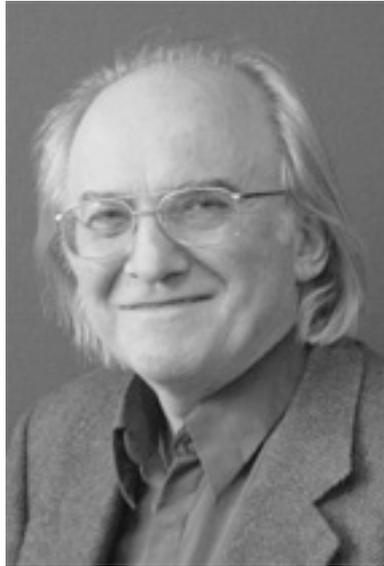


The Project of Non-Marxism: Arguing for “Monstrously” Radical Concepts

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François Laruelle

1. François Laruelle: The Project of Non-Philosophy

The project of François Laruelle’s *non-philosophy* consists in creating a methodology that will enable surpassing dualisms of theoretical thought inevitably and endlessly produced by Philosophy. Laruelle’s first work of his post-Derridian, i.e., of his “non-philosophical period,” *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (1989), is an exhaustive demonstration of the thesis according to which (all western) Philosophy is based on a constitutive split produced by *Reflection* as its defining cognitive tool. Philosophy is trapped, claims Laruelle, in the vicious circle of “auto-mirroring.” One of the axioms upon which the non-philosophical methodology of stepping out of the aporia of auto-reflexivity is based is the “Thought-in-terms-of-the-One.” The latter consists in an epistemic procedure generated by a “posture of Thought” that correlates with the Real of the object of investigation rather than with concepts within philosophical “uni-verses” (= doctrines). In this respect, non-philosophical interrogation (of philosophical phenomena) resorts to copying (“cloning” as Laruelle would put it) the model of modern scientific thinking.

Laruelle's *Théorie des identités* (1992) departs from the presupposition that the object of non-philosophical investigation is always already of "transcendental material" — it is a concept. Still, the ways in which one attempts to think it non-philosophically is not conditioned by another concept that is part of a conceptual construct (a "discourse" or doctrine) and by the concept's position within this (doctrinal) construct. Rather, one thinks the concept in correlation with the (or: its) Real behind the Transcendental (a term that in non-philosophy functions as "Language" or "Discourse") that the latter always already attempts to grasp and reflect (Laruelle 1992, 92-93).

The Real, on the other hand, is the elusive instance that each concept strives — by way of always already failing — to discipline and reduce to meaning, to Language. The Real of non-philosophy is close to yet not identical in meaning with the Lacanian Real; it's rather the result of its (non-)Euclidean twist. Laruelle argues for thinking in correlation with the Real while always already failing to reflect it in its identity-in-the-last instance by way of admitting Thought's radically different structure. Hence, what he calls upon is attempting to reflect the Real "without a mirror," without the pretension that Thought in its constitution could ever be the direct reflection of the Real and vice versa. However, Laruelle insists that Language can *describe* the Real, "which has not at all the same structure as it [the Language], without reflecting it exactly or reproducing it" (Laruelle 1989, 50).

Correlating with the Real is theoretical attuning with the "radical immanence" of the "Identity" (in Laruelle's parlance, referring to the concept-object of investigation), which is postulated as the "real object" of the non-philosophical research. The "real object" of research is a *postulate*: it is from the realm of the Transcendental. The "real object" of non-philosophical theory is conceptual/linguistic reality. And it is not considered *the* direct reflection — in spite of the pretension — of the Real of the "Identity" that is subject to investigation. There is a distinction between "the Real" as "the finitude of Identity" and "the real object of research." The latter, being an extrapolation from the "World" (a "transcendental" Universe or the Discursivity in which we are all inevitably born and live in) contains "theorico-technico-experimental ingredients," claims Laruelle (1992, 93). The two objects, "the Real" and "the real object" of (non-philosophical) research, contain the "the same representations, but of an entirely different status" (*ibid.*). The distinction between

the two, insists Laruelle, “is not epistemological [. . .], but only of-the-last-instance, that is to say, either *transcendental or immanent* [. . .]” (ibid.). Furthermore, it does not imply the distinction between “experience and concept, the concrete and the abstract, the experimentation and the theoretical — nor any of their ‘dialectizations’ or ‘couplings,’” insists Laruelle (ibid.).

It is important that the Thought correlates with the “Real” and it is this process that brings us to the “real object” of investigation. It is the result of acknowledging the Real as the identity-in-the-last instance of that which has been subjected to theoretical investigation, as that to which the cognition succumbs as to the ultimate authority. In sum, this posture of thought suspends relationism, cancels the authority of a discourse to determine the status of the “real object” of investigation by the position it holds inside its own doctrinal universe, and renders the singular — elusive and undisciplined — reality the ultimate authority of Thought.

2. The Project of Non-Marxism

In *Introduction au non-marxisme* (2000) François Laruelle embarks upon an endeavor of creating a methodology that will enable critical re-reading of Marxian doctrine of the kind that brings forth its “source of immanence” and “power (of) thought.” At the same time, claims Laruelle, this sort of critical positioning is of the kind that will also make possible the exact identification of the reasons for the failure of Marxism. What Laruelle argues for is a theoretical positioning that is in its fundament a posture of thought succumbing to its source of immanence or to its immanent source: a thought of the immanent mode (*de manière immanente*) (2000, 10). As a result of its relentless attuning to the immanent, the latter being the intrinsic corrective of the possible detours of falsifications of the first, this is a mode of thinking that enables the most precise identification of the Doctrine’s failure. This is a simplifying summarization of one of the central arguments of Laruelle’s *Introduction au non-marxisme* (INM), namely to establish a thought of immanence which will enable both a satisfactory explanation of “the failure” (*l’échec*) of Marxism and rediscover the potentiality of its thought-force. The “failure” of Marxism that Laruelle seeks to explain is merely a *symptom*; and he refuses to open the question of whether this failure is real or supposed, whether this is a fact — he is interested only in exploring the universality of this *symptom* (2000, 7).

In order to arrive at the source of immanence of Marxism, and in that way establish a relation of fidelity to the genuinely Marxist intentions and “model” (of thought and society change), one has to first evacuate not only the Dialectics but also Materialism, and undertake afresh the elucidation of Marxism’s Determination-in-the-last-instance (or *la Détermination-en-dernière-instance*), argues Laruelle (2000, 10). The formula of Determination-in-the-last-instance (*la Détermination-en-dernière-instance*, hereafter referred to as DDI), exists in the Marxist texts, says Laruelle, but without ever being sufficiently well elucidated (*ibid.*). The DDI of Marxism is also a DDI of the cause of Marxism’s failure. This is not an equation, but a claim that the ultimate and irrevocable reason for the failure of Marxism is inherently related to its “essence,” or rather to its source of immanence. According to Laruelle, there has to be a cause-in-the-last-instance of the failure (2000, 13), namely the one that can be explained but by a determination-in-the last-instance of Marxism.

The determination-in-the-last-instance is dictated by or necessarily correlates with the source of immanence, and the latter, in the context of non-philosophy and of non-Marxism, is always already the Real. This is neither the Lacanian Real nor philosophical realism’s Real, neither an equivalent to the Marxian idea of praxis or matter nor to any other philosophical — by its origin — concept of the Real. And the truth is that in Laruelle’s view any concept of the Real other than that of the non-philosophy is a philosophical one. The Real of non-philosophy is a Real that is foreclosed to Thought but can still, as an instance of its immanence, dictate it. The non-philosophical notion of the Real is neither a materialist nor an idealist one. It cannot be grasped as (or: by) any form of transcendence. The Real of which Laruelle’s non-philosophy speaks is an instance that is immanently and inalterably indifferent to either Thought or Language.

The Real and Thought are unilaterally alien to one another. One cannot establish any form of reciprocity between them. They do not establish any reciprocity whatsoever. They do not even relate to one another — except unilaterally. The Real and the Thought do not “have a relationship,” since the Real is fundamentally indifferent to any Thought. The non-philosophical Real is without ontology, and, therefore, it cannot be the Being. Quite to the contrary, as a Transcendental which has always already been circumscribed within itself (as transcendental and made of

Language), the Being is one of the chief philosophical terms that the non-philosophy aims to dismantle.

Consequently, the non-philosophical Real is not the Being. Rather, it is a number or a “number” — a “One.” In its unilateral indifference to Thought, to our “World” of discursivity (the Laruellian *Monde*), it can be but a certain “one” to it. Yet, the Thought is not indifferent to the Real: it is always already the workings of the Real that thinking and/or theory attempts to grasp, fixate and explain. And what non-philosophy proposes is that the Thought attempts to unilaterally correlate with the Real, a mode of thinking which will respond to the symptoms of the latter without the pretension to encompass it; to “integrate” it into a Universe of Thought explaining its “essence,” without the ambition for reciprocity (between Thought and the Real.)

The Real is, thus, “a” or “the” One, because it is undivided by a constitutive split that can be introduced, insists Laruelle, only through reflection, speculation, or simply — Thought. Non-philosophy conceives of the Real as ultimately “untouched” by Thought and, hence, does not constitute it on the basis of a defining division consisting in its relation (of any kind) with the Thought. The Real of non-philosophy is lived, *experienced* while remaining within itself without the need to alienate itself through representation, says Laruelle.

The identity of the real is lived, experienced, consumed while remaining in itself without the need to alienate itself through representation.¹

The method or the procedure of establishing a determination-in-the-last-instance is an act of thought which rigorously observes the dictate of the experienced, lived undivided identity (the Real) by striving to “clone” it into a minimum transcendental (say, a concept). It radicalizes the concept, by way of isolating it from the referential web with which the doctrine that has produced it surrounds it. The latter is enabled by a non-philosophical procedure of turning philosophy into a deliberate *chaos* or *chôra* of transcendental *material*, instead of an organized transcendental or philosophical universe, a *cosmology* (2000, 18).

¹ François Laruelle, *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (Liege-Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga, 1989), 57: « “L’identité du réel se vit, s’éprouve, se consume en restant en elle-même sans avoir besoin de s’aliéner dans une représentation. »

The non-philosophical principle of observance of the symptomatic “language” of the Real, principle of observance of the rule of non-intervention of a “divisionist” kind by a thought that would attempt to constitute the Real, is made operative through the method of determination-in-the-last-instance (DDI).

DDI is a theoretical procedure that is a product of the non-philosophical Vision-in-One (2000, 37ff) and an act of “cloning” the Real. The latter is a unilateral gesture which renders the DDI essentially non-dualistic. But at the same time it is a product of a pure Dyad — pure, not “mixed” the latter being the characteristic of philosophy — since it presupposes the inevitable act of transcendental operation enabling the process of thinking/theorizing. This, however, is a radical duality, an act of dualism which is aware of an instance of duality that is unilaterally established on the part of the Thought. The Real remains immanently and inalterably indifferent to the workings of Thought, and the non-philosophical thought “knows” it and, therefore, leaves it “unmixed” with itself.

[. . .] this thought would not, could not be any longer a divided Identity such as the philosophical one. It would be, on one hand, by virtue of its real fundament or its essence, nothing-but-an-Identity, it would be rigorously identical to the real without passing through a division or a Dyad; and on the other hand, it would be a pure Dyad, a radical duality, not obtained through division and not re-mixed with the Identity. The first would have the latter as its fundament, issuing from it without being reciprocally determined by it.²

In order to arrive at that which determines Marxism in its last instance, the non-Marxist needs to transform Dialectical Materialism and the Historical Materialism into a transcendental material, to dismember that self-enclosed discursive organism and render it non-philosophical *chôra*. This is a necessary procedure in order to bypass the Doctrine’s (of Dialectical Materialism) determining of the Real. Once the role of the Marxist “cosmology” in co-constituting the Real — or rather, its pretension to constitute it, inevitably resulting into an establishing of an

² *Ibid.*, 56 : « [. . .] cette pensée ne serait pas, ne pourrait plus être alors une Identité divisée comme la philosophique. Ce serait d’une part, par son fondement réel ou son essence, rien-qu’une Identité, elle serait rigoureusement identique au réel sans passer par une division ou une Dyade ; et ce serait d’autre part une Dyade pure, une dualité radicale, elle aussi non obtenue par division et non re-mélangée avec l’Identité. Elle aurait son fondement en celle-ci, mais découlerait d’elle sans se déterminer réciproquement avec elle. »

“amphibology” of the Real — has been cast aside, one can engage in a search for the DDI “in an immanent way” (de manière immanente).

The immanent way of re-reading Marxism or its non-Marxist re-appropriation consists in the search for the cause-in-the-last-instance of Marxism by way of using its transcendental material in accordance with the pre-established goal of isolating the radical concepts.³ The non-Marxist resorts to Marx and to the Marxist “body of text” only in order to establish a symptomatology of the Real it conveys, and by way of identifying the radical concepts recover its determination-in-the-last-instance.

If it [non-Marxism] would seem to go back there [to Marxism], it would be more to its problems rather than to its texts, and to problems whose solution implies treating the texts as symptoms, by way of suspension of the philosophical authority. [. . .] It is impossible, even in Freud and in Marx, and even more so within a philosophy, to find radical concepts of the Real and the uni-versal — solely the unconscious and the productive forces, desire and labor. As soon as one arrives to this discovery, psychoanalysis and Marxism gain one utterly new sense — a transformation of their theories into simple material [. . .] These sorts of disciplines require more than just a simple theoretical transformation — a discovery from within a “non-“ that would be the effect (of) the Real or its action.⁴

In an immanent manner, the non-philosopher traces the symptomatic manifestations of the Real and identifies the “sample” of transcendental material which is then disorganized for the purposes of revealing the underlying “radical concept” which has been “cloned” from the Real. The most radical concept the Marxist corpus provides is “productive forces” or “labor,” claims Laruelle. It is the closest to “cloning” the Real into the Transcendental.

³ Laruelle, *Introduction au non-marxisme*, 21: « Le problème d’un traitement nouveau du marxisme est d’isoler ce noyau d’une universalité seulement symptôme mais dont l’isolation soit aussi sa détermination en dernière instance, sa ‘radicalisation.’ »

⁴ *Ibid.*, 61 : « S’il [non-Marxism] paraît y revenir [to Marxism], c’est à ses problèmes plutôt qu’à ses textes, et à des problèmes dont la solution implique de traiter les textes comme des symptômes, par le suspens de l’autorité philosophique. [. . .] Il est impossible, même dans Freud et dans Marx, à plus forte raison dans une philosophie, de trouver les concepts radicaux du Réel et de l’uni-versel — seulement l’inconscient et les forces productives, le désir et le travail. Mais cette découverte faite, psychanalyse et marxisme en reçoivent après coup plus qu’un nouveau sens — une transformation de leurs théories comme simple matériau. [. . .] De telles disciplines exigent plus qu’une refonte simplement théorique — une découverte en ‘non’- qui soit un effet (du) Réel ou son agir. »

The Real — at least for Marxism, which is a humanist hybrid of theory-science, but also for non-Marxism — is the Human-in-Human. The latter is a Laruellian term referring to that instance in the human being which is only lived, experienced, and indifferent to the prescriptions of the Transcendental. It is the mute instance in which each of us (the Humans) lives and which is always already beyond the reach of Language. An entire “science of humans” — which is not a humanist science but rather a radical subversion of it — is developed throughout the non-philosophical opus of François Laruelle. One of its most meticulous elaborations can be found in *Théorie des Étrangers*,⁵ and one of the central arguments of Laruelle’s “science of humans” is that there is an Ego-in-Ego, an instance of the lived and of the “Joui” insofar as non-reflected experience.⁶ The Real which a humanist project such as Marxism can invoke and attempt to correlate to is but the instance of the Real of the Human — or, in Laruelle’s words, the Human-in-Human.

What non-Marxism needs to ask and create a knowledge (theory and/or science) of is how the Real of the Human(-in-Human) is affected, in-Real, by Capitalism and what sort of transcendental configuration can be the most adequate conceptual tool-kit for the goal of “liberation.” Or, in different words, non-Marxism is all about establishing an immanent mode of thinking that will correspond with the immanent aim of Marxism stemming directly from the most radical needs of the “Proletariat” or the “productive forces.” The formula of the immanent mode of re-thinking Marxism, the mode of non-Marxism, is proposed by Laruelle as follows:

The “real” solution to the problem of the DDI as the object and cause of its own theory should avoid Hegelian idealism better than it has been done by the materialism. Neither a cause in exteriority nor a dialectical identity of contraries, the Real is the cause by virtue of immanence and determines cognition of its own syntax, of its own causality, through a process that one would call “cloning.” [. . .] Suppose there is an object X to be cognized.

⁵ See: François Laruelle, *Théorie des Étrangers*, Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1995; and also: François Laruelle, *Théorie des identités*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992.

⁶ The Real can be rendered as Language and mediated to and through the World only through an instance other than that of the Real, and instance of Real’s self-alienation — the Stranger (l’Étranger); See: Laruelle, *Théorie des Étrangers* (Paris : Éditions Kimé, 1995), 74-82.

Provided it is affected by immanence or susceptible to DDI, that is seen-in-One, it also can clone “itself” from the material that is its transcendence.⁷

The object X is to be seen-in-One, as Real or in-its-Real, and then “cloned” as concept/s, as the Transcendental by way of resorting to the transcendental material at the theoretician’s disposal. The process of cloning also implies an (auto)establishing of a unique syntax dictated by the Real itself of the object of cognition.

3. The Real of the “Force de Travail”: Marxism Determined in the Last Instance?

Determination-in-the-last instance of Marxism is to be looked for in its cause-in-the-last-instance: the Real of the Human(-in-Human)’s repression in the World of Capitalism. There is another real cause or cause-in-Real and another source of immanence in the Marxist Project: the Real of the Marxian Desire to liberate the “productive forces” from the constraints and repression of Capitalism. The latter, however, is not the cause *in the last instance*, since it has been caused by the first.

When the DDI is the cause or the immanent object of its own theory, one would say that this theory *is the force (of) thought*, the theory of the force (of) thought is itself in-the-last instance [. . .] Object to knowing, while remaining the known object, should also be capable of determining its cognition.⁸

The cause-in-the-last-instance is what determines in the last instance any Project of Transcendence, that is to say, any philosophy or any philosophy-science, the latter being the category under which falls Marxism (and for that matter, also psychoanalysis), says Laruelle. The DDI is what makes a certain philosophical, scientific or theoretical project unique. It is what defines (or rather, determines) that project, an analogy of *differentia specifica* while at the same time being its utter

⁷ « La solution ‘réelle’ à ce problème de la DDI comme objet et cause de sa propre théorie doit éviter l’idéalisme hégélien encore plus que ne le fait le matérialisme. Ni cause en extériorité, ni identité dialectique des contraires, le Réel est cause par immanence et détermine la connaissance de sa propre syntaxe, de sa causalité, par un processus que l’on dira de ‘clonage.’ [. . .] Soit l’objet X à connaître. S’il est affecté d’immanence ou capable de DDI, c’est-à-dire vu-en-Un, lui-même peut alors ‘se’ cloner à partir du matériau qu’est sa transcendence. »

⁸ *Ibid.*, 48 : « Lorsque la DDI est la cause ou l’objet immanent de sa propre théorie, on dira que cette théorie *est la force (de) pensée*, la théorie de la force (de) pensée est celle-ci même en-dernière-instance. [. . .] L’objet à connaître, tout en restant l’objet connu, doit être ainsi capable de déterminer sa connaissance. »

opposite — not a transcendental (not a definition) but an immanent (a determining Real) determination. The Real, the cause in the last instance of any theory, “clones itself” as a radical concept. It is this radical concept and its auto-development into a transcendental conceptual “tool-kit” incessantly corresponding with the Real that is the force (of) thought or thought-force. Laruelle illustrates this point in the following way:

Let us suppose that the “labor force” is finally capable of its own “proletarian” theory, without the Hegelian idealism, or has become the restricted model of the universal instance of the force (of) thought.⁹

“Labor force” (*force de travail*) is *already* a concept, but a radical one, correlating with the Real of the condition of the “Proletariat” as labor force that is non-reflected, lived, experienced.¹⁰ Even the linguistic construct itself, the concept of “labor force,” is merely descriptive of a real condition, consisting of a minimum of transcendence. And it is precisely the method or style of descriptiveness that Laruelle invokes as the non-Marxist and non-philosophical approach *par excellence*.¹¹ The minimally descriptive concept, the radical concept, the one in which the Real has “cloned itself,” is the causality in the last instance of a certain theory — its Determination-in-the-last-instance (DDI).

Labor force is the DDI of Marxism, argues Laruelle, and the method of immanence of the process of developing or creating a theory guarantees that the DDI will “dictate” that process, determine it, without becoming itself an instance of the Transcendental, without entering into a process of its own rationalization, without any sort of its “mixing” with a speculative activity— only as determination-in-the-last instance of the process of theorizing. DDI is capable of its own cognition without co-participation in the philosophical cognition process.

⁹ *Ibid.* : « Comme si la ‘force de travail’ était capable enfin de sa propre théorie ‘prolétarienne,’ sans idéalisme hégélien, ou devenait le modèle restreint de l’instance universelle de la force (de) pensée. »

¹⁰ Laruelle, *Philosophie et non-philosophie*, 56-57 : « [. . .] le réel se vit, s’éprouve, se consomme en restant en elle-même [. . .] »

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57: « On dira que la représentation, dans la vision-en-Un, est un reflet non-thétique ou non-positionnel (du) réel, qu’elle est descriptive, en dernière instance du moins, et non constitutive comme prétend l’être la philosophie. » Descriptiveness as the method favored by non-philosophy is argued for also at many other places in *Philosophie et non-philosophie*, and is often referred to in *Introduction au non-marxisme* as well.

The identity of the DDI signifies that it is capable, without a philosophical operation, of its own cognition. The old problem of the possibility of cognition is resolved not through appealing to a transcendental subject or fundament but through being foreclosed of the Real to cognition, of every object to its cognition, being-foreclosed which does render possible yet determines cognition.¹²

The Thinking Subject takes upon itself (or her/himself) the entire “responsibility” of observing the dictate of immanence, and, in that process, the trajectory of symptoms produced by the pulsating Real would be the ultimate test of the corresponding of the first to the “needs” and laws of the latter. It is precisely in this sense that the DDI is both the instance which can provide the answer to Marxism’s failure as well as the source of its force (of-) thought or thought-force that can surface only as a result of its transformation through a “non”- (in the form of non-Marxism). In this sense, one should assume that a theory or a vision of the “liberation” of the Proletariat (or of the productive forces) which has been created by way of applying an immanent mode of thinking, a theory determined by the Real (of that which is subject to theorizing) and co-responding to the real conditions, would not have failed — as Marxism did.

Laruelle states explicitly that it is precisely the layers or the transcendental constructs of Materialism and Dialectics, assuming the “false” (“mixing”-with-the-Real) status of determinations-in-the-last-instance, that have created the critical detour from the initially immanent determination of Marxism. Dialectical Materialism is determined by a purely transcendental instance which is the concept of “matter.” It is the latter which has substituted the initial source of immanence as a determination in the last instance. Dialectics is again purely transcendentially determined, a philosophical “world,” a product of a philosophical decision — a Hegelian one. Dialectics has been mixed with Materialism, and Materialism has “mixed” itself with the Real — the assumed Real has ceased to determine Marx’s project the moment the concept of “Materialist Matter” has been implanted upon it.

¹² Laruelle, *Introduction au non-marxisme*, 49 : « L’identité de la DDI signifie qu’elle est capable, sans opération philosophique, de sa propre connaissance. Le vieux problème de la possibilité de la connaissance se résout non par l’appel à un sujet transcendantal ou un fondement mais par l’être forclos du Réel à la connaissance, de tout objet à sa connaissance, être-forclos qui ne rend possible la connaissance mais qui la détermine. »

And indeed, according to Laruelle, Marxism has embarked upon its mission of constructing a new World with the ambition to answer to a *real* condition, to respond to a source of immanence rather than to philosophy, and its departure point has been the radical concept of “labor force.” After all, it is young Marx who has so insistently posed the question of an Exit (*Ausgang*) from philosophy in order to arrive and establish a relation of fidelity to the Real, as the founding goal of his entire philosophico-scientific project.

It is precisely in this respect that Laruelle claims the falsity of the proposition that Marxism has (most probably) failed as a bad practice of a good theory.

[. . .] Marxism has been evaluated or tested only on the basis of its passage to act or to the real of history and of society. But perhaps there is a failure which is more profound, which unravels a transcendental illusion of which it is the sanction rather than an aborted realization [. . .] Theoretical failure or other-than-theoretical, that could not be measured according to purely theoretical criteria? Without doubt. But that failure is also practical and other-than-practical, and moreover cannot be measured according to criteria allegedly purely practical. In effect, the only criterion of theory and of practice is the instance of the real inasmuch as precisely it is not itself anymore a simple criterion but rather an immanence foreclosed to any theoretical or practical criterion, and moreover, inasmuch as cause-in-the-last-instance capable of determining a real practice and rigorous theory.¹³

There is something fundamentally defective both in the theory and in practice. In fact, according to Laruelle’s non-philosophy, there can be no essential, no real difference between theory and practice in the sense these terms are used by the neo-Marxists. “Practice” is but an operationalization of a “theory” whereby the latter is merely transformed into a “World” in Laruellian sense of the word — “le Monde,” as the discursive universe we live in, a transcendental “cosmology” we (the estranged

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17: « [. . .] le marxisme n’a été évalué et testé que sur l’argument de son passage à l’acte ou au réel de l’histoire et de la société. Mais peut-être y a-t-il un échec plus profond qui relève d’une illusion transcendante dont il est la sanction plutôt que d’une réalisation avortée [. . .] Echec théorique et autre-que-théorique, qui ne peut se mesurer à des critères purement théoriques? Sans doute. Mais cet échec est tout aussi pratique et autre-que-pratique, et ne peut davantage se mesurer à des critères prétendus purement pratiques. En effet le seul critère de la théorie et de la pratique, c’est l’instance du Réel en tant que précisément elle n’est plus un simple critère mais qu’elle est une immanence forclosée à tout critère théorique et pratique, et capable d’autant plus, comme cause-de-dernière-instance, de déterminer une pratique réelle et une théorie rigoureuse. »

Humans-in-Humans) inhabit. In this respect, “practice” is an extension, supplementation of “theory,” and there is no real difference between the two except in the sense that “practice” is an instance of the Transcendental when the latter gives itself the permission to exercise authority over the Real.

4. The Workings of the Transcendental over the Real (of Human-in-Human): Investigating the Transcendental Minimum of non-Marxist “Force de Travail” and the “Poor” of Negri and Hardt

The installment of communist systems of social organization in the countries of the former Yugoslavia (and for that matter, in the entire former Eastern Bloc) was a blatant example of implanting a purely Transcendental Construct upon the Real. Marxist Doctrine remained something virtually non-intelligible to the Proletariat. For the caste of Marxist scholars — which, apart from the scholars in the proper sense of the word, also refers to the Party officials and the so-called “social-political workers” (the journalists, for example) — it has grown to be subject to their endless desire for scholasticism.

The university student and the university professor in the former Yugoslavia could derive unending pleasure from the impossible bravura of extracting the unimaginable from Marxism: ways of its reconciliation with philosophies that were in utter divergence or even contradiction with Marxism. These “reconciliations” had so often been examples of absurd reasoning, of a certain bizarre “para-rational” and served to satisfy a political demand of the State — to be open enough and not to exercise complete censorship with respect to the Ideology and Culture of the West. The form of censorship that was unavoidable was to render the reception of whatever theory coming from the West — as Marxist as possible. (It is my assumption that the reasons for the — in my view — redundant Marxist passages in one of Slavoj Žižek’s first books, *Znak, označitelj, pismo*,¹⁴ published in former Yugoslavia in Serbo-Croatian, lay precisely in his duty as a “social-political worker” — to render Lacan and structuralist linguistics as Marxist as possible.)

The factory worker, however, the one who *believed* in the Ideology of the State (or the “ordinary” person adapted to the ruling regime) did not care or understand

¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Znak, označitelj, pismo* [*Sign, Signifier, Textuality*], Belgrade: BIGS, 1979.

much about Marx and Marxism. His or her belief was founded upon the unreserved admiration for the Leader of the State, Josip Broz-Tito, and upon the reverent respect and fear of the Party and its mechanisms of Control and Subjugation (the Police, and especially the Secret Police).

The normalization of the citizen in the former regime (of the former state) of Yugoslavia was exercised through the severe mechanisms of external control (the Police and the Party) and through internalization of control (which was usually demonstrated through rituals of “self-critique” performed in front of the collective of co-workers or the so-called workers’ council). The first is nonetheless, in my view, more characteristic of the communist regime whereas the latter of the democratic one. Control and punishment in the “political imaginary” of the former communist regime was always coming from outside the private, from outside the home — from the secret forms of control: from the secret police, secret informers and secret prisons.

The channels of ideological normalization were those of clearly discernable and external instances of control which had to remain veiled both visually (disguised: secret police, informers posing as friends and neighbors, secret hearings) and by silence (secret prisons, hearings and repression that one recognized as such but never spoke of). Certainly, normalization is impossible without internalization and, hence, the sentencing of the “verbal delict” (the very uttering of one’s thought which is ideologically inappropriate). On the other hand, the very existence of such punishment, the very fact of the State assuming the authority and “responsibility” of punishment speaks of the control and normalization-in-the-last-instance as external rather than internal.

Hence, the ruling collective pathology has been the paranoia, in particular with respect to the Institutions (of the State; or any Institutions). The paranoid mistrust was extended also to the ideology. (This is why today, in the countries of the so-called transition from the communist to the democratic regime, “ideology” is a bad, almost insulting term.) One was trained to agree with the public discourse about the indisputable perfection and superiority of Marxist ideology, one was expected to believe in it, but *not* necessarily to understand it. What mattered was to publicly agree with it. Control was external and belonged to the State.

It is more than clear that in former Yugoslavia, Marxist theory did not correspond with the immanent needs of the Proletariat. It did not even speak the same

language. Dialectical and Historical Materialism were magic formulas, never quite or at all understood by the ordinary representative of the Proletariat, which were supposed to be pronounced in order to mark one's belonging to the society. Indeed it would be false to say that Marxism in communist Yugoslavia ever correlated with its "source of immanence."

It was a violent attempt to implant a ghostly, purely Conceptual Organism (a Transcendental) upon the Real (of the Human-in-Human) by virtue of ignoring and excluding the relevance of the symptomatology of the latter. Marxism was alien to the Proletariat, as the Transcendental is alien to the Laruillian Real. It is precisely as a result of its failure to theorize and develop a "World" on the basis of the immanent mode of thinking, drawing legitimacy from its source of immanence, that Marxism and the communist system has failed in former Yugoslavia. Immanence is the territory of the non-reflected, the lived and the experienced "without the need to alienate itself through representation" (Laruelle 1989, 57) and Marxism did not correlate adequately with this instance of which it purported to be the Truth. Successful correspondence with the source of immanence would have been the one to be proven as such by the legitimizing symptomatology of the Real — again — "without the need to alienate itself through representation."

In this respect, it is worthwhile raising the question of whether the concept of the "labor force" is sufficiently radical. Namely, does it correspond in an immanent mode with its source of immanence, with the Real of the Human-in-Human represented as Proletariat? The possible correspondence in an immanent mode can be "tested" only by the symptomatology provided by the Real, witnessing yet another instance of violent (metaphysically violent) alienation through a concept. Certainly, every instance of representation or of the thinking process is self-alienating of the Real, but the question is: Is this self-alienation an act of self-cloning (of the Real)? The immanent mode of thinking is accompanied by a legitimizing — although unilateral and in-the-last-instance indifferent — response of the Real, but in a non-speculative and non-reflected way. (Just as in a scientific experiment the Real which is being researched "responds" in a way that legitimizes the original hypothesis of the researcher.) To return to the question: can those on whose behalf Marxism is professed today communicate, in an immanent way, with the term "labor force"?

Following the main concern of the non-Marxist project, I would like to pose the question of whether “labor force” is a sufficiently radical term, sufficiently “impoverished” of philosophy. As Graham-Gibson observe, capitalism is no longer a monolithic category, but a heteronymous global phenomenon in a need of different lexis (and, a non-Marxist would add, in a need of a different syntax of thought, as well) that can speak of the diversity of forms of capitalist exploitation enabling its adequate explanation and critique, but also political action against it. It should be able to explain and provide grounds for action against a wide range of forms of social subjugation and capitalist exploitation: from gendered poverty (or the ever increasing feminization of the “Proletariat”) to the production of a Global Proletariat (over 90% of the Third World population is the Proletariat to the First World). In *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* by Gibson-Graham, we read:

Capitalism is an architecture or structure of power, which is conferred by ownership and by managerial or financial control. Capitalist exploitation is thus an aspect or effect of domination [. . .] Capitalism is the phallus or ‘master term’ within a system of social differentiation. Capitalist industrialization grounds the distinction between core (the developed world) and periphery (the so-called Third World). It defines the household as the space of ‘consumption’ (of capitalist commodities) and of ‘reproduction’ (of the capitalist workforce) rather than a space of noncapitalist production and consumption. [. . .] Complexly generated social processes of commodification, urbanization, internationalization, proletarianization are viewed as aspects of capitalism’s self-realization. (1996, 8-9)

Having this picture in mind of capitalism’s “self-realization,” it is more than clear that the “Proletariat” is hardly a term radical enough to be seen as the “clone” of the Real or of the source of immanence of the (post- or non-) Marxist critique. It is, nonetheless, worthwhile asking the question of whether “workforce” is the sufficiently radical — “cloned from immanence” — term? “Workforce” or “labor force” is a product of the transcendently constituted syntax of capitalism: the term has a meaning only in and for the Capitalist-“World.” It is conditioned by the capitalist envisioning of the “World” and is, as a consequence of this, a term which

“works” in favor of Capitalism (“World-Capitalism”). Hence, it is not “uni-versal” enough, not sufficiently rid of the auto-conditioning and auto-positioning “interests” of the Transcendental (of the philosophies of Capitalism and Marxism), as non-Marxism demands.

In a search for what non-Marxism would call a “radical concept,” rereading Marx’s *Capital* (volumes I and III) along the “anti-essentialist” line of critique provided by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff,¹⁵ Gibson-Graham propose the following formulation:

When individuals labor beyond what is necessary for their own reproduction and the ‘surplus’ fruits of their labor are appropriated by others (or themselves), and when that surplus is distributed to its social destinations, then we may recognize the processes of class. (1996, 17)

In my view, this is a sort of a descriptive formulation that non-Marxism, i.e., the non-philosophy favors as a method. It represents a “transcendental minimum” that is necessary to explicate — or provide a possibility of thinking/theorizing — a certain Real. It has been enabled by the twofold act of dismantling the doctrinal organization it departs from and attuning solely to the “dictate” of its source of immanence — the Real(-of-the-Human-in-Human) exploited by the Capitalist Order. This is an attempt to “clone” the Real of a form of exploitation of the Human-in-Human that is immanently characteristic of Capitalism: the radical concept explaining the “form” of exploitation is “class,” whereas the radical concept of the exploited one (the Real of the Human-in-Human) is — just as in non-Marxism — “labor force.”

In order for non-Marxism to become an operational theory capable of both explaining immanently the “human condition” in Capitalism and proposing ways of action that can introduce change, it is in a need of identifying another instance of the Real, the one which immanently fuels its theoretical desire. It is an instance of immanence which is structurally situated on the side, in the domain of the thinking subject (or the Stranger). It is the desire (theoretical, or Truth-Desire) of the Thinker unilaterally positioned and parallel to the cause-in-the-last-instance. Namely, an immanent cause of the Marxist theoretical project is also the Real of the Marxist desire to explain the human subjugation by Capitalism and to intervene into its Real

¹⁵ Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick, “Power, Property and Class,” *Socialist Review* 16 (2), 97-124.

(or Reality) in order to change it. Hence, in order to construct a theory which also “behaves” immanently with respect to this second source of immanence, one is in need of a more “mobile” non-Marxist approach that can provide answers to the question regarding the form/s of exploitation and subjugation, but also ground the political possibility of acting against it.

The radical concept explaining the form of exploitation immanently characteristic of Capitalism as “class,” is, in my view, again overly transcendently conditioned — it communicates well with the Marxist doctrine but insufficiently with its source of immanence, i.e., the Real of the Human-in-Human subjugated by Capitalism. Class is an overly economically (again, purely doctrinally or transcendently) determined term, and at the same time entirely conditioned by a particular horizon of thought — namely a sociology of positivist origin (in spite of all of its later revisions). It is hardly possible that a citizen of the Third World who “culturally” belongs to the upper-middle class (i.e., he or she is well educated and maintains a certain bourgeois life style) but “economically” stands on the verge of (economic) collapse will see himself or herself as belonging to the same class with a worker from the First World, and the other way around. The word “class” brings in confusion in the supposed attempt for their mutual recognition that in some way they belong to the same social (and beyond social) category, that they share the same “Real of the Human Condition.” The latter signals that we are in a need for an even more radical concept, a more descriptive one, one which is less constituted by a doctrine or philosophy, and a term that can be immanently understood by its own source of immanence.

A possibly more radical term than that of “class” or “labor force” has been proposed by Negri and Hardt in their *Empire* — the “Poor.” I am not claiming that this is *the* term, and *the* one which will enable *the* theory of social change that radically corresponds with the source of immanence. In my personal vision of the theoretical potentials and of the potential force for political action of the non-Marxist stance, there can be many, a virtually endless number of non-philosophical theories-practices in immanent correspondence with the Real of their causes-in-the-last-instance. In order to arrive at a thought-force or force-of-thought, one needs to depart from a radical term which is cloned from the Real of “the lived and the experienced

without the need to alienate itself into representation.” One such term is perhaps the Poor.

[. . .] the poor is almost always seen to have a prophetic capacity: not only is the poor *in* the world, but the poor itself is the very possibility of the world. Only the poor lives radically the actual and present being, in destitution and suffering, and thus only the poor has the ability to renew being. The divinity of the multitude of the poor does not point to any transcendence. On the contrary, here and only here in this world, in the existence of the poor, is the field of immanence presented, confirmed, consolidated, and opened. The poor is god on earth. (Hardt and Negri 2001, 157)

It seems indicative that the more radical, purely descriptive and corresponding with the Real the term is, the less theoretical rigor there is to it (to the term itself). Nonetheless, paradoxically, it is precisely the non-rigorousness of the radical term which should guarantee the rigor of the non-philosophical, scientific development of a theory. Descriptiveness of the non-reflected and non-reflecting “lived” (*le vécu*, on which Laruelle repeatedly insists throughout his work) is something which is, by definition, on the verge of the Poetic. By the very imperative — the axiom which prescribes — that the radical concept “clones” the Lived-of-the-Real, it seems that the rigor itself of the theory is provided by the Poetic, as its point of departure. Following Vico, the bordering of the two types of languages, the “scientific” and the “poetic,” produces a form of discourse that could be called “monstrous.” Radical concepts produce “monstrous” discourses: “monstrosity” of political thought and action is that which can radically undermine capitalism and bring forth a completely different horizon of thought and reality.

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