one end and tennis balls at the other. (Clark in Rolnik 1999, 29 n.54)

This is a foretaste of some of the *things* of emergence from singular and combined forms that aggregated under a procedural system that Lygia Clark called *Structuring the Self* (1976–1988), her final aesthetic, philosophical and in this last phase therapeutic, propositional transfigurations. They form a large and interchangeable repertoire of relics of common life. Vessels filled with timid life, a fluidal realm, dark or spherical bodies; empty spaces softly cushioned, vaguely contoured to encompass and accommodate; elemental and fibrous materials with malleable boundaries or a tendency towards plastic tightness. These objects present themselves as ‘non-objects’ that evade functional signification, denomination, apprehension (see Amor 2010). Rather, they present mini-conditions endowed with different registers of texture, weight, light, size, temperature, sound, pressure and movement. They are original creatures of closeness in the literal sense that they communicate themselves via contact as a first gift, in the physical sense of a touch that when it befalls can give a dizzying feeling of things shifting. It is not by chance that these matters come into being but contingency:

the term ‘contingency’ refers back to the Latin *contingere*, meaning ‘to touch, to befall’, which is to say, that which happens, but which happens enough to happen to us. The contingent, in a word, is *something that finally happens* – something other, something which, in its irreducibility to all preregistered possibilities, puts an end to the vanity of a game wherein everything, even the improbable, is predictable. (Meillassoux 2009, 178, original emphasis)¹²

The paradoxical properties of such unexpected arousal, along with questions of intimacy, absorption, participation and immanence have been touched on by physicist and philosopher Karen Barad. In the article, ‘On Touching: The Inhuman That I Therefore Am’, they explore how the haptic field can be expressed by that which is beyond the horizon of the human sensorium. In physical terms, touch is an electromagnetic interaction that bounces off in an unexpected way:

A common explanation for the physics of touching is that one thing it does not involve is . . . well, touching. That is, there is no actual contact involved. You may think you are touching a coffee mug when you are about to raise it to your mouth, but your hand is not actually touching the mug. Sure, you can feel the smooth surface of the mug’s exterior right where your fingers come into contact with it (or seem to), but what you are actually sensing is the electromagnetic repulsion between the electrons of the atoms that make up your fingers and those

that make up the mug. Electrons are tiny negatively charged particles that surround the nuclei of atoms, and having the same charges they repel one another, much like powerful little magnets. As you decrease the distance between them the repulsive force increases. Try as you might, you cannot bring two electrons into direct contact with each other. (2012a, 209)

If the repellent effect of classical physics ontology already casts spatial touch into a crisis, things get further troubled by the (in)defining movement within quantum field theory (QFT). Approaching matters from this perspective can be equally dazzling and dizzying. We can only imagine this elementary field as an absent plenitude that becomes the foundation for a generic theory of nothingness: ‘the vacuum is far from empty; indeed, it’s teeming with the full set of possibilities of what may come to be. Matter is regularly created and destroyed’ (Barad 2007, 354). Contrary to any metaphysical account, this lively emptiness oscillates between the concept of nothingness and being as it combines the *actual* and *virtual* orbs of each particle point, where the actual is what passes and the virtual encompasses its already infinite mode of expression.

The virtual expands the categories of existence, ‘That is, virtuality is a kind of thought experiment the world performs’ (Barad 2012a, 210). The generic quantum entities, ‘quantons’ – spanning electrons, protons, photons, neutrons, and so on – interact transforming themselves into self-organizing complex structures endowed with a ‘collective intelligence’ (Polisena 2013: 57). Their thoughtful simulations realize ‘alive epistemes’ (59) where all possibilities are equally available and equally cannot contain that which is ‘real’. The invisible, the impossible, the unnatural, the virtual: is real. For example, the negatively charged electron is a point particle with a particular history of inversions. Quantum field theorist Richard Feynman says the following about electrons: ‘Instead of going directly from one point to another, the electron goes along for a while and suddenly emits a photon; then (horrors!) it absorbs its own photon. Perhaps there’s something “immoral” about that, but the electron does it!’ (in *ibid.*, 212).

The self-spawning extra-versions of the particle show a touch of the queer and even the perverse in a specific moment of contact that incites different matterings. The theory of particles allows us to grasp the exodus of identity from things dispersed and diffracted in a mo(ve)ment of ‘cutting-together-apart’ (*ibid.*, 220 n.4) of the one with the other and the other within the one. These encounters create a resonance of difference – a chiasmic entanglement of attractive-repulsive responses establishing a certain(ly) plastic structure of matter(ing) where things are created, transformed and destroyed in a wink of existence. In the field where quantized particles self-touch in virtual ways, every other is indeed touching every other, including the void, which is not a

simple vacuum but an empty spaciousness full of spectral particles: ‘a living, breathing indeterminacy of non/being’ (ibid., 210). Inanimate matter – stone, plastic, air, seed, marble – inhabit this transient world of particles, fluctuations and void, all entangled: ‘no longer suspended in eternity, matter is born, lives, and dies’ (ibid., 209).

But how to account for the erotic correspondence of a vibrating force field touching the void? Barad sounds the example of an indiscreet instrument likening the quantized field to the surface of an infinite drumhead. The classical vacuum state corresponds to the perfect stillness of the drum in the zero-energy state of non-displacement, without any oscillation. Hitting the surface tension generates vibrations across the drumhead. Similarly, a strike to the field would reverberate and dissipate in displacement waves across the field. However, in a quantized ensemble, the composition is not differentiated to the point of stillness and the instrument is not crystallized to the zero-energy vacuum. Rather, because of a special relativity ‘a field vibrating at a particular frequency or energy is equivalent to the existence of particles of matter with particular mass’ (Barad 2012b, 11). The playing of one is always that of the other too, and if the incipient vibration were deprived of its counterpart particle mass, then the music would die.

A meaningful QFT of this relationship would suggest that the drum is not a dull soloist but an instrument whose animating force of practice not only emerges from but *is* fluctuations in the field – a constitutive ensemble whose dynamism does not require the animating strike of the player. In fact, it turns out that ‘there is no determinate fact of the matter as to whether or not the drumhead is perfectly still, even in the absence of all external disturbances, including drumming’ (ibid.). Experimenting rhythmicities plunge into the field and transform the agglutinated zone of matter and void into an intra-animate ensemble. The void, hence, exists as an unabandonable intimate something, without whose fluctuation and resonance the ensemblic composition of all matters would not be complete: ‘*Vacuum fluctuations are the indeterminate vibrations of the vacuum or zero-energy state. Indeed, the vacuum is far from empty, for it is filled with all possible indeterminate yearnings of time-being; or in this drum analogy, the vacuum is filled with the indeterminate murmurings of all possible sounds: it is a speaking silence*’ (Barad 2018, 77, original emphasis).

Could perhaps this musical-erotic communication return us to the plane of creative yearnings played by Lygia Clark’s own imaginings of the flush of plenitude that she would call ‘*vazio-pleno*’ – empty-full? The artist intones: ‘In art we seek out the emptiness (from which we have come) and when we discovered it being valorized we then discover our inner time. The acceptance of life (contradictory dynamics), silence and non-formulation has taken on the sense of the full and formulation’ (in Butler and Pérez-Oramas 2014, 159) The empty fullness of this field – or plane here – vibrates with an ‘anti- or

ante-subjective no-thing-ness', (Moten 2016, 169) 'where every possible happening is there in potential, ready to be realized in the act' (Clark in 161). Then, it is in this active sphere that the inanimate matter of the *non-object* itself gives itself to be touched and thought by the other, with which it shares its mortal finitude. This gift involves a tactful openness and generosity. In the light touch of the other, one, and the other, is not possessed, seized or manipulated but held in a sensitive sensible space that affects one's sense of curiosity, surprise, awe - all in-tense and in-tact *wonder!*

Memória do Corpo is a short film by Mário Carneiro shot in 1984 documenting Clark's 'structuring of the self' therapy sessions in her small apartment in Copacabana, conducted by using several of her odd non-objects on her many 'patients'. Brazilian art critic Paulo Sérgio Duarte experienced those objects on his body for the purposes of the documentation. From the observer's perspective, André Lepecki captures the sensuous moments of this encounter storing the experience in the beholder who perceives; the language of affect itself is a full and surprisingly immanent picture:

I would like to concentrate on one striking moment when Duarte is starting to come out of the long therapy session, in which the patient eventually lies covered by the very peculiar and paradoxical relational objects on a large and very soft bed, and begins to share with Clark his *vivência* – that is, starts to verbalize the sensations he had throughout the session, what Clark called the expression of the 'phantasmatics'.¹³ [. . .] He starts a sentence but stops right after pronouncing just the first word; he pauses, ponders, eyes still shut while lying almost totally naked on the large bed. His pause takes a few long seconds, and finally he says: '[. . .] I don't know if it offends them to call them "things," but every time that they are passing over me I was [*sic*] above all skin, above all surface. That's very good'. (2017, 112)

The art critic, who had built a reputation on connecting words as a magical medium, hesitates to make any proclamations under the semblance of individualism. The specific and singular aspect of this experience can be noted in the face: eyes-(wide)shut as a clearing of subjective entries and properties. The most accurate illustration of the *modus operandi* of the 'things' is the delicately enlivened trace of a contact rooted on the primal surface of affection and that belongs to a careful ensemblic participation. In fact, Duarte senses something (of the other) that triggers an extra-normal phenomenon of affective and scenic transmission that is perceived as a fascinating and inquisitive curiosity – for the other – and as such drawn into the dynamics of wonder itself.

Philosopher Catherine Malabou develops a theory of wonder that cuts across (touchingly) Derrida, Descartes, Spinoza, Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, but also neurologist Antonio Damasio and Sigmund Freud's writings. Beginning with its etymological formations, Malabou notes that as a verb, *to*

wonder means ‘to be curious, to feel amazement and admiration, to feel doubt or to inquire about something’ (2013a, 8) – like: ‘I wonder if . . . it offends them to call them “things”’. As a noun, ‘wonder’ ‘characterizes a feeling of surprise and admiration caused by something beautiful, unexpected or unfamiliar’ (ibid., my emphasis) – like: ‘every time that they are passing over me I was above all skin, above all surface. That’s very good’. The *capacity to wonder* figures not only as the most originary passion – ‘a degree zero of expressive movement’ (47) – but also as the primary matter fundamental to philosophical activity. Malabou reads wonder through Descartes not so much as ‘the ability to be astonished by something external to the subject’, but as in fact the ‘faculty of self-surprising, the amazement of the mind at itself, its own opening to objects’ (10).

Both Descartes and Spinoza find in wonder a fundamental resonance – or ‘disturbance’ – to be recognized as the initial or most constitutive affect ‘of them all’, and as that which attunes the subject both to the world and to itself (Malabou 2013b, 8–9). And more. On the one hand, the philosopher gets in touch, via Derrida, with the relational potential of wonder as a primarily *present* in the self/self-relationship of autoaffection, which speaks (of) ‘the inner voice and the possibility of hearing and feeling oneself’ (63) in self-touching, where the ‘self’ coincides with itself and no other else. However, the ability of being affected cannot be unadulteratedly connected to, let alone identical to, the ‘self’ feeling, as affection always comes from something other than oneself. On the other hand, Malabou points to the ways in which wonder appeals sensually (and ethically) to difference via heteroaffection, or ‘the affect of the other’ (20), in the double sense as affection that comes from the other outside the self, and secondly, as affection that, without knowledge or perception, takes hold in ‘my being affected by the other in me’ (63). Thus, in wonder, the subject opens its very form of autoaffection to alterity, which is in all effects an affect of auto-heteroaffection.

In this way, the other is always involved in *the structure of the self* (Malabou: sic!) via a self-touching that is already a ‘self-touching you’ (Nancy), where one is touched by the other in its-self and made open by this primary chasm of self-estrangement and subjective ‘exappropriation’ (Derrida). This tactful relationality is what Nancy recognized as a *partage* and that Malabou rewrites as a syncopated and non-metaphysical sensibility:

A touch *that structurally loses contact with itself*. ‘Discontinuity, interruption, caesura, syncope’ express this loss. The subject self-touching is always discontinuous – absent to itself, as it were – as if it were the touching of an other: heteroaffection as such. This interruption marks a moment, a node, a fold, in the continuity: it performs a hinging breaking the continuity and letting it appear. (23–4, original emphasis)

Like the modular hinges of the *Bichos/Critters* that fold and diffract with contact, the touch of wonder accurately registers the emphatic, ethically and politically invested overturning of subjecthood/objecthood polarities in favour of a participatory play of intra-action or intra-intelligence. This new cartography of senses tirelessly finds alterity inserted within each self, as *they* could not have made contact if they had not previously become estranged, yet could not be estranged if they had not touched one and the other from time immemorial – even in the absence of touching itself, as the tale of physics demonstrates. Reconnecting to Barad is easy here:

Self-touching is an encounter with the infinite alterity of the self. Matter is an enfolding, an involution, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is. Polymorphous perversity raised to an infinite power: talk about a queer intimacy! What is being called into question here is the very nature of the ‘self’, and in terms of not just being but also time. That is, in an important sense, the self is dispersed/diffracted through time and being. (2012a, 213, original emphasis)

This transformative – plastic – contact encompasses the fundamental openness towards the other as well as the primordial rift/gift that comes from an impersonal passion: ‘An affect is a gift that comes from the absolute outside of being’; a ‘space’ or ‘spacing’ between being and the subject, for ‘it is existence itself that gives me the feeling of existence, not “me”’ (all Malabou 2013a, 25). Borrowing from Derrida, Malabou combines wonder and generosity as fundamental ethical affects unconscious of their own giving – a touchy-feeling that ‘allows one to *configure*, and think together, *the gift* (or rather the *offering*), *decision*, *spacing*, and *freedom*’ (Derrida in *ibid.*, 24, original emphasis). Hence, touch performs a(n agential)¹⁴ cut through the gift of separation and freedom that provides the stimulus for existence in the external world. As Malabou concludes: ‘the affective opening of the self cannot signify autonomy or autoaffection any longer. It is to be thought each time, as an event: something coming from outside, from the other’ (2013a, 25). Could the ‘propositions’ advanced here then emerge as the catalysts of such surprising and unpredictable transformation of virtuality into a concrete event of curious and tactful becoming?

LIVED THOUGHT

From a morphological perspective, the Relational Objects are motile bodies whose expression and composition seem a surprisingly productive motor for an event – or encounter. Even in the kind of degree zero of form they

possess, due to their essential non-object properties, they appear embedded with a sense of movement and liveliness – or wonder – introduced into the scene by a need or desire for contact. See, for example, or try to imagine and feel, *Pedra e Ar (Stone and Air, 1966)* where the participant is instructed to breathe into a small plastic bag, fill it with air, then seal it with an elastic band and put a pebble on top. This short composition is then placed between the hands that press into it systolic and diastolic motion. The impulse of this proposition has an *air* of the conspiratory – expiratory and inspiratory – from the outset. Everything starts with an original exchange in which there can be no first pole. Similarly, in *Máscara Abismo (Abyssal Masks, 1968)* the face of the participant is covered by a bag of loosely woven mesh, weighed down with a stone, where the sound of breathing within the hood can reproduce the movement of air within the body. In this case, the particle points of this encounter are only possible in a homogenized space of intercourse where the corporeal, elemental, initial and simple share in the atmospheric unity and intertwined freedom of the abyss from which nothing can be removed without cancelling the total ecology.

Rather than a reflection of extrinsic matters, these ‘wild’ sensorial things offer the capacity to enter into relations with others, and the kinds of events those relations produce are fundamentally a matter of their plastic intra-formations. Catalysing each other into this high-intensity field, things – bodies – come together, attracted by a shared resonance, yielding and resisting, continually cutting-together apart, creating correspondences and discordances; serving and severing connections. They assemble together into instruments of vibrancy that suggest more-than-biological rhythms of breathing, pulsing, throbbing, quivering, shuddering – all disturbances, distortions and reformations of participation. This animation exists on an immanent plane that for Rolnik invokes the “‘vibrating body’”,¹⁵ in which contact with the other, human and nonhuman, mobilizes affects as changing as the variable multiplicity that constitutes otherness. The constellation of such affects forms a reality of sensations, corporeal reality, which, though invisible, is no less real than visible reality and its maps’ (1999, 2).

The reality of these maps is faithfully pursued by Malabou in the work of neurologist Antonio Damasio, en route to her own composition of the ‘The Structure of the Self’ (2013a, 31). In the philosopher’s account, through the current neurobiological approach to the brain one can finally begin to comprehend that subjectivity is the phenomenon that results when mapping embodied materiality contrapuntally onto neural reality, via the sound of affects, in fact ‘the brain is primarily a sensuous and affected organ’ (30). Damasio hails Spinoza as a proto-neurobiologist in that he foresees that what happens in the body corresponds to what happens in the mind, and this coincidence is now interpreted by neurobiologists in the form of ‘neural-maps’.

Within this horizon, affects determine the disturbance of a wider ontology. Affect is defined by Spinoza as a modification of the *conatus*; an ontological disposition, in body *and* mind, that implies that ‘each thing,¹⁶ in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being’ (in *ibid.* 38). I read this persistence not as an ‘automatism of repetition’ (Laruelle 1999, 142) – a compulsive respiratory autonomy – but as a conspiratory (inspiratory *and* expiratory) desire for change – to ‘be given in order to be *effectuated*’ (143).¹⁷ This, in short, is life’s spirit in the form of its finest essence, always attuned to affects’ gradient variations of its force.

Echoing Deleuze, Malabou reiterates that the *conatus* is like a musical instrument played by affect (Malabou 2013a, 39). Consequently, affects are the non-subjective and impersonal passions that determine the tonalities and properties, as well as the reciprocal influence, of all things that exists, with joyful affects increasing the power of acting and sad or sorrowful passions diminishing this same actability. In the continuous play of affections, their interdependence, discordance and correlation define the very ‘force of existing’ (Spinoza) in the realization of an intimate – and sonorous – sphere of objects, or more precisely, ‘encounters’ that change everything in the finite mode through which they are experienced:

Being affected means to be modified – that is altered, changed – by the impact of an encounter, be it with another subject or an object. But, what, exactly is modified by this encounter, and why does this modification create an emotional, and not immediately cognitive, phenomenon? This is because the encounter does not trigger any faculty or sense or logical structure; it touches – and thus reveals – the very feeling of existence. (5)

A feeling of difference that no longer makes rigorous human sense; a distance not felt as opposed to an ‘other’ but as radical form or multitude, that is a multiplicity without an undercutting or superimposing unity. Applying a non-philosophical touch, the most adequate form this radical immanence takes on is found in the concept of the Stranger: ‘I . . . am (and not “is”), thus I am an Other, a democratic multitude, a Stranger. The Stranger is not the Other encountered in the space of the World or as Infinite, but myself in-the-last-instance’. And through whatever processes of thought you reach this conception, it will walk the void: ‘The Stranger “makes” the void; it transcendently anesthetizes every type of conditioning (psychological, sociological). The void is also fully positive, as identity of universal law, which is itself in the flesh. The content of this void is precisely a transcendental multitude, a nonautopoitional democracy’. Continuity of the self can only be imagined through this void, which affords vital participation in the ongoingness of emergent formations.

This account of the subject is paradigmatically *materialist* for Malabou because it reveals that the subject is ‘fundamentally, immediately and biologically’ a stranger to itself, a process encrypted within the structure of the brain itself and not simply of consciousness (34). Much new materialist practice encompasses the thought about difference, the idea of the other within and the potential of thinking ‘stranger things’ through the phenomenal tool of touch. As Barad writes: ‘Is that not in the nature of touching? Is touching not by its very nature always already an involution, invitation, ininvitation, wanted or unwanted, of the stranger within?’ (Barad 2012, 206).¹⁸

This means to be tactful, in ways that solicit rhythms, relations, bodies, concepts, thoughts, orientations that are singular in their unfettered strangeness. Within this susceptibility, wonder reinforces its intuitive presence: ‘Surprise and astonishment solicit the power of acting in a very creative way. It is attraction to singularity. [. . .] The singularity of an object creates a greater desire to look for it; in consequence, it increases the power of striving and thriving’ (Malabou 2013a, 40–1). The sensorial and relational non-objects invoked in these pages, I propose, are imbued with the stranger and singular value of the addressable other of independent and unrepeatable power. For Lepecki, they persist – beyond the artist’s lifespan the economy of artistic production, and curatorial enterprises – as a *difficult thing*:

The difficulty in curating these works derives from the very fact of their aesthetic singularity; it derives from their *thingness*, their existence in active exteriority to, and radical escape from, regimes of display that subjugate and colonize the relational objects as being Clark’s objects and the participants as being the new authors/artists of a Lygia Clark work. Clark’s works are difficult exactly because (and to invoke again Moten’s quote on the unassimilable ontology and constitutive fugitivity of things) they ‘are out of all compass however precisely they are located’. (2017, 109–10)

In fugue from the contemptuous terms of artistic contemplation and the distracting (destructive?) business of art, these difficult things¹⁹ find their own unrelated knots – or contingencies. In the sensuous and sonorous realms they *touch with*, in space and time, they become a psychodynamic source of material and symbolic accentuation. On the way into contact, they arrive at something else: the human without a protective layer, the individual without an isolated kernel, a space without a predestined logic. Here bodies augment and contract in techniques – propositions – that absorb them within what Moten call ‘the real assembly’: ‘the gathering of things in the flesh, of fantasy in the hold – as the fecund caress of earth /commune/school/lab/jam/ (collective) head, where the performed devotion of calling and responding in an arrangement refuses every enclosure of its’ (2016, 163).

In the *mélange*, things germinate and things transform. Clark herself was the surprised witness of such curious intimate broodings: ‘A patient brought this piece of oakum and placed it inside his bathing suit. He said it was used to cover his vagina. He was a man, but he experienced his vagina’ (Scovino 2016). In extraordinary solidarity with these hard things, the experimenting participant plunges into the zone of indistinction between the body and the object into the animate(d) plane of an imminent difference – or *vivência*. Artist and anthropologist Emma Sidgwick translates this concept as ‘lived thought’:

Translating *vivência*, in Western terms, as ‘life experience’ would fail to voice its true conception: it is not an experience, which one accumulates during a certain span of time, and by which one distinguishes oneself. On the contrary, it is diametrically opposed to such an understanding, and was conceived of as a ‘democratically aligned experience’ [. . .], situated in the immediacy of a ‘becoming’ and most accurately translated with the neologism *lived thought*, that is referring to synaesthetic sensory experience that contemporaneously activates an immediate creative epistemological faculty. (2010, 195)

The importance of this experience carries the implications of a democracy of objects where ‘all entities are equal’. Equality not to say the simplification of things collapsing into one another but to sound the evenness and levelness of the field. A potentially liberatory epistemic smoothness that declares a ‘democracy of thought’ and the matrix of animation that it performs. This vital impulse awakens a level of performance that can be brought to touch with neuroscientific models. Through interaction, the epistemological brain-ensemble²⁰ receives key stimuli for its own activity from other forms of intelligence. Like affect and the body it strikes, the brain is not a subject but a milieu or resonance ensemble. The symbiotic intelligence between one and the other is embedded in a close- and long-range neuronal communication and orientated towards a dense climate of co-participation, in the collectivity of maps. Malabou writes:

There are representational ‘correspondences’, and they go in one direction – from body to mind. The means to achieve the representational correspondences are contained in the substance. The statements in which Spinoza finds ideas ‘propositional’ to ‘modification of the body’, in terms of both quantity and intensity, are especially intriguing. The notion of ‘proposition’ conjures up ‘correspondence’ and even ‘mappings’. (2013a, 53–4)

Speaking of ‘propositions’, there appears here a symbiotic intimacy or libidinal assonance between the spheres of theory and the planes of practice, between the theory of the inner spatial formation of body-mind

correspondences and the abstractive processes of *vivência*, between the imaging of the brain and the imaginings of art, and to add one more: between the logic of non-art and the re-figuring of plastic non-philosophy. Reflecting on the (anti-)aesthetic experience, non-art ('the unfinished project of abolition and reconstruction that is our most enduring legacy of successful, however attenuated, struggle') we realise that the characteristic sound is not the break of eradication but the vibrational murmur of disruption – of propriety, property of possession and self-possession, and of the modes of being including the subjectivity these modes engender. This is the soundboard where, finally, the question can be posed as to what *forms* of political and ethical activation can the syncretic accretions of non-art actually trigger, to make *some-thing finally happen*, and not just for the human-self.

Through the model of propositional non-art, a scientific and philosophical activity of experiences/experiments in non-parallel becomings can take shape: life affirming itself in its creative eroticism, generating new landscapes of existence, unleashing endless process of alteration, transformation and even destruction. In the form of the proposition – the generic proposition of things – we can perhaps recognize a particular technique – or apparatus²¹ – where entities do not just e-merge relationally (they are not appropriated or delimited in contact), but they solicit each other into form (with wonder-full generosity). Within this field, there is nothing dualistic in the interior/exterior, subject/object, human/critter, body/mind (agential) cuts, for all are emergent properties of immanent phenomena. There is no originary theory, matter or subject to be discovered here, so the result is not a consequence of the human brain – or human ignorance.

Instead, the potential, or promise, is to eventuate new material and epistemological form from radical difference and retain an openness to surprising change: '[Wonder] reveals to us the beauty of difficult things and attunes our mind to their scarcity and rarity. Again, it is not the mind that affects itself and appraises itself through wonder. Wonder is the call of being, the tendency to turn the conatus toward the ontological beauty of the necessity of things' (Malabou 2013a, 41). Wonder re-encounters beauty in necessity for all the forms of strange and stranger things, wild beasts, nameless critters and forgotten others – sundry, ordinary, vulgar, gregarious, quotidian. The wonderfully acoustic plane of the proposition constructs an apparatus that allows to follow the rhythm of states of being(s) – *vivência* – in their original talent for existing in integrity, connectedness and generosity. The sounds effect of this abandonment, at first touch, works more reliably and effectively than any philosophical anamnesis. The human emerges from within this structure without exception, from a multivocal chorality developed from responsive – and responsible – attunement.

In his essay tracing the ‘liveness’ of inert matters and of the *thingness* of participation in the radically critical *thought-action* of Clark’s fellow Brazilian propositional artist Hélio Oiticica, Lepecki pursues the notion of *vivência estética*, which he translated as ‘the lived experience of the aesthetic’. He writes:

The declension toward the thing, the discovery of oneself as thing through the precariousness typical of transobjects,²² removes from *vivência estética* the last remnant of a conventional or normative notion of ‘human life’. Life lived as *vivência* is not equivalent to the ‘monohumanist’ (to use Sylvia Winter’s expression) confinement of ‘human living’ to majoritarian and racist subjectivity. Instead of occupying a subject-object relation, [Oiticica’s work] turns all the relations in the aesthetic experience (artist to work, work to public, audience to work) into thing-to-thing relations. (2016, 93)

In this respect too, the continuum between the affect of wonder and *lived thought* is productive. As long as the apparatus is perceived as an extra-normative phenomenon where agency and intelligibility are not restricted to human exceptionality and activity, then it can be lived/thought as a fascinating curiosity, and as such drawn into the dynamics of the desire for surprise and transformation, and the resistance to disaffection and indifference.

WALKING AS A WAY OF WONDERING

In her pivotal approach to destructive plasticity, Catherine Malabou inserts within the philosophical and political landscape the potential for *loss of the capacity to wonder*. Her analysis of contemporary political subjectivity insists on the urgency of envisioning the destruction of wonder against the tradition of continental philosophy (from Aristotle to Heidegger) that makes this possibility unthinkable and unimaginable (Malabou 2013b). Meaningful neuroscientific findings (Antonio Damasio, Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull) suggest that after brain damage, it is possible that the self can suffer a withdrawal or separation from the constitutive capacity to be touched, moved, altered – in one word, affected. What is even more unsettling is that, owing to this incident, the subject can suffer an acute impoverishment of the psyche without however losing its cognitive potential – formerly considered a psychoanalytical impossibility. Born out of this condition at the opposite pole of wonder is the capability of ‘acting in cold blood’ (Damasio after Truman Capote), or of being *absent without leave* (Oliver Sacks).

Malabou refers to this state of disaffection and self-abandonment as *indifference*: the intimate cut off from some-thing without whose presence and

resonance the subjects can no longer feel – touch – the world and oneself. The neuroscientific narrative of the relationship between trauma and the emotional brain views the disaffected subject as an involuntary soloist, who, left without the instrument of wonder, becomes detached from the animating force of thriving for existence. In other words, in wonder loss, some-thing so intimately close to the subject, which was never really ‘one’ within itself, undeniably vanishes and the self is left behind alone, in an intact state of cognition, but existentially free from any libidinal investment in life – at large. The result is the lack of the most significant (and creative) part of affective communication – erotic sonority – competence (Malabou 2013b). In a correctly applied scientific conception of the subject, the possibility of affective disenchantment must already be implicit in *every* subject, the philosopher insists. The strong impact of this losability is that it casts no doubt on the fact of (auto)heteroaffection as the very essence of subjectivity.

Emotional impairment and the destruction of the ability to wonder are not only consequences of brain traumas like strokes, lesions and seizures. Recent studies have arrived at the view that people suffering from social traumas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, victims of rape, or homeless people and refugees, as well as murderers and serial killers are similarly deprived of fundamental aspects of the living gen(i)us – the intimate augments of the feeling for oneself and others. In politicized terms, the philosopher argues that this form of *indifference to indifference* is the mode of being that political power or authority tries to invoke, and, raising the stakes, she asks: ‘How does power foster emotional absence, hidden behind discourses on care and solidarity?’ (ibid.). If we postulate the separability of the ‘emotional brain’ – and with it wonder – from cognitive networks, precisely the new form of the subject is attained from a loss of the power to act: ‘we live in times in which we clearly need transformation, [. . .] is it the lack of wonder that keeps us from transforming our current world?’ (Malabou 2013b).

Inspiring indifference, despotic political (capitalist and neo-liberalist) power have weaponized this perspective with a war on the senses that leaves no room for dialectics. Political, societal, environmental, violent or catastrophic events today appear as mere ‘blows’, devoid of meaning. Politics assumes the face of nature, the meaningless accident (Malabou 2013c). There is no sense to all the catastrophic events around us. Inspiring indifference towards all these events is the new political violence. A growing absence of empathy, a lack of political engagement, a profound passivity and loss of curiosity and motivation, a general sense of distrust and withdrawal are some of the symptoms of this ‘global psychic pathology’ and ‘the profile of this loss is universal’ (Malabou 2013b). Constituting wonder as a losable, abandonable and irreplaceable affective power is the philosopher’s response to the withering political (and philosophical) field. It is by establishing and

honouring its transformative potential that we can be on the way to think and feel difference differently from the terms of appropriation and normalization. By viewing every-things as the ‘same’ (as us), or even ‘equal’ (to us), we close the gap of openness to the event – or encounter – of the other. Here, is the work of non-art, non-philosophy, and all the other non-objects, in an asymmetric form equality ‘which owes nothing to the leveling of a prior hierarchy – to the qualitative inequality that makes up the ground of the real’ (Laruelle in Cull Ó Maoilearca 2017, 107).

The core of the constitutive ontology of self-touching difference staves off the possibility of indifference reconstructing a relationship between ‘things’ – entities – not through bipolar or even affective transactions, but as forms of resonating and corresponding activities; as communicative alliances. Non-objects are such things of irresolvable ambiguity that make it possible to keep wondering. The proposition is the phenomenon that ties sensory perception to the presence of a different form, in self-estranging contact. Clark liked to conduct her treatments under the direction of these (trans)formative objects. For the artist, the abandonment of the *aesthetic regime of art*, which projects and claims a hierarchy for its exclusive privilege, means not to lose or to relinquish but to reclaim an original prerogative: making the invisible, the unthinkable, the impossible a generic reality. A reality requiring continuous re-definition.

This for Clark and her fellow mobilizers was the road to cultural and political healing. In 1986, Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik penned a map of new Brazilian political vitality after years of military dictatorship in the preface of the travel journal *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, together they write:

A silent molecular revolution was taking place within discourse and, even more, in people’s gestures and attitudes: the first steps toward the disinvestment of a politics of subjectivation constructed over five hundred years of Brazilian history, since the country’s foundation. A period in which regimes of exclusion and segmentation – colonial, slave-holding, dictatorial and capitalist – were overlaid to form a perverse, powerfully established social hierarchy. Profoundly inscribed in subjectivities, this cartography is so cruel and so passively accepted that the country ranked (and continuous to rank) near the top of the list of the world’s most unequal societies. (In Sidgwick 2010, 199)

Non-art(ists) reacts to the profound crisis that had invaded the body – never felt as separable from the mind – with a cacophony of multivocal propositions: to ‘make living objects, reveal the life in things, their incessant state of process, allow a glimpse of the forces’ (Clark in Rolnik 1999, 24). Getting back in touch with other bodies – things – and their altering abilities produces the experience ‘of the vibrating body at the moment in which the exhaustion of a cartography is processed, when the silent incubation of a new reality of

feeling is under way, that incubation being the manifestation of the fullness of life in its power of differentiation' (Rolnik 1999, 5).

Beginning with *Walking* and continuing until the end of her life, Clark's fugitive mode of study sought strategies to awaken the vibrating body to *wonder* so that, freed from the lure of impassivity, it could initiate itself to the experience of the *vazio-pleno*, or 'empty full' – touching the void of bursting and blooming acts of material transformation. Taking from Barad: 'Being in touch with the infinite in/determinacy at the heart of matter, the abundance of nothingness, the infinitude of the void that is threaded in, through, and around all spacetime-mattering opens up the possibility of hearing the murmurings, the muted cries, the speaking silence of justice-to-come' (2012a, 216). New possibilities for creative assembly can emerge in the company of non-equal, formally dissimilar beings that can surprise, astonish and move by exceeding their grounds, histories and fixed forms. Of course, this common multivocal space is never simply given as such and as *something* that always drops out at the opposite poles of inside/outside, inclusion/exclusion, human/critter.

Clark's propositional study of the structuring of the self, Barad's 'queering' of QFT and Catherine Malabou's plastic reading of speculative materialism suggest not so much an experienceable similarity between original fields – or planes – but that the science of being, changing and dying can only get under way as a theory of ensemblic praxis, rather than binary pairings, and despairing(s). In this way, the *lived thought* that accompanies them provides not a supplement but an alternative to the misery of so much humanities (and humanist) critique. These inspired reimagings turn the violent histories on the side of the collective possibilities to turn back in wonder so that the violence that constructs our present worlds can never fully ground, capture or destroy the 'moving' force of political life, which is to say ecological life. The polycacophony of creative fabulations that transpires in the material folds of these eco-ethics entanglements must be struggled for, each time in the daily, mundane work of 'the fugitive art of social life':

This art is practiced on and over the edge of politics, beneath its ground, in animative and improvisatory decomposition of its inert body. It emerges as an ensemblic stand, a kinetic set of positions, but also takes the form of embodied notation, study, score. Its encoded noise is hidden in plain sight from the ones who refuse to see and hear – even while placing under constant surveillance – the thing whose repressive imitation they call for and are. (Harney and Moten 2013, 73–4)

The radical leap of non-art, non-philosophy and non-objects, I propose, is not towards an 'abandonment of' – which stands for a 'definite separation

from' – the field or discipline, but a *relinquishing* that designates 'a negotiated rupture; a farewell that maintains a relation with what it splits from' (see Malabou 2016). It is such movements of radical differentiation that can transform individuated legacies through the astonishing power of acts of collective invention, improvisation, participation. It is with this determination that a fugitive practice of material plasticity can contingently trespass the territories of art, philosophy, science, culture, politics, ethics and life in general to find the 'extraordinary' in the ordinary – same, normal – and experiment, rehearse, sound out new ways of 'making sense' of it.

IN CODA

If 'the plasticity and style of non-philosophy demand a continuous labor of internal interpretation and taste or affect simultaneously' (Laruelle 1998, 63), then the sensibility – sense-ability – of non-art requires a new style with philosophies, and not with just the one/One. This condition is a real ensemble of thoughts from a diverse spectrum of creative and improvisational idioms as a catalyst for a sensual renewal of the aesthetic, the political, the ethical, and more. At the convergence of these interactions is perhaps the 'common' mode of investigation that Anne-Françoise Schmid calls 'collective intimacy': 'a paradoxical and problematic concept which puts in tension heterogenousness in a manner non-authoritarian and non-disciplinary' (2014). Another way to express this generic epistemology might be via the experiments that constitute Manolo Callahan's thought-practice of 'convivial research' (2012) on the ongoing renewal of our habits of 'assembly': 'Not an organization or congregation, not an aggregation of individuals, not an event, but a collective subject' (2020).

The generic non-aesthetic movement featuring the Relational Objects and many other wild things provides inspiration for the gregarious and performative enactments of 'practice as thought'. In the contemporary theatres of insecurity, the expressive performatives of these materials are what stages the agitational, dramatically non-agentive gesture of non-philosophies. Now, more than ever, at the surreal convergence of COVID-19 and the ethico-political sphere, we need not only pass through what can feel in turn like a dream or nightmare state, but find something here – a collective desire, a redeployment of affect – to access new strategies for art, scholarship, activism, life. Acting out of fierce care (Callahan), curious wonder (Malabou), radical abandon (Clark) and even thoughtful indecision (Laruelle) might be the key to polyphonic modes of thought that can disarm intensive regimes of discipline and lead the fugue into a cosmic future.

NOTES

1. Also, close collaborator of Félix Guattari during her exile in Paris (1970–1979) from the military dictatorship in Brazil. Lygia Clark also lived in France, first in the late 1950s, and again between 1968 and 1976.

2. It is documented that Lygia Clarke was prone to physical convulsions during the gestation of each new emergence/y in her work, see Rolnik 1994.

3. ‘Non-object’ was also a concept forged by Malevich at the beginning of the twentieth century and in vogue in the 1960s. Brazilian critic Ferreira Gullar adopted it to describe the approach to the object in the work of the Brazilian Neoconcretist Movement. Clark withdrew from the Movement in 1961 and rejected the application of the term to her work. However, I will retain its use here as an ambiguous and exploratory term to investigate their paradigmatically non-philosophical properties.

4. This is the exhibition catalogue of the first and major exhibition, by the same title, devoted to the work of Lygia Clark (1920–1988) in North America, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 10 May–24 August 2014.

5. Curiously, in Portuguese the word ‘hinge’ (*dobra*) is etymologically related to the verb ‘to fold’ (*dobrar*). The plastic nature of these active translations transpires in Gilles Deleuze: ‘We are discovering new ways of folding, akin to new envelopments [. . .] What always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding’ (1993, 137).

6. In the most material and plastic terms, ‘implicate’ comes from the Latin verb *plicare*, meaning ‘to weave’ or ‘to fold’.

7. As Clark wrote: ‘It is no longer the problem of feeling the poetic through a form. The structure exists there only as a support for the expressive gesture, the cut, and after it is finished, it has nothing to do with the traditional work of art’ (in Rolnik 2007, 1).

8. The French *decoupage* is a term used in artistic and scientific praxis in reference to phenomena that literally ‘cut-out’. Philosopher Gilles-Gaston Granger adopted this precise meaning ‘to suggest that out of the amorphous material of experience, science must separate, mold, shape, contour, arrange and refine its objects’ (Alexander Rosenberg in the Introduction to Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Formal Thought and the Sciences of Man* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983), xvii).

9. It is great the temptation to follow the call of a dark ecology into object-orientated ontologies. Traversing the Relational Objects of this story with the trail of what Timothy Morton (2013) dubs ‘hyperobjects’ would offer a way to orient the knowledge coming from these animated agencies. All the same, I shall resist this trajectory as it exceeds the scope of this narrative, for now.

10. Together with her fellow artist, friend and correspondent Hélio Oiticica.

11. For the inherent precariousness of the object of Clark’s study, see Deleuze 2013.

12. My contact with Meillassoux’s sense for gravity ends as he begins to take mathematics too seriously as a privileged site of thinking.

13. Interestingly, in Malabou’s sense of material plasticity, being presents itself to thought in the transformability of phantasmatic images and forms of being (see Malabou 2011).

14. Barad explains: ‘Intra-actions include the larger material arrangement (i.e., a set of material practices) that effects an agential cut between “subject” and “object”

(in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes this distinction for granted). That is, the agential cut enacts a resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy' (2007, 139–40).

15. Rolnik began to develop the notion of the *vibrating* or *vibratile body* (depending on the translation) in the book *Cartografia Sentimental. Transformações contemporâneas do desejo* (São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 1989), which 'refers to the power of the body to vibrate the music of universe, composition of affects that plays "live" in our subjectivity. Our consistency is made of these compositions creating themselves over and over, inspired by the pieces of world that affect us. The vibrating body is therefore that what, within us, is the inside and the outside at the same time. The inside is nothing more than a fleeting combination of the outside' (1999, 26 n.2).

16. Spinoza here intends all living things.

17. You might have guessed, I am hacking Laruelle's expressions for the 'affect of the World, and its real contingency' (1999, 142) and reorient it towards my own purposes here.

18. See also Irigaray 1980; Kirby 1997; Vasseleu 1998.

19. Notably, Malabou writes: "'Difficult" things are singular and rare. [. . .] Difficult things are simple: noncomposed, frank, entire, total' (2013, 41).

20. Neural pathways guarantee that the brain is 'never alone' in its activity, see Malabou 2008.

21. Apparatuses for Karen Barad 'are not mere observing instruments, but boundary-drawing practices – specific material (re)configurings of the world – which come to matter' (2007, 140).

22. Like the non-object, the '*transobjeto*' or transobject is the portmanteau term that collapses the normative separation object/subject.

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Chapter 9

Laruelle Prefers Heresy to Revolution

From Non-philosophy to Live Art

Gary Anderson

This essay is an experiment: to draw a parallel between Laruelle's thought and Live Art. Live Art (capitalized according to the tradition of the Live Art Development Agency¹) is a periphery 'discipline' of theatre and fine arts – at least in academia. During a conversation with Lois Keidan, then, now former, director of the Live Art Development Agency² during the *Art Disarming Philosophy* symposium, Keidan claimed that if there was a parallel between Laruelle's thought and Live Art it was something to do with the refusal of a basic decision out of which all insights/practices/thoughts subsequently spring. Keidan called Live Art the 'non-method'. I will attempt to develop that thought with reference to key Live Artists from a specific branch of Live Art called art-activism.³ I am focussing on art-activism because the way art-activists work seems to me to be curiously Laruellean, despite hardly a mention of his name in the art-activist worlds. Or more specifically, art-activists are more heretical than revolutionary. I am working with Laruelle's idea that revolutionary means replacing one dominant system with another, which becomes, eventually, just as dominant. Heresy might mean the constant chipping away from the side lines of that dominant system in the hope of exposure and eventual, cumulative insurrection⁴ – like many art-activists do.

Despite Anthony Paul Smith and John (Mullarkey) O'Maoilearca's excellent account⁵ I am working here with an unresolved personal confusion between Deleuze's thoughts on radical immanence and Laruelle's. I think Laruelle fits more squarely into a Deleuze-Spinozist tradition⁶ of 'all thoughts are equal',⁷ into 'the great system of anti-judgment'.⁸ The more I encounter Deleuze's seminars on Spinoza from the early 1980s,⁹ the more convinced I am of the similarities between Laruelle and Deleuze's positions on immanence. That said, I want to try to throw some potentially useful thoughts together for performance theory – all of which revolve around an invitation

to adopt radical immanence as a conceptual framework for art-activist work. I'm drawing from Laruelle and Deleuze's work on immanence to do that and creating an improbable dialogue between Laruelle and art-activist Bill Talen. Bill Talen's character 'Rev Billy' is a leading art-activist and someone who cultural theorist Nicola Kirkham once memorably called 'the archbishop of anticapitalism'.¹⁰ Rev Billy, I argue, is perhaps the most useful personification of a Laruellean heretic in the arts. Ray Brassier's statement in his review in *Radical Philosophy* in 2003 is useful and forms part of the title of this essay: 'Laruelle prefers heresy to revolution'.¹¹

In bringing Laruelle and Rev Billy together I'll be making a series of what cultural theorist Malcolm Miles calls 'interested, but non-judgmental statements' (as opposed to Kantian 'disinterested judgments'¹²) about art-activist work generally: a critical reflexivity with a nod to what I understand to be Laruelle's position on radical immanence. In other words, I'm conflating the praxis of a knowingly doomed critical reflexivity – doomed because it can never produce independent insight – with an invitation to encounter the Real. Or, how to hold reflexivity (a marxist trope – 'how to understand my own position in the processes of production'¹³) and immanence (a Laruellean notion which strips away the authority of the reflexive insight by including it alongside every other insight *as just as valid*) together. How to hold reflexivity and immanence together, I would suggest, is an often-encountered problem for art-activists.

As an art-activist formerly of the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home,¹⁴ the assumption I am working under is that calling for social revolution is the activist's given role, while heresy could be seen as 'messing about' at the margins of the system without replacing it. It might be a question of defeat on my part, but I am more or less convinced that revolution is not what it is cracked up to be, at least in the 'lefty' circles I am part of (trade union meetings, Corbyn-led Labour faction gatherings, other left splinter groups). I think I now realize that revolution is 'literally unthinkable' and it reminds me of what George Orwell said of the alternative to Ingsoc in his appendix to *Nineteen-Eighty Four*.¹⁵ The powers of action we have as Live Artists and art-activists are best deployed in heresy – if what we mean by revolution is the overhaul of late capitalism as the dominant organizing system of planet earth to be replaced with another system equally dominating. It is the allergic reaction to authority that I find exciting in Laruelle and Live Art. I am not capable of worldwide solutions to global problems, but I am capable of heresy – we all are. Here, heresy is more than critique. Heresy goes beyond the safety of the position of looking at an object from a distance and saying what is wrong with it. Heresy, in Laruellean terms, to me, means the full commitment of a life lived in the production of alternative modes of expression which serve to undermine the dominance of late capitalism while

inviting others to invent further heresies. Ekin Erkan's review of Laruelle's 2018 book *A Biography of Ordinary Man* ends with: 'how to apply [Laruelle] is now within the reader's sphere'.¹⁶

With that in mind the intention here is to write a heretical essay which performatively demonstrates what I feel to be a useful meeting point or parallel between Laruellean thought and contemporary art-activist work, namely that heresy is more productive than revolution in creating what Laruelle calls 'an effective utopia'.¹⁷ I am assuming that the art-activists under discussion are utopianists in the sense suggested by Malcolm Miles's 2011 book on Herbert Marcuse: heretics who bite the hand that feeds them in the name of creating utopia.

To do that, I think it is best to experiment not only with the paralleling of Laruellean thought and Live Art but also with the format of this essay. I do this to try to bring out the possibility of the affective connections between the various layers at work in this essay – most of which, from now on, will read as a dialogue between two people: Laruelle and Reverend Billy. Here are the layers as I see them:

1. *A very modest exploration of Laruelle's work on heresy and its relationship to radical immanence.*
2. *Live Art's penchant for the refusal of a foundational decision – or, in Lois Keidan's words the 'non-method' of Live Art – with a focus on art-activism.*
3. *Examples from art-activism accounted for via the 'archbishop of anti-capitalism' Reverend Billy – whose permission I have to 'put words in his mouth' for this essay.¹⁸*
4. *The heresy of putting words into Laruelle's mouth without permission in a book on Laruelle.*
5. *The fact that this essay is only what I'm capable of – placed adjacent to a core Laruellean notion that 'all thoughts are equal'.¹⁹ (How we get through peer review with that in mind, I don't know. But that is further 'complicated and explicated'²⁰ by the embarrassing fact that I'm one of the editors of the book).*

The intention is that playing around with heresy in form and content is helpful in producing a 'heresy-affect'. That might help us to see something *from* the Real. I am trying to foster an understanding of those five layers *immanently*. The point of that is to try to see things for a moment (a little bit like a Lefevrean moment of liberation²¹) – *sub specie aeternitatis* – from the point of view of eternity. Only for a moment though, perhaps. I think this is partly what Laruelle is up to. He is a heretic in the long line of heretics who preach of an immanent cause. Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza trace a line of

immanentists until ‘Spinoza arrives’. Interestingly, Deleuze describes these as ‘heresies’:

The idea of an immanent cause appears constantly in the history of philosophy, but as [something] held in check, kept at such-and-such a level of the sequence, not having value, and faced with being corrected by other moments of the sequence. [A]nd the accusation of immanentism was, *for every story of heresies*, the fundamental accusation: you confuse God and the creature. (My italics)²²

‘Confusing God and the creature’ is the immanentists heresy, but also Reverend Billy’s as we shall see in the following dialogue. They know that:

‘[t]hat’s the fatal accusation. Therefore, the immanent cause was constantly there’, says Deleuze, ‘but it didn’t manage to gain a status [*statut*]. It had only a small place in the sequence of concepts’.²³

The immanent cause, as opposed to the emanative cause, states there is no hierarchy between ‘being’ and ‘the One’, no superiority of the cause over the effect. All being is equal and beings are not ‘beings’ as previously understood, but modes or manners of existence.²⁴

The immanent cause in philosophy is better established it seems than in the theatre arts, despite the excellent work of Laura Cull O’Maoilearca,²⁵ Gavin Grindon²⁶ and others and despite it being so prevalent in Live Art. Deleuze goes on to say that eventually ‘Spinoza arrives’ and establishes, for the first time, a comprehensive ontological system which postulates an immanent cause. It is no wonder then that Spinoza was considered a heretic in his own lifetime and a ‘herem’ pronounced against him for his excommunication.²⁷ Laruelle fashions a science of immanentism, heretical to philosophy’s main prejudices (of being an authority on itself and other disciplines), in order to provide the possibility of a glance of things sub specie aeternitatis. After all, what else would a believer in an immanent cause want to demonstrate?

The following dialogue is between Laruelle and Reverend Billy. I have pieced it together from extracts of texts and emails they have written and what I have heard them say in public and to me when I met them on separate occasions.

LARUELLE AND REVEREND BILLY ON HERESY AND REVOLUTION

[The scene is Gary Anderson and Niamh Malone’s kitchen in North Liverpool, UK. A long table, with a coffee at each end, one for François

Laruelle, one for Reverend Billy. After polite introductions Laruelle opens the conversation]

Laruelle: Gary tells me you're a heretic.

Rev Billy: There's a history of heresy that we've tapped into when making the work we've been making since the late 1990s. Our group are cultural heretics and refugees from the theatre.

Laruelle: Ah. Cursed be you by day and cursed be you by night; cursed be you when you lie down and cursed be you when you rise up.

Rev Billy: Cursed are we when we go out and cursed are we when we come in. The Lord will not spare us.

Laruelle: The Lord shall blot out your name from under heaven.

Rev Billy: No one should communicate with you neither in writing nor accord you any favour.

Laruelle: Nor stay with you under the same roof nor within four cubits in your vicinity! Despite the fact that we are seated at Gary's table, over coffee. But the table is more than four cubits long!

Rev Billy: (slurps his coffee) How long is a cubit?

Laruelle: I think it's about the length from the fingertip to the elbow.

Rev Billy: I'd say we were just about four cubits apart.

Laruelle: But under the same roof.

Rev Billy: Nor shall anyone read any treatise composed or written by you!

Laruelle: Ouch.

Rev Billy: I believe in curses. Spinoza's *herem* applies to all heretics, so it's an honour to have you declare it.²⁸

Laruelle: Likewise.

Rev Billy: But more than us, the earth is cursed. The earth is cursed because its destruction is funded by JP Morgan Chase – the largest bank in the United States.²⁹

Laruelle: We'll get to that. Tell me, where did you grow up?

Rev Billy: I grew up in small towns throughout Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. I left home at 16, moving east with Charles and Patricia Gaines, a writer and painter who encouraged me as an artist. I began to perform his poems and stories, hitch-hiking from Philadelphia to New York to San Francisco.

Laruelle: You're not a reverend?

Rev Billy: No, not in the institutionally ordained sense according to the major religious organizations of the United States, but my mentor Sidney Lanier was. And, now I help co-organize the Church of Stop Shopping of which I am a preacher and reverend.

Laruelle: I've heard of Sidney Lanier, the radical preacher from Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan? I read an obituary in the *New York Times* a few years ago.³⁰

Rev Billy: My chief collaborator in developing the Reverend Billy character was the Reverend Sidney Lanier, vicar of St. Clements in the 1960s, an Episcopal Church. In an effort to increase attendance at St. Clement's, Lanier tore out the altar and pews, inviting actors to perform scenes from plays by his cousin Tennessee Williams and Terrence McNally. In doing so he founded the American Place Theater.³¹ It was heretical of him. He gave up his collar soon afterwards and tried his hand at acting too, but always kept his heretical belief that church was a theatre and theatre a church, alive.

Laruelle: Cursed be the heretic when he rises up!

Rev Billy: With him I developed the character of Rev Billy in the 1990s. Lanier said I was 'more of a preacher with a gift for social prophecy than an actor'. In the early 1990s I moved with Lanier to New York City from the San Francisco Bay Area, branding this act as a 'new kind of American preacher'.³²

Laruelle: Where did you first try out this heresy?

Rev Billy: The Reverend Billy character debuted on the sidewalk at Times Square in 1998, outside the Disney Store, where he proclaimed Mickey Mouse to be the anti-Christ. I was arrested multiple times outside the Disney Store, where I duct-taped Mickey Mouse to a cross.

Laruelle: Your sermons decry the evils of consumerism and the racism of sweatshop labour?

Rev Billy: Yes, but also what I saw as the loss of neighbourhood spirit in Giuliani's New York.

Laruelle: Are you a satyr – a satirist? Are you a parodist?

Rev Billy: The Reverend Billy character isn't so much a parody of a preacher, as a preacher motif used to blur the lines between performance and religious experience. It's a church service, but it's also a political rally.

Laruelle: And, it's theatre.

Rev Billy: It's all three and at the same time none of them. As Alisa Solomon from the Village Voice said, 'The collar is fake, the calling is real'. Along with the Church of Stop Shopping, we have been referred to by academics as 'performance activism', 'carnavalesque protest' and 'art-activists'.³³

Laruelle: So cultural heretics in the sense that categorization is deliberately elusive?

Rev Billy: That's how it began. Bringing artists and activists together through the medium of a comic preacher. With Savitri D, now the director of the project, we developed the Church of Stop Shopping. Savitri has led direct action and organizing campaigns against corporations, institutions and injustice all over the world. She is the principal designer of the Church of Stop Shopping's visual materials and conceptualizes most of the actions with me and the Choir. She is a serious lover of the wild and devotes her life to working *for* the earth, not an employer, but for the earth.³⁴

Laruelle: They are the real heretics: those who work *for* the earth.

Rev Billy: The Church of Stop Shopping is a self-identified collection of misfits with a mission. It first formed between 1999 and 2003, some people joined from the street, others came in through the arts. People come and go all the time. Some stay. We specialize in the imperative – we sing because we have to. We are learning how to move through the world with integrity, alone and together. We are sinners.³⁵ The choir puts it like that, after more than a thousand actions, performances, sermons, songs and after maybe a hundred arrests and many nights spent in a police cell. Rev Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping is a project – it isn't just me, but I deliver the sermons. So, without talking on anybody else's behalf – and to keep Gary happy – I want to focus on that.

Laruelle: I've been a keen reader of them. I loved 'Freakstorm'³⁶ and your 2012 book *The End of the World*.

Rev Billy: That's where I realized that blurring the boundaries between 'Creative Resistance', 'Direct Action' and 'Spiritual Trespassing' could produce the heresy of Earth Action. That heresy is based on the refusal of an anthropocentric solution-based programme to reverse climate breakdown. It holds that we need to train ourselves to listen to the earth and respond accordingly. It's more like thinking like a forest. John Jordan and the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination wrote a beautiful piece called 'Think like a forest, act like a meadow'.³⁷

Laruelle: I know. I've read it.

Rev Billy: Back in 2009 it was at the apex of anti-globalization work from art-activists. John had grown up in Platform³⁸ and started off Reclaim the Streets,³⁹ the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination⁴⁰ and Liberate Tate.⁴¹

Laruelle: I saw a clip of you exorcizing the Tate Modern from BP sponsorship. It worked. They backed off after that.

Rev Billy: Only after lots of other actions too and pressure coordinated by Liberate Tate.

Laruelle: I read *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts* by Mel Evans.⁴² An excellent publication. I also read something from John Jordan about quantum physics. I think he put it something like this: 'Quantum physics dramatically showed us that there are no discrete parts, just patterns in an inseparable web of relationships. Sometimes the closer we look the harder it is to understand the whole'.⁴³

Rev Billy: Yes. Before taking action on the detail we should take a step back and observe the bigger picture.⁴⁴

Laruelle: Knowing that the position of ourselves as observers is part of that picture. And in that sense it's a picture we can never properly describe, because we're already part of it. So, the language fails to equip us with words to do the double-work of having an idea and having an idea of the idea, and on it goes to having an idea of having an idea of the idea. Every

time you have an idea of the idea it is always possible to have an idea of having that idea. That's how we know we can never step out of what we are critiquing: we're always, however many places removed, inside the process. In other words, reflexivity is great, but necessarily limited.

Rev Billy: It is only then that we observe how the specifics of a system connect and interact with ourselves, what the shape of edges and overlaps are, and what the inherent cycles and patterns reveal. But I do feel that humans are hardwired to spot patterns; we were born 'network thinkers'.⁴⁵

Laruelle: You sound like an analyst. Have you ever been employed by a university?

Rev Billy: Only as invited artist. John Jordan used to teach performance in Sheffield, if I remember correctly.

Laruelle: Ultimately, I see non-philosophers, or for the purposes of this conversation 'heretics', in several different ways. I see them, inevitably, as subjects of the university, as is required by worldly life, but above all as related to three fundamental human types. And I suggest you are somebody who embodies all three.

Rev Billy: What types?

Laruelle: They are related to the analyst and the political militant since heresy is close to psychoanalysis and Marxism – it transforms the subject by transforming instances of thought. But they are also related to what I would call the 'spiritual'. They are the great destroyers of the forces of philosophy and the state, which band together in the name of order and conformity. The spiritual haunt the margins of philosophy, gnosticism, mysticism and even of institutional religion and politics.

Rev Billy: The Church of Stop Shopping likes to hang out in the margins of the religious, declaring non-war with institutions but a blurring of the boundaries between the performance of religious experience, its sanctification and its political effectiveness. Billy Graham, the great conman, claimed the end of the world is nigh and he was right, but for him it's a Napoleonic Jesus who will come in judgement and separate the sheep from the goats. For the Church of Stop Shopping, it's the earth asking us to listen. It's the banks that doom us, not our impious souls.

Laruelle: The spiritual are not just abstract, quietist mystics; they are *for* the earth. Like you. Billy Graham and the doom-sayers who haunt the tv channels all over the world, asking sinners to send in money, are committed to abstraction. They only ever deal in the abstract until it comes to the actual phone number to pledge more dollars.

Rev Billy: This is why a quiet discipline is not sufficient, because man is implicated in the world as the presupposed that determines it.

Laruelle: Thus, heresy is also related to gnosticism and science-fiction; it answers their fundamental question – which is not at all philosophy's primary concern – 'Should humanity be saved? And how?'

Rev Billy: This is the question of art-activism and of Live Art in general. Not, what's the most sufficient form to communicate certain ideas, but 'what can save us?' The earth is asking us this question. It's like a chance for us. Otherwise, we're gone and earth will just carry on without us. I lay there sometimes, waiting, listening for the earth to speak to me. I lie on my back and wait until the earth speaks.

Laruelle: It is close to spiritual revolutionaries such as Muntzer and certain mystics who skirted heresy.

Rev Billy: Like who?

Laruelle: The Anabaptist leaders immediately after Muntzer, for example: Balthasar Hubmaier, Hans Denck, Hans Hut, Hans Römer, Melchior Rinck all involved in the German Peasants War of 1525. But from an historical perspective there are so many. And so many movements related to gnosticism, mysticism. Those who experimented with doctrine and in the words of Muntzer obeyed the spirit not the letter. Take an online search for those excommunicated by any religion and you'll find the heretics. Hundreds of them, thousands of them. They are to be venerated.

Rev Billy: Cursed be they by day and cursed be they by night.

Laruelle: Like your art-activism, heresy, and indeed non-philosophy is a practice, it is enacted, almost criminally performative, this is the only way of demonstrating it. I could say the same for your work – it has to be a practice across form and content and it must be demonstrated – or put into practice. It couldn't stay abstract. If it did, it wouldn't be heresy.

Rev Billy: I walked into the office of Platform⁴⁶ a number of years back. Hugely influential group. They used to be housed in Bermondsey, London on a street called Horselydown – where, a hundred years before, the horses used to lie down to rest before making another journey back to the markets. A poky little office that changed the face of art-activism for us all. On the wall was an embroidered picture of a formula. Sewn in colours and framed, simply, modestly. With a formula. So simple.

Laruelle: What was the formula?

Rev Billy: The sewing read: 'Form' 'plus' 'Content' 'equals' 'Communication'.⁴⁷ But it was written out like a sum.

Laruelle: That's very non-philosophy.

Rev Billy: For them it was sort of Bertolt Brecht meets Joseph Beuys, but yes, it refuses the abstract and insists on the criminally performative nature of the presence of something.

Laruelle: In other words, the immanence of it.

Rev Billy: When all is said and done, is heresy anything other than the chance for an effective utopia?⁴⁸ Are heresy and non-philosophy synonymous here?

Laruelle: I'd say heresy is a way of performing non-philosophy.

Rev Billy: Without it ever being abstract! That's what banks do: they make their operations abstract. The church of stop shopping tries to make them

concrete. The banks finance climate breakdown – while their ‘social licence to operate’⁴⁹ depends upon the population believing it’s all about high-speed numbers whizzing through computers and strange entities like hedge fund managers sitting in front of ticker tape (or modern equivalent) waiting for shares to rise or fall. It couldn’t be more concrete in fact. The effect of what JP Morgan Chase, BP, Shell, Exxon Mobil do is literally all around us.

Laruelle: In some ways the problem of continental philosophy over the last 50 years has been about trying to convince people that abstract things are actually concrete things. If you can see the world *sub specie aeternitatis* it’s clear that there is nothing abstract – except the idea. Yes, most philosophical education continues in this way. Abstract ideas about abstract ideas. No, philosophy, and I share Deleuze’s concern here, is obviously concrete.⁵⁰ It creates a concept out of a specific problem. If there’s no problem, then there’s no need for another concept.

Rev Billy: What was the problem for you?

Laruelle: The arrogance of philosophy.

Rev Billy: Perhaps Live Art is a response to the arrogance of theatre, or more precisely its dislocation from the immediate. Theatre was too much about interpreting an object in order to make it relevant to a life lived. Live Art, very often, dispenses with representation and attempts to go straight at it – saying it as it is, in the location of its saying. We’ve suffered from ‘interpretosis’⁵¹ for too long. If the Real is to intrude, then representation of the Real needs to be dispensed with because the representation of it gets in the way – representation makes things abstract. We see all history as being created through disobedience, from women wearing trousers, to the right to a weekend, to being part of a union; all these things happened because people disobeyed the laws. We think that art and activism together can create incredible new forms. We reject representation. Our work is organizing. It is not representing things; it is transforming things. The role of the artist is to transform things not represent them.⁵²

Laruelle: So, what’s next for you? It’s been at least 20 years since you started flirting with the production of the affect of immanence in your work. I’ve noted how you seem to have taken a turn from anti-consumerism (I very much enjoyed that full length documentary about you and the choir *What Would Jesus Buy?*⁵³) towards Earth Action. I applaud that. But I’m curious. Was that because of the lack of immanence in the topic of ‘stop shopping’?

Rev Billy: How do you mean?

Laruelle: Well, there’s only so far you can go with consumerism, despite that fact that it is literally destroying the world via a chain of finance, carbon emissions, racist sweatshop production, how it stupefies people with irrelevant things like ‘the latest . . .’, ‘the fastest . . .’, ‘the additional . . .’. Did you turn to Earth Action because it invited you to something limitless?

Rev Billy: Consumerism can involve everything, and there's as much immanence to it as anything else, by definition. But yes, I got tired of getting arrested outside Walmart and spending the night in a police cell. The payoff was minimal. A few heads turned, a few documentaries made, but I found out that I wasn't spending my time at the heart of things. I felt the preaching had to be at the white heat of things, not at the end of the supply chain. So I started preaching at Monsanto – the chemical multinational that supplies earth destroying products to the stores, JP Morgan Chase who actively fund climate breakdown via big oil and energy firms. The arrests increased, intensified and the threats of long-term imprisonment became real.⁵⁴ But I couldn't reach a final decision on how to proceed. We were all more involved in Standing Rock – the peace protest against the Dakota pipeline – who recently had a great victory,⁵⁵ and Earth Actions.

Laruelle: Ah, the immanence of it.

Rev Billy: That's generous of you. [pause] Apologies for asking but what do you mean exactly by immanence?

Laruelle: You said it yourself on so many occasions in your podcasts, your actions, your songs. Philosophically it sounds complicated, but it's a very common view outside of philosophy. Seeing *from* the Real, the One. I want to set out a pragmatics of thinking, rather than make a transcendent claim that what we need is a decisive insight. On the basis of that decisive insight we make the rest of our decisions about how the universe functions. Your work seems to ask us to experience that. We are in the middle of things, unable to break out. I like it that you tell us that in your work. That's what I mean by immanence: an endlessly effable, rather than ineffable, universe of equally valuable performances of thought.

Rev Billy: If that's the case, I'm pleased, but I have to say it doesn't feel like that for me. I'm not certain about anything I've done or said. There is a still moment sometimes to think about what the hell I'm doing. Thank you for your talking with me about this 20-year-old project. It is at a bit of a crossroads now as I try to reflect on what's next. I don't get much framing of it, discussing of it, in recent years. So, I'm grateful.

Laruelle: I suppose the intensity of the constant attempts to appreciate immanence, which keeps the question of the decision always open, is tiring?

Rev Billy: It comes in waves. Some ups and some downs, but recently in the disquiet of a down, I decided to go into my preaching more and more. I preach all day long. At dawn, and again at 1 p.m., I preach into the iPhone. Once a week I make a half-hour podcast/radio show, now spreading in the world.

Laruelle: Is that the Reverend Billy Radio podcast? I've been listening.⁵⁶

Rev Billy: That's the centrepiece sermon, usually 10 minutes long. Every morning I lay on my back until my persuasive message for the day comes into me. Then I get up.

Laruelle: You don't know in advance?

Rev Billy: Yesterday morning it was 'Why is the phrase Climate Change so weak?' In the Democratic virtual convention the politicians repeated it like it was an annoyance. Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Standing Rock – so much stronger. As the apocalypse engulfs us, today we have scores of California fires uncontrolled, the pandemic across the country is at 170,000 dead, and twin hurricanes are hitting the gulf like monstrous synchronized swimmers.

Laruelle: How can one describe it?

Rev Billy: There is no realistic language for all this, the public writing and talking doesn't face up to it, can't mention causes. It starts with the generic apologetic-sounding title of the whole thing. 'Climate Change' is about as gripping as 'Black Beans' on a can. Of course, this is perfect for the comic, fulminating preacher, who gets serious. The concept of our poisoning the atmosphere and the oceans remains at a great distance from us.

Laruelle: Yes, it is kept far away by consumerism, the cultural arm of capitalism. The information that comes to us must be a profit-making product, and that enforcement is strict. That censorship by consumerized culture is hidden from us, cloaked in 'freedom' and 'democracy' and 'America'.

Rev Billy: I would very much like to dedicate myself to unveiling the ruse. That would be a good job for Rev.

Laruelle: But you're dedicated to *not* having all you do be a mission dependent on a decision, aren't you? Does it make sense to you to work under the banner of 'unveil the ruse'?

Rev Billy: It can't happen that way. There is no decision anymore. Only the pre-decision to listen to the earth and respond. I'm not infinitely open, and of course there are lots of pre-decisions, but Earth Action itself requires a certain lack of decision. We need to be able to listen without knowing how it will go.

Laruelle: How do you mean?

Rev Billy: It's a bit like being open to parody. Parody is possible because people know beforehand what you're going to do or say. That's what makes parody work. There's a recognition of a decision and its consequences. It's easy to parody a marxist or a feminist or an anarchist because they've already made all their decisions.⁵⁷ Their responses are predictable, even inevitable.

Laruelle: I don't think decisions are bad things in other areas outside philosophy, it's just that philosophy can't own up to the fact that the decisions have already been made. They go on endlessly about how they're exploring and discovering new knowledge, but the paradigms are already set out and clear, so the conclusions they reach are there, literally, from the beginning. I don't think it's bad to make a decision to be anti-capitalist, for example.

Rev Billy: I suppose it depends on what claim you are making. If I said I was pitching my performance tent in a completely new field, when really I was just doing a variation of what I've always done, then yes, I agree. But I feel that Earth Action needs new forms, new thoughts, new weapons. And at the base of that is listening and responding to the Earth.

Laruelle: So, what will this week's sermon be about?

Rev Billy: So, this week's sermon will be all about how words have meaning when the body's senses are engaged. To be a part of the dramatic evolution now underway, we would have to stand or dance in an eco-system and find out what the Earth is doing. Immersion in life, the sticky scary mystery of it, can give meaning to the words that we use to describe it.

Laruelle: Writing songs to carry the idea, preaching into a mic, building a group of faithful who talk about this in quiet circles? Not unlike Muntzer and the Peasant's War, except Muntzer lacked a microphone, but according to all accounts he could preach to a crowd.

Rev Billy: Yes, and making media out of all of it. The subject matter of our task seems obvious. The USA commercial media has been afraid of the subject, the censorship continues to this day.

Laruelle: Well, I guess you can't sell ads to carry the End of the World.

Rev Billy: And with our work, in the shifting liquid of the media – we don't have very much play, either, with or without the apocalypse.

Laruelle: Your media coverage is stronger than most. I'm not entirely sure the words of Spinoza's *herem* apply to you fully there.

Rev Billy: Well, this year we've gotten our pictures in lots of media, but the impact of that is elusive. We're not on the world stage like the old days when Rev Billy was a bit of an art star, albeit a fairly minor and anomalous one. We've never been attached to any industry. And in fact, my hero image is getting in the way, as the choir watches me struggle for a comeback. My last book, once again self-mythologizing, did not have the heroism to carry it. I flailed away at book stores, reading it, but national press was scanty, C-Span, or BookSpan – that was all. In NYC I could perform at the Public Theater with a jazz combo. But I was unable to generate a public conversation about it, which was the acceptance of Gaia, a comic shouting acceptance of the conscious living being – the Earth. Again and again I would go from the Earthalujah! to the quiet prayer directed at creation, sort of avoiding calling her 'her'. Never using the phrase 'Mother Earth'.

Laruelle: You seem prone to a certain sort of despair or fear or running out of ways to grab attention. As Deleuze said to me in a café near the Rue di Bizerte where he lived, as I sat with him and Anne-Françoise Schmid. I'd been asking him questions about radical immanence and the potential success of non-standard philosophy. He leaned over and said 'there is no need to hope nor fear, only to look for new weapons'. Then congratulated me on finding one: non-philosophy. When I asked how on earth I could fly in the

face of the institutions of knowledge and their privileges, he told me that the institutions were full of stupidity. That stupidity was infinite.

Rev Billy: Infinite? That doesn't sound too helpful.

Laruelle: Infinite yes, but reversible! He sipped his water – he'd given up drink by that time – 'yes, stupidity is infinite but reversible'.⁵⁸

Rev Billy: [drinking the last of his coffee] I take my over-cultured audiences part-way into the communing with the invisible, but that is enough, because I'm a fool and have no compunction, usually, unless I REALLY freeze up, like when I preached at Neil Young and Daryl Hannah's wedding.

Laruelle: Not many art-activists could claim that!

Rev Billy: No, but . . .

Laruelle: But anyway it's all so useful. Rev Billy is infinitely useful.

Rev Billy: I know that there is still a usefulness in the character Reverend Billy, that old axe of a 'weapon' Deleuze talked of. There still is, technically, some use – with or without the minor fame of yore. I'm willing to make shouting messages surrounded by cops . . .

Laruelle: Is that how you'd like to be remembered?

Rev Billy: Sometimes I feel a flash of 'how I will be remembered' (by people who are themselves barely remembered until we are all forgotten . . .) Mostly, the meaning that the idea of being remembered has is – how will my partner Savi and daughter Lena remember me? When 14 tsunamis rake across New York, perhaps they will remember that I tried . . . I tried hard for a long time.

Laruelle: You've gone farther than anyone thought possible. You don't have the safety of fame, but you have the safety of loved ones and this secular church, an island of love in the city. I have Anne-Françoise and loved ones, and one or two admirers.

Rev Billy: Yes, people who actively track each other. A depressed person is cared for, for example. In that environment my Reverend Billyness is fine, whatever the missteps. We sing the praises of the Earth inside the megalopolis, surrounded by irony and over-education. The Earth people are missing in New York. We still have a bit of the old – 'If you can't make it here you're doomed to Palookaville'. But, in some way that I can't explain, I enjoy being in New York even as it dies as an international capital, and so does Savi. That old chauvinistic New York is doing something else now.

Laruelle: But Black Lives Matter was amazing.

Rev Billy: It was. It is! Savi and I are not culture meteors, in fact we can't even find any . . . Greta Thunberg? But we know how to risk arrest with a group of people from all over the world who sing as they get the hand-cuffs.

Laruelle: In the presentation of Rev Billy, you are part of a family and this larger family of heretics across the world, and that may be the best place for the character of the preacher of immanence: in a little heretical family.

Rev Billy: I can give a decent sermon and emerge as much as I deserve.

Laruelle: And then there is that moment when you're on the radio and I hear it in our car late at night, and I enter the romance of the lonely passionate preacher, that wailing voice on the radio in some American night while I sit and watch the clouds form over the back of my apartment not far from Rue de Bizerte where Deleuze dreamed.

[*Laruelle and Rev Billy stand up, shake hands and leave the kitchen table, mumbling something to each other. Just before they leave the house, where Niamh has agreed to take them to their hotels in Liverpool, she hears Rev Billy say*]:

Rev Billy: 'Dualysis' autocorrects to 'dialysis' in Microsoft word and on my iphone. I just tried it. If dialysis cleans the institution of its waste then let dualysis clean the body of the science of Christ – amen! Neither synthesis nor analysis. Dualysis-a-lujah!

[*Niamh returns home after having dropped Rev Billy and Laruelle off at The Adelphi Hotel, I pour her a glass of white wine as she sits at the table*]

Niamh: Jesus, the Adelphi is such a dump. I wanted to bring them back here to sleep. [*sips the wine*] Lois Keidan and the Live Art Development Agency have been going for 20 years, that's about the same amount of time as Rev Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping. Two decades of more or less thankless work, and more than double that for Laruelle. I'm starting to get a genuine sense of what heresy means: a life lived against the dominant, productive of hundreds of examples of how to fight back. Blessed be the heretics!

NOTES

1. All online sources last accessed 20 December 2020 unless otherwise stated.

"LADA: The Live Art Development Agency, which is the 'centre' of support for Live Art in the UK", <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/>

2. "Lois Keidan's statement of commitment to organisational change and racial equity from June 2020", <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/2020/06/23/lada-statement-of-commitment-on-organisational-change-and-racial-equity/>

3. 'Live Art practices are continually influencing new forms of creative resistance and are often found on the frontline of movements for social and environmental change. By disrupting borders, breaking rules, defying traditions, resisting definitions, and asking awkward questions, Live Art breaks the rules about who is making art, how they are making it, and who they are making it for'. 'Lois Keidan on Live Art', <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about-lada/what-is-live-art/>

4. François Laruelle, *Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*. (London: Urbanomic/Sequence, 2012).

5. John Mullarkey, Anthony Paul Smith. 'Introduction: The Non-Philosophical Inversion: Laruelle's Knowledge Without Domination' in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, edited by Mullarkey and Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1–18.

6. 'François Laruelle is engaged in one of the most interesting undertakings of contemporary philosophy. He invokes a One-All that he qualifies as "non-philosophical" and, oddly, as "scientific", on which the "philosophical decision" takes root. This One-All seems to be close to Spinoza'; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (London: Verso, 1994) n5, 220.

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

8. "Deleuze's description of Spinoza's system of anti-judgment from his lecture series *Velocities of Thought*", <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/index.php/seminars/spinoza-velocities-thought/lecture-03>

9. Deleuze, *Velocities of Thought*.

10. Nicola Kirkham in a private conversation with author (c. 2009).

11. 'Ray Brassier, Axiomatic heresy: The non-philosophy of François Laruelle', *Radical Philosophy*, 121 (Sep/Oct 2003), <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/axiomatic-heresy>

12. Malcolm Miles, *Urban Avant-gardes: Art, Architecture and Change* (London: Routledge 2004), 109.

13. "Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay 'The Author as Producer'", https://monoskop.org/images/9/93/Benjamin_Walter_1934_1999_The_Author_as_Producer.pdf

14. "The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home", <https://dissentathome.org/>

15. "George Orwell on IngSoc", <http://www.telelib.com/authors/O/OrwellGeorge/prose/NineteenEightyFour/appendix.html>

16. "Ekin Erkan's review of Laruelle's *A Biography of Ordinary Man (2018)*", <http://www.cromrev.com/current/R05-Erkan.pdf>

17. François Laruelle, 'A New Presentation of Non-Philosophy', <https://onphi.org/corpus/32/a-new-presentation-of-non-philosophy>

18. Bill Talen in private emails to the author (2009–2020).

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

20. "Deleuze on Plotinus and the linguistic doublet 'complicate, explicate'", <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/spinoza-velocities-thought/lecture-01?keys=plotinus%20emanative%20cause>

21. '[Lefebvre] says, briefly, that moments, like flashes of liberating consciousness, occur within the banal and alienating routines of daily life. Such moments are revelatory, in an ordinary rather than transcendental sense'. Malcolm Miles, 'The End of Utopia: Imminent and Immanent Liberation', *Spaces of Utopia: An Electronic Journal* (online, 2006) 112. And online here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/54454050/The-End-of-Utopia-Imminent-and-Immanent-Liberation-Malcolm-Miles>

22. "Deleuze, Velocities of Thought", <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/spinoza-velocities-thought/lecture-01>

23. "Deleuze, Velocities of Thought".

24. "Deleuze, Velocities of Thought".

25. Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

26. “Gavin Grindon and John Jordan demanding the impossible”, <https://demandingimpossible.wordpress.com/> and “Gavin Grindon on Disobedient Objects” <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/art-and-activism-in-the-age-of-the-antropocene>

27. Interestingly, in 2015 a conference took place to see if the ‘herem’ could be lifted. The chief Rabbi of the Portuguese Jews Pinchas Toledano said he had neither the authority nor the inclination to lift the ban, despite Spinoza’s books being sold in the community synagogue. Cnaan Liphshiz, ‘Centuries after excommunication, time to void ban on Spinoza?’, *Times of Israel*, December 12, 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/centuries-after-excommunication-time-to-void-ban-on-spinoza/> and “The wording of the Herem”, <https://www.tau.ac.il/~kasher/pspin.htm>

28. “Herem”, <https://www.tau.ac.il/~kasher/pspin.htm>

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31. “Bill Talen Alpert Awards”, <http://previous.alpertawards.org/archive/winner10/thework/theatre/transformation.html> and “Rev Billy Biography” <https://revbilly.com/reverend-billy/>

32. “Rev Billy Biography”, <https://revbilly.com/reverend-billy/>

33. From private conversation with author (2020).

34. “Savitri D biography”, <https://revbilly.com/savitri-d/>

35. “Stop Shopping Choir Biography”, <https://revbilly.com/stopshopping-choir/>

36. “Laura Newman, *The End of the World* (Youtube video, 2012)”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oj1XByBvOTQ>

37. “John Jordan, Think like a Forest (2016)”, http://field-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/field_03_3_Think_Like_a_Forest.pdf

38. “Platform is different. We combine art, activism, education and research in one organisation. This approach enables us to create unique projects driven by the need for social and ecological justice”. <https://platformlondon.org/>

39. “Reclaim the Streets” <https://beautifultrouble.org/case/reclaim-the-streets/>

40. The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination website is down, but a very good, and still active Facebook group can be accessed here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/58916936705/>

41. “Liberate TATE”, <https://www.liberatetate.org.uk/>

42. Mel Evans, *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts*, (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

43. “John Jordan”, http://field-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/field_03_3_Think_Like_a_Forest.pdf

44. “John Jordan”, http://field-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/field_03_3_Think_Like_a_Forest.pdf

45. Freely adapted from “John Jordan”, http://field-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/field_03_3_Think_Like_a_Forest.pdf

46. “Platform”, <https://platformlondon.org/>

47. Mel Evans, then of Platform, authored this work. Date unknown.
48. François Laruelle, 'A New Presentation of Non-Philosophy' (2004) <http://www.onphi.net/download/pdf/32> last accessed July 19, 2019.
49. A term I've taken from Platform's project the Carbon Web. See <https://platformlondon.org/about-us/platform-the-carbon-web/>
50. Gilles Deleuze, "the history of philosophy is abstract in the second degree since it does not consist of talking about abstract ideas, but of forming abstract ideas about abstract ideas", <http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/ABC2.html#anchor700599>
51. Deleuze's satirical term for hermeneutics, wittily discussed by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca in 'Deleuze's bodies, philosophical diseases and the thought of illness' (unpublished paper presented at *Philosophy on Stage 3*, 2011).
52. John Jordan, 'On Creative Activism' (ND), <https://www.robynhambrook.com/john-jordan.html>
53. Laura Kern, *New York Times*, November 16, 2007 'Review of VanAlkemade, 'What Would Jesus Buy?' (Warrior Poets, DVD, 2005)': <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/16/movies/16buy.html>
54. John Vidal, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/nov/25/rev-erend-billy-jpmorgan-chase-toad-protest-talen>
55. Lisa Friedman, 'Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Wins a Victory in Dakota Access Pipeline Case' *New York Times*, March 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/climate/dakota-access-pipeline-sioux.html>
56. <https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/revbilly>
57. François Laruelle, *Introduction to non-marxism* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
58. Anne-Françoise Schmid related this episode to the author and Niamh Malone while driving Schmid and Laruelle to Crosby beach, Liverpool, UK, in February 2018 after the Art Disarming Philosophy symposium closed.

Chapter 10

The Generative Tone

Musical Disruptions of Philosophy's Tissue

Steven Shakespeare

INTRODUCTION: MUSICAL ORGANIZATION OR TISSUE

According to Laruelle, 'Non-philosophy is doubled more globally by a musical organization or tissue . . . music is the placenta that has to give birth to non-philosophy'.¹ These are remarkable statements, which seem to resonate with the vitality and ambivalence of music for the project of philosophy. What can they tell us about the way non-philosophy seeks to disarm the pretensions of philosophical mastery?

This essay does not aim to focus on Laruelle's own handling of music in his texts, but rather on the idea of this musical 'doubling' of non-philosophy. It seems clear that, if there were to be a non-philosophical engagement with music, it would try to do something different from a philosophy *of* music. Rather than a thought of or about music, non-philosophy would think from music as Real. Music would be, not the object of a thinking directed from elsewhere, but itself the vibrancy, the tissue of a way of thinking. Perhaps, given the essential impermanence of musical sound, non-philosophy fosters a theoretical abandonment of sight and permanence for the speculative and experimental work of what passes and passes away.

Laruelle's specific reference to music quoted above concerns the stages of his published work over the course of five decades. On several occasions, he has distinguished between phases of his project, mapping the unfolding of his intellectual journey. So is his invocation of music merely a metaphor for this development? A development that is analogous to musical form, perhaps in the ancient terms of ratios producing resonance, the intertwining lines of counterpoint or the structured sonata form which allowed a 'narrative' extension of for the exposition and development of musical themes?

Any of these options could be explored. But they would seem to tie non-philosophy to a very particular conception of musical form, while reducing music to providing an abstract framework, or perhaps simply a convenient but inessential metaphor for a complex body of work.

However, Laruelle's words suggest something more: music as both an incarnate doubling of non-philosophy (its tissue) and music as the nourishing source of non-philosophy, the condition of its birth. Rather than reducing music or the sonorous in general to an appendage of thought and discourse, music is here invoked in its immanent, fleshly sufficiency. That might sound odd: music as the most temporal and ephemeral of media seems to escape the permanence and gravity of the plastic arts. However, Laruelle's aside opens a different way of hearing music: as intellectual, or gnostic vision (the doubling of non-philosophy); and as the resonance of flesh and blood (what we might call the maternal/material debt of all thinking).

In this expanded sense, music appears as both theoretical (in a sense yet to be determined) and incarnate – a way in which the unconditioned immanence of the Real resounds in, forms and deforms bodies. Such a possibility allows us to engage with and resist what philosophy has done with music, for philosophy has always tried to conceptualize and determine it for its own ends. Across a complex history, powerful traditions in philosophy have understood music in terms of its relation to cosmic harmonies or as a mute expression of human spirit. In each case, it resounds only after or under the work of reason.

At this point, the informed reader might well object that this is an unfair and inaccurate portrayal of philosophy of music as actually practised. Even in what has just been said, the diverse nature of philosophical thinking on music has been invoked: from Platonism to nineteenth-century idealism, from theories of music which emphasize its sensory or expressive nature, to those which are more 'idealist' or formalist. Added to that, contemporary philosophers of music are often mindful of this complexity and reluctant to putting forward fixed theories of what music 'is'. Rather, they see their enterprise as a process of critical questioning. As Wayne Bowman puts it:

Music philosophy is not so much a quest for the universal or the definitive as it is a dynamic, ongoing process with no single point of arrival. Instead of explaining, interpreting, comparing, and evaluating, contemporary philosophy increasingly seeks to describe, to engage in a grounded endeavor whose validity is consensual, local, and perhaps only temporary. Potential fallibility or partiality of purview are not philosophical flaws. Nor are philosophies necessarily the kind of things that supersede and overcome each other. Nor is the continuing evolution of philosophical thought invariably a matter of right replacing wrong, of old wearing out and being replaced by new. It is more a matter of orienting and reorienting, of refining, of assessing and reassessing descriptive adequacy

in light of musical practices that are radically plural, diverse, divergent, and constantly changing.²

There is a potential irony at work in non-philosophy: in seeking to avoid philosophical definition and decision, it performs its own act of decision, reducing philosophy itself to a timeless essence. However, it still draws attention to the stakes of the philosophical endeavour, as symptomatic of broader problems with the way worlds of meaning and sense are constructed. Even in its diversity, and even when practised as a tentative, critical process of exploration, philosophy still has a tendency to take music as an object of thought, and to be guided by questions of its nature, purpose and value. There is an implicit decision made here as to the nature and possibility of the philosophical task, which is one of defining the real and the worthwhile. Note that Rowman himself argues that the aim of philosophy of music – however partial its achievements – remains the elucidation of ‘beliefs as to what constitutes good or proper musical practice: beliefs whose formulation and examination are explicitly philosophical undertakings’.³ Philosophy underwrites a kind of metaphysical and epistemological propriety.

Consider this statement from Lewis Rowell’s introduction to music philosophy:

The musical experience itself is a form of knowledge and a means of seeking truth. Music presents being to us in audible form, and our apperception of that being (insofar as it corresponds to the presentation) is a means of obtaining valid knowledge – of the world, of experience, of ourselves. The being of music is a being we can initiate, control, and terminate; with it we demonstrate that we are thinking and feeling creatures, perhaps the purest proof of our humanity.⁴

It affirms that music itself is a form of knowledge; at the same time, it insinuates into this form of knowledge criteria of validity, rooted in a questionable anthropocentric self-affirmation: humanity as the measure of the world.

Mindful of this complex situation, this essay attempts to resist any philosophical destiny imposed upon music while attending to the capacity of music to generate theoretical understanding and give birth to ecstatic affect. In other words, it will be argued that music is the milieu in which theory is not subordinated to disembodied and atemporal ideas of reason. It is not a rationally inert substratum which requires an initial philosophical decision about its status to produce and regulate its capacity for meaning. Instead of this attempt at conceptual mastery, I am attempting the mutation of philosophy by music. What might arise when philosophy is transposed through music as contingently performed, rather than inscribed into a timeless harmonic theory? What happens when the modalities by which philosophy attempts

to determine music are employed as experimental materials to open new possibilities for attention, rather than as fixed conceptual frameworks which determine what can be said and thought? At issue here is what Andrew Bowie calls ‘music’s resistance to philosophy’ – without implying thereby that music lacks meaning or thought.⁵

This essay will therefore experiment with a non-philosophical stance, remembering that this is not the same as an *antiphilosophy*. Rather, it suspends philosophical decisions taken about the nature of the Real, since it views all thinking and being as radically immanent *to* the Real. However, I am not thereby endorsing a global reduction of philosophy to a single structure of thinking-as-mastery, nor denying that there are modes of philosophical thinking which themselves (at least in part) refuse such structures.

Ultimately, this approach allows us to encounter music not as object of thought, but as a mode, expression or (to use Laruelle’s parlance) a clone of the unconditioned Real which is inaccessible to conceptual mastery. A true – that is, adequate – theory of music is not a dissection of melody, rhythm and harmony, not a theoretical grasp of an object. Rather it is music’s theory, the capacity of music to generate a resonant, ecstatic evocation of the unconditioned as a Real which is not pre-defined by the division of the world into poles (of subject-object, for instance, or immanent–transcendent).

STRUCTURE

The structure of the rest of essay is as follows. I will begin by reflecting on the characterization of music in texts by Plato and Plotinus. This will allow us to take the measure of how music is associated with the soul, moral character, the organization of the world and the One. Non-philosophy will help us take a distance from these formulations which subordinate music to a philosophical framework, while extracting some possibilities for thinking music more radically.

I will then examine the very different way in which music is associated with the nature of reality and the absolute in post-idealist thinking. I will again seek to detach the speculative possibilities of this thought from a domineering philosophical narrative about the Real, aided by reference to Schelling’s philosophy of art.

Finally, I will engage with the work of Fred Moten and Marie Thompson, on radical black music and the nature of noise, respectively. Moten and Thompson allow us to reconceive music as material resistant to theoretical grasp, while offering a transcendental possibility of surviving in and seeing the world for what it is, and for reconstructing it. In different ways, they question the relegation of music to serving a certain conception of the human,

while calling for attention to singular, material histories and bodies in combination. In calling us back to hear what has been obscured by theorization, they foster an attentive gnosis – a knowing-without-conceptual-knowing, or knowing-without-grasping – of the Real.

These three moments are not related to each other dialectically, in a narrative of increasing scope, depth and synthesis. That would be to impose a philosophical teleology on the material. In addition, there is undoubtedly a contingency and selectivity about this way of presenting things, constrained as we are by space. Significant contributions – such as those by Schopenhauer and Adorno – can only be skated over at best. However, I submit that the structure makes a performative ‘sense’. Each moment offers variations on the speculative theme of music understood as the resonance of the unconditioned: that which precedes and exceeds conceptual meaning, while making that meaning possible. At the same time, each element of the structure contributes a different sort of material. This allows us to play with philosophical ideas of metaphysical ultimacy and harmony, of temporality and succession, of bodies and resonance, without having to decide an order of priority between them.

Alongside this structure, something else will resound: you are invited to accompany your reading with a listening exercise. Instructions for this are in the following section. Of course, the author has no control over whether or how you do this, and what will appear in the text will be a series of citations and glosses on the music: a textual clone of the corrosive, interruptive force the music gives to be thought. The music itself remains off the page.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR READING/ LISTENING/REVERBERATING

Sound that becomes music preserves the instant of the scream and expresses it in the expressive construction of the instrumental voice. The word also preserves this sound. The word preserves in its memory the instant of the scream that marks the passing of the sound into music, thus preserving it in the instant that precedes its own symbolic and conceptual opening.⁶

Turn on your favourite medium of musical reproduction. Access the 2009 album *Revelations of the Black Flame* by 1349 on the Candlelight label. In advance of each of the following sections of the essay, we will engage tangentially with a couple of tracks from this album in sequential order.

1349 is a Norwegian black metal band. I have chosen this as a soundtrack because I submit that black metal is a venture in metaphysics via sound. Since its origins in the 1990s in Norway, it has championed negation while offering a ‘hideous gnosis’: a dark unknowing which is also a knowing of the absolute

decay of all things, the horror in all things, the unconditional affirmation of an unconditional impurity.⁷ It is musical blasphemy and the paradoxical mystical ecstasy of knowing one's own divine oblivion.

For some, it is associated with nativism, a rejection of Christendom and modernity in favour of a return to old European traditions of blood and soil. And so it has courted far right and racist politics. That is and will always be a part of its trajectory and its temptation. But I maintain that its sovereign denial of comforting illusions most truly lead, not to racial purity, but to an ecology of decay, an anarchism of powers and an atmospheric performance of ego-dissolution.⁸

For some years now, black metal theory has grown up alongside the music: or rather, as an outgrowth and mutation of the music. Black metal theory has never been a theory applied to black metal from the outside, by a philosophical decision which places the principles of aesthetics and its genres in their proper place. It is black metal as theory, as the gnostic seeing-more-than-saying which views and inhabits the constructed world as inevitably fallen.

As Scott Wilson puts it:

Black metal and academic discourse are no doubt heterogenous and cannot be conjoined, but in bringing one into proximity with the other it is essential that this clash should result less in the academic illumination of black metal than in the blackening of discourse itself wherein the forces of black metal restore some of the powers and dangers of discourse which the procedures of academic institutions seek to ward off and master by controlling and delimiting them.⁹

More gnomically, Nicola Masciandaro writes: 'Not black metal. Not theory. Not not black metal. Not not theory. Black metal theory. Theoretical blackening of metal. Metallic blackening of theory. Mutual blackening. Nigredo in the intoxicological crucible of symposia'.¹⁰

Black metal theory thus affirms a mutual blackening of music and theory, in which philosophy *of* music is disarmed, while an ecstatic metaphysics of the disruptive, insurrectionary effect of the Real is performed. It is experimental in form, and it refuses analytical distinctions between music and the theory that 'thinks' music. As Edia Connole has remarked, black metal theory is thus non-philosophy *avant la lettre* – or, to be precise, prior to substantive engagement with Laruelle in the English-speaking work.¹¹ Both speculative and abrasive, black metal/black metal theory does not see a representation of the Real, but views the world as if emerging from the empty tomb of the death of transcendence.

Listen then, to the soundtrack of non-philosophy, through an album which itself disturbed and divided black metal purists: an experiment, perhaps a

failed one, in stretching time and mixing tones beyond the sonic world of ‘true’ black metal. Perhaps something will be revealed there, in the black flame that sheds no light.

Count the tracks as we approach each section of the essay ‘proper’, where the scholar plies his trade in concepts. Count them, though there is only One thing that is being said, only One . . . *Musica est exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi.*¹²

SOUNDTRACK PART ONE: 1349, REVELATIONS OF THE BLACK FLAME

Track One: Invocation (lyrics in italics)

The album opens with a protracted scream.

In the beginning was the scream. It goes on and on
and on. It opens a path downwards.

At the opening of the world, the opening of the mouth of hell.

The scream that pours out is the uncreation of the world, its dissolution. At the same time, it is the origin of all things. The chance and ruin of structure and harmony.

Tissue stretches and tears (it was never whole).

This music is clone of the Real in its oscillation between the lines that are the emergence of signification and the human, the persistence of the scream as nature’s pain and joy.

They are many, these screams. Intertwined, without harmony, a sonic tide that builds and writhes.

They are nowhere. There is no point of view. You cannot hear them all. Sound beyond the audible.

They are Real.

Let the darkness fall, arouse my soul and reignite the Black Flame

Scream becomes pulsing, ragged ambience. A beat. A machine gun riff marches in. We think it will tip over into speeding arpeggio, but a halting, barking rhythm takes over. Something obstructs the flow.

We are offered revelation, sleep will end, mysteries will be uncovered. *Aletheia*: truth beckons.

And yet this movement through the scream takes us to darkness. To the relighting of a black flame which reveals nothing but the abyssal churning of hell.

The music and lyrics clone movement of the Neoplatonic One: the ineffable origin from which everything descends and to which is constantly longs to re-ascend. But here the movement is reversed: from depths we climb only to fall back under the moon, under the silvery decay of the guitar’s screams, back to the trauma before words, ungrounding all concepts.

When he sings ‘fall’, it is stretched out of all shape and coherence.

Track Two: Serpentine Sibilance

Hear the snake speak, hear the snaking of words, the sibilant seduction. No longer a human word. No longer a dialogue under a horizon of shared meaning, a Thou that fits the I.

The riff circles, slowly; there is nothing snake-like here only tearing apart of form and content. The fundamental paradox is announced:

There is no God, and we are his prophets

And yet, at another level, the song is a perfect identity: alliteration without promise of meaning, a serpentine sibilance whose spectral fingers unweave time. Yes, time is undone, reaped by harvesters heralded as unconditional. The song tries to speed up before the end and collapses under its own weight.

MUSIC AND DOUBLING OF THE REAL

In the *Laws*, Plato sets out the care that has to be taken with teaching music. Music, he claims ‘needs more caution than any of the arts’. Those who use it without care debase their moral standing. The difficulty in recognizing this is that human poets make errors which the Muses themselves would never commit:

The Muses would never make the ghastly mistake of composing the speech of men to a musical idiom suitable for women, or of fitting rhythms appropriate to the portrayal of slaves and slave-like people to the tune and bodily movements used to represent free men. . . . Nor would they ever mix up together in one production the din of wild animals and men and musical instruments and all kinds of other noises and still claim to be representing a unifying theme.¹³

The confusion created by these errors is at its height in instrumental music unaccompanied by words, which exhibit a ‘fondness for speed and dexterity (as in reproducing the noises of wild animals)’.

What is striking here is the way music is connected to the proper definition of the human, which in turn is structured by a fitting distribution of sound, gesture and character between female and male, slave and free, nonhuman and human. Unaccompanied music represents the biggest risk to this proper order. It is ungoverned by the logos, and therefore lacks form and meaning. Lacking reason, it flirts with both animality and mechanism.

The Greek preoccupation with pitch ratios to define harmonies suggested a link between music and fundamental mathematical principles of order, at its height in Pythagoreanism. What is striking in Plato’s account is the way that this abstract notion of harmony is mapped on to the boundaries which define the human. The human emerges, or resounds, out of a sequence of musical

decisions. Questions of gender, slavery, animality and mechanism are rooted in a sonorous world order. Everything is kept in place.

At the same time, in the hands of 'clownish' human poets, music threatens to slip free of the logos. In wordlessness, dissonance or inappropriate melodies and gestures, it evokes hybrid realities which destabilize the human essence. If music doubles and expresses the cosmic order, it also provides the raw materials for disorder and chaos. The generative potency of music needs to be reined in by a philosophical discourse which assigns melody and rhythm to the governance of logic, a logic which patrols the borders of the human.

It is interesting to compare this account of music with its more famous appearance in *Phaedo*, as an image of the human soul.¹⁴ In the dialogue, the analogy of the soul with the attunement of a lyre is put forward by Simmias. It acts as an objection to Socrates's case for the immortality of the soul. If the soul stands to the body as attunement stands to a lyre, then the soul is only a product of bodily dispositions and cannot exist without them. The argument is rejected by Socrates on the basis of the previously established theory of recollection (which purports to show that the soul pre-exists the body), but further reasons are added. The nub of these is that, unlike attunement, a soul is not a matter of changeable degree (i.e., you either have a soul or you do not, you cannot have a partially tuned soul!); and, crucially, that a soul *governs* the body, and so cannot be a product of it.

The case against seeing the soul as attunement is echoed by later thinkers, ones notably as different as Aristotle and Plotinus. For all Aristotle resists the dualism of Plato's doctrine of the soul, he holds that the soul must be a causal principle, a finite equivalent of the unmoved mover.¹⁵ Plotinus offers a list of reasons to dismiss attunement theory, which he considers mistakenly reductionist and materialist. Again, crucial here is the argument that the soul is prior to and rules the body. Moreover, the tuning of a lyre requires some agent to bring it about, so there would have to be a soul before the soul. Plotinus cannot countenance this division of soul from its own ground, since he is committed to the ultimate unity of soul, despite its illumination of matter.¹⁶

Across the examples we have seen so far, there is a strong association of the soul with governance and right ordering, both of the soul-body relationship itself and the human sphere more generally, in both its internal hierarchies and external boundaries. Music can be a secondary expression of such ordering, but it by no means possesses prior reality or originary causal power of its own (its power, in the *Laws*, is of giving morally appropriate pleasure or else debasing morals, but the moral principle is external to it).

This seems like unpromising material. However, there is a principle here which is suggestive of a path leading beyond this philosophical marginalization of music: the rejection of attunement.

The argument here is tricky, so let me try to set it down more abstractly before fleshing it out.

1. Platonism rejects attunement as a model for the soul.
2. It does so in order to maintain the priority of soul over matter and of philosophy over the Real.
3. One effect of this is the expulsion of mundane music from serious philosophical consideration. Music is without logos. (Note how this Platonic move works hand in glove with a reductionist one: music is merely the subjective expression of emotion, without conceptual or moral content. Note how Platonism and latter-day empiricism often work as mirror images of the philosophical decision.)
4. However, this still leaves a place for music as metaphor or analogy for the harmony that ideally exists within the cosmos and between the soul and its ground. Music in this sense is given a certain dignity, but only if it keeps its place in a hierarchy, at the top of which sits rational contemplation of the Real.
5. Although attunement has been rejected as a model for the soul itself, it thus continues to serve as a model for the Real.
6. If, however, we take the rejection of attunement as a principle and generalize it, we destabilize this philosophically mediated hierarchy. Philosophy undoes itself. In other words, we can extract from the Platonic rejection of attunement a more generic axiom: the refusal of prioritization per se, so that there is no privileged discourse or principle which commands and comprehends reality, ordering it towards a determined goal.
7. The consequences of this would be as follows: (a) The Real is not subjected to any model which claims to comprehend it. It is foreclosed to any strategy which prioritizes conceptual thought. (b) The analogical basis for the hierarchy between art and philosophy, and between specific art forms, is suspended. Such a hierarchy has often worked to the detriment of music, especially instrumental (and so a-logical) music. (c) We are free to use the materials of philosophy of music differently: to allow music and philosophy to mutate one another.

The intention here is to treat music on its own terms. Such a statement might immediately conjure notions of avant-garde music, especially the atonal music which refused to follow pre-defined rules for key signatures. Atonal music does not accept the structure of a 'home' key, or the associated notion that a musical piece finds resolution by returning to its source, and articulates itself melodically and harmonically within tonal constraints.

Atonal music proposes freeing music from such teleology. It might appear the ideal candidate for a 'non-philosophical music'.¹⁷

However, this essay does not follow that approach, for the reason that it introduced another genre-hierarchy into our analysis of music. Since the Real is foreclosed to comprehension, it is not that any particular genre of music is better equipped than any other to 'correspond' to it. Moreover, a turn to the avant-garde reintroduces another modernist hierarchy, which holds both tonal classical music and popular music as lower art forms (remember Adorno's contempt for jazz). Non-philosophy, in contrast, offers a democratization between genres.

This is not to suspend all judgement about music but to refocus those judgements on the worldly effects and interventions of musical works rather than global ones about musical genres, arranged in analogical hierarchies ascending towards the Real. It allows a decolonizing of musical judgement, without exoticizing (as in the emergence of 'world' music as a genre) or sentimentalizing and appropriating the subcultures around jazz, R&B, soul, hip hop, grime, drill, and so on. It is partly in a bid to avoid the image of the white theorist chasing authenticity that black metal provides the soundtrack for this essay. The key is that for non-philosophy, musical works do not wait for theory to speak for them. Nor do they exist in a purely 'expressive' or 'emotive' realm devoid of theory. No doubt there is music which simply serves a preordained meaning, whether it is obviously didactic or more subtly ideological; and the music industry also shapes and decides the world of music in its drive for profit and image. However, musical works can exercise an insurrectionary effect on systems of totalization or false resolution (including capital) and do not need to be atonal, avant-garde or unpopular to do so. They break open new possibilities of affect, insight and knowledge.

Ironically, this frees us to re-engage with the more speculative aspects of classical musical philosophy on another basis. Rather than being a pale reflection or subordinate moment of the Absolute, music is its own singular 'absolute' – it is absolved of the requirement or imposed destiny of representation. In this sense, it is a 'clone' of the Real: its singular effect within the world. This is not to deny that music is a contingent and historically located practice; its absoluteness consists in its identity, its own being or affirmation of itself, not in it being reducible to a timeless or all-encompassing quality.

This allows us to read the language used in classical speculation differently: 'expression' or 'representation', for example, becomes non-hierarchical. Each art or discourse 'reduplicates' the Real in that it becomes a fount of theoretical experimentation, an 'unmoved mover' no longer assigned a place by philosophical/political decisions.

Take the way in which Plotinus writes of mundane music as a subordinate material expression of the ‘unheard’ harmony of the cosmos:

And harmonies unheard in sound create the harmonies we hear, and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind: for the measures of our sensible music are not arbitrary but are determined by the Principle whose labour is to dominate Matter and bring pattern into being.¹⁸

This cosmic ordering is harmonious, and thus,

out of this concordance rises as it were one musical utterance: the music, the harmony, by which all is described, is the best witness to this truth. Such a consonance can have been produced in one only way: The All must, in every detail of act and experience, be an expression of the Supreme, which must dominate alike its periods and its stable ordering and the life-careers varying with the movement of the souls, as they are sometimes absorbed in the highest, sometimes in the heavens, sometimes turned to the things and places of our earth.¹⁹

In this way, music offers ‘the earthly representation of the music there is in the rhythm of the Ideal Realm’.²⁰

For Plotinus, it is clear that any actual music falls short of the ‘unheard’ cosmic music, and that music which takes place physically and temporally must find its destination in the One. However, let us seriously consider the idea that the Real is foreclosed to thought. This means not only that no thought is adequate to the Real, but, more radically, that it bears no relation to any thought (since it encompasses all relations). The Real cannot be located, relativized, related to, although the All is ‘in’ the Real. The flip side of this is that no phenomenon finds its telos in the Real in any straightforward sense. The Real cannot be the final destination for anything – a place to move towards or arrive at. In a sense, we are always already ‘in’ it, if we accept that this language of being ‘within’ is also misleading if it implies the Real is some sort of container for realities.

How does this apply to music? It does not mean that music cannot have its own internal logics and teleologies; however, none of these are dictated by ontological necessity. This frees music to be the successive and ephemeral medium it is, without prejudice to its relation to the Real. If music does not capture a cosmic harmony, it nevertheless articulates the force of time and resonance through the ways it sets up the internal contrasts necessary for harmony, melody and rhythm, and the way these are contested and complicated (e.g., by dissonance or atonality). The inherent temporality and ephemerality of music is not a problem to be resolved in a more permanent medium or monument: it carries within it an affirmation that the passing moment and noise of life is as real as any other phenomenon. Music can redeem us from

the Platonic demand to find our justification and home in another world apart from flesh and blood and time.

In this inversion of Plotinus, temporality, ephemerality and incarnation are no longer subordinate. The concept of the One is made musical. But this does not mean that the Real is captured within any musical phrase or form, for the concept of the One is a clone of the Real which refuses all prioritization of one area of lived experience over others. Rather, the One is *performed* musically.

This musical performance of the One has several aspects:

1. Abstraction: The possibility of music is in part defined by mathematically specified ratios, even when it departs from such; moreover, music is not intrinsically tied to the possibility of representation, or the expression of pre-existing states of feeling.
2. Concretion: Music exists virtually as a composition/recording, but only exists in actuality as performed. Its 'transcendental' possibility and concept can neither define nor predict what it will be when performed; although the manner of its performance is never entirely separated from its context.
3. Non-authenticity: Performance here is an elastic concept which can encompass technological reproduction and manipulation, citation/sampling, improvisation, and so on. There is no obvious 'authenticity' of musical expression.
4. Polyvalent: Music is thus at once abstract, virtual, incarnate in specific socio-economic-political contexts, composed, unpredictable.

In Neoplatonism, the One is generative; it initiates all being and signification but remains beyond conceptual capture. My argument is that music shares in, or performs that condition: it is generative of new realities and possibilities of signification, as they are unfolded out of a virtual and abstract formal matrix; its individual expressions arise in and through traditions and contexts of musical labour and production, but have a capacity to remake and resituate the conditions of their production – a capacity which depends on the decisions, improvisations and struggles of actual people and communities. Musical temporality is not simply a matter of music taking place 'in' time as in an abstract container or form; music actively reshapes time, resignifying it, opening out new possibilities of temporal experience. In these ways, music is generative, transcendent and ineffable while simultaneously being worldly, embodied and relational. It is an experience of the outside of the 'world', where the world equates to the organized structures of power, meaning and discourse available to us, and which define our being and humanity.

Performance becomes the identity of the clone as a radical experience of the real. Thus, Plotinus envisages the end of all striving: ‘We are ever before the Supreme – cut off is utter dissolution; we can no longer be – but we do not always attend: when we look, our Term is attained; this is rest; this is the end of singing ill; effectively before Him, we lift a choral song full of God [χορείαν ἔνθεον]’.²¹

In this sense, music can perform a cloning of the Real. A new relationship between music and speculative thought becomes possible, in which the former is no longer subject to the latter. To indicate where this might lead, the next section will look in more detail at the nature of this cloning process, and how it might relate to themes in idealist and post-idealist speculative thought on music.

SOUNDTRACK PART TWO: 1349, REVELATIONS OF THE BLACK FLAME

Track Three: Horns

A bass drone and, breathing over it, the persistence of the polyvocal scream. It ends in decay and feedback. An exposure to the wonder/horror of being in becoming.

Track Four: Maggot Fetus . . . Teeth Like Thorns

The track stutters and barks – drums and guitars along with the voice, a black/thrash metal refusal of melody which scrapes on the ear. The guitar solo is a twisted monster.

Lyrically, the song seeks to replace the soul with rot, with a consuming sickness or parasite that devours from within – ‘*the ghost in the carcass worm . . . Like a vulture devouring from deep inside*’.

SPECULATIVE SOUNDS

Music, I am suggesting, clones the Real. The clone is a performative process whereby signifying material is understood as determined by and so ‘mimicking’ the Real without subjecting it or representing it. In developing this idea, I take inspiration from Katerina Kolozova’s reflections on how metaphysical concepts of the Real operate as clones. It is worth quoting her at length:

The radical metaphysical concept, one which is not the product of the discipline of thought called philosophy but a direct clone of an experience of exteriority, the horror and wonder of being-in-the-out-there, being-before-the-other, the

horror and wonder facing the difference between living and non-living entities, the horror of the indifference of the non-living other and of the out-there, the horror and wonder before nature as the out-there that is both living and non-living, acting as a living non-entity or the real alive: all of these ideas are direct clones of the experience of the real or of the real insofar as this experience is a non-reflected real. And they all resort to language, but they can dispense with it, too. They precede every utterance yet urge all utterances. They therefore initiate and require signification. The more formal the signification, the more narratively minimal and the more precise the cloning of the experience of the real in the form of metaphysical wonderful horror. The path begins with the concrete, ascends to the highest possible abstraction – and, to arrive there, narration is indispensable – only to reach the most minimal expression that signifies (i.e. mediates) with the highest possible exactness the pure form of the real or the clone.²²

The experience of the real is one of an exteriority: a ‘metaphysical wonderful horror’. The way that music offers a clone of this experience can be understood in a number of ways: as the sonorous instantiation of harmonic ratios which precede human subjectivity and sense; as a form of signification which precedes or exceeds language; as an essentially performed and temporal medium which defies capture by ideal, atemporal concepts. And, of course, specific musical genres and pieces can make this performance of the exterior concrete in radically different ways – from a Palestrina mass to *The Rite of Spring*, from black metal to drill and grime.

In a sense, then, there is something quite abstract and formulaic about what music is and can do, and Kolozova highlights the importance of abstraction in the creation of the clone. Abstraction is an act of leave-taking, reducing the illusory solidity of the world to formal elements. However, abstraction is not a goal in itself, another Platonic ideal to aim for. It is a way of subtracting concrete expressions or performances from the ‘world’ – the organized system of finalities and roles and powers which seeks to organize the known and the knowable, and to dictate which performances are legitimate.

The clone mimics the non-relationality, the non-worldliness of the real, while having its own identity. Jonathan Fardy puts the point well:

[Anthony Paul] Smith rightly points out that the non-philosophical clone has neither the status of a copy nor a reflection, but nonetheless carries within itself something of the essence of the Real. That essence is precisely the clone’s non-relation to that which has no relation to anything for it is immanent to everything – the Real.²³

As Kolozova argues, such clones precede and yet initiate and require signification, but they can dispense with language too. Music is not language,

but is not thereby reducible to something non-signifying, non-conceptual or merely emotive.²⁴ We have already seen how this might be applied to the Neoplatonic speculation that music is an echo of cosmic harmony.

In his writing on photography, Laruelle develops an alternative aesthetics which is helpful here. He does not attempt to construct a philosophy of art or of the photograph in particular. There is no sense of determining how the photo relates to or captures the real world. Rather, the photo is a production in its own right – and to write about photography as a non-philosopher is not to decide upon its essence and meaning, but to perform a new work alongside it. In parallel to the photo, to its simple refusal to capture the Real, the non-philosopher writes philo-fiction – a form of writing which deploys philosophical themes and ideas without pretending to use them to define the Real. Philo-fiction is ‘an insurrection against the all-too great superior finalities’ of philosophy. By doing this, non-philosophy bears a kind of witness to photography and to art in general: ‘Art is the world without the world, the entire world but without its over-determining concept’.²⁵

Laruelle radicalizes Kantian aesthetics here, drawing on Kant’s ‘subtractive’ account of what art is. In relation to art, Kant writes of ‘knowledge without concept, a finality without end, a disinterested pleasure’.²⁶ Laruelle claims that this ‘without’ needs to be radicalized. Art is the world – its concepts, goals, pleasures all converge there, but it is ‘without the world’: these concepts, goals and pleasures are no longer ordered to a transcendent ground and telos. Art performs the world, suspends it, exposes it to the insurrectional possibility of its re-expression. Kant’s difficulty in defining the place of beauty and art in his system is suggestive here: art disarticulates the system’s capacity to comprehend the Real. It necessarily exposes itself to something other than philosophy, to the felt, lived experience which outstrips conceptual grasp.

Laruelle writes: ‘Each time in reality one needs a complementary residue of pleasure, of the concept, of the end, but at the level of the clone or objective appearance provided by waves of lived experience or *jouissance*’.²⁷ In other words, art may well offer us experiences and ideas and purposes, but these do not root us in any metaphysical ground (not even a self-sufficient materialist/reductionist one – the idea that art ‘is’ an emotive expression or release, or music ‘is’ sound waves, for instance). Instead, art’s self-sufficiency clones the Real’s foreclosure to any attempt to grasp and position it. Music enacts the intrinsically felt, resonant and performative nature of this cloning.

Given that the radicalization of Kantian aesthetics is thus important to Laruelle, post-Kantian idealism could well be seen as a regression back to a more naïve attempt to determine the essence of the Real and of art in particular. The way in which Schopenhauer, for example, sees in music a direct expression of the striving Will underlying all phenomena – a stance which

influenced Nietzsche's early valorization of the Dionysian nature of music. For the latter, the effect of music in tragic drama is that 'the spell of individuation is broken', and we are returned to a preindividual mythic unity of ecstasy and cruelty.²⁸

For both thinkers, then, music expresses a fundamental reality beyond appearances. While this expression is resistant to any conceptual grasp, this remains a basically metaphysical move.²⁹ As Nietzsche puts it: 'if our feelings were those of entirely Dionysian beings, myth as symbol would remain totally ineffective and unnoticed, and would never for a moment keep us from listening to the re-echo of the *universalia ante rem*'.³⁰ Music sets us within the realm of Reality – the 'thing-in-itself' or ideas in the divine mind (the 'universalia') which precede all particulars, even when those ideas are recast as the churning chaos of undifferentiated and unconditioned Will. In addition, this is of course a one-sided interpretation of music. It assumes that structure and harmony are merely accidental to the underlying identity of what music 'is' – one which, at least in Nietzsche's case, is also significantly gendered, connected with the 'primordial mother' and the drive to return to the 'bosom' of the One.

However, as with the Neoplatonic approach to music noted above, it is possible to extract materials from these approaches which allow us to experience music differently, as a source of thinking and not merely as an object of thought or other modes of philosophical comprehension. Much post-Kantian thought portrays music as the art form in which the division between subject and object is overcome. In addition to the thinkers touched on above, Schelling also makes grand claims for it as an art form. Music, he claims, is 'nothing other than the primal rhythm of nature and of the universe itself'.³¹

Key, however, to Schelling's approach is the method of 'construction'. To put it simply: if we are seeking a philosophy of the absolute – of all of reality, without condition – then we cannot put ourselves in the position of subjects or minds who are representing or cognizing an external object. The split between subject and object is only itself a partial and inadequate image of how thought conceives the world.³² For Schelling, however, thought can only be true to the absolute if it reaches that point of indifference and identity between subject and object. Speculative philosophy must therefore become constructive: in other words, as itself an expression of the absolute, philosophy must express and perform it, not merely describe or analyse it. Philosophy becomes a path of insight, purgation and unification. However, its milieu is entirely immanent: there is no transcendent elsewhere at which to arrive.³³

Art in general, and music in particular, play an important role for Schelling at the time of *The Philosophy of Art* and his *System of Transcendental Idealism* precisely because they accentuate this necessary construction of the absolute. It is true that Schelling can still fall into privileging philosophy and

human consciousness as arbiters of the real. But there are materials in his speculative journey which help detach us from such ‘finalities’.³⁴

When Schelling turns to music, he grounds it on ‘sonority’, in which we discover ‘the informing of the infinite into the finite’.³⁵ Sonority plays this role because it is at once living and active, and yet also a ‘mere dimension in time’.³⁶ Sonority is, in a sense, a physical phenomenon; and yet, in principle, it is distinct from any particular body; it is a mode of the body, a way a body resounds. Sonority is ‘in and for itself’ – it has a real identity – and yet it has no fixed, enduring form. Sonority leads to music because it is a flow of resonant sound: at once coherent and yet allowing individual sounds to be heard.

Music articulates this flow in rhythm and harmony which bring together the unity and multiplicity of sounds together in different ways. Rhythm finds the unity in a differential, temporal series of sounds; harmony expresses the multiplicity within a moment of coexisting resonant pitches. Melody, in its turn, brings rhythm and harmony into union.³⁷

Schelling’s discussion is convoluted and abstracted from particular musical works. It also betrays a typical idealist penchant for dialectics, where opposing principles are unified and transfigured in a third. However, my point is not to claim that Schelling has music ‘right’, but to note the potency of the materials he works with. Music here – in continuity with sound and sonority more widely – has identity in and of itself. It performs a meeting and articulation of philosophical abstractions – unity and multiplicity, the one and the many, the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite – in an impermanent medium. It does not capture the Real, but resounds from the place of the Real and so carries an insurrectionary sonic potential through the world, like the horns and shouts which made the walls of Jericho fall.

Philosophy can only construct its own insurrections, its own ‘sonority’ alongside music, warped and shaken by what is played and sung. In this respect, a certain preference can be given, for *strategic* reasons, to the musical practices of formal experiment and controlled use of dissonance. Nietzsche claims that the Dionysian element of music needs to be kept in check by an ‘Apollonian’ façade of order and beauty: ‘If we could imagine dissonance become man – and what else is man? – this dissonance, to be able to live, would need a splendid illusion that would cover dissonance in a veil of beauty’.³⁸ But music allows the dissonance that is us and our world to break out and break down: a speculative performance of possibility, the trumpet that heralds the end of the world.

In music, like fiction, the purpose is ‘a kind of counter-creation to that of the world’.³⁹ It matters, then, how music is performed, since that is part of the world, or counter-world, we make. As music can serve to reinforce cosmic, theological and political hierarchies, or serve consumer fantasies, it has also enabled the performance of human identities in opposition to systems of

dominance, control and conformity, where the victims of the world perform their own identity, as a choral song ‘full of God’. Anthony Paul Smith’s words about fiction could apply equally to music:

After the creation of a fiction . . . the radical immanence of the One still remains foreclosed. The radical (lived) human remains unrepresentable. But . . . how that radical (lived) human lives in the world, how the radical (lived) human is performed, does matter. . . . Survival is important and should be relatively valued, even though survival always takes place by definition within the limits set by the world and through means derived from the world, even if in-the-last-instance these means remain human. There is, for Laruelle, a way of valorizing fiction: as a force of insurrection that disempowers the world and operates without concern for its parameters.⁴⁰

SOUNDTRACK PART THREE: 1349, REVELATIONS OF THE BLACK FLAME

Track Five: Misanthropy

Piano chords in a minor key. No development or melody.

They drop like gently crashing tombstones.

Then a swelling wave: ominous, industrially slow guitar riffs and synth.

There are no words. All will fall. Hate the prison of humanity!

Track Six: Uncreation

A reversed sample, then the ice cold barbs of atmosphere drip from the guitar.

It all returns: the celebration of death and ruin, the hatred, ‘*maggot-ridden hearts still beating*’. It is decomposition which gives life, not harmony.

And in the chorus, the world dissolved into the bare machinic ‘toneless’ elements of rhythm, lyrically correlated with the cries of the dead. Uncreation promises a revelation, a revelation of the inhuman emerging from nothingness, from the black cloak of death. No: there is no promise here, the maggot always already resides in the heart. No: here the absolute of nothingness is performed.

THE GEOMETRY OF A GHOST

We have been experimenting with speculative philosophy of music, asking what materials might emerge from it to allow us to perform philosophy differently, and to allow it to resonate with and be mutated by musical performance as forces for insurrectionary affirmation and survival. This might appear to be an unlikely course to chart, but notice the role played by a kind of speculative music in the work of contemporary critic Fred Moten:

For the unthinkable, as we can easily show, is not structure in the absence of the center (for we see all the time that this absence is constitutive of structure; this is what Derrida shows); rather, the unthinkable is structure or ensemble thought independently of any tension between itself and some absent origin. The unthinkable is a tone. That tone is to be thought neither as or in its absence (atonality) nor as/in its multiplicity or plenitude (pantonality): it is rather an ensemble tone, the tone that is not structured by or around the presence/absence of singularity or totality, the tone that is not iterative but generative.⁴¹

Here, Moten improvises a thought around Cecil Taylor's 1978 avant-garde jazz album, *Chinampas*. In this work, simply put, Taylor reads poetry over music. But *Chinampas* is anything but a simple work. Spare as it is – voice and stripped down percussion, for the most part – it invites us into another way of listening. Here, it is not only articulated meaning or musical structure that matters, as the way the fragile substance of the voice insists, bends, slides and elides around the sounds it makes, floating on a punctuated, uneven sea of beats.

For Moten, this is not simply an instance of avant-garde performance poetry or free jazz; it is born out of a particular genealogy of black music. The voice, as it twists and turns ('forces of the air/angles of blackness/concealed'), lies in the tradition of black screaming and black resistance.

Right, then, initiate going on, Right, Right, Right o
(‘Garden’)

What cannot be *heard* in this citation is that the sound of the voice is not incidental to the meaning. What cannot be heard is the transcendental and yet material condition of citation's possibility. Here is a material deposit made by a bodily musicality which defies 'exterior commerce' and yet goes on, *insists*. At the same time, it deals out heady doses of mathematical abstraction and mystical illumination ['step into celestial essence']. It is both the incarnate voice of a body marked by the history of chattel slavery and the commerce-defying geometry of mystical abstraction: incarnate but knowing the world, speculatively improvising from the point where angles converge and screams erupt.

The unthinkable is a generative tone: an oscillation between, on the one hand, ratios, structures and scores, and on the other, idiom and improvisation. Taylor performs a strange meeting between abstraction and embodied particularity, which is why Moten asks if we should characterize his poetry as 'the geometry of a ghost'.⁴² Moten gives this account of what Taylor offers us:

A poetry, then, that is of the music; a poetry that would articulate the music's construction; a poetry that would mar and question the idiomatic difference, that is the space-time of performance, ritual and event; a poetry, finally, that

becomes music in that it iconically presents those organizational principles that are the essence of music. The thing is, these organizational principles break down; their breakdown disallows reading, improvises idiom(atic difference) and gestures towards an anarchic and generative meditation on phrasing that occurs in what has become, for reading, the occluded of language: sound.⁴³

Yes, it is sound as performed, idiom as improvised, the haunting ghost of a scream within the abstract structures of music which comprise the clone of an occluded Real. The ritual performance of the poetry is crucial, as it hovers between the beats and the surface grammar of the text. It plays with the racist stereotype of the black person who is poor in world, poor in language, unable to express themselves properly, subject to a non-rational worldview of savage ritual and drums. The unthinkable takes place in a specific context of resistance. Here is a history which gave birth to hip hop and all its siblings.

Moten draws on Saidiya Hartman's work on the tradition of depicting violence against black people in order to recall us to the irreducible *sound* of how blackness is born: how the visual scenes of subjugation are only the echo of the screaming of the tortured slave; or how the famous photograph of Emmet Till, a black teenager lynched in Mississippi in 1955, is an aftershock of the accusation that he whistled at a white woman (perhaps to soothe a speech impediment) and of the cries that accompanied his beating and murder. Moten argues that such screaming is taken by the perpetrators of violence as confirmation of the wild animality in blackness, even though it is produced by the whips and fists of 'civilization'.

For Moten, the scream articulates a meaning, articulates the materiality of the commodity *that speaks*. A slave has no voice, has no tongue; a slave is a thing marked by social death. Nevertheless, the slave speaks, reacts to pain; and it is the power inherent in dehumanizing and objectifying the slave as speaking subject which provides the surplus pleasure for the masters and lynchers. The condition for the possibility of this perverse exchange is also the objection to that exchange: the scream and the song as a refusal to be without voice and feeling, to defy the interdict on being human. Moten quotes Edouard Glissant:

From the outset (that is from the moment Creole is forged as a medium of communication between slave and master), the spoken imposes on the slave its particular syntax. For Caribbean man, the word is first and foremost sound. Noise is essential to speech. Din is discourse. . . . Since speech was forbidden, slaves camouflaged the word under the provocative intensity of the scream. It was taken to be nothing but the call of a wild animal. This is how the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving into it the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise.⁴⁴

This strange hybrid, this material-transcendental condition of possibility, connects with Marie Thompson's reflections on noise. Thompson questions the 'aesthetic moralism' which judges noise as unwanted, bad sound; as something disharmonious and unwelcome. Influenced by Spinoza and Deleuze, she argues that noise is an 'affective relation' which is, intrinsically, neither good nor bad. Thompson therefore disputes the idea, prevalent in communications theory, that noise is associated with the unwanted interference of sounds which detract from the intended meaning of the message. The implication of aesthetic moralism is that noise ought to be eliminated to as close to zero as possible in order for the pristine signal to arrive at its target. In contrast, Thompson argues that noise is the necessary condition for signals to be transmitted. It is not the opposite of meaning and communication, but their necessary compositional presupposition. Moreover, noise is not merely a meaningless accompaniment to or vehicle for meaning, but is itself generative of new possibilities for hearing, attending, meaning, theorizing and being in the world. Noise is the 'ineradicable and constitutive element of any communicational process, and of relations more broadly'.⁴⁵

Drawing on Serres, Thompson writes of noise as a parasitic medium, a third term which connects and reinscribes subjects and objects. Rather than noise being defined by the intentions of a pre-existing subject, or by supposedly objective or natural characteristics of a pre-existing reality, it is a force-relation. Importantly, however, 'it is not assumed that noise affects a listener, or only acts upon, and is perceptible to the "human"'.⁴⁶ Noise is not reducible to simply being an adjunct of human perception.

This is important in the contemporary philosophical context, in which there has been a great deal of discussion of problems with correlationism: the notion that the known only exists in relation to a knower, that the 'in-itself' of objects must be relegated to the status of a fiction or projection, that the real only exists for us as known through our categories of thought and/or language. For 'object-orientated' philosophies, this is an unwarranted anthropocentrism which obscures the independence of real objects. Objects should be seen as having their own being or 'inner life', severed from our forms of knowing and control.⁴⁷

I do not have the space to explore these debates in detail, so let me risk what I think is a valid general remark: that object-orientated philosophies still need to give an account of how an independent Real presses upon and is referred to by our forms of knowing and language. Questions of hermeneutics, relatedness and epistemology do not simply disappear with the critique of correlationism.

In this context, Thompson's approach to noise offers a way forward. Turning again to Serres, Thompson quotes his claim that noise is 'the ground of our perception', 'the ground of our being'. Noise 'is not signal's antithesis

but its precursor: “the originating rumour and murmuring”^{.48} In this sense, noise is the *often inaudible* background vibration and vibrancy out of which sounds emerge. It is the condition for audibility, even as it appears as that which obscures or blocks audibility.

Noise is thus both material and transcendental – a condition of perception and yet irreducible to a subject’s perception. It disrupts the dualisms of either a subject-centred epistemology or an object-orientated speculation. In this, it shares much in common with the aporetic ‘quasi-transcendentals’ of Derrida, those conditions of possibility and impossibility which refuse to be comprehended by either materialism or idealism.

These reflections by Moten and Thompson clearly draw on the tradition of philosophizing about music, and on speculative philosophy more generally. However, they offer a possible way of doing so which does not reduce music to an object, but seeks to hear it as no longer purely separated from noise and dissonance. Moten, in particular, constructs a strange text, as he improvises in response to Taylor and does so in affirmation of the black voice and its anarchic power.

Neither thinker, however, is advocating a return to a pure origin, a ‘pre-musical’ tone which is simply innocent of the effects of sociality and language. Origins are complicated, contested, occluded. That is precisely why they resonate between articulation and what resists articulation in a way which no longer gets circumscribed by philosophy or any other discourse. For Moten, improvisation no longer resounds in the echo chamber of philosophy; it anarchically works through the way our worlds are organized, the way hierarchies are imposed and bodies disposed. Its material is ‘infinite divisibilities and irreducible singularities’.⁴⁹ The idiom of improvisation no longer takes place ‘in the name of an originary creativity or a grounded and telic liberty, but of a free, which is to say, anarchic and atelic, generativity; a reconceptualization or out-from-outside reinstrumentalization of idiom, that allows an improvisation through rather than a deconstructive oscillation within the *aporia* of philosophy’.⁵⁰

Noise/music is not merely the object of our listening. It is what we hear *from*.

SOUNDTRACK PART FOUR: 1349, REVELATIONS OF THE BLACK FLAME

Track Seven: Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun

Progressive rock and black metal? Why not? Pink Floyd and the cusp of the sixties’ dream, between ecstasy and death. It is a slow, bass-heavy whispered dirge, spiralling into the unheard.

There is no original truth. Here, citation and distortion merge, plunge into burning, into something as fiercely unknowable as love. This is song as intoxication and sacrament, a sacrament offered by a ghost.

Love is the shadow that ripens the wine

The absolute proof of black metal's impurity, despite what its fans might think.

Track Eight: Solitude

Funeral doom organ sounds over a rattling, pulsing. Touches of lightness arise from bent and caressed guitar strings. An angle takes flight in the beating wind. It is the singular self, the blackened soul, without recourse to ultimate harmony, persisting in its own being.

CONCLUSION

The materials of a philosophy of music have been reassembled here: a musical organization or tissue which exceeds philosophical grasp. It has been my argument that music operates as clone of the Real. When the teleological ordering of music to philosophical or other finalities is suspended, what remains is not a pure, timeless essence. It is the sonorous performance of flesh and blood, generating form, meaning, dancing, living in ways which are not preordained to form part of the 'world' and its powers.

From speculative philosophy of music, we drew the notion of music mimicking the One. Taking Platonism's rejection of attunement as a model of the soul, we generalized it. Music does not gain meaning second-hand by participating in an ideal world of Forms, or acting as a pale, earthly echo of cosmic harmonies. In its intrinsic temporality and resistance to conceptual capture, music has the capacity to be performed as an insurrectionary potency. Rather than reducing music to being merely emotive or mundane, however, it is precisely this which gives its own identity, its non-relationality as a clone of the Real, and its capacity to disrupt worlds.

This was further explored in connection with post-idealist thought. Here, music can become the rhythm of the world, a way in which the unformed enters into form. Music disputes subject/object dualism and the boundaries of the human. It 'constructs' the absolute via an irreducibly singular felt or lived experience. The juxtaposition of rhythm, harmony and melody, when detached from its dialectical ordering, offers a counter-creation, re-expressing the world through experimentation with structures and dissonances.

Finally, the work of Fred Moten and Marie Thompson offered a contemporary twist on this speculative tradition. For Moten in particular, the scream associated with black resistance, suffering and music offers an alternative 'geometry' or organization of feeling, life and meaning, on which insists

against the strictures of the world. The absoluteness of music is inextricable from its specificity – a temporal and contextual exhalation from living bodies, or else a witness to their dying and absence.

In each case, then, what we have is not music subordinated to a philosophical meaning, but music performed as a clone of the Real, foreclosed to conceptual grasp, yet generative of survival and even insurrection. Music sings and sounds from the Real, in all its exteriority: the tissue of a new body and a new heart.

SOUNDTRACK PART FIVE: 1349, REVELATIONS OF THE BLACK FLAME

Track Nine: At the Gate . . .

Echoes of Black Sabbath: what is this that stands before me?

We are drawn, unutterably slowly, painfully, towards the final unveiling of the truth.
Distortion. Chanted words. Funereal beat. Eyes filled
with darkness, and yet eyes that truly see.

In this liminal space, there is no final deliverance, no visible concept, no grasping of the real which hollows out every concept, which eats up every soul and world from within. There is only suspension, absolute suspension in the void as the music goes too slow to breathe.

What can we see? We are at the gate:

The final destination: let it all begin, here at the gate of . . .

A note alone, on the edge of the world.

NOTES

1. François Laruelle, 'Preface to the English Edition', *Theory of Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), xii–xiii.

2. Wayne D. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

3. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*, 7.

4. Lewis Rowell, *Thinking about Music: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 7. Cf R. A. Sharpe's doubts about the scope of analytical philosophy and his modest proposal that philosophy should be an 'underlabourer' with regard to music; however, the job of philosophy is still seen as clearing away misunderstanding and confusions which block our appreciation of music, as if the primary hindrance to musical appreciation were conceptual. See R. A. Sharpe, *Philosophy of Music: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8. Relevant here is Andrew Bowie's critique of analytical philosophies of music which 'assume that an account of verbal meaning has been established and

this is what allows them to determine the status of musical meaning'; Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy and Modernity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2007), 4. For a recent overview of such theories, see Andrew Kania, *Philosophy of Western Music: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2020).

5. Bowie, *Music, Philosophy and Modernity*, 13.

6. Leonardo V. Distaso, 'On the Common Origin of Music and Philosophy: Plato, Nietzsche, and Benjamin', *Topoi* (2009) 28, 137–142: 140.

7. See Nicola Masciandaro (ed.), *Hideous Gnosis* (CreateSpace, 2010)

8. See my 'Shuddering: Black Metal at the Edge of the Earth' in Scott Wilson (ed.) *Melanecology: Black Metal and Ecology* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014), 99–118; and 'Of Plications: A Short Summa on the Nature of Cascadian Black Metal', *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary* (2012) 6, 1–31.

9. Scott Wilson, 'BASileus philosoPHORum METaloricum' in Masciandaro, *Hideous Gnosis*, 35.

10. Nicola Masciandaro, Epitaph, 'Black Metal Theory' blog, <http://blackmetal-theory.blogspot.co.uk/>

11. Verbal comment at the 'Art Disarming Philosophy' workshop, Tate gallery, Liverpool, 2018.

12. 'Music is a hidden [or occult] arithmetic exercise of the soul, which does not know that it is counting.' Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (letter to Goldbach of 17 April 1712)

13. Plato, *Laws*, trans. Trevor Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 65 [669d].

14. Plato, *Phaedo*, 86a-d.

15. Aristotle, *De Anima* 1. 4. 407b27 – 408a29. See Fred Miller, 'Aristotle's Philosophy of Soul', *The Review of Metaphysics* 53 (1999), 309–337: 327–8 and 332–3.

16. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV:7.8

17. Compare how Fardy connects Adorno's 'atonal philosophy' and anti-expressivism to Laruelle's aesthetics; Jonathan Fardy, *Laruelle and Art. The Aesthetics of Non-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 51 and 70ff.

18. Plotinus, *The Enneads* trans. Stephen MacKenna (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 49 [I.6.3]

19. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 266 [IV.3.12]

20. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 434 [V.9.11]

21. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 545 [VI.9.8]

22. Katerina Kolozova, excerpt from manuscript draft 'Non-Philosophical Metaphysics: Critique of the Bourgeois Ideologies of the Ontologisation of Capitalism, Gender and Culture', *Speculative Heresy*, March 7, 2018. <https://speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2018/03/07/a-new-manuscript-by-katerina-kolozova-on-non-philosophical-metaphysics/>

23. Jonathan Fardy, *Laruelle and Non-Photography*, (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2018), 10.

24. An argument explored at length in Bowie, *Music, Philosophy and Modernity*.

25. François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012), 63.

26. Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 64.

27. Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 64.
28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 99.
29. Cf. 'The appeal of Schopenhauer's position would seem to lie in its elevation of music to real philosophical dignity. In many respects, however, he does precisely the opposite, subordinating music to the limiting effects of a highly contentious meta-physical vision'. Bowie, *Music, Philosophy and Modernity*, 200.
30. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 127.
31. Friedrich Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 17.
32. 'Some of the problems which most concern analytical philosophy of music are themselves generated by the model of a spectatorial subjective mind confronting an objective world of which music is a part'. Bowie, *Music, Philosophy and Modernity*, 8.
33. See Daniel Whistler, *Schelling's Theory of Symbolic Language: Forming the System of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
34. See Jason Wirth, *Schelling's Practice of the Wild: Time, Art, Imagination* (New York: SUNY press, 2015).
35. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, 107.
36. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, 108.
37. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, 109–112.
38. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 143.
39. Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (London: Polity, 2016), 119.
40. Smith, *Laruelle*, 120.
41. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2003), 57.
42. Moten, *In the Break*, 45.
43. Moten, *In the Break*, 44.
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45. Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 62.
46. Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, 54.
47. See, for example, the works of Levi Bryant and Graham Harman.
48. Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, 77.
49. Moten, *In the Break*, 45.
50. Moten, *In the Break*, 46.

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About the Contributors

Annalaura Alifuoco works across performance and academia. Her current practice explores performance (art) as an event that frames interesting collaborations between (so-called) human and nonhuman forms and environments.

Gary Anderson co-organized The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home (www.dissentathome.org) and is Head of Subject in Drama, Dance and Performance Studies at Liverpool Hope University. Recent publications include *10: The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home*, and 'Children Ruin Everything' in *Performance Research: On Children* (2018) which he co-edited with Adele Senior. He also runs 'From HMP to Hope' a radical education project in UK prisons in collaboration with Niamh Malone.

Brad Baumgartner is an Assistant Teaching Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of several works, including *The –Tempered Mid riff* (Schism Neuronics, 2020), *Celeste* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2020), *Quantum Mechantics: Memoirs of a Quark* (The Operating System, 2019), and a forthcoming monograph entitled *Weird Mysticism: Philosophical Horror and the Mystical Text* (Lehigh University Press, 2021).

Edia Connole is a writer, editor, artist, and educator working at the intersections of continental philosophy, cultural studies, and mysticism. She has contributed to philosophical and cultural collections such as *Hebdige and Subculture in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), *Georges Bataille and Contemporary Thought* (Bloomsbury, 2017), and *Metal Music Studies* (Intellect, 2017; 2016). Her books include *Floating Tomb: Black Metal Theory* (Mimesis, 2015), co-authored with Nicola Masciandaro, and *Serial Killing: A Philosophical Anthology* (Schism, 2015), co-edited with

Gary J. Shipley. With Shipley, Connole is currently co-editing the commemorative anthology *Acéphale and Autobiographical Philosophy in the 21st Century* (Schism, forthcoming 2021).

Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca is head of the Department of Theatre & Dance and senior lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Surrey. She is author of *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (2012); editor of *Deleuze and Performance* (2009) and co-editor of *Encounters in Performance Philosophy* (2014) with Alice Lagaay and *Manifesto Now! Instructions for Performance, Philosophy, Politics* (2013) with Will Daddario. She is a founding convener of the professional association, Performance Philosophy (<http://www.performancephilosophy.org>); joint series editor of the Performance Philosophy book series with Rowman & Littlefield and joint editor of the *Performance Philosophy* journal launched in 2015.

Caoimhe Doyle is a designer and theorist who works across video, audio, and interactive mediums. Indicative works include “The Hum: Tales from an Alien Soundscape,” presented at *Extreme Music Hearing and Nothingness*, University of Southern Denmark, Odense (2016), with collaborator Katherine Foyle, or the more recent Not Not: A Podcast, which harnesses pop cultural collisions to spawn theory and other nonsense on a bimonthly basis: topics under disruption include Black Metal Theory, Science Fiction, Xenofeminism, Fungus, and Hyperstition. Doyle has contributed to the edited collections: *Serial Killing: A Philosophical Anthology* (Schism, 2015), *Mors Mystica: Black Metal Theory Symposium* (Schism, 2015), and *True Detection* (Schism, 2014). Her books include *Weaponising Speculation* (Punctum, 2014).

Hannah Lammin is a visiting lecturer in Media at the University of Greenwich and teaches contextual studies at Camberwell College of Arts. Recent publications include ‘Seeing In-Photo: Non-Philosophy as Positive Barbarism’, *Parallax* 24(2); and ‘Krisis as the Scene of Judgement: A Theatre-Fiction for the Generic Human’, *Performance Philosophy* 4(1).

François Laruelle is professor emeritus at the University of Paris X (Nanterre). He is the author of more than 20 books, including *Biography of the Ordinary Man*, *Theory of Strangers*, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, *Future Christ*, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, *Anti-Badiou* and *Non-Standard Philosophy*.

Niamh Malone is senior lecturer in Drama at Liverpool Hope University. She has published in the areas of Applied Theatre and dementia, Global Cities

and Urban Regeneration and is currently co-ordinating 'From HMP to Hope' a radical education project for UK's prisons. She is the founding and managing director of Hope Theatre Company. She is also the creator of the applied theatre project entitled *Forgotten Futures and the City* (est. 2017).

John Ó Maoilearca is professor of Film, Kingston School of Art, Kingston University, London. He has also taught philosophy and film theory at the University of Sunderland, England and the University of Dundee, Scotland, and has published 10 books, including *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (2015).

Alice Lucy Rekab is a visual artist currently based between London and Dublin. Through mimetic, amateur, viral and regional methods of creative collaboration and production she has developed a practice of film, performance and sculpture making. This practice forms part of an investigation into the possibilities and limits of non-standard art both inside and outside the institution.

Anne-Françoise Schmid is honorary associate professor at Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Lyon; adjunct researcher to the Chair of Theory and Methods of innovative Design, Mines ParisTech; and researcher at Poincaré Archives (University of Lorraine).

Steven Shakespeare is professor of Philosophy at Liverpool Hope University. He works in the area of continental philosophy of religion and has written on Kierkegaard, Derrida and black metal theory. He is the author of a number of books, including *Kierkegaard and the Refusal of Transcendence* (2015) and *The Earth Cries Glory* (2019).

Anthony Paul Smith is associate professor in the Department of Religion and Theology at La Salle University. He is the translator of a number of Laruelle's works and the author most recently of *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought*.

