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Behold the Non-Rabbit: Kant, Quine, Laruelle

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Introduction

This paper is about individuation, theory, and experience, and will examine the way in which these concepts are intertwined in the work of three very different philosophers. More precisely, I will be foregrounding the theme of individuation but only in order to use it as a lens through which to focus on the way in which the relation between theory and experience is understood by these three thinkers.

By 'individuation' I mean the problem that can be summarised in the question: how is it that *something* comes to be counted as 'one'? In this regard, Leibniz's famous claim according to which "That which is not *one* being is not a *being*" encapsulates an entire ontological tradition. But is it possible to think 'something' without having thereby immediately counted it as 'one' thing? Taking this question as a starting point, my aim in considering the issue of individuation here is twofold. First, to look at one way to which this traditional (but largely unstated) conceptual equivalence between 'being' and 'being-one', or between entity and unity, has figured as an uncircumventable precondition for ontology. Second, to suggest some of the ways in which the assumption of that precondition might be challenged or undermined. In order to do this I intend to chart a trajectory through three distinct theoretical stances concerning individuation. I will begin with the Kantian account, according to which an invariable transcendental paradigm for objective individuation is available. Then I shall move on to consider the more sceptical Quinean stance, whereby far from being universal and paradigmatic, individuation is actually a matter of linguistic convention, hence epistemically relative, and ultimately ontologically indeterminate. Finally, I will conclude by trying to elucidate the suggestion, formulated

by way of an examination of François Laruelle's 'non-philosophy',[1] that only a strictly transcendental determination of the singular can sever the

[1] François Laruelle (born 1937) is arguably one of the most remarkable but also least well known of all contemporary French philosophers (none of his numerous books have been translated into English). In his formative work, covering the period 1971-1981, which he now classifies under the heading *Philosophie I*, Laruelle deliberately synthesised an impressively heterogeneous variety of contemporary philosophical influences (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Henry, Althusser, Deleuze, Derrida) the better to construct a line of diagonalisation accelerating beyond all available theoretical co-ordinates. The result was a brilliantly disorientating exercise in anomalous conceptual subversion; a philosophical project that concurrently involved the mobilisation of Nietzsche to effect a 'transvaluation of fundamental ontology' from Husserl to Heidegger (*Phénomène et Différence,* 1971; *Nietzsche contre Heidegger,* 1977); the hybridisation of Deleuzean schizoanalysis and Derridean grammatology through the deployment of a 'machinic deconstruction' (*Machines Textuelles,* 1976; *Le Déclin de L'écriture,* 1977); and culminated in the elaboration of a 'generalised syntax against the ideology of the signifier' (*Au-delà du Prinçipe de Pouvoir,* 1978); all in the name of what Laruelle then described as a 'machinic materialism'. However, beginning with 1981's *Prinçipe de Minorité*, a significant reorientation in Laruelle's thinking occurs. In this work, and in the six subsequent books published between 1981 and 1992 that go to make up *Philosophie II* (including *Une Biographie de l'Homme Ordinaire,* 1985, *Philosophie et Non-Philosophie,* 1989, and *Théorie des Identités,* 1992), the central theoretical preoccupation underlying *Philosophie I*'s militantly eclectic *modus operandi* finally becomes explicitly articulated. Laruelle sets out to construct a rigorously abstract transcendental methodology endowed with a universal explanatory power that would prove pertinent to every conceivable variety of philosophical approach, regardless of the circumstantial vagaries of doctrine. Thus, *Philosophie II* painstakingly assembles the necessary theoretical conditions required for a universal but non-systemic theory *for* philosophising, and begins to put into play a conceptual apparatus of often unprecedented sophistication in the attempt to initiate a type of thinking that would prove capable of processing utterly disparate instances of philosophical theorising. The universal transcendental theory sought for by Laruelle is characterised as a non-Decisional theory for philosophical Decision, which is to say, a transcendental but non-philosophical theory *for* philosophy. Yet as far as Laruelle himself is concerned, it is not until *Philosophie III* (1995-present), and specifically until 1996's *Prinçipes de la Non-Philosophie,* that this ambitious project finally reaches fruition. It is in the latter book that Laruelle works out the precise technical details proper to the methodological apparatus of non-philosophical theory as transcendental organon for the axiomatisation and theorematisation of philosophical Decision. Since having achieved this crystallisation of non-philosophical method, Laruelle's most recent works apply that methodology to various philosophical problematics. Thus, *Éthique de l'Étranger* (2000) proposes an axiomatisation of ethical Decision on the basis of 'radical misfortune' (*le malheur radical*) as 'first-name' for the Real's foreclosure to the ethical, while *Introduction au Non-Marxisme* (2000) attempts a transcendental universalisation of Marxism by delineating a 'unified theory' of philosophy and Capital.

link between entity and unity, thereby guaranteeing the de-objectification and de-phenomenologisation of the singular.

Implicit in this comparative analysis is the suggestion that the first and second of these theses concerning individuation can be roughly correlated with certain more or less generic philosophical postures, the better to give some inkling of the peculiar way in which Laruelle's own theoretical stance — which he somewhat notoriously describes as 'non-philosophical' — constitutes neither a negation nor a synthesis of the Kantian and Quinean postures, but something like their *radicalisation* and *generalisation*. Thus, in the first section of the paper, we will see how Kant, the idealist, mobilises an invariant transcendental criterion guaranteeing the objective unity of individuation. In the second, we shall examine the way in which Quine, the physicalist, undermines the assumption that any such transcendental guarantor for individuation exists. In the third and final section, however, I hope to show how Laruelle – circumventing both the idealist and physicalist schemas – effectively generalises Quine's physicalist subversion of objective unity by radicalising Kant's transcendental method. It is this concurrent radicalisation of transcendental determination and generalisation of empirical under-determination that, I would like to suggest, enables Laruelle to effect a *transcendental universalisation* of materialism in a way that definitively severs the idealist's presumption of a link between entity and unity.

Consequently the 'non-rabbit' mentioned in the title of this piece is neither an 'anti-rabbit' nor a 'not-rabbit' but an entity without unity. The prefix 'non-' in the expression 'non-rabbit' – or 'non-philosophy' for that matter – is not be understood negatively or privatively. It has a very specific technical sense in Laruelle's work as an abbreviation for 'non-Decisional', which in turn is also shorthand for 'non-auto-positional' and 'non-auto-donational'. Thankfully, for present purposes, these somewhat cumbersome locutions can be usefully compressed into the far more economical 'non-thetic': it will be a 'non-thetic rabbit' that is in question here. One of the key claims I would like to make in this paper is that although a 'non-thetic rabbit' is effectively unobjectifiable, it is neither ineffable nor inconceivable. Laruelle insists that neither objectification nor phenomenologisation exhaust the entire available spectrum of immanent phenomenal manifestation. So not only does the 'non-thetic rabbit' remain entirely immanent, precisely articulated within the bounds of conceptual thought, it also remains available to perception – albeit only with the crucial proviso that the empirical parameters of the human sensory apparatus become theoretically reconfigured in accordance with

certain transcendental strictures (we will return to this latter point in the final section).

Hence the use of the word 'behold' in the title of this piece: the non-rabbit is entirely immanent, entirely manifest, in spite of the fact that is neither a unitary nor an intentional phenomenon. In this regard, the plausibility of our entire enterprise hinges on the final section's degree of success in rendering intelligible Laruelle's fundamental distinction between a phenomenological and non-phenomenological definition of *phenomenality*. To anticipate very briefly: in Husserl's case, the phenomenological definition designates a mode of manifestation defined in terms of intentional consciousness's 'transcendence-in-immanence', while in (the early) Heidegger's, it designates an apophantic mode of manifestation defined in terms of the *'ekstatic'* structure of ontological transcendence articulated through Dasein's being-in-the-world.[2] Laruelle's non-phenomenological definition, however, refers to a non-intentional, non-apophantic, and non-worldly mode of phenomenal manifestation defined exclusively in terms of its immanence 'in' theory. It describes an immanently *theoretical* mode of phenomenality. So because it is an intrinsically theoretical phenomenon – one, moreover, entirely devoid of apophantic intelligibility, intentional unity or worldly horizonality by virtue of its constitutively theoretical status — the non-rabbit will only become manifest according to the strictures of a non-empirical, non-intuitive, or theoretically determined phenomenality, as opposed to those of consciousness, sensibility, or being-in-the-world. Again, hopefully these points will become somewhat clearer in the third and final section of this paper.

Kant

In all three of the thinkers under consideration here, there's a complex interrelation between individuation, theory and experience. But perhaps most significantly, all three are concerned with undermining the basically Cartesian notion that there exists some kind of essentially pre-theoretical immediacy through which 'consciousness' — supposing there to be such a thing — enjoys privileged access to phenomena or 'things themselves'.

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[2] Cf. for instance Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, trans. by F. Kersten (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982); and Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, p.56.

If they have anything at all in common, it's this basic refusal to have any truck with the homely phenomenological faith in the pre-theoretical experiential immediacy of 'the things themselves'.

Thus, Kant denies the fanciful notion that we have privileged intuitive access to the contents of our own consciousness for the same reason that he denies our ability to immediately grasp the nature of 'things in themselves'. As far as the investigation into the conditions of possibility for experience is concerned, phenomenological intuition promises to be about as helpful as wand-dowsing. The transcendental difference between 'phenomenon' and 'in-itself' cuts all the way into the subject: inner sense –which is to say, consciousness – is just as conditioned, just as determined, as every other kind of objective phenomenon. Moreover, as the ultimate ground for the possibility of transcendental synthesis, pure apperception maintains a formal, impersonal and objective status which precludes its identification with the personal subject of empirical consciousness; although transcendentally immanent to experience it is never given in experience, it remains external to inner sense: "The transcendental unity of apperception [...] is therefore entitled objective, and must be distinguished from the subjective unity of consciousness, which is a determination of inner sense" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by N. K. Smith, London: Macmillan 1929, B139, p.157). Consequently, the experience into whose conditions of possibility Kant is investigating is neither the 'lived' experience of phenomenological consciousness, nor the putatively private realm of subjective qualia, but the universal cognitive experience whose structures are mapped out in the theories of Euclid and Newton. Kant is laying out transcendental conditions for the possibility of a single, universal but ultimately impersonal objective experience as theoretically articulated by Euclid and Newton, rather than as phenomenologically apprehended or 'lived' by a conscious subject:

> There is one single experience in which all perceptions are represented as in thoroughgoing and orderly connection, just as there is only one space and one time in which all modes of appearance and all relations of being or not-being occur. When we speak of different experiences, we can refer only to the various perceptions, all of which, as such, belong to one and the same general experience. This thoroughgoing synthetic unity of perceptions is indeed the form of experience; it is nothing else than the synthetic unity of appearances in accordance with concepts. (Ibid., A111, p.138).

For Kant, this 'synthetic unity of appearances in accordance with concepts' provides the transcendental basis for the universal cognitive experience whose invariant features are delineated in Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics. These invariants constitute the universal laws in conformity with which all possible appearances are woven together into one unified, cohesive whole. Moreover, Kant claims that "The unity of apperception is thus the transcendental ground of the necessary conformity to law of all appearances in one experience" (Ibid., A127, p.148). If this is so, it follows that pure apperception, the indivisible integer of categorial judgement and transcendental synthesis, is the formal principle grounding the synthetic unity of appearances, and ultimately the universal, impersonal, and objective principle in which the nomological consistency of all appearances finds its basis. Which is to say that pure apperception is in fact the subject of Euclidean and Newtonian theory: it is the transcendental guarantor for the possibility of the nomological consistency of appearances as set out in geometry and physics. Thus, Kant is attempting to define conditions of possibility for experience in accordance with a specific set of theoretical strictures which carve out certain necessary and law-like invariances through which that experience is structured. Pure apperception, the wellspring of the synthetic *a priori*, is the cardinal hinge bridging the divide between the empty logical necessity of the analytical *a priori* and the contentful empirical contingency of the synthetic *a posteriori*. In doing so it ensures the transcendental isomorphy of theory and experience. But how then does pure apperception serve to articulate the link between theory, experience, and individuation?

To answer this question, it is imperative we bear in mind Kant's crucial distinction between combination or *Verbindung* as function of the transcendental imagination, and unity or *Einheit* as rooted in the pure understandings.[3] Thus, Kant writes: "Combination is representation of the synthetic unity of the manifold. The representation of this unity cannot, therefore, arise out of the combination. On the contrary, it is what, by adding itself to the representation of the manifold, first makes possible the concept of the combination" (Ibid., B131, p.152). The synthesizing function Kant ascribes to the transcendental imagination would not be possible, he argues, unless that combinatory activity was rooted in an

[3] For a brilliantly innovative reading of Kant exploring the ramifications of this fundamental distinction between *Verbindung* and *Einheit*, cf. Alain Badiou's 'L'ontologie soustractive de Kant' in his *Court Traité d'Ontologie Transitoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), pp. 153-165.

essentially pre-synthetic or indivisible integer of transcendental unity proper to the pure understanding. This unity, of course, is provided by transcendental apperception. And it is precisely insofar as it first makes possible the *a priori* combination of the manifold in pure intuition that apperception provides the transcendental ground binding together subjective individuation and individuated objectivity. This is why, as Kant famously maintains: "the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are likewise conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience" (Ibid., A 158/B 197, p.194). Because apperception is indissociably correlated with the pure and empty-form of objectivity in general — the transcendental object = x — it yields the isomorphic reciprocity between representing subject and represented object which grounds the possibility of empirical experience. It is thereby the universal synthetic principle out of which both subjective and objective individuation are crystallized. For although 'unity' is one of the categories of quantity and hence one of the twelve determinate modalities of objective synthesis, it is finally apperception which furnishes the qualitative unity from which objective synthesis originarily arises as a mode of categorial judgement. In this regard, pure apperception is the ultimate determining instance for individuation, and the schematism and the principles of the pure understanding merely provide supplementary details concerning the *a priori* structures of spatio-temporal combination into which appearances which have already been individuated through apperception become woven in order to produce an intra-consistent network for cognitive representation.

It comes as no surprise then to find that Kant's account of individuation is basically hylomorphic. Pure apperception is the indivisible paradigm of formal unity stamping an essentially amorphous manifold of spatio-temporal presentation with its individuating seal. It would be a mistake, however, to regard that unity as merely subjective in character, for as Kant repeatedly insists, it is from the indivisibility of pure apperception that the representing subject and the represented object both derive. Thus, Kant's account of individuation necessitates a transcendental isomorphy between subjective and objective unity. In fact, subjectivation, objectivation, and individuation all become virtually indistinguishable processes inasmuch as apperceptive synthesis exhausts the possibilities of phenomenal manifestation. As far as Kant is concerned, to be something is to be an object of possible experience, and pure apperception is the ultimate transcendental determinant for all possible experience. Consequently, although Kant's transcendentalism critically undermines the idea that consciousness is the domain of a

privileged pre-theoretical immediacy — for that idea conflates conscious experience of phenomena with experience of 'things-in-themselves' — not only does Kant fail to critically examine the link between entity and unity, he reinforces it by identifying the notions of phenomenon and object, thereby subordinating both to the indivisible transcendental bond between subjective and objective unity. In short, the Kantian rabbit-entity is one with which we are all perfectly familiar: it is an objectively individuated, three dimensional physical phenomenon persisting in time and locatable by reference to an entirely-determinate system of spatio-temporal coordinates, its objective contours fixed through a stable set of spatial boundaries and a homogeneous segment of temporal continuity.

What then can we conclude about the relation between individuation, theory and experience in Kant? We have already mentioned how, because of its universal, impersonal and objective character, the unified experience correlated with pure apperception is that whose invariant, law like features are jointly delineated by the theories of Euclid and Newton. Clearly then, Kant's entire transcendental project is intimately bound to the presupposition of an immanent, already constituted system of scientific theory. The substantive character of the synthetic *a priori* judgements whose formal possibility Kant is trying to uncover is, to all intents and purposes, defined by Newton and Euclid. The empirical immanence of an experience whose universally necessary features are jointly described in Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics defines the parameters of possible experience for which Kant seeks to provide a transcendental ground. Borrowing a useful schema from Deleuze and Guattari, we might say that the transcendental and the synthetic *a priori*, critical philosophy and science, are wedded together and doubly articulated in a relation of reciprocal presupposition. Thus, Kant's Critical project presupposes an empirically immanent scientific theory of experience, for which he then tries to provide an *a priori* but nevertheless transcendentally immanent epistemological footing.

However, as subsequent scientific developments have all too clearly shown, this relation of presupposition remains fatally one-sided. It is Kant's transcendental philosophy which presupposes the empirical immanence of scientific theory and a scientific delineation of the synthetic *a priori* in the shape of an already extant system of apodictic mathematical and scientific truths; not, as Kant mistakenly believed, empirical science which presupposes a transcendental basis. This one-sidedness is a consequence of the unmistakeably transcendent character of Kant's transcendental *a priori*. And given the extent to which the internal coherence of the critical project as a whole hinges on the first

Critique's crucial distinction between the transcendental and the transcendent,[4] this is deeply problematic for Kant. More than one commentator[5] has remarked how, by simply *tracing* transcendental conditions from the empirically conditioned, and superimposing the presumed unity of pure apperception onto the synthetic combinations of the empirical manifold, Kant merely constructs a redundant, second order abstraction which, far from explaining them, simply reproduces the formal features of empirical generality at a higher level. Consequently, the supposedly transcendental reciprocity between critical philosophy and the scientific mapping of experience is only operative from the perspective of the former.

The trouble with Kant's transcendentalism can be summarized in the following way: in principle, the empirically immanent bounds of possible experience, its universal, law-like features as laid out in the theories of Euclid and Newton, are supposed to be transcendentally girded, necessarily rooted in the constitutive structures of cognition by those forms of *a priori* synthesis grounded in the immanence of pure apperception. But in fact they are not, as the discoveries of Lobatchevski, Riemann and Einstein (among others) showed only too clearly, revealing to what extent Kant's transcendental girding was flimsy, makeshift, and expedient, its foundations far too shallowly excavated. It is only by presupposing science as empirically given that Kant is able to posit the *a priori* conditions through which the empirical comes to be constituted as given. Consequently, Kant's transcendental *a priori* ends up floundering in extraneous metaphysical transcendence: neither rigorously transcendental, nor authentically immanent *vis à vis* the empirical domain of possible experience mapped out in scientific theory.

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[4] Kant, op. cit., A295-6/B352-3.

[5] Mikel Dufrenne, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault have made this particular criticism almost ubiquitous in recent years, but Miklos Vetö reveals the extent to which it had already been more or less explicitly formulated by many of Kant's contemporaries and immediate successors: e.g. Haaman, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Cf. Vetö, *De Kant à Schelling. Les deux voies de l'Idéalisme allemand*, two volumes, (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1998 and 2000). In view of the now elephantine proportions of secondary literature on Kant, many more names probably could be added to this list.

Quine

Interestingly enough, this relation of double articulation and reciprocal presupposition between philosophy and science is also one of the most striking features of Quine's work, albeit reconfigured in a vigorously naturalistic, anti-transcendental fashion. Quine's demolition of the analytic-synthetic distinction[6] invalidates the Kantian conception of the transcendental and liquidates the very notion of the synthetic *a priori*. For Quine, truth is immanent and disquotational,[7] while reference remains a strictly intra-theoretical relation; thus, there is no difference in kind between truths of logic and truths of fact, only a difference of degree measured in terms of their susceptibility to empirical refutation. Consequently, there is no gap to bridge between logic and fact, essence and existence, judgement and experience; and no justification whatsoever for positing a transcendental isomorphy between representing and represented through the good offices of a synthetic *a priori*. Quine's dissolution of the analytic/synthetic distinction necessitates abandoning the idea that the possibilities of empirical experience can be delimited through certain *a priori* epistemic structures possessing an inviolable formal necessity. As far as Quine is concerned, there simply are no purely *a priori* formal structures constraining the bounds of possible experience. Which is to say that the possibilities of scientific theory are continuously being reconfigured in accordance with real occurrences in the world, rather than eternally fixed according to ideal structures in the subject.

Thus, although Quine's empiricism operates on the basis of a presupposition of immanence defined in terms of an already extant body of scientific theory, in a manner initially analogous to Kant's, he refuses the Kantian dissociation of philosophical epistemology from science in the shift to a transcendental epistemological register. This is Quine's thesis of the reciprocal containment of epistemology and ontology.[8] With

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[6] Cf. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' in *From A Logical Point of View*, 2nd, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 20-46.

[7] "Where it makes sense to apply 'true' is to a sentence couched in terms of a given theory and seen from within that theory, complete with its posited reality ... To say that the statement 'Brutus killed Caesar' is true, or that 'The atomic weight of sodium is 23' is true, is in effect simply to say that Brutus killed Caesar or that the atomic weight of sodium is 23." (*Word and Object* [Cambridge, MA.: M.I.T Press, 1960], p. 24).

[8] For an account of this thesis' fundamental importance in Quine's thought, and for an exemplary exposition and defence of Quine's philosophy in its systematic consistency, see Roger Gibson's, *Enlightened Empiricism. An examination of W.V.O.*

the denial of the analytic/synthetic distinction and the dissolution of the synthetic *a priori* goes the idea that there can be a first philosophy providing transcendental grounds for scientific theory. Not only does philosophical epistemology presupposes scientific ontology – ultimately the ontology of microphysical states provided by physics – the epistemological investigation into the genesis of scientific ontology must be carried out within the conceptual framework provided by that fundamental physical ontology. There can be no transcendental bracketing or suspension of the natural scientific attitude. Thus, the fundamental methodological presupposition underlying Quine's empiricism is the espousal of an uncompromisingly physicalist ontology. And the physicalist holds that there can be no difference in the world that would not ultimately prove reducible to some physical difference explainable in terms of the distribution of elementary particles.

As a physicalist, Quine insists that "nothing happens in the world, not the flutter of an eyelid, not the flicker of a thought, without some redistribution of microphysical states." (*Theories and Things*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 98) Consequently, although epistemology can investigate the process of scientific theory formation, it must do so from a vantage point included within that scientific theory. The ontological framework provided by the physical sciences provides the basis for epistemology even as the latter investigates the genesis of the former. Thus, for Quine, science's empirical immanence functions like a kind of transcendental presupposition for epistemology. Where Kant sought to ground scientific ontology in transcendental epistemology, Quine grounds a naturalized epistemology in the transcendentally immanent ontology provided by physics: "my position is a naturalistic one; I see philosophy not as an a priori propaedeutic or groundwork for science, but as continuous with science. I see philosophy and science as in the same boat — a boat which, to revert to Neurath's figure as I so often do, we can rebuild only at sea while staying afloat in it. There is no external vantage point, no first philosophy." ('Ontological Relativity' in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 126-127)

It is this idea that the boat of empirical science functions as an inalienable presupposition for philosophy – in other words, that it functions as a real, rather than ideal, condition of possibility – which permits us to qualify it with the otherwise resolutely un-Quinean epithet of 'transcendental'. But note that what we are calling 'transcendental'

Quine's theory of knowledge (Tampa, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1988).

here, in the context of Quine's allusion to Neurath's boat, is neither the wood from which the ship's planks have been hewn, nor any specific feature concerning the shape and structure of those planks: this was Kant's mistake. It is simply the fact that philosophy begins as 'always already' inscribed within a complex global network of intricately interrelated conceptual presuppositions. There is always some fundamental theory of the world keeping the possibility of philosophical investigation afloat. Without it, philosophy could not even begin to operate.

Moreover that global web of belief, that intricate network of conceptual presupposition, is irreducible to the perspective of first-person subjectivity. For although the fabric and tissue of the web are woven – via intricate micrological processes of probably unimaginable complexity – in the course of a vast and ongoing collective cultural enterprise, it is scientific *praxis* that constructs and articulates its interconnecting nodes. Scientific theory furnishes the abstract logical filters, syntactical connectives, and conceptual joints that ensure the cohesive articulation of the whole. And science, as an impersonal theoretical *praxis* intrinsically embedded within a collective socio-cultural enterprise, is too variegated, heterogeneous and complex a phenomenon to be ascribed a unique and invariable essence. The structure of scientific *praxis* remains irreducible to the sum of individual scientific subjectivities that compose its parts. Thus, science as abstract, impersonal socio-historical structure cannot be phenomenologically encompassed. To attempt to bracket or reduce science, to try to ground our global theory of the world, painstakingly accumulated through millennia of collective cultural evolution, in individuated subjectivity would be like trying to reduce the whole to the sum of its parts; or trying to generate the whole, along with its inconceivably intricate structural articulation, on the basis of one of its microscopic parts. From a Quinean perspective, to try to ground science in subjectivity is not just to indulge in asinine philosophical solipsism; it is to commit a rudimentary category mistake.

Accordingly, for Quine, it is science that functions as an irreducible *sine qua non* for philosophical subjectivity, and not the reverse. In this regard, it may be that Quine's doctrine of disquotational truth, his intra-theoretical account of word-world correspondence, and his commitment to the methodological primacy of a physicalist ontology, although all resolutely anti-Kantian in inspiration, amount to something like a reconfiguration of the notion of transcendental immanence, rather than its simple obliteration. What is certain is that it is Quine's radical empiricism and his physicalism that underlie two of his most provocative doctrines:

indeterminacy of translation and ontological relativity. It is not unusual to see both doctrines dismissed in a somewhat summary fashion, often by philosophers who fail to appreciate the way in which they are underwritten by the quasi-transcendental methodological primacy Quine ascribes to his presupposition of an unequivocally physicalist ontology. Nevertheless, it is this methodological presupposition that provides the theoretical basis for Quine's epistemological behaviourism. According to the latter, a scientific theory is primarily a structurally intraconsistent system of sentences, and the appropriate focus of epistemic analysis as far the empiricist philosopher is concerned is linguistic utterance as instance of publicly observable behaviour. Consequently, a rigorously naturalistic epistemology will, as a matter of principle, forgo all references to subjectivity, whether it be in the shape of appeals to phenomenological introspection or latent mental processes, in order to recast epistemology in a explicitly behaviourist mode. It will then be seen to consist for the most part in a study of the relation between patterns of sensory stimulation and dispositions to overt verbal behaviour as observable in a particularly sophisticated species of biological organism — i.e. *homo sapiens*. More precisely, it will seek to establish a correlation between the various modalities of sensory input and the various patterns of linguistic output exhibited by those organisms. In the context of a behaviourist epistemology, the cognitive subject is merely the functional black box relaying input and output, and the precise nature of the mechanisms mediating between sensory input and linguistic output, or between stimulus and science, remains a matter for neurophysiological investigation rather than phenomenological speculation.

The startling and far-reaching consequences of Quine's epistemological behaviourism become apparent in the test case of radical translation. The radical translator has to decipher what is presumably an instance of ostensive definition in the case of an entirely alien language. Thus, the alien utters the phrase 'Gavagai!' while ostensively indicating a passing rabbit. But as far as behavioural evidence is concerned, the translator is no more empirically justified in concluding that the alien is indicating an individual rabbit, than he would be in concluding that it was actually pointing to an undetached rabbit-part, or a temporal segment in the history of a rabbit, or the instantiation of rabbithood, and so on. The alien's behavioural disposition to utter the phrase 'Gavagai!' and point a tentacle whenever a rabbit hops by will be the same whether he 'means' to indicate a rabbit, a rabbit-segment, or an undetached rabbit-part. Consequently, Quine argues, there is nothing in principle to prevent a pair of rival translators from constructing two mutually conflicting manuals of

translation for the alien tongue, both of which would be completely compatible with the totality of the alien's speech-dispositions, providing a smooth sentence to sentence mapping between English and alien sentences, yet both entirely incompatible with one another, inasmuch as one translates 'Gavagai!' with 'Lo, a rabbit!', while the other translates it with 'Lo, an undetached rabbit-part!'.

Now the point, Quine argues, is not that radical translation is epistemologically underdetermined and that we lack enough evidence to discover what the alien 'really' means. It is that translation is ontologically indeterminate and that there is nothing to discover about meaning, no fact of the matter about what the alien 'means' for the translator to be right or wrong about: "The discontinuity of radical translation tries our meanings: really sets them over against their verbal embodiments, or, more typically, finds nothing there."(*Word and Object*, Cambridge, MA.: M.I.T. Press, 1960, p.76)

If 'Gavagai!' doesn't mean anything, Quine insists, it's because 'Lo, a rabbit!' doesn't mean anything either. There simply are no such things as 'meanings'. For the truth is that indeterminacy of translation begins at home. Thus, Quine's epistemological behaviourism and his principled disqualification of the 'first person point of view' applies even in the case of our own native language: we could suspend our habitual practice of homophonic translation when conversing with other English speakers and, by systematically reinterpreting words and sentential constructions, construe utterances such as 'there's a rabbit' as being 'about' rabbithood or undetached rabbit parts while still respecting all the available empirical facts about behavioural predispositions.

Moreover, this holds even in the case of the individual speaker: I could systematically reconstrue even my own utterances and conclude that the word 'rabbit' as I use it is actually true of rabbit parts or rabbit stages. Or, and perhaps even more interestingly, that the word 'I' as 'I' use it actually refers to some other entity. Quine's hostility to the phenomenological superstitions enshrined in 'the first person point of view' is utterly uncompromising: not even my own utterances can have any determinate meaning for me. The assumption that speakers enjoy privileged access to their own phenomenological states is no more than a widespread but scientifically unwarranted cultural prejudice. Since truth is disquotational and the reference scheme governing a language's ontological commitments remains relative to a translation manual, the ontological commitments of my own assertions remain inscrutable even to myself.

This is Quine's doctrine of the inscrutability of reference, which shades off indiscernibly into that of ontological relativity. The latter provides the basic theoretical underpinning for the thesis of translational indeterminacy. It states that ontologies are not fixed and absolute but aleatory and relative: different theories will have different ontological commitments insofar as the range of bound variables over which the sentences of a theory must quantify will vary according to the kind of entities required to stand in as values of those variables in order for the sentences of the theory to be true. Rabbits and undetached rabbit parts are alike, Quine suggests, insofar as the question of their existence or non-existence only makes sense within the context of the relevant world-theory. But it is important to stress that as far as Quine is concerned, there can be no fact of the matter concerning 'what there really is' independently of any or all theory. The criterion according to which rabbits afford greater epistemological convenience as theoretical posits in the context of our own particular world-system remains an instrumental one: it so happens that we, as biological organisms striving to organize the raw flux of sensory input, have so far found it simpler and more profitable to formulate our accounts of those sensory stimulations and successfully predict their future occurrence by explaining them in terms of rabbits rather than undetached rabbit-parts. Beyond this purely instrumental criteria and the immanence of the world-theory we happen to inhabit, there is no higher court of ontological appeal, and ultimately no answer to questions about whether the world 'really' consists of rabbits or rabbit-stages since "it makes no sense to say what the objects of a theory are, beyond saying how to interpret or reinterpret that theory in another." ('Ontological Relativity', op. cit., p. 50) Accordingly, there is no right or wrong way in which to carve up the world independently of the best available theory, and what counts as the 'best' theory for an organism is simply a function of adaptive efficiency.

Moreover, given that Quine believes the best ontology to be that of the best unified science, and that physics offers the widest-ranging avenue for the projected unification of the natural sciences, it follows that, as far as Quine is concerned, physics should be afforded pride of place at the heart of our scientific system of the world. By systematically reconstruing and reinterpreting quantificational predicates, apparent divergences in the ontologies of the various sub-systems of science can be eliminated, thereby maximizing the potential convergence of those discrete scientific regions with a view to a seamlessly unified, universal physical theory. Whenever possible, Quine maintains, we should strive for physical reduction, or at least re-identification: substituting a frugal ontology of

microphysical objects for our luxurious ontology of bodies and substances, eliminating these microphysical objects in favour of regions of pure space-time, and ultimately abandoning the latter in order to replace them with corresponding classes of quadruple numbers as specified within the bounds of arbitrarily adopted coordinate systems, thereby arriving at the austerely minimalist ontology of set theory.

Given that our own scientific system of the world already exhibits this high degree of functional plasticity, it would be churlish to impose fixed ontological parameters onto the process of radical translation. When confronted with an alien it may be more convenient to assume that its ostensive practices more or less coincide with our own, and that it individuates things in the world very much like we do. Quine's point is that although such assumptions are pragmatically warranted, they will always remain ontologically indeterminable insofar as they exceed all possible epistemological, which is to say behavioural, evidence — the only empirically legitimate evidence as far as Quine is concerned:

> Such is the quandary over 'gavagai': where one gavagai leaves off and another begins. The only difference between rabbits, undetached rabbit parts and rabbit stages is in their individuation. If you take the total scattered portion of the spatiotemporal world that is made up of rabbits, and that which is made up of undetached rabbit parts, and that which is made up of rabbit stages, you come out with the same scattered portion of the world each of the three times. The only difference is in how you slice it. And how to slice it is what ostension or simple conditioning, however persistently repeated, cannot teach. (Ibid., pp. 31-32)

Thus, what the indeterminacy of translation really boils down to is an indeterminacy of individuation. Although the total scattered portion of the spatiotemporal world comprising rabbits, rabbit parts and rabbit stages, is ultimately 'one and the same',[9] the fact remains that at the local level, there will always be a greater number of undetached rabbit-parts present

[9] Although, strictly speaking, from a Quinean perspective, to say it remains 'one and the same' is problematic insofar as it erroneously suggests we might have some means of accessing this scattered portion of the spatiotemporal world independently of our habitual practices of ostensive individuation as nested within the overarching world-theory we happen to inhabit. As we shall see, it is this possibility of theoretically accessing a pre-individuated ontological realm which becomes feasible in the context of Laruelle's work, in spite of the fact that it remains a strictly incoherent notion for Quine.

than single rabbits, an even greater number of temporal segments in the history of a rabbit than undetached rabbit-parts present, but conversely, only a single rabbithood present whenever a multiplicity of rabbits, rabbit stages or rabbit parts are present. The truth is that this incommensurability at the global level of *that* which ostension counts as one remains inscrutable at the local level of behavioural equivalence for ostensive indication, in other words, inscrutable at the level of the *way* in which ostension count something as one. This is because, for Quine, there is no 'thing-in-itself', nothing left over once you've subtracted the 'how' of ostensive individuation from the 'what' which is supposedly being pointed to. There simply are no facts of the matter – i.e. no behavioural, and ultimately no physical facts – about what we 'intend' to single out when uttering 'Lo, a rabbit !' and pointing, or to tell us whether we are indicating rabbits, rabbit stages, or rabbithood.

Individuation is indeterminate, and the reference of our singular terms inscrutable, argues Quine, because there are no entities there for us to scrute in the absence of a global theory fixing the conventions for ostension and specifying determinate criteria for the individuation of entities. Unless it's determined in the context of an overarching background theory, reference is indeterminate and being inscrutable. Hence the famous Quinean formula: 'to be is to be the value of a variable'. Reference as a basic ontological relation between word and world cannot be construed in a transcendent and extra-theoretical fashion, because only the presupposition of physics as the most fundamental and all-encompassing available system of global ontology can provide the immanent, empirically legitimate condition of possibility for defining that relation. And herein lies the potent anti-phenomenological thrust of Quine's radical empiricism: if practices of ostension and criteria for individuation are relative to theory, so are all those perceptual or phenomenological 'experiences' subsequently attributed to the epistemological subject as a function of those theoretically grounded conventions and criteria. Change the translation manual and the customary rules of homophonic equivalence whereby your utterances are habitually mapped onto the familiar lexicon of standard English, their reference fixed in conformity with the conventional criteria of ordinary usage, and you effectively reconfigure the phenomenological furnishings of your own being-in-the-world. Rabbit-stage qualia will be substituted for rabbit qualia.

Accordingly, Quine's epistemological behaviourism and his sceptical stance toward the conventions of propositional attitude ascription and the ontological trappings of folk psychological discourse, as crystallised in

the indeterminacy of translation,[10] provide us with as an explicitly materialist variant on what was most valuable in Kant: the transcendental critique of the supposition that we possess unmediated access to our own first-person phenomenological awareness as though it were something immediate and 'in-itself', and the latent implication that there simply is no 'experience in-itself' since 'experience' is conceptually defined and 'always already' theoretically articulated. Significantly, it is this idea of a transcendental suspension or bracketing of the realm of phenomenologically defined immediacy in its entirety, coupled with the possibility of a subsequent theoretical reconfiguration of what counts as experience, which links Laruelle's work to that of Kant and Quine.

Laruelle

Laruelle is interested in clarifying the notion of a transcendental presupposition for philosophical thought. In other words, he's interested in clarifying the notion of transcendental immanence that, we suggested, was already operative in the thought of Kant and Quine. But unlike Kant, Laruelle is trying to define this notion of transcendental immanence in terms of a *real* rather merely ideal presupposition for experience. And unlike Quine, he refuses to identify this real presupposition with an already extant body of empirical science. This is because he thinks that both Kant's synthetic *a priori*, as rooted in pure apperception, and Quine's epistemological behaviourism, as rooted in his physicalism, are ultimately equivalent gestures of transcendence, that is to say, philosophical Decisions[11] about what should count as an inevitable presupposition for philosophy. Thus, what Laruelle is after is a

[10] Of course, there are many who view the indeterminacy of translation as a *reductio* of Quine's epistemological behaviourism, protesting that such a profoundly counter-intuitive doctrine could not possibly be correct. Appeals to the incontrovertible obviousness of first-person phenomenology invariably figure largely in protests of this sort. An altogether more interesting and less question-begging critique comes from Donald Davidson, a philosopher much influenced by Quine. In 'On the Very Idea Of a Conceptual Scheme', Davidson criticizes Quine for holding on to a 'third dogma' of empiricism: the dualism of conceptual scheme and sensory content which he sees as perpetuating the Kantian dualism of concept and intuition. Cf. 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1984), pp. 183-198.

[11] For Laruelle, all philosophy is Decisional; which is to say that every philosophical gesture, whether it be Hume's or Hegel's, Kant's or Quine's, is invariably rooted in a minimal structure of auto-positional/auto-donational transcendence.

precondition for philosophy that is real without being empirically determinate and capable of assuming a transcendental function without becoming ideally transcendent. The question then is: can we discover this real but non-empirical presupposition, this unconditional immanence that is always already presupposed by philosophy, without having to make a philosophical Decision about its character? For by immediately characterizing its own precondition philosophically, Decision institutes a vicious circularity whereby philosophy's minimal precondition or *sine qua non* always turns out to be already philosophical. But is there some ultimate presupposition for philosophical thought that would not turn out to be *posited as presupposed* through Decision?

Laruelle believes he has discovered this non-Decisional precondition for philosophising, and that defining it as the authentically ineliminable *sine qua non* for all philosophical thought is a matter of purifying the notion of immanence of every residue of ideal transcendence and empirical determination. For the philosophical presupposition of transcendental immanence, whether as ideal (Kant) or as real (Quine), invariably renders it immanent *to* something. Thus, for Kant, the transcendental *qua* ideal synthetic *a priori* is immanent to possible experience, while for Quine the transcendental *qua* real physical theory of the world is immanent to empirical science. Accordingly, in order to safeguard immanence's autonomy and prevent its contamination through transcendent ideality and empirical reality, Laruelle must achieve a seemingly impossible feat: he has to separate immanence *qua* immanence from immanence *qua* transcendental without differentiating them as two distinct 'things'. Immanence must be capable of fulfilling a transcendental function without becoming transcendental. The function of the transcendental entails a *relation* of determination (whether this be one of conditioning (Kant), constitution (Husserl) or production (Deleuze)), a relation that would compromise the radical autonomy of the immanence Laruelle seeks. So in order not to render immanence relative to that which it transcendentally determines, Laruelle will carefully distinguish immanence as a *necessary* but negative condition, as *sine qua non* for the relation of determination, from its effectuation as transcendentally determining condition insofar as this is *contingently* occasioned by the empirical instance which it necessarily determines. Immanence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the determination of philosophy because it requires the supplement of philosophical thought as a contingent occasion in order to fulfil its necessary determining function *vis à vis* philosophy. Consequently, whereas transcendental immanence is merely posited-as-presupposed through philosophical Decision, Laruelle

will separate or 'dualyse' the two moments of Decision, so that non-Decisional immanence is first presupposed – without being posited – in its radical autonomy as immanence, which is to say, as *foreclosed* to Decision, the better to be occasionally posited – without being presupposed – as a transcendentally foreclosed but nevertheless determining condition *for* philosophical Decision.

Accordingly, unlike Kant and Quine, Laruelle separates the gesture of presupposition from that of position at the same time as he separates immanence from its transcendental effectuation. First, immanence is presupposed (without-position) in its foreclosure to Decision as utterly empty and transparent, void of any and every form of predicative content, whether it be empirical or ideal. It is presupposed as the minimally necessary precondition for thought, as a negative or empty condition, rather than a positive, ontologically sufficient or substantive state of affairs. Which is to say that it is presupposed as foreclosed to the advent of ontological Decision concerning that which is or the way in which what is (i.e. foreclosed to the possibility of articulating the distinction between essence and existence). Second, and only by virtue of being presupposed as this necessary but non-sufficient condition, immanence is posited (without-presupposition) on the occasional basis of Decision, as transcendentally necessary for Decision. Only on the occasional basis of philosophical Decision can immanence be posited as transcendental and thereby become positively effectuated as a necessary condition for Decisional thought.

What are the consequences of this delicate procedure? The most important for our present purposes is that whereas the Decisional mixture of presupposition and position invariably hybridises immanence's conceptual definition with its ontological constitution, Laruelle manages to characterise it as foreclosed to definition as well as constitution. Immanence 'itself' (*l'immanence telle quelle; l'immanence en chair et en os*, as Laruelle likes to say) is a radically autonomous instance that simply has no need for definition or constitution. Immanence 'itself' remains foreclosed to conceptual symbolisation and ontological predication, and therefore independent of the Decisional mixture of description and constitution.

We might almost be tempted to say that in invoking immanence 'itself', Laruelle is defining it substantively, were it not for the fact that once immanence is thought in and by itself, it can no longer even be characterised as substantively immanent *to* itself. What separates Laruelle's non-philosophical project of thinking *in accordance with* immanence's foreclosure to thought from philosophies of absolute

immanence of the kind propounded by Gilles Deleuze and Michel Henry in very different registers[12], is the conviction that once immanence has been purged of every residue of transcendence, it is no longer possible to say of it, as Deleuze and Henry do in their very different ways, that it's immanent *to* itself, because that 'to' still maintains a modicum of reflexive folding, a doubling up, a residual intentionality.[13] If immanence is to be unconditional it must remain non-thetic: neither immanence 'in' itself nor immanent 'to' itself, but rather non-thetic-immanence 'itself'.

Moreover, it is through this intransitive 'bracketing' or suspension of intentional relationality and reflexive doubling, that the non-thetic suspends the premise of unitary ontological consistency. Because the Laruellean invocation of immanence is no longer defined as an identity 'to' something, not even to itself, it becomes the immanence of an Identity without consistency and without unity. Laruellean immanence is 'given-without-givenness' as *the radical*, or the One-in-One, the One-without-Being (*l'Un-sans-l'Être*), rather than 'given-with-givenness' as the absolute or transcendent immanence of the One-beyond-Being (*l'au-delà de l'Être* or *epekeina tes ousias*). Accordingly, the non-thetic immanence of what Laruelle calls 'the One' or 'the Real' becomes an index of radically singular but non-consistent Identity, an identity shorn of the presumption of ontological unity. And it is this suspension of thetic positing, of intentional correlation and transitivity, which the 'non' in 'non-thetic immanence' imparts to thought insofar as it begins to think, as Laruelle puts it, *according to*, or *on the basis* of radical immanence as its real, yet non-ontological, presupposition. This has four very important consequences as far as our consideration of the relation between individuation, theory, and experience is concerned; consequences which we shall now proceed to elaborate on in turn.

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[12] Whereas both Gilles Deleuze and Michel Henry define immanence philosophically (Decisionally) as an absolute, Laruelle defines immanence non-philosophically (non-Decisionally) as *the radical*. Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 35-60; Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', trans. by N. Millet, in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1997, pp. 3-9; and Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. by G. Etskorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof), 1973, *passim*.

[13] Cf. François Laruelle, 'Réponse à Deleuze' in Non-Philosophie, Le Collectif, *La Non-Philosophie des Contemporains* (Paris: Kimé, 1995), pp. 49-80.

First consequence: immanence — which is to say, the Real — through its foreclosure to Decision, 'causes'[14] the phenomenological World to distinguish itself as absolutely transcendent in relation to it, while it remains radically indifferent to the World's transcendence. In so doing it transforms thetic transcendence, or the phenomenological World, into an empirical *occasion*, a neutral support on whose basis immanence models itself non-thetically in thought. Although foreclosed to thought, immanence becomes transcendentally *effectuated* by thought as a non-thetic model of thetic transcendence. In other words, non-thetic immanence has as its (non-intentional) correlate (or 'uni-late', as Laruelle says) a fathomless well or abyss of non-thetic transcendence into which the phenomenological World and everything in it drops. This dimension of non-thetic transcendence *occasioned* by the World articulates what could be called 'the relation of relation and non-relation' and provides the vehicle for a non-phenomenological theory of the phenomenon. Its complex structure spans the *unilateral duality* articulating the Unseparated immanence whose radical or relationless foreclosure to thought it now effectuates *as* thought; and the equally indivisible Separation whereby immanence's relationless foreclosure is now effectuated by thought as non-thetic transcendence 'relative to' the thetic transcendence that serves as its occasion. This difficult yet extraordinarily fruitful idea can be more economically (but not necessarily more simply) expressed in Laruellese: the foreclosure of radical immanence *clones* itself as thought on the occasional basis of the World's thetic transcendence; 'existing' as a unilateral duality comprising an Identity of immanence-without-unity and a Duality of transcendence without-distinction.

But what does this apparently unintelligible gobbledygook actually mean? Well, for one thing, this transcendental effectuation or 'cloning' of immanence as Identity-without-unity and Duality-without-distinction engenders a *practico-theoretical* – rather than phenomenological – instance of immanent subjectivation. Thus, in being transcendentally effectuated as unilateral duality, radical immanence becomes the Subject of transcendental theory without becoming immanent 'to' empirical subjectivity or phenomenological consciousness. It is effectuated in thought in a way that engenders a definitive estrangement of the customary parameters of our phenomenological being-in-the-world. As

[14] 'Causes-only-in-the-last-instance'; i.e. according to a novel, non-metaphysical characterisation of the notion of cause as neither formal nor final, neither efficient nor material.

far as Laruelle is concerned, the Identity and Duality constitutive of non-thetic transcendence *qua* Subject of non-phenomenological theory mean that the latter can neither be an empirically given fact 'in' experience, nor an ontologically necessary precondition 'of' experience. The subject of non-phenomenological theory is a Stranger to the World; an Alien-subject: a purely transcendental, practico-theoretical organon *for* the determination of phenomenological experience, but an organon devoid of every residue of intentional familiarity with the realm of intra-worldly experience.

This last point is particularly crucial: the Alien-subject does not 'do' theory as if it were a pre-existing agency pragmatically engaged 'in the world' prior to and independently of being a practico-theoretical instance *for* the determination of the World. On the contrary, its 'being' is exclusively performative; its articulation is exhausted by this practico-theoretical determination; and it is nothing apart from its (practico-theoretical) effectuation as the Subject of non-phenomenological thought.[15] For Laruelle, the only authentically immanent articulation of the Subject is effectuated in the structure of the transcendental clone modelling, suspending and ultimately reconfiguring the World's thetic transcendence. It is the World as structure of phenomenological transcendence *in toto* that now becomes a determinable 'object'; a merely occasional support or material subject to a process of practico-theoretical determination.

Second consequence: through this dimension of radical exteriority or non-thetic transcendence which constitutes the structure of the Alien-subject, Laruelle effects a transcendental dilation of the empirical realm; one which, like Quine but for very different reasons, discontinues the possibility of presupposing a phenomenological distinction between experience and judgement, fact and essence, *a posteriori* and *a priori*. In emancipating the pure and empty form of the transcendental, Laruelle extends the bounds of the empirical beyond the phenomenological parameters of what it's possible to define as empirical relative to the subject of consciousness. Everything becomes indifferently empirical – not just rabbits and rabbit-parts, but also the *a priori* criteria of individuation for rabbits and rabbit-parts. Once the radically transcendental viewpoint of the Alien-subject has been effectuated, then according to the latter's rigorously universalising perspective *qua* 'vision-

[15] Cf. François Laruelle, 'A Summary of Non-Philosophy', trans. by R. Brassier, in *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy - Philosophies of Nature*, Vol. 8, 1999, pp. 146-7.

in-One', all phenomenologically rooted distinctions between proprietary proximity and exproprietary distance, or between a (so-called) concrete subjective immanence and a (so-called) abstract objective transcendence, become completely invalidated. Everything is at once univocally concrete or equivalently *phenomenal* in its non-thetic immanence, and indifferently abstract or utterly *excarnate* in its non-thetic transcendence. Which is to say that according to the Alien-subject's radically non-worldly perspective, there is no distinction in phenomenal or perceptual status between being hit by a brick and constructing a proof for Cantor's continuum hypothesis. Envisaged according to radical immanence, or 'seen-in-One' by the Alien-subject, a bunny-rabbit has exactly the same phenomenal status as an axiom of set-theory, and a particle accelerator has exactly the same phenomenal status as a toothache.

Third consequence: a thinking that effectuates immanence's foreclosure to the World isn't 'about' anything – it is (as Beckett famously remarked *apropos* of *Finnegan's Wake*) that 'something' itself. It is non-thetic: which is to say, non-intentional, intransitive, radically performative. Because transcendental theory is Subject without being dependent on any empirically given instance of subjectivity, non-phenomenological thinking is neither grounded in a conscious subject, nor dependent on an intentional object. Like Kant, Laruelle includes the subject of phenomenological consciousness within the realm of empirically determinable objectivity. So Laruelle's non-philosophical version of transcendental theory does not depend on a subject of consciousness because it remains rooted in immanence's foreclosure to thought as the non-conscious cause determining thought in-the-last-instance. By the same token, it has no intentional object either because it constitutes itself on the occasional basis of those *a priori* theories of objectivation (philosophical Decisions) that function as its empirical material[16], rather than relative to an already objectified, empirically determinate phenomenological field. This is why it operates in an exclusively transcendental as opposed to phenomenological register: it relates to *theories* of objects rather than to objects themselves; the point being that from the perspective of the Alien-subject, the possibility of establishing a phenomenological distinction between 'objects' and 'theories of objects' becomes completely invalidated. That distinction is now supplanted by a transcendental Identity of phenomenological-object and objectifying-theory that is itself radically phenomenal (yet non-

[16] Cf. François Laruelle, *Principes de la Non-Philosophie* (Paris: P.U.F, 1996), pp.32-34.

phenomenological) or non-thetically immanent in-the-last-instance.

In this respect, Laruelle can be seen to be radicalising the combined Kantian and Quinean critiques of the idea that our experience is of things-in-themselves, defined independently of theoretical mediation. There are no pre-theoretical experiences of rabbits-in-themselves, only an experience constructed through theories of rabbithood. But in another respect, Laruelle vigorously reinstates the thing-in-itself: for this is exactly what non-thetic immanence is – the only proviso being that it is no longer a reifiable 'thing' at all. Once it ceases being defined privatively as a limiting concept, and is characterised instead as that whose immanent foreclosure to definition and constitution allows for its immanent effectuation by thought, it becomes possible to redefine the thing-in-itself positively as an unconditionally immanent phenomenon, or as *the transcendental phenomenon-in-itself* = *x*.[17] It is this philosophically oxymoronic definition of the Real that serves as the impetus for the Laruellean shift to a non-philosophical register; that is to say, one which takes philosophical accounts of objectivation themselves, rather than objects, as its empirical material. And it is radical immanence's unconditionally positive phenomenal transparency as *the phenomenon-in-itself*, rather than the kind of negatively defined noumenal opacity characteristically ascribed to the in-itself by philosophers, which makes of it the unknown but determining cause in accordance with which the Real *qua* One or 'Individual-without-individuation' can be limitlessly redescribed using philosophical theories of individuation as a merely occasional index. It is with this process of constant redescription that a non-phenomenological theory of the phenomenon-in-itself concerns itself.

Fourth consequence: the redescription at issue involves thinking the Identity-without-unity and the Duality-without-difference of the Real *qua* phenomenon-in-itself, or immanent cause of thought, and of the Ideal *qua* phenomenological objectivation or individuating schema for the scattered portion of the spatio-temporal world indexed by the "Gavagai!" or "Rabbit!" occasioning occurrence. In other words, the non-phenomenological redescription of phenomenologically articulated cognition strives to construct a theoretical clone of the "Gavagai!" occasioning occurrence by producing the concurrent Identity (without-

[17] "The Real is rather like Kant's 'thing-in-itself': unknowable and even unthinkable, but with this difference: it is constituted by a foreclosed immanence rather than by transcendence (it is the One rather than the Other), and consists in an experience or cognition of the third kind; — the vision-in-One." (Laruelle, op. cit., p. 271).

synthesis) and Duality (without-distinction) of the latter's indeterminable reality as a pre-individual 'Thing' or phenomenon-in-itself, and its phenomenologically determinable ideality as individuated entity. Thus, the non-phenomenological redescription of phenomenologically articulated rabbithood will strive to liberate the rabbity-occurrence's pre-individual character, which is to say, its non-thetic essence, in terms of the radically immanent Identity (without-unity) and radically transcendent Duality (without-distinction) proper to the rabbity occurrence as simultaneity of a determinate but unobjectifiable reality and a phenomenologically determinable, objectivating ideality. In other words, it is a question of, as Laruelle puts it, 'dualysing' the phenomenological hybridisation of individuating phenomenality and individuated phenomenon – that is to say, reconfiguring it in terms of a unilateral duality wherein an individual-without-individuation now determines the hylomorphic dyad of individuating form and individuated matter as 'unidentity' and 'unilaterality' of a matter-without-form, or individual-without-individuation, and a form-without-matter, or individuation-without-individual.

It is Gilbert Simondon who, in his seminal work,[18] identified and denounced the fundamental circularity in all hylomorphic accounts of individuation. That circularity derives from the latter's retroactive imposition of the characteristics of constituted individual unity back onto the pre-individual conditions of ontological individuation. Pre-individual being will never be conceptually conceived, Simondon argued, so long as the only available theoretical schema is that of the fundamentally Kantian model according to which the unity of the subject is mirrored in the object and that of the object in the subject, thereby presupposing the isomorphy of thought and thing at the level of individuation. However, Simondon not only diagnosed the problem, he also suggested an alternative:

> The individuation of the real external to the subject is grasped by the subject thanks to the analogical individuation of cognition in the subject; but it is through the individuation of cognition rather than through cognition alone that the individuation of those beings which are not subjects is grasped. Beings can be known through the cognition of the subject, but the individuation of beings can be grasped only through the individuation of the subject's cognition.

[18] Cf. in particular *L'Individu et sa Genèse Physico-Biologique* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1995) [originally published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1964].

(*L'Individu et sa Genèse Physico-Biologique*, Grenoble; Jérôme Millon, 1995, p. 34)

Thus, the only to way to grasp pre-individual singularity, Simondon suggests, is through the pre-individual singularisation of thought. Simondon's philosophical quest to articulate the conditions for a thought of pre-individual being provides us with a useful (albeit tangential as far as Laruelle himself is concerned) way of delineating some of the novel conceptual possibilities opened up by Laruelle's work. For it is in fact the latter which furnishes us with the relevant methodological apparatus required in order to effect the transfiguration of philosophical theory demanded for the successful realisation of the former. What the theoretical grasp of individuation as pre-individual ontological process demands is a suspension of phenomenological intuition, a dissolution of intentional correlation, and a disarticulation ('dualysation') of the hylomorphic synthesis of individual phenomenon and individuating phenomenality (insofar as it is phenomenality's temporalising function that individuates the temporal phenomenon).[19] The Laruellean apparatus effects the relevant transformations by discontinuing all vestiges of merely analogical equivalence or representational isomorphy between individuated cognition and individuated being, as well as all phenomenological correlation between individuated consciousness and individuated phenomenon. This severance is effected through the medium of non-phenomenological cognition as articulation of unilateral duality, rather than unitary synthesis, between individuation and individuated. Thus, by way of contrast to the unitary intentional consistency of phenomenological adumbrations (*Abschattung*), this duality is effectuated in thought according to the radical inconsistency of the phenomenon-in-itself as individual-without-individuation. And instead of phenomenologically presupposing the intuition or 'perception' of the individuated phenomenon as already encompassed within a unitary horizon of intentional adumbration, it is the phenomenological phenomenon as hylomorphic synthesis of individuated phenomenon and individuating phenomenality that is 'dualysed' as a phenomenologically unencompassable duality comprising the immanence of a phenomenon-without-unity and the transcendence of a phenomenality-without-difference, in accordance with the phenomenon-in-itself as individual-without-individuation. Thus, the One's inconsistent transparency *qua* phenomenon-in-itself dualyses the individuated phenomenon as a

[19] Cf. Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie Materielle* (Paris: P.U.F., 1990), pp. 13-59.

dispersive singularity: an Identity-without-synthesis that is simultaneously a Duality-without-distinction.

Perhaps we can illuminate these somewhat turgid ruminations by reconsidering the case of radical translation. In order to grasp the "Gavagai!" occasioning occurrence without presupposing that the alien shares in our own familiar ostensive practices or subscribes to our conventional criteria for individuation, we would have to become capable of accessing the "Gavagai!" prompting event in its pre-individual ontological heterogeneity. This would entail achieving a theoretical access to the rabbity-occurrence prior to the mobilisation of an individuating schema; in other words, accessing it as equally and simultaneously comprising rabbithood, rabbit-parts, rabbit-segments, etc. Such a feat of cognitive redescription would require the effectuation of a non-intentional or non-unitary syntax — a unilateralising syntax or 'uni-tax'— at the level of the non-phenomenological theory that takes the phenomenological hybridisation of individual and individuation as its material, the better to extract from the latter the rabbity-occurrence's unilateralised or dispersive identity, its unidentity and unilaterality as phenomenon-in-itself: neither rabbit-object nor rabbit-segment nor rabbit-part, but the transcendental prototype, the pre-individual condition for these and all other rabbit-individuating schemas.

Thus, what Laruelle calls the 'indivi-dualysation' of theoretical cognition in accordance with its cause (the One *qua* individual-without-individuation) results in the de-individuation or dualysation of its empirical support (the rabbit-individuating schema) as unilateral duality of individuated phenomenon and individuating phenomenality. Non-phenomenological thought grasps the rabbity-occurrence in its non-thetic universality according to a mode of non-intuitive, or theoretically determined phenomenality,[20] a phenomenality determined independently of any and every empirically determinate mode of perceptual intuition or phenomenological manifestation.

Moreover, if the putatively invariant or pseudo-transcendental parameters of phenomenological individuation remain entirely arbitrary and contingent, and if there are as many possible modalities of immanent phenomenalisation as there are possible transcendental redescriptions of individuation, it is because the indivisible immanence of the Real *qua* phenomenon-in-itself remains commensurate with a radically

[20] Cf. François Laruelle, 'A Summary of Non-Philosophy', trans. by R. Brassier, in *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy - Philosophies of Nature*, Vol. 8, 1999, p. 141.

heterogeneous, phenomenologically unencompassable manifold of potential modes of individuation. That is to say, any given schema for individuation, any given phenomenological hybrid of individuated phenomenon and individuating phenomenality, can be dualysed in accordance with the Identity of the phenomenon-in-itself *qua* individual-without-individuation in a limitless variety of mutually incommensurable ways, leading to an unencompassable manifold of alternative modes of individuation – which is to say, of 'entification' and phenomenalisation – each of them identical-in-the-last-instance with the One as individual-in-itself.

To understand this notion of a transcendental manifold of registers of phenomenalisation entails making sense of Laruelle's conception of an immanent but theoretically malleable plurality of basically in-consistent space-times. Unfortunately, however suggestive, Laruelle's indications in this regard are frustratingly sketchy.[21] Nevertheless, in light of the foregoing account, there are a few positive claims we can make concerning the nature of this malleable, inconsistent space-time within which the non-thetic or pre-individuated rabbit gaily capers and gambols. Given the immanence of the phenomenon-in-itself, which is its cause-in-the-last-instance, and given the various phenomenological schemas of rabbit-individuation, which are its empirical support, a non-phenomenological modelling of 'rabbithood' will strive to extract or clone a non-thetic *xenotype* from the thetic schematisations of the individuated rabbit-phenomenon that serve as its empirical support. The complex structure of this xenotype as transcendental clone spans its unidentity as radically immanent indivision and unilaterality as radically transcendent division. Which is to say that the non-thetic or non-phenomenological essence of the rabbit-in-itself spans its radical immanence as individual-without-individuation and its radical transcendence as individuation-without-individual. Thus, the rabbit xenotype comprises the pre-individuated or non-consistent essence of the rabbit's immanent phenomenal identity as simultaneously rabbit-part, rabbit-segment, rabbithood, and so on. As a result, the rabbity-occurrence's non-thetic xenotype indexes its singular but pre-individuated nature as inconsistent Entity = x; a theoretically immanent but unobjectifiable phenomenal entity which has been subtracted from the retentional and protentional syntheses of temporal presentation, as well as from all intuitive forms of spatial presence. It is as coincidence of an

[21] See for instance the tantalising but inconclusive remarks in *Théorie des Identités. Fractalité Généralisée et Philosophie Artificielle* (Paris: P.U.F., 1992).

identity-without-unity and a duality-without-difference, of a singular indivision and a universal division, that the rabbitty-occurrence constitutes a dispersive singularity, neither homogeneous in space nor continuous through time.

In *Theory of Identities*, Laruelle characterises this theoretical reconfiguration of Decisionally circumscribed spatio-temporal phenomena in terms of a process of *a priori fractalisation*. The latter is to be understood in terms of the proliferation of inconsistent, discontinuous and mutually incommensurable phenomenalisations of the 'same' occasional phenomenon; its reiterated 'irregularisation' as determined by a transcendentally homothetic invariant rupturing the spatio-temporal consistency in accordance with which intentional consciousness continuously reinscribes phenomena within the horizon of a potential phenomenological unity.[22] Yet paradoxically, it is the phenomenon-in-itself through its invariant but inconsistent non-phenomenological transparency that conditions this fractalisation. Accordingly, insofar as the severing of the bond between entity and unity is inseparable from the theoretical effectuation of the phenomenon's inconsistency as fractalising *a priori*, it is the latter's non-phenomenological inconsistency that guarantees the transcendental equivalence or universal translatability[23] of all these mutually incommensurable instances of spatio-temporal phenomenalisation. Thus, it is as a direct consequence of the dimension of universality proper to non-intuitive phenomenality insofar as it effectuates immanence's radically inconsistent univocity, that all Decisionally circumscribed spatio-temporal phenomena can be subjected to a process of theoretical fractalisation rendering them at once stringently individual and universally translatable.

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[22] Cf. ibid., pp.153-232.

[23] The idea of non-philosophy as universal medium for the translation of all philosophical languages into one another is a recurrent theme in *Philosophie III*. In *Principes de la Non-Philosophie*, for instance, Laruelle writes: "It is thus through this theoretical usage, through this transcendental theory of private philosophical languages (these being at once general and total), and on the basis of this non-linguistic identity of language, that the problem of philosophical translation can be posed in terms of a translation of philosophical languages 'into' one another, which is to say, 'into-the-One-in-the-last-instance', rather than in terms of a translation between philosophies carried out under the ultimate authority of philosophy. Non-philosophy is this translation of Kant 'into' Descartes, of Descartes 'into' Marx, of Marx 'into' Husserl, etc.; which is to say, under the condition of the vision-in-One as un-translatable Real."(p.273) More recently, the topic of the non-philosophical translation of philosophy has provided the theme for an unpublished conference paper entitled 'Translated From the Philosophical' [*Traduit du Philosophique*].

Consequently, non-phenomenological theory could be said to function like a kind of transcendental prosthetic for conceptual cognition, emancipating it from the functional specificities of the human sensory apparatus and the constraints of empirical sensibility, the better to provide it with an authentically universal mode of cognitive access to the non-anthropocognitive realm of pre-individual phenomena. Moreover, in providing this non-phenomenological amplification of cognition in accordance with the Identity of the phenomenon-in-itself, this transcendental prosthetic might be said to operate somewhat like a universal organon for radical translation, allowing creatures with otherwise utterly disparate sensory modalities and incommensurate individuation criteria to communicate *via* a cognitive vocabulary shorn of all contamination by empirically overdetermined conceptual schemes. Thus, the non-phenomenological 'indivi-dualysation' of phenomenality through transcendental theory liberates the phenomenal target of cognition (e.g. the '*Gavagai!*' occasioning occurrence) from its circumscription within the empirical ambit of a determinate set of basically anthropocognitive perceptual modalities. And if 'transcendental materialism' is defined simply in terms of the anti-phenomenological thesis according to which the realm of materiality-in-itself exceeds the ambit of intentional consciousness and the anthropocentric parameters of human being-in-the-world, then Laruelle allows us to radicalise and generalise that thesis by providing the means for a 'metatranscendental materialisation' of the phenomneological *a priori*.

Accordingly, although the persistent use of the 'non-' prefix in Laruelle's thought invites the suspicion that an entirely negative mode of determination has been substituted for positive characterisation, such suspicion is misguided. It fails to bear in mind the way in which Laruelle uses 'non-' as a kind of auxiliary tensor or index for non-thetic radicality; one which always unleashes a dimension of positive characterisation already immanent in the terms and concepts to which it is applied. In this respect, its function is best understood as akin to the lifting of a speed restriction or the raising of a floodgate. Far from negating the term to which it is affixed, it actually suspends or disqualifies a precise set of conceptual strictures through which a determinate species of thinking (i.e. the thetic or Decisional kind) superimposes certain systemically structured conditions onto the ineradicable simplicity of a phenomenon whose parameters of immanent manifestation remain conceptually uncircumscribable and phenomenologically unencompassable.

So although it *seems* to deny, Laruelle's 'non-' is ultimately a No that performs the Yes. What it suspends is the self-imposed constriction of

philosophical thought's auto-Decisional sufficiency; the charmed circle of its auto-positional and auto-donational autonomy. The suspension of that autonomy actually dissimulates an affirmation of the radically unconditioned; that which frees Decision from its absolute self-sufficiency by conditioning Decision without being conditioned by Decision in return. Whenever it is used, Laruelle's 'non-' reaffirms the ineradicable immanence of the phenomenon-in-itself by suspending the constrictive character of its attempted phenomenologisation at the hands of philosophical Decision.

What then is a 'non-rabbit'?

It is a dispersive singularity: the transcendental coincidence of a phenomenon that no longer presupposes an individuating *logos*, and a matter that is no longer posited on the basis of an individuated concept. It manifests itself as the unilateral duality of an unobjectifiably immanent phenomenon that has not been posited by means of an individuating phenomenality, and an unobjectifiably transcendent phenomenality that has not been presupposed through an individuated phenomenon. It is a xenotype: an unenvisageable but radically immanent theoretical entity.

And what is non-phenomenological theory that it is able to reconfigure the parameters of perception so as to allow for the apprehension of such phenomena?

A transcendental adrenochrome.[24]

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[24] 'Adrenochrome': mythical hallucinogen, of reputedly terrifying potency, supposedly synthesized from the living body's pituitary gland. The aftermath of an adrenochrome binge is described in Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (London: Paladin, 1972): "The room looked like the site of some disastrous zoological experiment involving whiskey and gorillas. The ten-foot mirror was shattered, but still hanging together – bad evidence of that afternoon when my attorney ran amok with the coconut hammer, smashing the mirror and all the lightbulbs [...] The bathroom floor was about six-inches deep with soap bars, vomit, and grapefruit rinds [...] crude pornographic photos, ripped out of magazines like Whores of Sweden and Orgies in the Casbah [...] were plastered on the broken mirror with smears of mustard that had dried to a hard yellow crust ... and all these signs of violence, these strange red and blue bulbs and shards of broken glass embedded in the wall plaster ... No; these were not the hoofprints of your average god-fearing junkie. It was too savage, too aggressive. There was evidence in this room of excessive consumption of almost every type of drug known to civilized man since A.D.1544. It could only be explained as a montage, a sort of exaggerated medical exhibit, put together very carefully to show what might happen if twenty-two serious drug felons – each with a different addiction – were penned up together in the same room for five days and nights without relief."(pp. 167-172).