François Laruelle, born in 1937, is Professor of Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Paris X (Nanterre), where he has taught since 1967. He is a prolific writer whose output is notable both for its quantity and its reputation for difficulty. Apart from the sixteen books he has published since 1971 – beginning with Phénomène et différence (1971) and including Machines textuelles (1976), Les Philosophies de la différence (1986), Principes de la non-philosophie (1996) and most recently Le Christ futur (2002) – there has also been a constant stream of essays and “experimental texts,” only a fraction of which have been published, and at least two complete treatises that remain unpublished or perhaps unpublishable, given their gargantuan heft (both are over six hundred pages long) and hair-raising conceptual severity.

Severity, or an adamantine density of conceptual abstraction, is a hallmark of Laruelle’s writing, one that has elicited charges of “obscurantism” against him and encouraged some to dismiss him as a wilful provocateur or even to accuse him of something akin to “terrorism” (presumably theoretical). But the austere abstraction of Laruelle’s writing is a function of its ambition: to elaborate a transcendental theory of philosophy in which the latter is reduced to the status of a mere empirical material. This is not a meta-philosophical conceit, Laruelle insists. He distinguishes between philosophy and theory, and hence between a meta-philosophical philosophy of philosophy and his own attempt to construct a non-philosophical theory of philosophy. According to Laruelle, the meta-philosophical dimension is intrinsic to the inherently reflexive nature of philosophical thought, so that every philosophy worthy of the name harbours a philosophy of philosophy. But what is required, Laruelle argues, is not more reflection but less, so that a non-philosophical theory of philosophy will not be “an intensified reduplication of philosophy,” a meta-philosophy, but rather its “simplification.” The intrinsically reflexive or specular nature of philosophical thought makes of philosophy a practice of interpretation rather than a theory: “Philosophy is interpretation at a global level because it is infinite repetition and self-reference, overview and contemplation of the world.”

Instead of a philosophy of philosophy, then, Laruelle proposes a non-reflexive and hence non-philosophical theory capable of explaining –
rather than reflecting or interpreting – the reflexive mechanisms of philosophy in terms that are themselves irreducible to philosophy’s own specular logic. For Laruelle, theoretical explanation is important as a heterogeneity between explanans and explanandum and is importantly distinct from philosophical speculation, which invarably includes mechanisms of interpretation and evaluation (whether explicitly, as in Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze, or implicitly, as in Kant, Hegel and Husserl); mechanisms that necessitate a structural isomorphy between speculation and whatever is “speculated.” Against the speculative narcissism of philosophy, for which every phenomenon functions as a mirror through which philosophy can conduct its own interminable self-interpretation, Laruelle proposes a non-philosophical theory that simultaneously explains philosophy and releases phenomena from their subordination to philosophical interpretation.

This preoccupation with achieving a theoretical mastery of the logic of philosophy is already apparent in Laruelle’s early work, which he now classifies under the heading “Philosophy I” (1971–81). The latter finds its initial impetus in a prolonged and systematic engagement with the “philosophies of difference”: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze. It is in the wake of this engagement that Laruelle claims to have identified a structural invariant governing the logic of philosophy as such; an invariant at once more universal and more all-encompassing than the logic of metaphysics, representation or ontology. This is the logic of philosophical decision as difference (a logics that includes the deconstruction of metaphysics and the dismantling of representations). In Les Philosophies de la différence (1986), Laruelle argues that Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze do not so much undermine the authority of the Greek logos as reinforce its underlying structure by exemplifying its underlying structure: the structure of philosophical decision as a dyad or difference that simultaneously includes and excludes its own identity as a supplementary third term. Thus, the identity of philosophical decision is a fractional structure comprising $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{2}$ terms. In the former case, the $2$ qua difference between $x$ and $y$ is divided by the $3$ as identity of that difference, but an identity that has to be added on to it in a necessary supplement in order to construct it. In the latter case, the $3$ qua identity added on to $x$ and $y$ is subtracted from their identity in order to constitute it. Nietzsche and Deleuze exemplify the former schema; Heidegger and Derrida the latter.

Laruelle concludes that philosophy, from Heraclitus to Hegeler, Derrida and Deleuze, has only ever exploited identity in order to think being qua difference. Even when it laid claim to the supremacy of the self-identical Notion, as in Hegel, philosophy surreptitiously privileged difference for the Hegelian “identity of identity is nothing but their difference as absolute contradiction – the fundamental parameters of philosophical decision as consisting of the identity-in-difference of thought and being. Thus, it is decision as identity-in-difference that Laruelle identifies as the invariant governing the possibilities of the invariant governing the possibilities of thought and being. Hence the charge of “idealism” that has often been leveled at philosophy by Laruelle.

Having uncovered the structure of decision as the invariant governing the possibilities of thought and being, Laruelle sets out to determine what non-philosophy can do.
philosophising, Laruelle, in *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (1989), proposes to suspend the authority of philosophy through a non-decisional or non-philosophical thinking in order to explore new, previously unenvisageable conceptual possibilities – much as non-Euclidean geometries began exploring previously inconceivable geometries once they suspended Euclid’s fifth axiom about parallel lines. The key to the possibility of this suspension lies in the discovery that identity as radical immanence or what Laruelle calls “the One-in-One” has already effected this radical or unilateral separation between itself and the decisional dyad with regard to which identity is both a supplement and a deficit. Identity qua radical immanence is not some ineffable abstraction which the non-philosopher has to strive to attain: it is the element he or she is already concretely operating from, the “cause-of-the-last-instance” that is already determining his or her thinking. It is the identity of man as “the One without being.” But man’s identity as radical immanence is an identity-without-unity or ontological consistency; an identity that has already set aside or suspended the pertinence of ontological difference as decision or co-constitution of identity and difference. The point, Laruelle insists, is not to get out of philosophy but to realise that you were never in it in the first place; to liberate yourself from the intrinsically philosophical hallucination that you need to be liberated from philosophy:

The point is not to engender non-philosophical effects within philosophy, which would still be to presuppose philosophy’s uncircumventable validity. It is to install thought from the outset within the space of the universal opening as such, the space of the opening as essence rather than as mere event, attribute or alterity. The point is to install thought within the space of an opening that no longer needs to be brought about by means of constitutive operations such as those of overturning or displacement; an opening that has always already been brought about by the One and is simply its correlate.¹

Accordingly, unlike the space of philosophical or decisional thinking, whose parameters are shaped by the structure of decision as differential synthesis or One-of-the-dyad (where the One is simultaneously added to and subtracted from the dyad), the space of non-philosophical or non-decisional thinking is shaped by what Laruelle calls the “unilaterality” whereby the One is separate from the dyad without the dyad being separate from the One. Thus, whereas the logic of philosophical decision consists in dyadic synthesis (+ or − One), the logic of non-decisional or non-philosophical thinking consists in unilater-alisation: dyadic synthesis is converted into a “unilateral duality” where the One as identity without synthesis determines decision as a duality that is also without synthesis. This conversion of decisional synthesis into unilateral duality is what Laruelle calls “determination-in-the-last-instance” or, more recently, “cloning.” Laruelle provides an exhaustive analysis of the logic of unilateralisation, as well as of the non-philosophical “cloning” of philosophy to which it gives rise, in *Principes de la non-philosophie* (1996), which he regards as his most important book to date and in which the concepts, procedures and operations specific to non-philosophy attain their full realisation. This is also the book in which Laruelle tries to explain the (highly complex) nature of the shift in his thinking from “Philosophie II” (1981–92) to “Philosophie III” (1995 to the present).

Following the systematic presentation of non-philosophical method in *Principes*, Laruelle has, in subsequent work, tried to “apply” this method to various philosophical materials in a manner consonant with non-philosophy’s explicitly experimental ethos. Thus, *Éthique de l’étranger* (2000) proposes a “non-ethical” treatment of Platonist, Kantian and Levinasian accounts of the ethical, while *Introduction au non-marxisme* (2000) delineates a “non-Marxist” reading of Marx. Most recently, 2002’s *Le Christ futur* is an exercise in “non-Christian heresy” organised around the concept of a Christ-subject who effectuates an unenvisageable future “other than” the world’s.

notes

¹ Examples of these can be found in *La Décision Philosophique*, the journal edited by Laruelle between 1987 and 1989.
what can non-philosophy do?


3 See, for example, the interviews with Laruelle conducted by Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, and included as appendices to Laruelle’s Le Déclin de l’écriture (1977). Laruelle responds to the charge of “terrorism” in a debate with Derrida that took place in 1986 at the Collège International de Philosophie, published as “Controverse sur la possibilité d’une science de la philosophie” in La Décision Philosophique 5 (1988): 63–76.


5 “The One’s radical autonomy, its real indifference with regard to being and to thought […] invalidates a fundamental thesis of ontology: that of the convertibility between the One and being […] It also limits the putatively primary pertinence of the thesis of another convertibility: that of the ontological difference between being and beings” (Laruelle, Principes de la non-philosophie 24).

6 Laruelle, Philosophie et non-philosophie 32.
what can non-philosophy do?

françois laruelle

I the infinite end of philosophy

Our contemporary situation is, as ever, complex. It harbours numerous contrasts. But one of its most telling characteristics is that of a bustling philosophical activity that masks a fundamental indifference to philosophy. Were we to set aside those distortions that are a function of historical perspective, we would see that this situation is perfectly normal, but a superficial awareness or consciousness of this phenomenon is particularly acute at the present time. Is this indicative of a lack of interest? A lack of purpose? Indifference? Unlike their predecessors, who were directly preoccupied with philosophy itself, modern philosophers have tended to be more preoccupied with their relation to philosophy as it is mediated across historical distance. We no longer practise philosophy naïvely and spontaneously from within itself, as though it were a second nature or a habitat. Kant shattered this spontaneity and bequeathed to us a new problem: that of the use of philosophy.

What are we to do with metaphysics from now on? It is as though we have been burdened with a suffocating legacy – we have inherited scraps that we do not know what to do with. Are we supposed to reprocess or even recycle these scraps of thought? Is it a question of the ecology of thought – a thought that no longer knows how to dispose of its products? There is something of this in our legacy and in our overburdened memory. But why does modern man formulate the problem of his legacy by wondering how to manage something that sometimes appears as a shortage and at other times as a surplus? Perhaps it is necessary to reformulate the problem of our relation to the tradition and begin by putting the latter to one side. Is it then a question of the “end of philosophy”?

But is not the expression “end of philosophy” or “end of metaphysics” part of this same cumbersome legacy? Let us use the expression “without-philosophy” instead, but only on condition that we ascribe the lack or absence of philosophy to man now understood as “man-in-person,” and that we re-examine these problems according to this new angle. To understand this change in problematic, we have to go back to the essential origins of philosophy.

“End of philosophy” is a philosophical expression not only by virtue of its formulation but also through its meaning and as a matter of principle. It expresses philosophy in its ultimate possibility – winding around itself, gathering itself and withdrawing from thought. Philosophy encloses itself, consummates itself as a form of technique, leaving behind an empty space for a new experience of thought. Heidegger and Derrida have added certain important nuances to this schema. But it still has to be understood as expressing the essence of philosophy: an auto-positional essence indefinitely closing on itself, whilst missing or exceeding itself by a difference intrinsic to that identity, so that it never fully achieves either a perfect closure or a perfect opening. This is not to say that auto-positioning or auto-beginning always fails, or fails as a matter of principle. It fails only to the same degree as it succeeds because this structure – specular in nature – is divided by a difference or alterity that remains subordinated to its identity, the whole forming a dyadic/triadic structure that is equally and simultaneously open and closed.

It may be that this structure is never manifested in a pure state within the history of philosophy, that it is always somewhat unbalanced depending on whether the emphasis is on identity or alterity. Nevertheless, it forms the principal core, the minimal invariant that must be presupposed as operative in any doctrine of a philosophical or systematic type. This core defines philosophy as a “theoreticist idealism” or “idealist theoreticism.” This is not the name of a particular doctrine but another name for the essence of philosophy as such. In other words, every philosophy, however it comes to be realised, is bound to a specularity that it mistakes for the real, bound to a primacy and priority of theory as reflection of that real – the two together constituting “speculation.” Different doctrines may vary this structure but they “economise” philosophy’s presence and

absence in such a way that its absence remains intrinsic to its continuous presence. It is always philosophical mastery that decides – without deciding – about philosophy’s end: for example (since we are talking about speculation) about its overcoming or internalising Aufhebung.

The unitary and sufficient presupposition which is intrinsic to philosophy’s self-relation (and which fuelled theoretician idealism from the Greeks to Hegel) was merely somewhat weakened by the various kinds of deconstruction when they began to acknowledge that philosophy’s auto-closure was simultaneously enabled and hindered by an alterity – but an alterity that they in turn continued to presuppose as sufficient or absolute, rather than as a radical alterity or alterity in-person. This amounted to yet another division (albeit one that was now uneven) between philosophy and an alterity that is partially extra-philosophical yet that continues to ratify philosophy’s basic sufficiency. The latter is precisely what an anonymous alterity of this kind is incapable of revoking.

II the real or identity-in-person

Non-philosophy is not a return to identity or to its primacy in the wake of twentieth-century philosophy’s orgy of alterity and difference. It is not some sort of reaction. Perhaps it is another identity altogether that is at issue here. Identity-in-person has never yet been attained. Identity has only ever been aimed at as though it were homologous with an object, one that might be used for various ends. Philosophical thought is directed towards identity intentionally, via transcendence as epekeina rather than as meta. Thus, it is obliged to make certain corrective adjustments in that practice of objectivation. Identity becomes the object of desire rather than of knowledge; it conditions the latter without falling under it, etc. Nevertheless, it remains inseparable from transcendence as deployed through the meta, from eidetic Being – as though it constituted an uneven half tacked on to this transcendence. Whence the fact that the epekeina, which is absolute transcendence, remains relatively dependent upon the meta, which is relative transcendence. Like desire, philosophy is ambitious, it is the enjoyment of the absolutely other; but the weakness of the absolute resides in its point of departure and in its process, which consists in an absolutisation of experience.

Non-philosophy is founded in another experience of identity. It conceives of identity precisely as that to which it is impossible to direct thought towards intentionally – whether as object or horizon. It conceives of identity as something that cannot be attained via transcendence. This is identity-in-person, the One in flesh and blood, which does not tolerate either internal transcendence or external, operational transcendence. It is not the object of a construction or of a philosophical desire deployed within the realm of what is operationally intuitable. It is the philosopher, not just philosophy, who is from the outset (albeit not definitively) put out of play as a deus ex machina. This is why non-philosophy simulates philosophy in its beginning, but does so through a different gesture. Philosophy begins and remains within itself, within its own immanence, by presupposing itself – but in such a way as to be capable of minimising and reintegrating its own presuppositions, which are gathered up in transcendence. The immanence of philosophy is complex, split into two: it is at once thematic and functional, requiring various gestures of transcendence or presupposition, but ones that can ultimately be minimised and reintegrated, or that are already directly amenable to integration (Hegel). This is characteristic of the auto-encompassing style of philosophy.

By way of contrast, although non-philosophy also begins in immanence and remains within it, it does not take the form of a self-encompassing movement in which identity merely functions to close or seal the circle. In non-philosophy, identity as such is no longer a function of anything else. No matter how much a functional identity simulates the real, or engenders real effects, it invariably dissolves in the only available reality: the reality of the system as the meta-stable, self-encompassing reality of philosophical desire. The question, then, is whether it is enough to restrict oneself to the construction – and thereby to the deconstruction – of a system of philosophical desire; or whether – in complete contrast – we...
should try to elaborate a theory of it instead. Let us continue our analysis.

III the transcendental or the separated middle: a theory of alterity

Identity-in-person is a primary name. There are others, such as man-in-person. Once it has been rigorously defined, rather than given over to the realm of unitary, metaphysical or anthropological generality; once it has been axiomatically determined rather than presupposed through vague theses or statements, what we are calling “man” as identity is so inconsistent, so devoid of essence as to constitute a hole in nothingness itself, not just in being. It is a blind-spot for philosophical auto-reflection, which now assumes the mantle of nothingness, now being, or shifts from one to the other. The concept of auto-reflection applies equally to the most ancient philosophies as to modern ones. It is indicative of theoreticist idealism and speculation as the essence of philosophical systems. Yet not only is the One-in-One foreign to all ontological or linguistic consistency, it is also foreign to all inconsistency. It is the without-consistency. Man-in-person or identity can be defined, in terms that are homologous with the simultaneously excluded and included middle that systematically opens and closes philosophy, as the identity-without-middle or better still as the separated middle, which is neither included nor excluded, neither consistent nor inconsistent, etc. It is neither of these two predicates as opposed to one another or as synthesised into a third term. In other words, no set of dyadic philosophical predicates is appropriate to “man-in-person” – which is not to say the latter is “ineffable,” as is objected by philosophers who assume that to state something about x or y is to attribute a predicate to a subject and thereby to affect the real through language. The separated middle is neither included nor excluded … but not because it is both at once, in the manner of a philosophical synthesis. It is separated … from inclusion and exclusion as such, separated from the kind of relation involved in those dualities with which thought traditionally operates. It is a rule of philosophy that the “neither … nor …,” which appears to exclude predicates from the real, actually reintroduces them into it by assuring us that it is “at once” one and the other, with the obvious proviso that this double negation be included within the final result. In non-philosophy, however, the “neither … nor …” is definitive from the outset because it expresses the being-separated proper to identity, or to the separated-in-person.

In other words, this being-separated, which we will later refer to as the other than …, is not an attribute of identity, analytically or synthetically contained within the latter. Rather, it is its transcendental aspect, which as real is invisible. This transcendental aspect is not a property of identity but is instead the very same thing as identity, or the function of relation to … which identity is always able to assume. Nevertheless, it is only in so far as it is real or immanent that identity can constitute a transcendental alterity, rather than the other way round. It may seem strange to think identity as the middle but this is an example of a philosophical necessity – in this instance, the way in which identity regularly functions as the third fundamental term in philosophy – being reconfigured non-philosophically.

How are we to conceive of this transcendental alterity that is proper to the real as identity-in-person? Let us consider for a moment dialectical identity as that which differentiates itself from itself, becomes other than itself, etc. Alterity affects it or belongs to its complex essence even if it is surmounted or overcome by identity. Identity is at once a “subordinate part” and the whole, while alterity is a subordinate part of the whole, the two together forming a continuous plane, or something susceptible to further dialecticisation. Let us suppose now that instead of finding alterity at the heart of identity, one encountered there only identity itself – identity as the flesh of the One itself rather than as the remainder of a gesture of abstraction. Such abstraction would reduce identity to something still less than an envelope, something that is not even a topological plane or pure surface but more like a logically formalised term or symbol. Yet identity-in-person is not a symbol but an identity whose own identity constitutes its phenomenon, its “flesh.” Real identity is impoverished, impov-
erished to an extent that is unimaginable for philosophy, but it is not impoverished because all alterity has been abstracted from it or because it has been stripped bare through a process of alienation. It is indeed articulated through a symbol, and its effects are in turn articulated through a play of symbols, but to confuse the real with its symbol is precisely the mistake of theoreticist idealism and the root of all philosophical illusion.

This confusion begins when, without one’s noticing it, identity-in-person is spontaneously imagined to be a bare term, a pure signifier devoid of signification. In fact, identity-in-person has no need of signification and is not of the order of the signifier. The real is not just what is impossible for the symbol; it is of an entirely other order and capable of determining a sign as symbol. This is enough to distinguish non-philosophy from psychoanalysis. Identity did not undergo the “linguistic turn” and nor does the symbol when it is determined by identity. There is a sense in which identity-in-person is the real-transcendental cause – rather than the condition of possibility – of symbolisation in a way that precludes the assumption that symbols are given ready-made, or provided via a symbolising given-ness. In other words, any philosophical coupling of terms directed at the One, or even at being, may be used to name real identity, provided those terms undergo a symbolic abstraction (but one that bears only on the symbol and not also on the real). As for the real itself, it is already abstract without there having been an operation of abstraction.

Having nothing but its own being-manifest – which is not even an essence – as content, identity cannot, strictly speaking, act or exert a direct positive causality. Since it is without essence, it can be neither active nor passive – no more so than it can be both at once, as though to compensate for this supposed deficiency. It is incapable of functioning as motor for a dialectic. It is “negative” rather than negational; a non-sufficient cause, rather than one that is sufficient and essential. Yet this quasi-sterility, this neutrality without return or compensation, in no way prevents it from taking into account or “cloning” philosophy as a reduced datum or material. This taking into account does not cause it to exit from itself; it does not constrain it to act. It is separated without that separation eating into it or affecting its essence. At the same time, since this being-separated directly expresses identity or radical immanence, it is brought forth, so to speak, by the vision-in-One as the latter takes into account what is offered by philosophy. Immanent knowledge is other than ... philosophical. We must replace Levinas’ otherwise than, which is still anonymous and pertains to absolute transcendence, with other than ...: an adjective rather than an adverb, but one that has been raised to the status of a primary name for the real or man-in-person.

Of course, philosophy also invokes a One-Other as the object that provides the supreme instance of absolute transcendence or epekeina. But there the situation is complicated by the fact that the nature of this object is still that of the philosophical combination in its topological form as infinite, self-enclosed Moebius strip. The radical One, by way of contrast, is initially in-One without the Other belonging to it. Consequently, it is Other only to the extent to which it is Other-in-Other or Other than ... In philosophy, the combinatorial structure or system continues to predominate so that philosophy can only posit the One-Other as a term in the guise of something that remains an “ideological” artefact: an effect or result that has been abstracted from the process through which it was produced. In non-philosophy, on the contrary, the One as such is not subordinated to any thing or structure because it is genuinely independent and has no need of such support. But at the same time the One is the Other-in-Other, which by virtue of this fact also acquires a radical autonomy. We could say that, as in philosophy, the Other is still first, but that it no longer has any primacy. Alternatively, and more precisely, we could say that primacy and priority always go hand in hand, but that in philosophy they are actually subordinated to a combinatorial structure which is the true locus of power and independence; one that secretly enjoys a kind of hyper-primacy and is deployed in the realm of operational transcendence. In non-philosophy, however, the One-Other subsists without being subordinated in an
idealistic fashion to the syntax of this operational transcendence and its combinatorial economy. Both primacy and priority are shorn of the equivocal, self-doubling nature which is characteristic of speculative identity. Primacy and priority go together but as the real that is also capable of assuming the function of transcendental or other than … for philosophy. They go together as the real that is independent but that is also primary.

Rather than dividing and doubling the One-Other by itself, or infinitely multiplying it, non-philosophy simplifies it. In philosophy, the One is never purely and simply “One,” unless it is a mere symbol, as it is in the principle of identity, in which it is already doubled by itself. Philosophy invariably doubles and multiplies it, as in the neo-Platonists’ hierarchy of Ones, or the more or less mediated identity of (difference and) identity. It is imperative not to confuse the One of philosophy, which is the One (of the) One, with the One of non-philosophy, which is the One-in-One or the One-in-person, the One in flesh and blood. Is the latter also multiplied, either by itself or by being divided? Or does it amount to an impoverishment, an abstraction-subtraction, a One – 1? The expression “One-in-One” or “vision-in-One” indicates the absence of any operation that would define the latter; the fact that it is not inscribed within an operational space or more powerful structure; its immanence in itself rather than to anything else; its naked simplicity as never either exceeding or lacking, because it is the only measure required, but one that is never a self-measurement, one that measures nothing as long as there is nothing to measure.

IV producing a programme of existence

If there is a non-philosophical programme, it consists in appropriating philosophy or the world (in a broadened sense of the term).

Why does non-philosophy invariably appear in the form of a programme or a project, one that irritates people because it never seems to be realised? The answer is that, although it has nothing to do with a programme in its essential or practical aspect, its inessential aspect (which is precisely the philosophical aspect non-philosophy assumes through its “material”) makes it appear as though it does. This programmatic appearance is unavoidable but it is no more than an appearance, in other words, something we will call a programme-without-programming or at the very least a programme for de-programming. What matters is knowing whether or not it will be possible to overcome this appearance and to acknowledge it as such. What follows explores part of this programme, guided by the theme of non-philosophical practice and what it is capable of, with regard to philosophy but also in the eyes of philosophy.

Why a “non-philosophy”? Philosophy is so varied, so fickle that it has already criticised itself in an infinite variety of ways, already exhibited such a degree of metamorphic plasticity as to disqualify any attempt to reduce it to a single invariant of thought. Was there any point in trying to do so? The question “what is non-philosophy?” must be replaced by the question about what it can and cannot do. To ask what it can do is already to acknowledge that its capacities are not unlimited. This question is partly Spinozist: no one knows what a body can do. It is partly Kantian: circumscribe philosophy’s illusory power, the power of reason or the faculties, and do not extend its sufficiency in the shape of another philosophy. It is also partly Marxist: how much of philosophy can be transformed through practice, how much of it can be withdrawn from its “ideological” use? And finally, it is also partly Wittgensteinian: how can one limit philosophical language through its proper use?

But these apparent philosophical proximities and family resemblances are only valid up to a point. That point is called the real – determination-in-the-last-instance, the unilateral duality, etc. – which is to say, all of non-philosophy in-person. In other words, these kinds of comparisons are devoid of meaning, or at best profoundly misleading, because non-philosophy is “performative” and exhausts itself as an immanent practice rather than as a programme.

The answer to the question “what are we to do with philosophy?” must already have been given in the form of the question “what can non-philosophy do?” The latter provides a rigorous formu-
lation of the former by delineating a space within which it can enjoy a certain pertinence without being allowed to get carried away with itself. It was Heidegger who unleashed the absurd delirium of “total questioning.” But his work is seldom read right through to the end, to the point where the primacy of the question is overthrown in favour of a primacy of the answer. We can radicalise him and affirm the primacy of the answer over questions, which we will characterise as merely “primary” and as pertaining to the beginning but not to the real. Conversely, however, the answer cannot be primary in some dogmatic sense, it can only impose or determine a way of answering.

Non-philosophy is usually interrogated about its efficacy, about what it can achieve in terms of effects. “What are the politics of non-philosophy?” “What are its ethical consequences?” Without realising it, such questions harbour a whole host of assumptions and prejudices, which is not to say that we have an excuse for ignoring them. But it is important that we not allow ourselves to be intimidated by these kinds of questions or objections. They are only valid for philosophy, they reiterate its bad habits in order to reassure it. This way of formulating questions imposes a double limitation. On the one hand, it assumes a linear and above all unitary causality in terms of causes and effects that are ultimately reversible and “Euclidean” (one cause, one effect). This is to assume a form of empiricism: causality is specified through the nature of its effects, a regional nature that is carved out from the world. What would a “non-Euclidean” action be like? One that acted upon the world as such, rather than on part of it or on a sector of philosophy? This is a problem that involves a change in methods and objectives, a change in the nature of the object, rather than a mere change in scale or the choice of another region traced from an already given section of the world. The entire theory of causality will have to be transformed in its meaning and bearing relative to philosophy. There may well be political as well as other kinds of effects of non-philosophy, but does this justify such a crude formulation of the question?

In this regard, it was Marxism that first cast suspicion on any attempt to provide a slightly more nuanced analysis of the political problem by encouraging the belief that such attempts secretly sought to obscure the class struggle. Yet it is not clear whether non-philosophy can be appraised in terms of a “programme,” or whether it consummates itself in something like a programme. In this regard, on the contrary, the Marxist notion of class struggle paved the way for an acknowledgement of the fact that politics has a real content, albeit one which is not political according to superficial, factual criteria. Similarly, just as man does not produce his existence but his means of existence, he does not produce his political existence or nature but his means of political existence. If he can wage class struggle through politics, he can “wage politics” through the class struggle. Which is why a slightly more rigorous (and probably already “non-Marxist”) understanding of Marx’s formula requires us to effect a unilateral distinction between the political struggle and a struggle that is constitutive of its subjects, a struggle whose universality envelops a possible but non-necessary reference (unless it be the general necessity of referring to a material) to politics or any other worldly activity. This is the way in which subjects produce themselves as means (organons) of political existence.

Marx’s formula is thus in need of urgent rectification, the better to maximise its novelty and scope: man-in-person is given as the real presupposition on the basis of which subjects produce themselves as means of existence with the participation of their political existence in the world. Consequently, we should distinguish between (1) man-in-person as the real presupposition whose nature has never been either political or anything else; (2) the political existence of subjects in the world; and finally, (3) the subject proper as “means of existence” – a subject whose rigorous, quasi-mathematical formulation clearly marks it out as an organon constituted with the aid of that against which it struggles, i.e. existence. The aim of this “dualysis” of Marx’s formula is to lay low the theoreticist idealism of philosophy, which levels out in a unitary continuum man-in-person and his duality as subject, together with the existence in terms of which this structure is interpreted whenever the question of political action,
or of other effects, is raised. Thus, we interpret “class-struggle” as a struggle that is constitutive of subjects (but not of man-in-man), but in a way that reinserts it into the apparatus as an articulatory hinge, instead of placing it either at the centre or the periphery. Of course, struggle constitutes the essence of subjects and finds support in the existence of classes but it cannot be reduced to the latter. It is as subjects that humans become indistinguishable from classes, but this is precisely so as to be better able to distinguish themselves from classes. Whence this corollary: humans do not produce their non-philosophical existence or essence, but only a programme that functions as a means of their existence.

Non-philosophy needs to be resituated in the context of the struggle against philosophy – or at least against philosophy understood as theoreticist idealism, which transcends any particular philosophical position and prevents the elaboration of a unified theory of philosophy and (for example) politics. It should not be circumscribed from the outset within the narrow ambit of “politics” [la-politique] in the restricted sense, which encourages all sorts of illusion. As we shall see, it is the transcendental yet practical dimension of non-philosophy that accounts for the erroneous or spontaneously philosophical character of the demand that it have political or other effects within the contemporary situation. For the real problem is not how to intervene in the world of philosophy, such as it supposedly subsists in itself, or how to transform it from within. The problem is how to use philosophy so as to effect a real transformation of the subject in such a way as to allow it to break the spell of its bewitchment by the world and enable it to constitute itself through a certain struggle with the latter. The goal is not to effect a specular doubling or duplication of the world, thereby reinforcing its grip, but to elaborate a new order, that of the radical subjectivity of the Stranger as subject who is in-struggle by definition. Thus, what had been an aporia for philosophy, but also partially for Marxism – the possibility of man’s alienation in the world (an alienation that is now merely partial and only involves the Stranger-subject, not man’s essence-without-essence), along with the corresponding possibility of man’s dis-alienation – is finally resolved here. The unilateral duality of man and the world-subject or Stranger-subject finally resolves this aporia.

V practice of theory

The question now is whether practice can have any meaning other than as a purely theoretical practice. The economy of theory and practice harbours all sorts of traps for the unwary because it is intra-philosophical and follows the classic distinctions, distinctions that comprise both division and identity, and that give rise to self-encompassing indecisions and hesitations between theory and practice – exchanges and ambiguities, mutual trespasses and territorial disputes, oppositions and contradictions. This kind of distribution pertains not only to philosophy but also to experience, injecting it with its vicious circles and interminable debates. The solutions proposed by philosophy are well known so we will not go over them here. They have been a staple of philosophy from Plato to Marx and beyond.

Non-philosophy introduces order into this combinatory confusion, but not in a philosophical manner. It does not oppose its own practice (which is theoretical) to philosophical theory, as though the former were at last the true transformative practice while the latter remained a merely contemplative theory. There is no question of reiterating the kind of intra-philosophical distinctions that Marxism popularised through the use of opposition and contradiction. Here, once again, the unilateral duality governs the relation to philosophy and it does not reshuffle philosophical distinctions but instead “simplifies” them by suspending a redundant postulate, a suspension that allows us to attain a radical universality. This is why we speak of practice being “of” or “in” theory: far from being opposed to it, practice is able to determine in-the-last-instance the philosophical forms of theory and their combination with empirical practice. To determine-in-the-last-instance is to posit the real-transcendental identity of a subject who is structured like a mixture (rather than a combination) of the theoretical stance and the...
practical stance, but in such a way that neither stance trespasses upon the other’s terrain. The unilateral duality is the practical essence that must be pitted against philosophy’s theoreticist idealism. But it is certainly not opposed to theory, implying rather a simplifying concentrate of philosophical combinations. Where philosophy mixes theory and practice according to the invariant of combination, non-philosophy associates them without synthesis or analysis, without a mediating term. The transcendental identity or essence of the subject is not a mediating agency or third term countable within the same operational space as the duality of the combination. The subject’s transcendental identity provides the reason why non-philosophy can be an identity for … philosophy, which is to say, its “dualysis.” Although the subject is radically identical in its essence, it can only concretely effectuate identity with the aid of a variety of philosophical solutions that delineate the contours of the world, which the subject accompanies and which continuously fill out its non-saturated being.

Ultimately, then, identity as cause of practice is commensurate with its non-consistency. Practice is the only stance that is heterogeneous to every other activity because it is univocal for all of them, give or take their determination-in-the-last-instance. But here it is practice in theory and relative to it, because theory is the only practice of first science, which is constituted by the stances of science and philosophy.

VI transforming the site of transformation

Non-philosophy transforms materials but these materials are both taken from the world and possess the general form of the world. Yet the philosophical requirement of efficacy postulates a universal site for philosophy in the world. Here we encounter an initial assumption that expresses a unitary and levelling conception of action, which is supposed to affect only one region of experience and to exhaust itself in it. This quasi-universal empiricism of action and practice is philosophically self-evident: it seems obvious that all production consists in transforming a material while staying on the same level as it, remaining content with distending the general convertibility of the realms implicated in practice. Even when structured by Difference as such, rather than merely specific differences as in Marxism, practices are still not heterogeneous enough to exceed the world, to which they return once the latter has been given its widest possible definition, which is precisely in terms of Difference and its alterity.

By way of contrast, if practice is conceived in terms of unilateral duality, which is the syntax proper to the strict immanence of the real as other than … the world, this non-representative causality of determination-in-the-last-instance presupposes a radical distinction between the order of reality and the order of syntax, so that neither one of these encompasses the other. Once it has been founded upon a non-agency or non-realm like the real, the conception of agencies, realms or orders eliminates every facile dialectic, no matter how deeply entrenched in representation. It institutes a transformation of the material as production of a new agency that cannot be ultimately reabsorbed into that material, an agency that does not consummate itself within the order of the world. The subject produced in this way is one that emerges beyond the world but who nevertheless continues to refer to the world as a form of necessary yet secondary and entirely occasional causality. Such is the transcendence specific to the subject in so far as it stands beyond all philosophical transcendence, not so much through an excess of hyperbolic transcendence as through an immanent grasp or cloning of the latter. Cloning is an operation of radical immanence in so far as it takes on a transcendental relation to a given datum that has the form of the world, transforming that datum into a material by virtue of the very fact that it is other than … it. Because the agency of the subject exists-(as a)-Stranger, the site of production remains distinct from the world, announcing itself (among other things) as the future-in-person, utopia-in-person, or the transcendental city of multitudes. Thus, practice first transforms the very site of the world’s transformation and effects what we might legitimately call its “radical” displacement.
If we want to formulate correctly the question of the effects of non-philosophy, we must have “exited” from the world without first having had to enter into it in order to leave it. We have to think according to the real – which does not mean without the world – rather than according to the world. Non-philosophy is entirely oriented towards the future, and, more fundamentally, it is entirely oriented towards a utopia of the real. It is produced as the identity of transformation and chooses to abandon not the world as such but rather the site of the world. It is a new way of relating to things-according-to the world, one that no longer considers them in terms of the previous ways of relating to entities within the horizon of the world as something simply presupposed. If things are inseparable from the world it is not on account of philosophical desire but because the world functions as their a priori mode of givenness, such that it is the site of their transformation that has to change.

As a result, there will be a change in the meaning and scope of alienation and appropriation. They no longer pertain to man in general in his anthropological essence but only to the subject conceived on the basis of man-in-person, who is neither alienable nor inalienable and too inconsistent to be circumscribed in terms of this antinomy. What alienates the subject is a system of transcendental hallucination and illusion that obviously goes unnoticed, but which the subject has to notice and whose spell he has to shake off, without being able simply to destroy it, in order to constitute himself as such or as subject for the world. To believe that the world can be treated in the same way as an object in the world, that it gives rise to the same kinds of illusion, would simply be a philosophical delusion. The hallucination and illusion continue to subsist for themselves: although they are acknowledged or identified, they continue to enjoy for themselves the capacity to re-engender the absolute belief in the world, a belief that persists as such. It is only for the subject that they are acknowledged and that the world can also be used or dismembered. The world is two faces in one: belief and pretension on the one hand, a material for constituting the subject on the other.

VII an immanent practice against the exception of thought

One initial consequence of the foregoing considerations is that of the simultaneously objectivist and ideal character of action and its effects. Since philosophical thought is oriented towards transcendence, the structure of philosophy requires it to describe ideal or idealised situations and to legislate about the world in a detached, contemplative manner without implicating itself in its own discourse, or rather by exempting itself from it. Philosophical thought cumulates the negative effects of a mode of objectivity that is indifferent both to its objects and to its own reabsorption into a unitary circuit. This is a consequence of philosophical thought’s tendency towards “objectivation” and its pernicious mode of “attachment” to the object; it follows from objectivation as a mode of objectivity that takes up a position of survey or overview relative to its object and ultimately evaporates into contemplation. Philosophy can only distinguish between
what can non-philosophy do?

enunciation and enunciability (which it conflates with the enunciated) or between objectivation and objectivity (which it conflates with the objectified) in a weak, unitary fashion – even more so perhaps than other forms of thought – that fails to constitute them as rigorously heterogeneous orders.

Although an explicit philosophy of practice seems to be free of this idealising tendency and seems to take on board the gravity of action, by using the term “practice” it too perpetuates the unitary conflation between ideal practical objectivity and action upon the world. It protects the former, which formulates the meaning and worth of things – what is good and bad, true or false for the world – from the latter. And with regard to itself, the philosophy of practice believes that it has achieved something sufficient but also something superior by setting out the aforementioned distinction, which makes of it an exception to the world and allows it to enunciate laws, norms and essences without itself falling under them, since it instantiates their “higher” form. Philosophy begins by putting itself on the same level or plane as the world, but this is only so as to raise itself above it and present itself as the true and authentic form of science, art, truth, ethics, etc., in such a way as to end up turning itself into an exception and instituting its exception as the absolute that rules and consummates its own (seemingly democratic) primary combination with the world. If philosophy is intrinsically political, as is so often but so glibly maintained, it is intrinsically anti-democratic.

The entire theory of philosophy’s practice, causality, effects and efficacy is vitiated by this exceptional status that philosophy ascribes to its own thought, by its ulterior motivation, its cunning which is not cunning, etc. Can we introduce seriousness and work into thought in place and instead of the pathos of seriousness and gravity which has made it so light-headed? Can we put practice into theory rather than just inserting practice “in theory”? Can we, ultimately, turn the thought of commitment into a commitment of thought? We are obviously assuming that in this current context mere inversion would be useless (which is to say philosophical), and that this kind of operation should be supplanted by others capable of transforming philosophy …

Superficially, the problem consists in channeling philosophical effects upon the world into the realm of thought as such. For example: how can “democracy” also be attributed to the thought that attributes it to social life? How can philosophical enunciation finally be rendered democratic rather than merely functioning as a universal instance of legitimation while exempting both itself and the philosopher? The spontaneous solution to this problem would be to say that thought should be affected by its object or affect itself with its object. But this would be to reiterate the philosophical circle as auto-affection and would merely invert philosophy’s primacy over politics and democracy. Marx would have seen in such a move a typically philosophical contortion or “somersault,” one that reinforces philosophy’s dialectical games and dissolves practice, as well as the democracy that is supposed to accompany it, in the vicious circle whereby everything becomes philosophy in so far as philosophy is affected by everything. The principle governing such a somersault is quite simple. Philosophical dualities, in which one term invariably enjoys a supplement of alterity and unity relative to the other, can be inverted and overturned because of this supplement, so that democracy becomes disseminated into philosophy and vice versa but always to the ultimate benefit of philosophy.

The principle behind the non-philosophical solution consists in exploiting the power of identity (which is un-convertible) rather than the power of philosophical duality (which is convertible). In order to eliminate division, difference and their quasi-dialectical games, what must be given – but without an act of giving – is an identity that is performative, or better still, that is performed without an act of performance, and that thereby contains the identity of thought, on the one hand, and those practical consequences that thought habitually enunciates or programmes for the world, on the other. Of course, such an identity cannot really “contain” two apparently – or at least philosophically – opposed entities such as these. In other words, it will “contain” them only “in-the-last-
instance,” not as real parts, which would divide identity once again. But identity must be the determination of the now transcendental identity of thought and practice as forever inseparable. Determination-in-the-last-instance and cloning ensure the radical interlocking of thought and practice. We will call “unified theory” this transcendental but determined identity of thought and practice, of knowledge and the consequences of action, which have now been withdrawn from the law of the world and the exception of philosophy. And we will require of every enterprise which claims to be non-philosophical that it take charge of, rather than merely internalise conceptually, all those effects and ideals it presumes to impose upon the world or what it calls the world.

Thus, the dilemma of theory and practice is resolved in a determination or performance-in-the-last-instance (rather than the performativity traced from its linguistic form) of theory as practice. Moreover, the universality of practice is not tied to the specific positivity of its cause, which is without-consistency. Practice finds its freedom and universality not in nothingness (which no doubt would already suffice to liberate it) but in man-in-person as without-consistency.

VIII can we intervene in the world?

The question of the political (or ethical) consequences of non-philosophy is usually badly formulated because it is formulated philosophically. Whenever it tries to think practice, philosophy postulates that it is possible to intervene in the world – “intervene” as philosophy understands it, obviously. What does such intervention mean when it applies to non-philosophy? Can an operation of the philosophical type apply only to things of the world?

Philosophy supposes, rightly or wrongly, that it has effects upon reality and it expects the same of non-philosophy. Wrongly perhaps, because what philosophy calls “reality” is in any case a concept – attenuated at worst, elaborate at best – of the world. Through this concept, philosophy projects a reality in itself, which is to say, one that has been constructed in the realm of operational transcendence, within which it claims to intervene, and in terms of which it gauges all possible intervention. But the real content of philosophy, once the illusion of the in-itself has been bracketed, is this very correlation between itself and the world. In any case, it is within this experience that non-philosophy can “intervene,” and not in the philosophical concept of experience itself (which is too narrow and devised too much in the manner of a projection). We can universalise Kant’s distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience and posit that our object is no longer the judgment of perception, whose role the philosophy of reality now plays for us, but the judgment of experience, i.e. the affirmation of existence as such, in terms of which philosophy-in-person, or philosophy as form of the world, presents itself. Philosophical intervention is itself highly problematic within the confines of a reality that is alternately anticipated and projected, forgotten and desired; it is both ahead of and lagging behind the conjuncture, “in the midst of” experience and its combinations but without getting to grips with the identity of the conjuncture, whose significance escapes it.

Philosophy projects its operation of division and re-appropriation onto a diverse variety of things, objects and sensations through the intermediary of a schema which seems to be primarily derived from language and, in the order of so-called regional forms of knowledge, science. The latter provides it with forms of knowledge that philosophy abstracts from their process of production and which it uses to fill out its own universal, necessary structures, which combine difference and identity but are empty and so have to be filled. Thus, philosophy grafts itself onto experience and claims to intervene within it on the basis of an identification and confusion of the very orders it requires. Philosophy is a long-suffering desire for the real, to which it aspires but only so as to be able to construct or reaffirm itself in its own proper, consistent order – an order structured by those transcendentals which function like an absolute metaphor for experience.

Every intervention in philosophy, which is to say, every intervention upon its objects, remains intra-philosophical, caught up in philosophy’s
self-encompassing structure. Every such intervention, consequently, remains in the world. But in so far as every practice of this type remains subsumed beneath the law of self-positioning and its pretensions, so then (from the point of view of non-philosophy) it continues to postulate a philosophy or a world “in itself.” The world as in-itself or self-encompassing is the source of antinomies that only non-philosophy can identify and suspend.

Given these conditions, it is difficult to maintain that philosophy transforms the world. It is the world or attaches itself to regional representations as the very “dimension” of the world. It “transforms” regional representations in an ideal-real or representational (in the enlarged sense we have given this term) modality, regional representations that it appropriates and from which it extracts a surplus value of meaning and empirical (but also transcendental or transformed empirical) content. Philosophical intervention consists in adding and subtracting philosophy, as the form of the world, to and from things. It consists in interpretation.

So what can non-philosophy hope to achieve with regard to the world itself? The non-philosophical operation is quite different from the philosophical version; it no longer comprises the combination of division and identity but instead radical identity and hence unilateral duality. The result is a gain in simplicity and minimality. Non-philosophy does not project itself onto things but solicits them necessarily and says so without trying to hide the fact in the manner that philosophy sometimes does. On the other hand, it clones subjects from philosophy, and here again cloning is the reduced or minimal form, the real core of philosophical projection. As for its object, this is now the world or the philosophical-form as such, rather than things. Consequently, non-philosophy is not an intensified reduplication of philosophy, a meta-philosophy, but rather its “simplification.” It does not represent a change in scale with respect to philosophy, as though the structure of the latter was maintained for smaller elements. It is the “same” structure but in a more concentrated, more focused form – it is withdrawn from identity as merely desired and brought to the level of identity as performed. It is a non-unity rather than a meta-unity. The gesture is one of universalisation, of simplification in the number of postulates. This simplification, which is achieved through the suspension of a certain postulate (that of the reciprocal determination of thought and the real), is capable of producing an explanation of philosophy in so far as it can be explained and in the terms in which it can. As in philosophy, there is a practical gain at the level of theory, but a theory that is wholly different from the philosophical kind.

IX interpretation, transformation, determination-in-the-last-instance

How does all this affect the duality of interpretation and transformation (Marx) once this duality has been reconceived according to the primacy of practice, and once practice has been prised free from philosophical difference and determined according to the real? Philosophy is interpretation at a global level because it is infinite repetition and self-reference, overview and contemplation of the world in the narrow sense presupposed by philosophy. Yet it also comprises a transcendental recursion, relating through itself to experience, which it does not so much dominate in the manner of a transcendent religious heaven as “transform” or help “constitute.” But is constitution equivalent to transformation as defined by an immanent performative practice?

Philosophy, as we have already observed, is not wholly devoid of operations, but these operations – such as overturning and displacement, to say nothing of more specular ones such as hermeneutics, or auto-specular ones such as the dialectic – not only operate at the heart of representations, they also operate with these representations: combining them, analysing them, deconstructing them, dialecticising them. Philosophy programmes a transformation of the world, but one which is ideal, objectified, incapable of getting an effective grip on it; one that achieves something akin to an effect only by adding to or subtracting from what is given (conceived now as a representation) new and equally ideal determinations that double then
redouble it, simplifying or even deconstructing it without really transforming it. Throughout its practice, twentieth-century philosophy has admitted and shown – but only ever under its breath, so to speak, without ever “truly” being aware of it (thereby demonstrating the extent to which its practice remains ideal) – that it has only ever worked with representations, with the _logos_, which is to say with metaphysics, even as it tried to criticise or deconstruct the latter. Such philosophy remains under the jurisdiction of philosophical tradition and submits to the authority of its tribunal. *Genuine transformation does not consist in playing a game (whether at the level of language, of practice, or of the world) with representation, but rather in determining the latter through a radically un-representable agency or instance – more precisely, through a without-representation that allows itself to be thought by means of representations which have been reduced to the status of philosophically inert material.*

Since the world has now been enlarged to include all possible philosophical thought, it is likewise necessary to enlarge the concept of representation and relate it to an agency or instance that has to function like a “last instance” for it, rather than an “ulterior instance,” a world-behind-the-scenes or thing-in-itself. Every instance of thought that is left to itself and not determined by a without-representation-of-the-last-instance is a representation in this widened sense of the term. To put it another way: we will call “representation” every presentation that refers back to itself through a transcendental recursion that, although capable of criticising, deconstructing or modifying presentation, cannot determine it in-(the)-real.

As for non-philosophy, it uses these representations, which are by definition its only material, but so as to confer upon them a new condition relative to their philosophical condition as _combinations_. We call this new condition a “mixture” because it is the transcendental identity of a duality of philosophical representations and (for example) scientific or artistic operations that are delivered from their subsumption by philosophy. This is a duality without an operation of synthesis or analysis.

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**X a transcendental practice**

A genuinely transformative practice must answer to several conditions. Among other things, it must be genuinely practical, which is to say _real by virtue of its cause_, in order not to become confused with globally ideal representations. It must also be capable of relating immanently or transcendently, rather than externally or in an empirico-idealist fashion, to these representations. It is often and erroneously imagined that practice is opposed to idealism but above all opposed to philosophy’s transcendental dimension. This is because philosophy lives off those divisions and hierarchies through which primacy and priority are linked together, and because the transcendental approach has traditionally been idealist, whereas it is in fact that aspect of the real which is “other than …”

Consequently, it is the philosophical apparatus as a whole which must be completely overhauled, practically transformed, so as to give back to practice its immanent force. Once the transcendental is determined by the real, as is the case in non-philosophy, it changes its status, it no longer represents the apex of an ontological hierarchy but rather a function which the real may or may not assume. Since practice is indissociable from the syntax of unilateral duality that follows from the real, it is indissociable from the real’s transcendental function. Practical effects and transcendental function are identical for the real; they are possible functions of it that become effectuated once the world is taken into account for itself or solicits the real and the latter “responds” to that solicitation – on account of the world’s being-given-in-the-real – with a transcendental practice.

Far from being a crude primary activity, or an idealist activity taken from the world (as is the case, for philosophical reasons, with Fichte), practice is the transcendental essence of the subject in so far as the latter is now distinguished from the world, which the subject uses as an occasion or material. This is why practice consists in transforming or dualysing representations and ceases to be an “activity” grafted onto these representations and controlling them both from within and from without. Practice is tran-
scendental through its real immanent root, which renders it radically heterogeneous to all representation. But this heterogeneity does not prevent it from being transcendental or effectuated by those representations that make up the world. Like the real, practice is immanent, but there is nothing to prevent it from relating to representations or from being sufficiently heterogeneous to these representations to be able to transform them. Obviously, in spite of its origin in the real, the transcendental is not valid for supposedly absolute representations or for the world in so far as it is supposed to be in itself, but only for the world-form or for the philosophy-form as a priori form of the world. Like practice, the transcendental pertains to this a priori form rather than to objects or to the world-object as sufficient reality.

XI the pragmatic appropriation of philosophy

“Man is universally predestined to philosophy just as philosophy has man as its destination”—this is the fundamental postulate of philosophy: that philosophy and man are reciprocally convertible on condition of a certain labour, education or ascesis. In order to render this postulate credible, in order to put it into practice and ensure its dominion over man, philosophy claims to define man by means of some circular duality (e.g. as a rational, linguistic or religious animal), a duality that is ultimately unitary and encompassing (man as the metaphysical animal). This begs the question by simply presupposing an interface between philosophy and man in the form of his philosophical definition, which is always an exclusive, unitary definition. It is a package deal: a definition of man is possible provided it is philosophical and posits the convertibility between a putative human essence and its attributes. “Man” becomes a combination of all sorts of essences and properties, depending on the doctrine in question: a generality in which what should have been distinguished non-philosophically—man’s non-philosophical essence—is instead conflated with an infinitely nuanced definition that encapsulates an entire philosophical system. In order to think man, or to think him in a manner adequate to his being, a distinction must cut across “man” as generality. But in order to avoid begging the question and so as to render the distinction rigorous, it should no longer coincide with any of those philosophical “differences” (of degree, kind, form, writing, affect or will). We will leave behind these aporias and the politics of the philosophical subjection of humans by positing the following axioms:

1. “Man,” “ego,” “subject,” “human(s)” are no longer concepts but primary names posed in axioms.

2. Primary names are terms extracted from philosophy but abstracted from their naive intuitive horizon, from the world of metaphysical objects and representations. Their signifying base serves as a support for an alternative logic, an alternative organisation of thought which we will call “non-philosophy.”

3. Non-philosophical thought and its theoretical practice is determined by its object, which we will designate by the symbol “man-in-man” (“in-man” for short, or even “man” when the context precludes misunderstanding). Such thought is not derived or received from some external or philosophical source, and it has the power to abstract philosophical terms from the realm of meaning within which they normally function.

4. The “object” of non-philosophy, and that which determines it, is its cause: “man-in-man.”

5. Man-in-man is not a concept or unitary entity. It is not amenable to definition: it is posited through real-transcendental axioms.

Posited in this way, the human is no longer a unitary generality, a conflation of the concept with the real object, of the attribute with the “essence.” On the one hand, this is the in-man as real rather than ideal cause, as the real rather than a reason or even the principle of reason. On the other hand, this is a subject in a new sense because the real is no longer the absolute subject of philosophy or even the classical subject; it is now ascribed to the in-man alone. The subject is no longer the real or something that co-operates with the real but rather an operation exercised upon the world or upon philosophy and constituting itself through that exercise. But the rela-
tion to the world and the supposedly essential relation to philosophy is no longer attributed to the human cause. For the expression “man-in-man” means that the latter is without a determining essence, without consistency; dispossessed of nothingness as much as being, dispossessed of substance as much as presence-to-itself. Of course this distinction is no longer a difference, which is to say a unitary structure, a more or less asymmetrical convertibility between cause and subject. The latter are radi-
cally but not absolutely distinct. The in-man is radically autonomous because man can only be found in-man rather than in philosophy or the world. But the subject is in an altogether more complex and more interesting situation. It is not between the in-man and the world, as though it constituted their (once more divided) in-between or their difference, or a duality of two substances. It is the indivisible clone produced on the basis of the world under the influence of the in-man. This is not some new version of man as microcosm who is convertible with the macrocosm, give or take a difference in scale. The subject registers the minimum of rationality that philosophy imposes upon the in-man but also the clone-form that the latter imposes upon philosophy. Yet although they are the asymmetrical cooperation of distinct roles, the cause and the subject are not juxtaposed. Since man and the subject are identical in-man or in-the-last-instance, the subject enjoys a relative autonomy which he gains from that of philosophy so that he is not entirely indistinguishable from the in-man. We say that he is determined-in-the-last-instance by the in-man.

In so far as he is posited in this “ultimate” fashion through a theoretical act we call a “primary ultimation,” man no longer has a privileged or essential affinity with philosophy. Instead, he receives it as a realm of (no doubt “fundamental”) objects, as the universal and necessary form of the world. Non-philosophy proposes to examine the fundamental structures of this a priori world-form while at the same time using it with a view to providing its theoretical explanation. Man is no longer a concept or even the object of a concept and, being devoid of essence, he cannot be essentially destined to a philosophical activity which now interests him only in the context of a practice in which he is a subject-for-philosophy. Humans are without-philosophy – not just men without qualities but men who are primarily without essence, yet all the more destined-for-the-world or philosophy without having decided or willed it. Philosophy has always wanted us and we have been obliged to consent to it – but have we ever wanted philosophy?

The critique of the philosophical “end” of philosophy and of its sufficiency in foreseeing and deciding its own death leads back to man-in-person, not to man in so far as he is capable of lack of interest, lack of purpose, or indifference. This is not a void that one describes in the hope of shoring up by returning to or reactivating a past of which we have been disinherited. We call “appropriation of philosophy” the theory of philosophy carried out on the basis of the real-transcendental indfference that philosophy itself effectuates. What is radically poor in essence and in philosophy remains radically poor throughout this appropriation whereby philosophy is cloned as what is proper to man-in-person. Appropriation has none of the bulimic or anorexic traits of re-appropriation: it is what is poor in philosophy as such that takes the latter into consideration and strips it of its sufficiency. It is by virtue of this poverty that the human relation to philosophy takes the form of a pragmatics determined in-the-last-instance rather than an auto-pragmatics. To abandon the end of philosophy to metaphysics alone, to repeat the gesture of self-positing in a nihilist mode and turn it into a gesture of self-repudiation is to fail to see that this end still harbours a sense-of-the-last-instance for man-in-man – but this is precisely a non-philosophical or other than ... philosophical sense. With the end of philosophy, it becomes easier to see the extent to which philosophy exerts its “grip” on the radical human subject. Consequently, the hypothesis of men-without-philosophy means that the latter is not an attribute and that our transcendental and contingent relation to it is brought forth with man-in-person and effectuated by philosophy itself as material [comme matériau]. It is a question of restoring or rather
giving to philosophy a utopian and uchronic force that it has deprived itself of – or that it has been deprived of as a result of man-in-person’s being-foreclosed.

Non-philosophy is a programme for appropriating philosophy itself as necessary relation to the world, since our “experience” is the world as such. Non-philosophical cognition does not relate to the world as an entity or to entities in the world (as objects or forms of knowledge): it is transcendental and exposes the reality of a cognition that relates to philosophy as the world’s a priori form, as “knowledge” or “existence” of the world.

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Philosophy I


Philosophy II


Philosophy III


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