

Non-Anthropological Foundations for a Science of Humans¹

Didier Moulinier

Translated by Adam Louis-Klein

Far from a rational, philosophical anthropology, defying the so-called “human” sciences, just as much at the margins of contemporary “theories of the subject,” non-Philosophy affirms a “Science of Man” grafted to the Real. Laruelle’s non-anthropological conceptualizations are already in place by Philosophy II (in the 1980’s). To begin, let us cite several extracts from *A Biography of Ordinary Man* (1985). First, a terrible accusation: “As far as they exist and are triumphant, the Sciences of man are not sciences and do not concern man: for the same reason” (Laruelle 1985: 8).² The Sciences of man do not approach him as One or Individual (real multiplicities), but solely as unitary generalities that they fetichize each in their own way; they do not form a science, precisely because they do not have a real object (real man) and have no more rigor than a techno-political fantasy. More generally, anthropological forms of philosophy simply fantasize real man in projecting upon him the prejudices of Greco-Christian ontology; in brief, the all-too-human philosophy embodied by the philosopher as universal model does not know ordinary man. “It does not know man except in encompassing him with prefixes and quotation marks, precautions and relations (with himself, with others,

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2 Laruelle, François (1985). *Une biographie de l'homme ordinaire: des Autorités et des Minorités*. Paris: Éditions Aubier.

with the World); never as ‘term’ (*terme*).³ Anthro-logical difference prohibits beginning with man and his solitude (Ibid: 11).” The mixture of man and logos as philosophical and dialectical condition of thought is a limitation, a deeper inhibition than all past humanisms; it is the denegation of man as thought (in) oneself, nothing but human, or of the immanent and theoretical knowledge that man possesses of himself. Man and his thought are an identity without circularity and without dialectic: it is what distinguishes the theoretical (or mystic) paradigm from the practical (or philosophical) paradigm that we are acquainted with. Identity without Unity, mystic without mysticism: the essence of man is not solely immanence; it is also finitude. “If the essence of man is not a difference, something like an undecidable decision, it is the radical subject of an experience (*épreuve*) which, far from alienating him, is finite and holds him in himself and prohibits him to ever go outside of himself” (Ibid: 13). A thinker of the absolute, Laruelle conceives of it as finitude and not as an infinite totality.

However, the distinction, difference/finitude, represents perhaps a trap, a last ruse of philosophical thought to which Philosophy II remains partially ensnared. As a condition of non-circularity, the theory demands that the subject of the science of ordinary humans does not differ from its object. The theory upholds a minimal opposition, subject/object (their non-difference even), that is equivalent to the minority of the human subject, its finitude. The *individual* (and not the *individuel*)⁴ is the transcendental foundation for a science of individuals, but the individual still is more of a condition than a real unconditioned. For this reason, Laruelle will come to distinguish ever more clearly between the transcendental (itself a form of theoretical immanence) and the real, or between the subject and real man. In Philosophy II, principally in *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, he still sustains that real (and not solely possible) man is subject, nothing-but-subject. For example: “The essence of man remains in the One, that is, in the non-positional inherence (of) itself, a nothing-but-subject or an absolute-as-subject, a finitude” (Ibid: 15). However, in Philosophy III,

3 The French word “*terme*” has the sense of “end or terminus,” in addition to a “term” as distinguished from a relation. – *trans.*

4 The author is drawing on Laruelle’s replacement of the term “*individuel*” by the unconventional French spelling “*individual*.” See Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet’s introduction to (2018) Laruelle, François. *trans.* Hock, J. & Dubilet, Alex. *A Biography of Ordinary Man: On Authorities and Minorities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

the theory of cloning gets rid of the last remaining ambiguity between real man, or Ego-in-Ego, and the finite subject.

We will return to these subtleties, but for the moment the description of man as finite subject is sufficient to counter anthropo-logical difference and to specify the non-philosophical conditions of a science of man, although not yet permitting a rigorous description of the *subject* as Stranger. It is clear why the real (of) the subject is not at all dialectisable and thus escapes any anthropology. Real man is in himself a sufficient response to the unitary illusion, since he does not have the World as a correlate or vis-à-vis and does not intend a subjective realization through an exit toward the Other. Enjoying an absolute precession over the Other, he simply unilaterizes it. Man does not even need to separate from the World or to hold himself in reserve or at a distance. “It is the World, History, the State which ‘unhook’ (*décrochent*) or ‘tear off’ (*décramponnent*) from the subject; it is not the subject which separates from them: if so, it would only separate itself yet again from itself” (Ibid: 19). In terms of the framework of Philosophy II, Laruelle still calls “dualysation” (*dualysation*) the relation between man and the World – (in Philosophy III, man or the real are radically foreclosed) – a “relation-without-relation” that authorizes a unilaterality deprived of any – notably analytic – reciprocity. On the basis of a rigorously finite topos (*topique*), the subject is at the non-thetic center of itself and does not make the World turn around it nor does it critique or bring about a Copernican revolution. There is no mundane (*mondain*) horizon, if not the unilaterized World (*Monde*), and there is no realized historical projection, if not the resistance of Philosophy to the radical, human real.

The cause of this dialectical and alienating fate weighing upon man in the age of philosophy is nothing but the prejudice of Action, in the philosophical and anthropological sense of *practice*. Laruelle notes that “‘Practical reason’ in general, in its deployed content, means that action is structured as a unifying scission, the unity of contraries or of transcendence” (Ibid: 219). He continues: “The philosophers know that the most fundamental Greco-Occidental matrix, the unity of contraries, is the practical essence *par excellence* of thought and that the ultimate core of all thought is an action (the action of becoming or the passage from one contrary to another, the historial action of Being, the practical essence of pure Reason, the primary process of the unconscious, etc.). But they stop the analysis too soon without reaching

the last, transcendental energy of finite acting, the individual drive (*pulsion*)” (ibid.). Certainly man, before being the Cogito, defines himself as *Agito*, but it is a question of an ordinary pragmatic or action, deprived of any transcendence or passing-beyond oneself. The solution is given in the concept of the drive (*pulsion*): “The subjective-finite side of the pragmatic is a drive toward the World but inherent (to) itself. Reduced to its irrecusable phenomenal content, to act is to drive-forward (*pousser*). Action is first of all a drive before it would be a transformation or production” (Ibid.). In this way, the finite drive does not generate any dialectic (of desire, for example), for the subject, even as it acts upon the World, does not divide or alienate itself. The drive is not a “power over” the Other or the World; it affects the World without emptying into it (*sans se déverser en lui*) and without communicating with it in response. According to its ideal, philosophy treats the drive as an agonistic force, a power (*pouvoir*) or a desire; thus did psychoanalysis hand it over to the primary process, to the unconscious, to *jouissance* ... prohibited. “The unitary drive is based on an unconscious edge or break (*coupure*), on a scission in general,” but “the real drive does not need such a basis, for it is finite and remains in itself” (Ibid.: 220). We most likely touch here on the ultimate essence of the Dialectic as submitted to anthropo-logical difference, characterized by a denial of the Real and of ordinary man, and we suspect that psychoanalysis here in no way forms an exception.