

Bibliography

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Endnotes

- 1 Hans-Thies Lehmann,
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NON- PHILOSOPHY AND ART PRACTICE (OR, FICTION AS METHOD)

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In the following essay I want to introduce François Laruelle's non-philosophy—or what he has more recently referred to as non-standard philosophy—with a particular eye to its relevance for art practice, when this latter term is very broadly construed.¹ Although at times this essay involves more questions than answers (and, indeed, proceeds through its own circuits and overlaps), at stake is the mapping out of a speculative and synthetic practice of thought, which might also be described as the deployment of fiction as method. My essay is concerned in part with those modes of thinking—art included—that occur away from the legislative and more standard frameworks of Philosophy and Art History. To move away from these frameworks is to call for a practice that involves forcing encounters and compatibilities and, ultimately, for experimentation with a terrain beyond typical ideas of self and world. In terms of using fiction as a method more specifically I am especially interested in how the performance of fictions can operate to show us the edges of our own reality, and in the diagram as itself a form of speculative fictioning. My essay ends by drawing some of these different threads together, and laying out six propositions or applications of non-philosophy to—or indeed *as*—art practice.

1. Definitions and Diagrams

In his work on non-philosophy (comprising over twenty-five books to date and periodized into five distinct phases of development) Laruelle claims to have identified and demarcated a certain autocratic (and arrogant) functioning of philosophy: that it tends to position itself as the highest form of thought (enthroned above all other disciplines), while at the same

time necessarily attempting to explain everything within its purview. Indeed, each subsequent philosophy must offer up its own exhaustive account of the real, “trumping” any previous philosophy in an endless game of one-upmanship. John Ó Maoilearca puts this particular pretension more strongly, suggesting that philosophy itself is a form of “thought control” that attempts to define the very act of thinking through its particular transcendent operations (more on these below).²

Non-philosophy pitches itself against this particular apparatus of capture. Not as an anti-philosophy (as, for example, in Jacques Lacan's characterization of psychoanalysis), nor as simply an “outside” to philosophy (at least as this is posited *by* philosophy). Indeed, non-philosophy does not turn away from philosophical materials exactly, but rather reuses or, we might say, retools them. As Ray Brassier, among many others, has pointed out (following Laruelle's own suggestion), the “non” here is more like that used in the term “non-Euclidean geometry”: it signals an expansion of an already existing paradigm; a recontextualization of existing material (in this case conceptual) and the placing of these alongside newer “discoveries.”³

From these few sentences we can already extract two key characteristics (or distinct articulations, perhaps) of non-philosophy:

1. It involves an attitude and orientation toward philosophy that also implies a kind of practice (or, at any rate, a particular “use” of philosophical materials). Laruelle also calls this a performance, as well as, crucially, a science: non-philosophy

is the “science of philosophy” in this sense. (Brassier’s writings on Laruelle attend specifically to this more “formal” articulation of non-philosophy.)

2. Non-philosophy might be said to name other forms of thought—other practices, we might say—besides the philosophical (again, when these are not simply positioned and interpreted by philosophy), while in the same gesture naming a general democratization of all thinking (Ó Maoilearca would be the key exponent of this second articulation, hence the title of his recent book “on” Laruelle, *All Thoughts are Equal*).

I want to take each of these two articulations in turn, but before that a further brief word about non-philosophy and the real.⁴ For Laruelle, as I have already intimated, philosophy involves a particular take on—or an account, explanation, or interpretation of—the real. Non-philosophy, on the other hand, is a form of thought that proceeds from the real, or, at a pinch, alongside it: rather than positing a real, it assumes its always already “givenness” as a presupposition or axiom. For non-philosophy this real is itself radically foreclosed to thought, at least as this is typically understood (it cannot be “explained” or interpreted in this sense), and as such we might say that the third key articulation of non-philosophy is that it implies a form of gnosis or even “spiritual” knowledge.⁵ In fact, alongside its formidable complexity there is a sense in which non-philosophy can be immediately grasped in an almost banal or at least naïve—sense. I will be returning to this and adding some qualifications below.

i. The science of philosophy

For Laruelle all philosophy involves a common function—or invariant—that he names “decision.” Put simply, philosophy sets up a binary that then dictates its subsequent operations. It is always “about” a world that, in fact, it has itself determined, posited as its object. In Laruelle’s terms (in Brassier’s somewhat technical reading) this is “an act of scission” producing a dyad between a conditioned datum and a conditioning faktum.⁶ This decisional structure involves a further move: philosophy’s “auto-positioning” as ultimate arbiter over the two terms. Philosophy offers a certain perspective and higher synthesis—a “unity of experience”—over both conditioning factors and what is conditioned.⁷ Philosophy’s cut, we might say, produces a particular subject and world, and then offers a perspective (now seemingly the only permissible or coherent one) from which to think them both.

We might also call this complex set of operations philosophy’s ideological character: the real causes—or, at least, in the last instance, determines—philosophy, but the latter is then abstracted out and seen as itself cause of the real (hence, its production of the world). The connections to two of Laruelle’s key precursors, Karl Marx and especially Louis Althusser, are explicit, but we might also note that this perspective bears some resemblance to Lacan’s theorization of the retro-formation of the subject (which must come to reverse the “illusion” of the ego and assume its own causality), as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s own materialist account of the subject as residuum in *Anti-Oedipus* (a subject that misrecognizes itself as prior to the process—the syntheses of the unconscious—that produced it).⁸

Indeed, in a relatively recent summary of non-philosophy Laruelle himself suggests that non-philosophers are very close to both the political militant and the analyst.⁹

The decisional mechanism is not restricted to philosophy as a discipline (or discourse), but impacts on our thinking more generally (we are all philosophical subjects in this sense). We might note here the resonances with Jacques Derrida's "diagnosis" of a logocentrism that is determinate in philosophy (at least in the Western tradition), but also in other forms of apparently non-philosophical thought (the lack of hyphen here denotes the non-Laruellian sense of these terms). Commentators have variously suggested that non-philosophy (this time in Laruelle's sense) is a less convincing deconstruction (as in Andrew McGettigan's critical overview of Laruelle) as well as, indeed, a more radical operation that itself repositions deconstruction as simply another form of philosophy (as in Brassier's own overview).¹⁰ Whatever the understanding, it seems clear that Derrida is the "near enemy" of Laruelle, but also (at least to this reader) that non-philosophy, although clearly indebted to Derrida, involves something more affirmative (at least potentially) than the melancholy science of deconstruction.

Non-philosophy is, then, an attempt to practice philosophy (at least of a kind) without the aforementioned auto-positioning. Crucially, it does not involve a straightforward disavowal of the philosophical gesture (again, it is not non-philosophy in this more straightforward sense); nor does it involve recourse to an "outside" that might then be simply folded back in *by* philosophy (as I suggested above, all philosophy claims to supersede previous interpretations, to really get to the real "from" a more radical

outside perspective). Non-philosophy, for Laruelle, must attempt its task from within philosophy's own interpretive circles (we might note, again, the connections with deconstruction as a process always already occurring "within" Western metaphysics).

To backtrack for a moment: as mentioned above, for Laruelle, non-philosophy is not another take on the real (or, indeed, a sufficient explanation of it), but proceeds from the real. For Laruelle it names a more radical immanence—arising from a suspension of decision—that is specifically other to the world produced by philosophy (whatever the claims of the latter about its own immanence might be).¹¹ Again, non-philosophy is a thinking *from* a real that is itself indifferent to that thinking (there is no reverse causality (or "reciprocal determination") in this sense). On the one hand, then, this real is very simple: it is just "this," immediately graspable, almost pre-cognitive (and, for Brassier, uninteresting—and empty—in this respect). And yet, as Robin Mackay points out in his own introduction to Laruelle, it is in fact not self-evident at all (at least to the typical "subject" that is in and of the "world").¹² Indeed, how could it be self-evident to a subject who has been produced by the very philosophical operation (the decisional structure) in question?

In its own operations, non-philosophy (at least in this particular articulation) does use concepts, but only after these have been untethered from their properly philosophical function, their auto-positioning. Laruelle also calls this auto-positioning the "Principle of Sufficient Philosophy": simply put, philosophy's claim to truth—or as Anthony Paul Smith puts it, "philosophy's faith in itself before the Real."¹³ This "explains" some of the complexity of non-philosophy, in that it can read

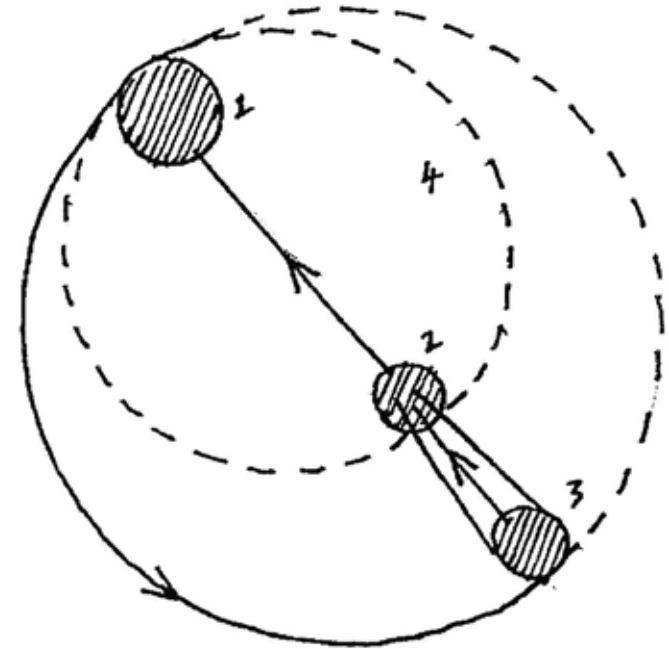
like philosophy (it cannot but be very close to the philosophy it writes on) and also must use neologisms and other unfamiliar terms—not only a new vocabulary but, at times, also a new syntax—in order to articulate its non-philosophical operations away from already existing philosophical language.

We could perhaps also diagram these relations between philosophy and non-philosophy, in relation to the real, as a set of circuits, as in in Fig. 1:

The arrows in the diagram suggest the direction of determination (as in the real determining both non-philosophy and philosophy) but also demark a direction of operation (as in philosophy interpreting the real, and non-philosophy “ventriloquizing,” or speaking through philosophy). To jump ahead slightly, we might also call this ventriloquism of philosophy by non-philosophy a kind of *fictioning*, insofar as the “explanatory” power of philosophy (its various claims about the real) is transformed into something else: models with no necessary pretensions to truth (I have attempted to suggest this in the above diagram with the broken line inner circuit). Certainly, in his more recent writings (as we shall see) Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy is concerned with just such a mutation of philosophy, which he calls “philo-fictions.”

We might also note again the connections to Marx and Althusser here: philosophy as a particular ideology (with its truth claims) and, thus, non-philosophy as a form of ideology critique. The apparent “real” world of philosophy—from the perspective of non-philosophy—is itself revealed as a fiction, determined (in the last instance) by a more radical immanence that has not been determined by philosophy at all (indeed, this real is, precisely,

Fig. 1. The ventriloquism of non-philosophy



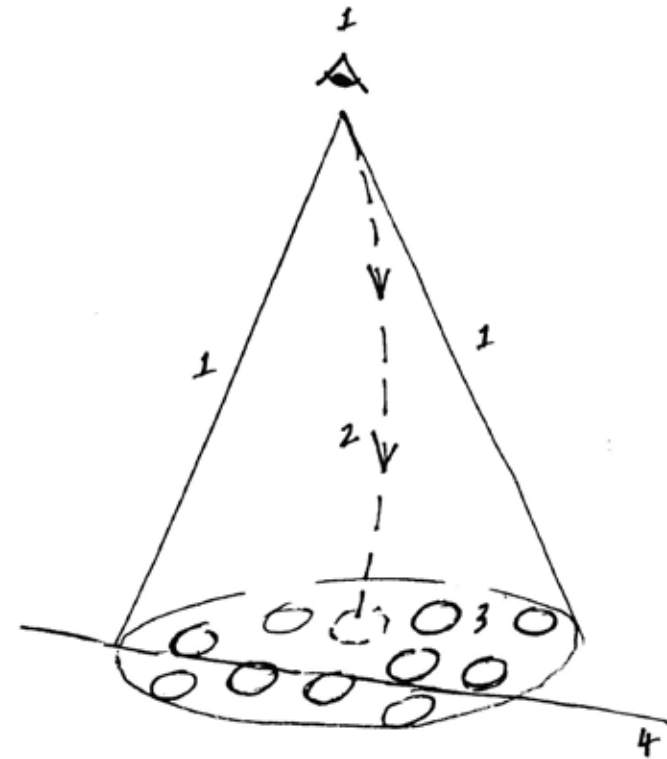
1. The real;
2. Philosophy;
3. Non-Philosophy;
4. Fictioning

undetermined). Crucially, however (and following Mackay once more), one cannot draw a simple line of demarcation here between ideology/philosophy and a science that “demystifies” them. This would act simply to produce a further binary that philosophy could then reach across and ultimately subsume; it would be to produce yet another philosophical circuit, a further structure of decision. Hence the importance of what Laruelle will call “superposition,” an act of placing the two alongside one another, as it were (I will return very briefly to this in section 2).

To see all this from a slightly different perspective—more topologically, or even “non-topologically”—we might suggest that non-philosophy involves a kind of “flattening” of philosophy’s auto-positioning and a concomitant undoing of its Principle of Sufficient Philosophy (again, its pretension of being able to account for all of the real). We might then draw a second diagram, as in Fig. 2:

This diagram foregrounds the particular “change in vision” (to use a Laruelian phrase) that non-philosophy entails, a kind of “dropping down” of philosophical perspective and, with that, what we might call a rejigging of foreground and background relations. Here, it is as if the conceptual material has been laid out on a tabletop. This is not exactly a move from three dimensions to two, but rather a flatness in which there are no supplementary dimensions (to use Deleuzian terminology).¹⁴ The “view from above” is replaced by something more immanent and, as such, partial (in fact, Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy is less an overview than like a line, a clinamen, that touches on different “models” of thought). It is this radical change in perspective that enables a different treatment of philosophy.

Fig. 2 The flattening of non-philosophy (or “change in vision”)



1. Philosophy (view from above);
2. Non-philosophy (as dropping down);
3. Philo-fictions (and other modes of thought);
4. Non-philosophy (as clinamen)

To jump ahead again slightly we might note an immediate and obvious connection with art practice here, insofar as non-philosophy becomes a practice that involves a manipulation of material (and even the construction of a different kind of conceptual “device” that allows for this “shift” in view). We might however also note four brief reservations before moving on to the second—and somewhat looser—articulation of non-philosophy. The first reservation concerns whether Laruelle’s diagnosis of all philosophy is correct. Are there forms of philosophy that do not proceed by decision in the sense Laruelle uses the term? This, ultimately, is where Brassier marks the limits of Laruelle’s method.¹⁵ An attendant (and stronger) critique is that the operation of reducing all philosophy to decision (albeit articulated in numerous ways) denies the specificity of different philosophies and indeed can produce a kind of solipsism; this is McGettigan’s take.¹⁶ A third reservation is whether non-philosophy involves anything other than a kind of “turf war” among philosophers (after all, generally speaking, non-philosophy is read by philosophers). A fourth and final reservation concerns what, precisely, a concept does when untethered from the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. This, for me, is really the key question (and the most productive), and it is something I will return to explicitly in section 2 below.

ii. Other modes of thought

In the second diagram above (Fig. 2) we might note the possibility that the “flattened” philosophical materials—the philo-fictions—can be positioned alongside other forms of non philosophical thought (note the lack of hyphen again here). Philosophy, when

untethered from its Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, becomes just one mode of thinking alongside a whole host of others: artistic, but also the scientific, even, perhaps, the animal (again, this is the democratization of thought, which is most thoroughly tracked through in Ó Maoilearca’s work “on” Laruelle).¹⁷ Non-philosophy gives us an interesting way in which to (re)position philosophy and its materials (as laid out above)—a radically different point of view, as it were—but it also offers up a corollary perspective on how different forms of thought invariably coexist and, indeed, might interact. This is to posit a radical horizontality (or, in Félix Guattari’s terms, “transversality”) that operates between heterogeneous practices. In this change of vision philosophy is brought down to earth, operating more as fiction than as a claim to truth (it is positioned as a model among others). In the same gesture, other forms of thought (for example art), in their turn, are given some philosophical (or at any rate non-philosophical) worth, insofar as they are no longer unfavorably compared with a philosophy enthroned above them.

This second articulation of non-philosophy (as naming different kinds of thinking) is less explored by Laruelle (although I will look below at two recent texts by him on the kind of thinking that photography, for example, might perform). This might well be, as Brassier suggests, because non-philosophy, in one respect anyway, has very little to say about these other forms of thought; it does not involve yet another (philosophical) take on the different terrains “outside” philosophy that it can then appropriate via its own definitions of the latter.¹⁸

It is worth remarking, however, that these other forms of thinking have themselves been theorized elsewhere (there is

plenty of material out there on art, the animal, and so on).¹⁹ The question, it seems to me, is whether these theorizations have hitherto always been philosophical in character (proceeding from decision), and, if so, what might a non-philosophical theorization (one not proceeding from decision) of, say, art be like? There is also the supplementary question as to whether these other non philosophical forms of thinking “need” an account—from philosophy or non-philosophy—in the first place. After all, the work of artists, scientists, and so forth is already occurring without the help of philosophy (although my own essay does not attend to this directly, there is also the more radical thesis I gestured to above that animals, for example, already think in some respects).

It seems to me that this is one of the most interesting areas of inquiry in relation to non-philosophy and art practice. The diagnosis of how philosophy or theory captures objects and practices (or, in fact, defines them as such in the first place) is important, but more compelling is how non-philosophy might reconfigure what counts as a theory of art and how it might contribute—however obliquely—to an understanding of how art itself works in practice, on the ground as it were (that is, when it is not explained, interpreted, or simply defined by philosophy). Two questions, then: what kind of framework does non-philosophy offer for thinking *about* art; and, what kind of thinking *is* art?

In fact, the above two questions—of theory and practice, we might say—are connected insofar as the change in perspective announced by non-philosophy (the “dropping down”) produces both a reconfiguration of what a theory (of art, for example) might be *and* a different understanding of what thought (understood

as a practice) might consist in (in passing we might also note that this implies that practice always already involves its own “theory”—it does not necessarily need a further layer of reflection—just as it also implies that theory can itself be its own kind of (speculative) practice).²⁰ I will return to some of these questions in section 3.

To return more directly to Laruelle, and pull back slightly, a more general question concerns what other practices could follow from non-philosophy’s particular shift in perspective. What *different* kinds of thought does it make possible in its very redefinition of thinking? To a certain extent this is precisely a work of experimentation and, indeed, construction. The possibility of what Mackay calls “non-standard worlds” that arise from this shift and radical change in perspective cannot be predicted—or even, perhaps, articulated in typical (read: philosophical) language.²¹ In relation to this we might note Laruelle’s interest in poetics, or forms of writing—fictions—that are not *for* philosophers (it is pretty clear from even a cursory look at Laruelle’s corpus that the readership of his major works needs to be well-versed in philosophy).²² Might this more poetic and experimental register involve an untethering from decision? Indeed, what forms of writing, we might ask, are really adequate to, and appropriate for, the properly non-philosophical subject? This question is of especial relevance when we consider that, typically, syntax and narrative are generally a kind of handmaiden to philosophy; I will return to this below.

To start to bring to an end this brief reflection on what I have called the second articulation of non-philosophy (the flattening) we might suggest a couple more questions. The first concerns how

Laruelle's account of different models and of an "algebra of thought" differs from, for example, someone like Guattari and his own theory of metamodelization. In fact, it seems to me that there might well be a highly productive encounter to be forced between non-philosophy and schizoanalysis, not least as the latter could itself be understood as a kind of "non-psychoanalysis."²³ To return to an earlier criticism, we might also ask whether Laruelle's thinking implies a certain homogenization, but also (and almost despite itself) a further overview, at least of a kind, "on" other forms of thought: non-philosophy as just the latest novel philosophy, as it were. Although non-philosophy does not involve the same auto-positioning as philosophy, it does posit a kind of view from elsewhere, or, perhaps, a view on a view (as exemplified in my own diagrams of its operations). In fact, as I suggested in section i above, it seems to me that the latter—the perspective of any view from above—must also be dropped down in a further flattening (it is in this sense that non-philosophy can only ever be one form of thinking; one perspective among others).

To give this another inflection, we might also note that these different perspectives or models are also "lived" out in the world. They are, we might say, performed (hence, again, the connection between non-philosophy and schizoanalysis). Which is to say that the realm of non-philosophical work is not only the tabletop—and the abstract (non) philosophical plane—but also life and practice more generally. (In this respect it is especially the connection of Guattari's abstract modeling to concrete practice—for example, at La Borde—that marks out schizoanalysis as its own kind of non philosophy.) Could we then posit a more radical non philosophy? This would perhaps name forms of thinking that do not "refer" to philosophy and its materials, or to any

kind of overview (or, indeed, any clinamen that "touches" other forms of thought). It would be a radical "non" that announces the necessity of always re-localizing any global view. This "non" does not name a terrain as such (external to philosophy), or indeed any kind of steady state or consistent practice, but the continuing refusal of any superior or global position—or what we might also call a radical parochialism.

All this speculation aside (and it has to be said that thinking about non-philosophy breeds this kind of speculation, with its various loops and nestings), there is also clearly a key issue here—another reason that what I have called the second articulation of non-philosophy is less explored by Laruelle. Indeed, following on from some of my comments above, we might note that the practice of non-philosophy can never be simply a question of mapping out a terrain outside philosophy, as this will then simply be co-opted by philosophy (as its material). Is this, ultimately, the limit of non-philosophy as a particular practice? Like deconstruction before it (at least from one perspective), non-philosophy—as a take on the structure and workings of philosophy—is delimited by the very thinking it pitches itself "against." Non-philosophy can operate as a kind of trap for thought even as it diagnoses philosophy as itself a trap.

2. Interlude: Philo- to Photo-Fiction

I want now to briefly turn to Laruelle's writings on what he calls "photo-fiction," which in many ways address—and bring together—the two articulations of non-philosophy outlined above. Indeed, for Laruelle a way of thinking the relationship of philosophy

to non-philosophy is *through* photography and its relationship to what he calls non-photography. Here photography contains its own Principle of Sufficient Photography, or, again, makes a particular claim to truth. Indeed, photography (at least at first glance) is an accurate and faithful “picture of the world”; it is, we might say, a graphic example of those standard modes of thought that Laruelle writes against. Outlining a possible non-photographic practice is then also a way of outlining a non-philosophical practice.

In his essay “What Is Seen in a Photo?” Laruelle pitches his own take on the photograph against any “theory” of photography that positions the former as a double of the world. Indeed, the task is to think the photograph as non-representational (however counterintuitive that might be).²⁴ For Laruelle this requires a certain stance or posture of the photographer—and with this the instantiation of a very particular kind of relation to the real—which then, in turn, entails the production of a different kind of knowledge (one that does not arise from representation). To “see” the photograph (and photographer) in this way means both the suspension of a certain privileging of perception and the interruption of the paradigm of “being-in-the-world.” In this problematization of phenomenology—and refusal of yet more philosophical “interpretive circles”—Laruelle suggests that science and scientific experiences of the world might operate as a guide insofar as the latter proceed through a pragmatic and experimental engagement with the real (or, at least, with a demarcated “section” of it). So, just as non-philosophy involves a particular take on philosophy, a use of it as material (untethered from its interpretive function), so non-photography will involve a use of the photograph as material (as very much

part of the real) instead of (or besides) its representational function. In each case the conceptual and photographic materials are positioned as fictions—or what Laruelle, in this essay, calls photo-fictions and philo-fictions.

In a more recent essay that develops this idea of photo-fiction, Laruelle tackles the philosophical discourse of aesthetics more directly, tracking a move from aesthetics (understood as a philosophical account of art’s self-sufficiency or truth) to what he calls, generally, art-fictions. These latter are associated with the practice of a “non-aesthetics,” an aesthetics not tied to a Principle of Sufficient Philosophy but instead arising from what he suggests, again, is a more a scientific paradigm involving the positing of models.²⁵ On the face of it, this later essay is less about art practice—photography or otherwise—and more about philosophy (as instantiated in the discourse of aesthetics) and how one might reposition it. Indeed, there is still a minimal aesthetics at work in Laruelle’s own account, at least of sorts (an account of what art “is”). That said, Laruelle’s own claim is that these photo/philo-fictions operate *between* photography and philosophy, with each discipline surrendering its own “auto-finalized form” or “auto-teleology.”²⁶ The two disciplines undergo a reduction of sorts (“in the sense of phenomenological reduction”²⁷)—or are themselves flattened—and are brought together in what Laruelle calls the matrix, or generic, “in which photo and fictions (a philosophy or conceptuality) are under-determined, which is to say, deprived of their classical finality and domination.”²⁸

The generic—a kind of image or “space” of thought that is non-hierarchical (or radically horizontal, to return to a term I used

above)—is then this other strange realm (of the real) that is un- or under-determined. Laruelle will also call this leveling out an algebra of philosophy/photography. This horizontality is important, as without it—as I mentioned above—non-philosophy becomes just one more superior philosophical position (and thus is itself open to further “nesting” by the positing of other outside perspectives). Indeed, one might suggest that Laruelle’s own non-philosophy is itself simply another form of thought among others; although, as I also mentioned above, Laruelle does suggest that non-philosophy has a specificity as a line—a clinamen—that “touches” these other fictions.

In “Photo-Fiction, A Theoretical Installation” Laruelle is concerned with building a new conceptual or theoretical apparatus that would be capable of producing these strange photo-fictions or models of the real. These are forms of thought (broadly construed) that are less explanatory or interpretive of the world as it is, and more speculative in character. Might we suggest, then, that it is this experimental nature of photo-fictions that characterizes them as a form of art practice?

As I intimated above, this strange kind of non-photographic apparatus is also necessarily a phenomenologically reduced one: it “pictures” what happens to experience when not tied to a self/interpreter, or when such experience is not “processed” through representation. We might also say the fictions that are produced by it are somehow weaker (again, they are “undetermined”), untethered as they are from a certain pretension. This is a more modest form of thought, perhaps, but it is also one that has the potential to expand the very idea—and working out—of what thought is and might become (it is in this sense that Laruelle’s “non”

announces a turn from hermeneutics to something more heuristic).

The key for Laruelle in all this is photo-fiction’s break with representation and mimesis and, with that, the production of a certain kind of freedom (he writes, for example, of the *jouissance* to be found at the end of “photo-centrism”).²⁹ In themselves these photo-fictions imply and, it seems to me, help produce a new kind of subject (if we can still call it this), or what Laruelle calls (in a nod to Kant’s notion of a non-empirical transcendental subject) “Subject = X.”³⁰ They also imply a new terrain (or, as I suggested above, a new realm) to be “discovered”—or constructed—“beyond” the “world” of philosophy/photography.³¹ Laruelle turns to quantum mechanics here (and indeed in much of his recent writings), where he finds the tools adequate and appropriate to this experimental reorganization or reconstruction of the world (outside representation). Such a “new” scientific theory does not involve yet more binaries, but rather a “superpositioning” in which a third state is produced by the addition (or “superposing”) of two previous states. Superpositioning is a way of dealing with the paradox I mentioned above of non-philosophy as both theory of thought and just one mode of thinking itself—indeed, it is precisely quantum science’s break with representational “accounts” of matter and the universe that makes it so useful for non-philosophy. We might even say that non-philosophy, in this sense, is quantum philosophy—and that the Subject = X is the quantum-subject.

3. Non-Art Practice

I want now to develop some of the above in six different, more specific “applications” of non-philosophy to art practice.³²

In particular I want to test Laruelle's method when it comes to thinking through a non philosophical discipline with its own logics and history, but also, more particularly, in relation to an understanding of performance as its own kind of "non-art" (or what David Burrows has called "performance fiction").³³

i. Diagrammatics

Diagrammatics might be a name for the practice of recontextualization, reorganization, and general manipulation of philosophical materials that have been untethered from their properly philosophical function or discourse. I have already laid out some of the aspects of this kind of practice above, but in relation to art more explicitly we might note the possibility that concepts be refigured diagrammatically. In a simple sense they can be drawn, but more generally to diagram suggests a different "imaging" or even performance of concepts. In fact, art practice has always involved a take on philosophy (and theory more broadly) that resonates with this—a "use" of philosophical materials *as* material.

A key question here is what these philosophical materials "do" when untethered in this way: what is their explanatory power (if that still has a meaning here)? Or, to put this another way, can this be anything different from the use of philosophy as illustration, or "caption"? (Laruelle himself uses the latter term when writing of philo-fictions.) What, we might ask, does the treatment of philosophy in this way allow us to think? One answer is that it might, for example, suggest surprising and productive connections and conjunctions between different

conceptual resources (given that the normal (philosophical) rules are suspended).³⁴ Philosophy (or non-philosophy) becomes a more synthetic—and, again, speculative—practice in this sense (rather than an analytic inquiry). More radically, this kind of practice opens up the different space of and for thinking that I mentioned above.

ii. Art as model

Non-philosophy might also name the multiplicity of thinking—the other kinds of thought—that subsists alongside the philosophical and the conceptual more broadly. Indeed, there is the important question, here, of the role of affect in art practice, and whether this more pathic register might also be understood as a kind of non-conceptual thinking—a different kind of non philosophy, perhaps. Again, some of this terrain has been laid out above, but in relation to art practice it seems to me that with this second aspect we are moving into more productive territory. Indeed, art practice has long been involved in non-conceptual explorations, just as it has also involved its own particular take on conceptual material (without the help of non-philosophy). A question rephrased from one asked above might also be posed here: what does non-philosophy in its democratizing aspect bring to art practice? Certainly it brings philosophy (and aesthetics) down from its throne, makes it more of a model among others; and, in the same gesture, art's own models are given a certain status beyond being simple fiction (at least when this is opposed to truth). But what does this modeling allow beyond such democratization? As I mentioned above, very little is said about this area—the other forms of thought besides philosophy—"within" non-philosophy

itself. Again, it seems to me that this is partly because a certain deconstructive logic is at play: any form of thinking, as thinking, is always already determined by the cut that produces the world and the subject that thinks.³⁵

But perhaps we might rephrase this, and also put it in more positive terms: non-philosophy cannot but use the stuff of the world and thus must use it differently, untethering it from the world (in the sense of a world determined by philosophy). In terms of art one thinks of William Burroughs and his cut-ups, which open up a different space-time. Indeed, narratives—the logical sequencing of sentences (cause and effect), familiar syntax, and so forth—which the cut-ups slice into and rearrange are key determining factors of the world. Non-philosophy in this expanded sense might then also be a form of non-narrative, or even a form of non-fiction (in which the “non” names a widening of context to include those formal experiments that go beyond simple narrative, as well as a use of language beyond its representational function). Such art will need to be “read,” or at least maintain a minimum consistency of sense. Again, experiments in writing non-narrative fictions (or, at least, in playing with narrative schema) would be instructive here.³⁶

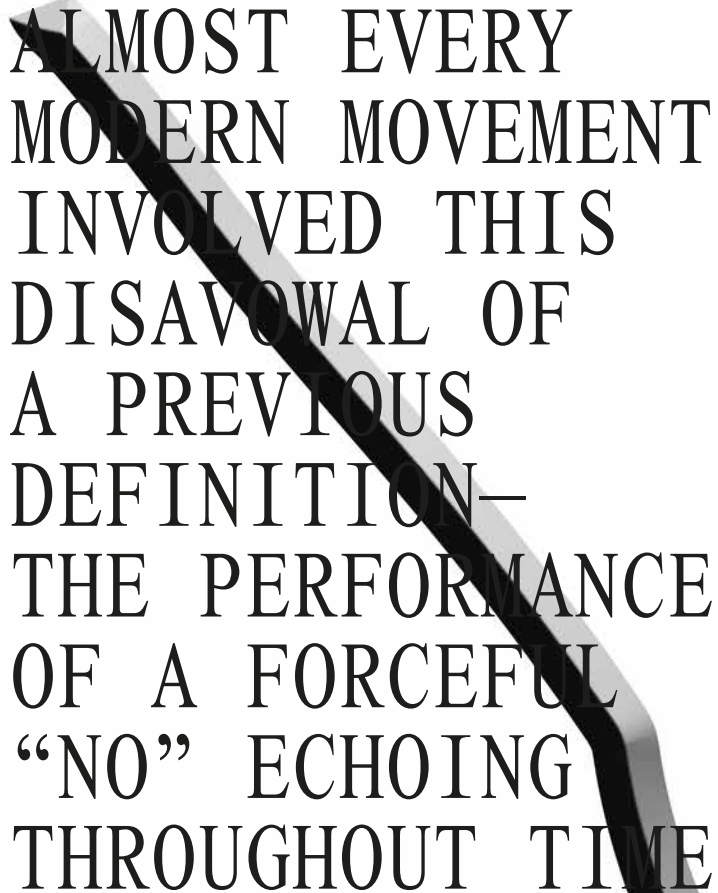
iii. Non-art (and art history)

Another (and perhaps more appropriate) thinking through of non-philosophy in relation to art would be an examination of whether art performs its own auto-positioning and has its own kind of principle that doubles the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy: does art also involve a certain kind of invariant

“decision” (however that might manifest)? Insofar as art involves representation (a “picturing of the world”) then the answer is clearly yes (and the above comments on photography would have relevance here—although work would need to be done to lay out how this particular structure operates in art practice more generally). But in this sense we might also say that modern art has already been through its own “non” “revolution” with the move from figuration to abstraction (Malevich and Pollock representing the twin apotheoses of this tendency in Western painting).³⁷

In fact, with the further move beyond abstraction to objecthood we have practices that, in their relationship to representation, “mirror” the relation between non-philosophy and philosophy. Certainly Minimalism, for example, was involved in something else “beyond” representation, in that it was the production of objects, assemblages, and so forth that were not “about” the real, but part of it (and in writers such as Donald Judd and Robert Smithson we have a clear articulation of this logic—the radical break their practices announce—as well as an indication of the importance of fiction, as a mode of writing, in articulating it).³⁸ We need only add that this shift in perspective also necessarily changes the perspective on previous art, such that it is then seen as representation but also as itself object (what else could it be?). We might also note Marcel Duchamp’s idea of the “reciprocal readymade,” which involves using (representational) art as material for everyday objects.³⁹ Contemporary practices that refer back to—or reuse—art, untethered from its previous representational functioning, would also be important here (what is sometimes called “second-order practice”), but so would those practices that, for example, repeat or restage previous performances. It is also in this

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sense that, today, abstract art is itself figural (it involves the referencing of previous abstractions). There is a similar structure to non-philosophy’s use of philosophy in these kinds of practice, but we might also note that there is equally a similar limit, insofar as such practices involve a nesting of art within art (ad infinitum). I will return to this.

We might also gesture here to the history of the avant-garde more generally and their refusal of previous categories of art. Almost every modern movement involved this disavowal of a previous definition—the performance of a forceful “No” echoing throughout time (and manifestos embody this recurring motif, perhaps most explicitly foregrounded in Dada, which further involved a refusal of “good sense”). There was also, with the avant-gardes, a concomitant drive to bring art into life. Indeed, in terms of non-art, a recurring feature of the avant-garde is the incorporation of non-artistic material in order to disrupt representation. From the readymade to Arte Povera to the happening, art has also been—at least in its initial impulse—non-art. Here it is surely Duchamp who best exemplifies the refusal of representation, just as it is Allan Kaprow who gestures to the very limits of the frame (and who does most to collapse or “blur” the art/life boundary). All this amounts to saying that from one perspective art history gives us an account of how art has always been thought in relation to something outside itself.

There is a lot more to be said about this relationship between art and non-art, especially in relation to Laruelle’s own ideas about how an anti-philosophy (as opposed to non-philosophy) invariably sets up an “outside” that then gets incorporated in a renewed “definition” (hence my interest in the reciprocal

readymade, which does not look “outside” art (it is not an anti-art) but uses art as its material). There is also the issue of art practice traversing this edge, often moving toward non-art status, only to hold back at the last moment, as it were, in order to maintain an artistic status (again, it seems to me that a certain deconstructive logic is at play with these practices that oscillate between art and non-art). A question here might be, then, what does an understanding of non-art (in Laruelle’s sense) bring to the table given this particular history of modern art? One answer might be that it allows a radical rethinking of the whole question of the avant-garde and of the art/non-art dialectic. To recall: Laruelle’s non-philosophy does not posit an outside; indeed, it is not an avant-garde position in this sense. Perhaps if we follow Laruelle, then, we are not so much exploring a territory beyond accepted definitions, but reconfiguring the very terrain of art and life (in terms of superpositioning). Once again it would seem that non-philosophy (and non-art) has this double face: on the one hand it allows a certain practice outside the laws and logics of the discipline it seeks to undermine (it is, as Laruelle calls it, “heretical”), but on the other it cannot but be caught by these very forms (insofar as it must work within and with them).⁴⁰

iv. Ideology critique

To return to some of my earlier comments about Althusser and ideology, another take on the conjunction of non-philosophy and art might be that non-philosophy can help to diagnose and critique “Contemporary Art” as a whole. It might help to identify a particular logic at work—for example, indeterminacy—that is,

as it were, a structuring invariant, whatever a given practice might claim. Such is the strategy of Suhail Malik, who calls for an “exit” from a Contemporary Art that is the handmaiden of contemporary neoliberalism.⁴¹ Here the very “openness” of the work of art is seen as profoundly ideological. In relation to this recent critique of contemporary art, we might also note that there has long been a “tradition” of radical (or “social”) art history as a form of ideology critique that is intent on demystifying the aesthetic and ideological functioning of art, and especially of “Art History,” by giving a properly historical account of art objects—might we even call this a kind of non-Art History (the capitals denoting a certain disciplinary self-sufficiency)?

But, to return to Malik, this is also a complex matter insofar as we might say that contemporary art (note: no capitals) is a practice that has itself been untethered from a certain programmatic account (namely, modernism). Contemporary art is already characterized by a radical democratization: this, for example, would be Jean-François Lyotard’s take (on “art in the age of postmodernity”), or indeed Rosalind Krauss’s (on our “post-medium condition”).⁴² From this perspective it would be Malik who is reinstating a certain program—we might even say decision—about what art *should* do. Of course, it is always possible to position the other’s point of view as the ideological one (witness the Adorno/Lukács debates around autonomy versus realism⁴³), but it does seem to me that positioning art as ideology critique—or as simply critical—and at the same time dismissing practices that are not committed to this critique, cannot but limit our understanding of art and indeed of its terrain of operation (rather than, for example, opening it up to further adventures).

Nevertheless, a key question arising from this particular perspective is whether there is indeed a non-art practice that utilizes art as its material, but untethers it from its dominant logics (whatever these might be); and, if so, whether this is something different to what art already does. It seems clear, here, that it is the definition of art that determines its “non” (and, as such, if the dominant logics are indeed indeterminacy, or perhaps representation, then this will define non-art as non-representation and determinate). A further question is whether art—or non-art—can itself escape these interminable circuits of definition and redefinition. Can it offer a different kind of knowledge “outside” art as it is typically understood?⁴⁴

v. Performance fictions

Leading on from the above, and changing perspective a little, there is also the compelling gnostic “account” that non-philosophy gives of the real that I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. At the end of the conference on “Fiction as Method” (the progenitor of this book), Tim Etchells performed a “re-mix” of the previous speaker, M. John Harrison, and his compelling reading of one of his own short stories.⁴⁵ Both presentations—one a piece of fiction, the other a performance—were somewhat different to the previous papers. Indeed, if the latter had generally been *about* fiction as method (albeit involving creative as well as critical approaches and interventions), here, in both of these last contributions to the conference, we were presented with fiction *as* method itself. With both it was as if the whole conference assemblage had somehow tipped—and phase-shifted—from being “about” the real to being “of” (or alongside) it.

For me this experience resonates with the radical immanence of non-philosophy. Indeed, as I also mentioned above, there is something surprising—and yet at the same time obvious—about Laruelle’s idea of a form of thought that is from the real rather than yet another interpretation of it. As I hope I have made clear, art practice is often involved in this other kind of presentation. The conference, however, made the difference between the two perspectives—or gestures—suddenly very apparent.

Indeed, performance in general has this quality of producing difference through a cut. It is non-representation par excellence insofar as in its very liveness it offers an “experience” of life “outside” representation.⁴⁶ However, there is also the question here as to whether at least some kind of minimal framing is required to make it art, or else it becomes “just life” (this, again, is the edge that Kaprow traverses). In fact, it seems to me that a life might well need some framing—a performance, as it were—in order for it be taken out of the frame within which it is usually experienced/perceived (what Laruelle calls the world). Counter-intuitively, art practice, as performance, can be more real than life *because* it is framed (at least minimally).

The models and fictions referred to earlier in this essay demonstrate ways of sidestepping more typical, often unseeable, frames of reference. They offer one set of approaches to enabling ourselves to think of art practice as the production of fictions that allow—almost as a side effect—for a glimpse of the real (or, to refer again to the conference, it is the very difference between the two fictional worlds—our typical world and the world an art practice can present—that allows for a small part of the real to leak through). Again, unless a fiction is produced, the

danger is that a practice merely presents a piece of the world as it surrounds us on an everyday basis, without any difference (as is the case with art practices that simply archive what exists without transforming it). It is, then, through the performance of a fiction that art can foreground the always already fictional status of a world it is different from.

vi. The fiction of a self

Performance art aside, it seems to me that non-philosophy is also at its most interesting and compelling when it is thought in relation to a life that is lived differently, or in relation to Michel Foucault's suggestion (though for different reasons) that "everyone's life become a work of art."⁴⁷ This is to "apply" non-philosophy to expanded practices beyond the gallery, but also to think about aesthetic practices, in more general terms, in relation to what Guattari called the production of subjectivity (and to the expanded ethico-aesthetic paradigm that is implied by this).

Indeed, as I have gestured toward above, we might want to ask whether the very structure of typical subjectivity—and of a "self"—is not itself the product of a certain philosophical decision (broadly construed), one that is lived on a day-to-day basis.⁴⁸ A non-philosophical take on subjectivity will involve a diagnosis of such a positioning (again, typical subjectivity), but, for me, more interesting is that it might point to the possibility of being in the world without a fixed sense of a typical self (with all the attendant issues this unfixedness can bring). Laruelle seems to be suggesting something similar in

his "A New Presentation of Non-Philosophy," not least when he suggests that non-philosophy might be the only "chance for an effective utopia."⁴⁹

This effective utopia would mean living life away from those forms that have caught and restrict it: it is to refuse philosophy, especially in its key operation of producing the fiction of a (separate) self—or, rather, its positing of the latter as not a fiction but as a truth (the self as product of a certain decision that is then occluded, hidden from that subject). Non-philosophy might then be about untethering the self from its auto-positioning, its own entronement (and as such it has something very specific to offer recent accounts and critiques of the "Anthropocene").

In fact, it seems that what follows from this insight is not the "dissolving" of the self, but, we might say, a holding of it in a lighter, more contingent manner—as, precisely, a fiction (and, insofar as the self is the anchor point for numerous other fictions—the different worlds through which a self moves—then these too are seen as fictions). Crucially, this might also mean the possibility of producing other fictions of the self (or other fictions of non-self), and with that the exploration of other ways of being in the world.⁵⁰ Although there is not the space here to go into Laruelle's own writings on this other kind of subject, we might note his concept of the "generic human," or "stranger," which he describes as a "radical ordinariness" that is nevertheless at odds with the world (and which we always already are, over and above any "assumed" subjectivity).⁵¹

A compelling final question—which I have gestured towards

throughout my essay—is what this terrain “outside” the self might be like and if, indeed, it can be explored. Mackay writes well on this discovery of the generic “beneath” the subject produced by philosophy and how we might begin to experience and experiment with it (for it is not a given, but, to echo Deleuze and Guattari, needs to be constructed, piece by piece).⁵² It is perhaps with this grand vision of the work of non-philosophy that we begin to see the more profound connections with, and radical implications for, what might be call a non-art practice. This, then, is the experimental exploration—but also the construction and performance—of new worlds and new kinds of non-subjects adequate and appropriate to them. Or, more simply: fiction as method.

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Endnotes

- 1 The following account is heavily indebted to a number of other introductions to Laruelle's thought, including: Ray Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-Philosophy of François Laruelle," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 121 (September/October 2003): 24–35; Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); Robin Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided," in *François Laruelle, From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), 1–32; John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith, "Introduction: The Non-Philosophical Inversion: Laruelle's Knowledge Without Domination," in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1–18; John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); and Anthony Paul Smith, *François Laruelle's "Principles of Non-Philosophy": A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). These and other secondary texts are referenced throughout (often in endnotes), but I also want to be clear at the outset that my understanding of Laruelle, and in particular the laying out of the tenets of non-philosophy in section 1 of my essay, is based on these rather than any exhaustive reading of Laruelle's own books (and as such constitutes only an initial foray into what, for me, is new territory). Any errors in understanding are, of course, my own.
- 2 Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts are Equal*, 1.
- 3 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 25.
- 4 Although I have used a lowercase "r" here and throughout, Laruelle invariably has Lacan's sense of the Real in mind – as that which is "outside" the symbolic register and which indeed is resistant to it (although, as we shall see, Laruelle makes his own modifications to this topology).
- 5 As Laruelle remarks in relation to the "character" of non-philosophers: "they are also related to what I would call the "spiritual" type – which it is imperative not to confuse with "spiritualist." The spiritual are not spiritualists. 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." François Laruelle, "A New Presentation of Non-Philosophy," *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, accessed August 23, 2017, <http://www.onphi.net/corpus/32/a-new-presentation-of-non-philosophy>.
- 6 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 26.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 See especially Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), 16–22.
- 9 Laruelle, "A New Presentation."
- 10 Andrew McGettigan, "Fabrication Defect: François Laruelle's Philosophical Materials," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 175 (September/October 2012): 33–42; Ray Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy."
- 11 As, for example, Laruelle will argue, in Deleuze's philosophy (see for example François Laruelle, "I, the Philosopher, Am Lying: A Reply to Deleuze," trans. Taylor Adkins, Ray Brassier, and Sid Littlefield, in *The Non-Philosophy Project: Essays by François Laruelle*, ed. Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjevic (New York: Telos, 2012), 40–74. Is this claim, however, entirely correct? In his last essay, "Immanence: A Life," Deleuze is very careful to distinguish his concept of immanence from one that is immanent "to" something (which would necessarily involve a form of transcendence): Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 25–34. Deleuze does attend, however, to how a "point of view" on this immanence cannot but involve a certain kind of abstraction and "folding back," but it is not entirely clear, at least to this reader, whether this can be understood as simply a decisional structure in Laruelle's terms. A more detailed comparison on this point will need to wait for another time, but we might note here Deleuze's own sympathy (albeit with reservations) with Laruelle's

- non-philosophical project, as evidenced by the footnote to the latter at the very end of *What is Philosophy?* (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), 234 n.16). For my own take on Deleuze (and Guattari) as a form of non philosophy see Simon O'Sullivan, "Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think Is Always to Follow the Witches Flight," in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, ed. Henry Somers-Hall, Jeff Bell, and James Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 172–88.
- 12 Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided," 2.
- 13 Smith, *François Laruelle's "Principles,"* 26. Indeed, Smith is especially attuned to the arrogance of Philosophy – and, not least, its connection to a "wider" European colonial attitude (hence the importance of non-philosophy in the decolonization of thinking). In his *Francois Laruelle's "Principles of Non-Philosophy": A Critical Introduction and Guide* he is also keen to maintain and defend the category of the human (albeit that this is not the human of a straightforward humanism, but of a more generic
- "force-of-thought") against those other readers of Laruelle – Smith has Brassier especially in mind – who are intent on dismantling the latter or hastening its demise. Might we say then that Smith attends to the ongoing importance of phenomenology (especially Martin Heidegger and Michel Henry) for Laruelle's non-philosophy (though in a "reduced" form), whereas Brassier is interested (see note 15 below) in a reading that effectively rids non-philosophy of any phenomenological residue (hence the focus on abstraction). These two positions revolve around different attitudes to alienation and reason. For Brassier, alienation enables freedom via the constructs of reason (hence the Promethean character of his writing); for Smith non-philosophy promises a kind of overcoming of alienation (and a limiting of reason) for a human that is always more than simply a rational animal.
- 14 See, for example, Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and in particular the third "Principle of Multiplicity": "The point is that a rhizome never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension [...]. All multiplicities are flat in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 9.
- 15 In *Nihil Unbound* Brassier suggests that the philosophical operation that Laruelle lays out as a universal invariant decision – which Brassier describes a "quasi-spontaneous philosophical compulsion" (*Nihil Unbound*, 119) – is, rather, the hallmark of a particular kind of philosophy that finds its terminus in Heidegger and deconstruction. Indeed, for Brassier it is only by understanding Laruelle in this way – as offering something to philosophy (basically the suspension of the decisional mechanism that in itself might allow for a different kind of thinking) – that the radical implications of Laruelle's thought can be laid out. Brassier argues that this must also involve the extraction from out of Laruelle's own account of non-philosophy (and especially of the human as locus of the real) of a "de-phenomenologized conception of the real as 'being-nothing'" (ibid., 118); hence the title of Brassier's book.
- 16 McGettigan, "Fabrication Defect."
- 17 As Ó Maoilearca remarks at the beginning of his book: "Non-philosophy is a conception of philosophy (and all forms of thought) that allows us to see them as equivalent according to a broader explanatory paradigm. It enlarges the set of things that can count as thoughtful, a set that includes existing philosophy but also a whole host of what is presently deemed (by standard philosophy) to be non-philosophical (art, technology, natural science)." Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts are Equal*, 9.
- 18 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 27.
- 19 Again, we might note the connections with deconstruction as a particular kind of practice here; a diagnosis of Western metaphysics, but also – more elusively, perhaps – a gesture to forms of thinking that are irreducible to this.
- 20 On this point see Keith Tilford's unpublished essay on the implications of non-philosophy for art: Keith Tilford, "Laruelle, Art, and the Scientific Model," accessed January 7, 2017, http://keithtilford.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Tilford_

- Keith.pdf. Tilford makes an especially compelling distinction (though not one I use in my own essay) between “theories” (based on decision) and “models” (which are, precisely, revisable).
- 21 Mackay, “Introduction: Laruelle Undivided,” 8.
- 22 See for example the texts gathered together in “Appendix I” at the end of Laruelle, *From Decision to Heresy*, 353–408.
- 23 As in Guattari’s metamodelization of Lacanian concepts. For Laruelle’s own non-philosophical response to Guattari and schizoanalysis (and, not least, the collaboration with Deleuze) see François Laruelle, “Fragments of an Anti-Guattari,” *Linguistic Capital*, accessed 7 January 2017, trans. Charles Wolfe, https://linguisticcapital.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/laruelle_fragments-of-an-anti-guattari.pdf.
- 24 François Laruelle, “What Is Seen in a Photo?” in *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 1–28.
- 25 François Laruelle, “Photo-Fiction, A Theoretical Installation,” in *Photo-Fiction: A Non-Standard Aesthetics*, trans. Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), 11–24.
- 26 Ibid., 16.
- 27 Ibid., 14.
- 28 Ibid., 16.
- 29 Ibid., 18–19.
- 30 Ibid., 15–17.
- 31 Ibid., 15.
- 32 I am aware that this idea of an “application” is highly problematic in relation to non-philosophy; my comments below attempt to address this particular limitation. I would also point the interested reader to the writings of Anne-Françoise Schmid, who develops a more sustained inquiry into the implications of non-philosophy for art history and practice. In her article “The Madonna on the Craters of the Moon: An Aesthetic Epistemology” Schmid follows Laruelle in making a case for a generic epistemology and, indeed, a generic aesthetics that might operate as an “intermediary” between science and art, but also between different art practices (or even between different elements within a practice): Anne-Françoise Schmid, “The Madonna on the Craters of the Moon: An Aesthetic Epistemology,” *Urbanomic*, accessed January 7, 2017, <https://www.urbanomic.com/document/the-madonna-on-the-craters-of-the-moon-an-aesthetic-epistemology>. For Schmid there is no “birds-eye view” on this terrain, and, as such, no one model (of either science or art), but rather a diversity of models in superposition. For Schmid this also implies a new understanding of the object, which is no longer given as such but must be invented (might we even say fictioned?). Schmid gives this expanded practice the name “integrative object,” involving as it does a kind of synthesis of heterogeneity, one that proceeds “piece by piece.”
- 33 David Burrows, “Performance Fictions,” in *Performance Fictions*, ed. David Burrows (Birmingham: Article Press, 2010), 47–70.
- 34 My own book *On the Production of Subjectivity* includes examples of this kind of diagrammatic treatment of conceptual material. Simon O’Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).
- 35 Nick Srnicek suggests something similar in his own take on a politics (and a certain aporia) that leads from non-philosophy: any form of typical intervention in the world cannot but be determined by that world (or, again, takes place within the horizon of decision): Nick Srnicek, “Capitalism and the Non-Philosophical Subject,” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 164–81. Non-philosophy can in this sense open a view from elsewhere (or, for Srnicek, it can open up a kind of non-capitalist space), but it cannot offer any content (Brassier’s reading of Laruelle’s method puts this necessary abstract character and formal inventiveness in more positive terms as the very work of non-philosophy: Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy”).
- 36 In relation to this – and to an idea of “fictioning” – see my essay “From Science Fiction to Science Fictioning: SF’s Traction on the Real,” *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 46.1, No. 126 (2017): 4–84. We might also note once again Laruelle’s own writing experiments here.
- 37 In relation to this it is worth noting Deleuze’s compelling observation (in the chapter on “The Image of Thought” in *Difference and Repetition*) that philosophy needs to go through a similar revolution to modern art. Gilles Deleuze,

Difference and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129–67.

- 38 In relation to the first of these, see, for example, Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” in *Art in Theory, 1900–1990*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 809–13; and Robert Smithson, “Entropy and the New Monuments,” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 10–23. In relation to the second, see Robert Smithson, “Strata: A Geophotographic Fiction,” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 75–77.
- 39 My thanks to Nadja Millner-Larsen for alerting me to the logic of the reciprocal readymade.
- 40 See for example François Laruelle, “Non-Philosophy as Heresy,” in *Laruelle, From Decision to Heresy*, 257–84.
- 41 Suhail Malik, *On the Necessity of Art’s Exit from Contemporary Art* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017).
- 42 See Jean-François Lyotard, “Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their

Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity,” trans. Mária Minich Brewer and Daniel Brewer, in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 181–95; and Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

- 43 Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: NLB, 1977).
- 44 This is the question that Amanda Beech asks in her own take on Laruelle and on what she sees as problems with an art practice invested in freedom, immediacy, difference, contingency, and so forth. For Beech, besides this critique of typical operating procedures and logics of contemporary art, at stake is the outlining of a different practice – or Science – of the image, one that embraces its representational/mediatory character in its own kind of “critical-political project”; or, in the terms of Laruelle’s own “non-differential space of the generic matrix”: “What is the distinction between the paradigm of art as we know it, and another category of art that we could imagine in this new configuration?” Amanda

Beech “Art and Its ‘Science,’” in *Speculative Aesthetics*, ed. Robin Mackay, Luke Pendrell, and James Trafford (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), 15.

- 45 *Fiction as Method conference*, Goldsmiths, University of London, October 17, 2015.
- 46 Performance, as Tero Nauha has articulated, can be a practice that is alongside the real and as such might be thought of as an “advent” (as opposed to an event that gets “recaptured” by philosophy). Nauha also makes a convincing case, following Laruelle, for performance as a heretical practice (pitched against the “law” of representation): see Tero Nauha, *Schizoproduction: Artistic Research and Performance in the Context of Immanent Capitalism* (Helsinki: University of the Arts, 2016).
- 47 Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 2000), 261.
- 48 Smith writes well on how a certain decisional structure produces the philosophical subject (as separate from an object – the real – that it

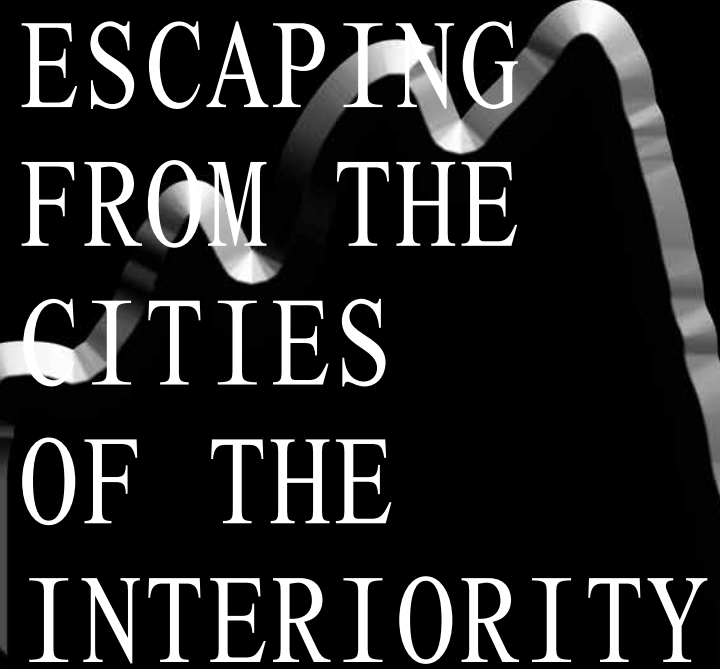
cannot know except through itself) and how the non-philosophical subject – as “force-of-thought” – might be understood, instead, as always already a part of, or a clone of, the real (see Smith, François Laruelle’s “Principles,” 45–61).

- 49 To continue the quote from note 5, above: “non-philosophy 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?” And it is also close to spiritual revolutionaries such as Müntzer and certain mystics who skirted heresy. When all is said and done, is non-philosophy anything other than the chance for an effective utopia?” Laruelle, “A New Presentation.”
- 50 David Burrows and I attend more fully to this in our forthcoming book: David Burrows and Simon O’Sullivan, *Mythopoesis–Myth–Science–Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).
- 51 One of the other key thinkers in relation to this area is the neuroscientist and philosopher Thomas Metzinger and his thesis of the “ego tunnel” as productive

of what he calls the “myth” of the self. See Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2009). We might also turn again to Brassier’s recent writings on a certain kind of “nemocentric” subject that is “produced” through neuroscientific understandings of our place in the world. In both of these cases it is a question of exploring a kind of non-subject whose processes of re-presenting the world (or modeling) are opaque rather than transparent (and thus open to examination). Ray Brassier, “The View from Nowhere,” *Identities: Journal of Politics, Gender and Culture* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 7–23.

52 Mackay, “Introduction: Laruelle Undivided.”

BEYOND PLATO’S CAVE: ESCAPING FROM THE CITIES OF THE INTERIORITY



Justin Barton