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‡ TIME WITHOUT TEMPORALIZATION

Futurity in François Laruelle's Non-Philosophy

THOMAS SUTHERLAND

It is better to walk straight into the wind of the future than to enter into the future backwards or to head straight back into the past.

François Laruelle – Philosophy and Non-Philosophy

Although the problem of time has remained central to philosophical enquiry since at least Anaximander, it is only really in the work of Aristotle – or more specifically, in *Physics IV*, that most foundational of metaphysical texts – that it is really considered on its own terms, as time *qua* time. It is in this context of Aristotle's ontology of nature, remarks Martin Heidegger, that “the ordinary way of understanding time has received its first thematically detailed traditional interpretation.”¹ Yet even Aristotle's notoriously obscure examination of time pales in terms of import to that of Saint Augustine, whose comparatively lucid account would provide the basic template for Western metaphysics' conceptualization of temporality until the rise of phenomenology in the early twentieth century. Augustine concludes that in a strictly objective sense “neither the future nor the past exist,” and instead, we should speak of “three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things.”² When we speak of time in the conventional sense, he continues, we are speaking of phenomena that exist only in the mind: “the present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct percep-

1 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), 414.

2 Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 269.

tion; and the present of future things is expectation.”³

In proposing this, Augustine accounts for the future as a mere present-to-come, an assurance that as the present passes away, a new present will come to replace it. For François Laruelle (following a line of thought inaugurated by Heidegger), however, this understanding of the future, filled with positive content, reflects a philosophical inability to think outside of the present, and thus, to think the future in its own right, rather than as a mere reiteration of said presence. His project of non-philosophy strives to “make a tabula rasa of the future” – to embrace a *futurity* that is neither shackled to the past that precedes it, nor locked into a cycle of permanent revolution, but rather, is emptied of all content.⁴ This is a future that is not already mixed or reversible with the past and the present, but is entirely and irreducibly futural in nature. In particular, Laruelle’s work provokes us to consider the fate of philosophy itself, and the extent to which this discipline is capable of contemplating a future that is not already colonized by its concepts and categories – not so much a future without philosophy (for philosophers themselves frequently pronounce the death of their field), but one that cannot be foreseen within the strictures of philosophical discursiveness.

Of course, Laruelle is not alone in this endeavor. Continental philosophy in the twentieth century has recurrently occupied itself with this desire to conceive of a future without content: Heidegger’s authentic temporality of anticipatory resoluteness, Derrida’s messianism-without-messiah, Deleuze’s eternal return, Badiou’s event, most recently Meillassoux’s hyper-chaos – all strive to uncover (or recover) a radical futurity unfettered by the seemingly endless repetitions of the past. Yet from the viewpoint of non-philosophy, all these approaches are limited by their inherently *philocentric* character, which is congenitally incapable of thinking the future *qua* future (i.e. one that would be truly *productive* or *inventive*) precisely because it cannot envision a future that would not be expressed in philosophical terms, under the aegis of philosophical reason and *logos*. What non-philosophy challenges, in other words, is the (usually unspoken) presupposition that philosophy as a modality of thought, regardless of its limitations or blindspots at any one moment, is constitutionally *sufficient* to speak to or survey all possible phenomena and forms of

3 Ibid.

4 François Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), 9.

knowledge. The time of philosophy appears as the ultimate horizon for every possible thought. Non-philosophy, in contrast to this, offers “a theory and a pragmatics of philosophical time on the basis of the past as radical immanence (of) time to self,” a “heretical time or the heretical conception of time, without history or becoming,” that purports to have freed itself from such philocentric confines.⁵

It is this time-seen-in-One, and the notion of futurity that comes along with it, that will compose the main focus of this article. Exploring the Heideggerian distinction between the authentic and inauthentic temporalities of Dasein (which is explicitly mobilized in opposition to Aristotle’s conceptualization of time), and Jacques Derrida’s subsequent observation that Heidegger, for all his effort to subvert the metaphysical presentation of time, remains thoroughly within the Aristotelian framework that he derides, I will argue that both of these accounts still presume philosophy to be capable of describing the essence of time (even if this manifests in a deconstructed form), and as such, maintain a philocentrism that implicitly views all possible temporalities as cognizable within the temporal horizon of philosophy itself. With this in mind, I will go on to discuss Laruelle’s attempt to articulate a non-philosophical and inecstatic time, a time that is given without temporalization, one that conceives of a future no longer burdened by the illusions of philosophical sufficiency.

“World-time” and “now-time”: from Aristotle to Heidegger

Any discussion of time within contemporary continental thought is indebted, for better or worse, to the work of Heidegger, who proffers perhaps the most significant reconceptualization of this concept since Augustine. Especially crucial here is the notion of *world-time*: “the time which makes itself public in the temporalizing of temporality.”⁶ This is a time that belongs to the world – “world” understood here in the ontico-existential sense of “that ‘*wherein*’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’” – and in accordance with which we encounter entities within such a world.⁷ In the disclosure of this world, by which these entities become intelligible as such, world-time is the ordi-

5 François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), 148.

6 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 414.

7 *Ibid.*, 65. All emphasis in quotes is original unless otherwise noted [Ed.].

nary, linear form of time through which Dasein understands such entities as encountered *in time*. The ecstatic-horizontal temporalization of world-time provides the time within which both the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are constituted.

World-time is effectively the interface between an authentic, primordial ecstatic unity of Dasein, and a crude, uniform *now-time*: from Aristotle through to Bergson, Heidegger observes, “all discussions of the concept of time have clung *in principle* to the Aristotelian definitions,” time being measured and understood in terms of the homogeneous medium of clock time, such that each moment of time is conceived of as merely one in an infinite series of presents.⁸ The definition alluded to here is specifically Aristotle’s description of time as “number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after,’” which follows the common-sense understanding of time as that which is counted (and thus made present) as a pointer (be it the hand of a clock or the shadow of a sundial) passes over it, each moment forming an intemporal point-limit that demarcates the past and the future.⁹ Whereas world-time is *datable*, its concepts of “now,” “then,” and “ago” being constituted in relation to the significance of a human event, now-time is abstract, standardized, and linear, divorcing time from the world that it temporalizes.

In order to escape this Aristotelian framework, Heidegger argues that time must be thought in terms of three ecstases – “Being-already-in...,” “Being-ahead-of-itself,” and “Being-alongside...” – which correspond in turn with Dasein’s structure of care, which “comprises in itself facticity (thrownness), existence (projection), and falling.”¹⁰ Superficially, it would be easy to view these three structures as correlating fairly neatly with the classical categories of future, past, and present, respectively. Yet he is adamant that to do so would be to remain within the scope of the vulgar, inauthentic interpretation of time that he strives to denounce:

8 Ibid., 421. Heidegger’s preparedness here to lump Bergson together with the philosophers of Aristotelian clock-time is odd (given the consonances between their respective approaches to philosophy), and his justification – that Bergson merely reverses the Hegelian conflation of time with space – infamously cursory and obscure. On this topic, see Heath Massey, *The Origin of Time: Heidegger and Bergson* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015).

9 Aristotle, “Physics” *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 219b.

10 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 284, 327.

only in so far as Dasein *is* as an “I-am-as-having-been,” can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes *back*. As authentically futural, Dasein *is* authentically as “*having been*.” Anticipation of one’s uttermost and ownmost possibility is coming back understandingly to one’s ownmost “been”. Only so far as it is futural can Dasein *be* authentically as having been. The character of “having been” arises, in a certain way, from the future.¹¹

Authentic time, according to this account, is inescapably unitary, for none of these structures may be extricated from the others without flattening their relations such that they return to the linear series of presents that characterizes inauthentic existence. Our understanding of time, therefore, and of Being more generally, must begin with the inherent futurity of Dasein as being, in that it is always anticipating, “always coming towards itself.”¹²

The future (that which is not-yet-now) does not arise from the present (the now); rather, through this ecstatic unity the present actually emerges from the future. “Dasein is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself – *thrown possibility* through and through,” such that “Dasein is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility.”¹³ This Being-possible means in effect that Dasein is always oriented, or projected, toward the future; its “potentiality-for-Being towards itself, for the sake of itself” always lies within the possibility of “what is *not yet* actual and what is *not at any time* necessary.”¹⁴ To speak of Dasein as projecting itself is not to suggest that one plans out in advance one’s futurity, for “any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting,” and as long as it does this, it will always understand itself in terms of possibilities, albeit without ever actually being able to grasp thematically these possibilities into which it throws itself, given that the very nature of projection relies upon the fact that it, “in throwing, throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and lets it *be* as such.”¹⁵ Being, therefore, is always already ahead of itself, coming into its own.

Importantly, though, Derrida challenges the notion that this ecstatic

11 Ibid., 326.

12 Ibid., 325.

13 Ibid., 143.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 145.

temporality of Dasein actually marks a discrete break from the Aristotelian approach, arguing that “every text of metaphysics carries within itself ... *both* the so-called ‘vulgar’ concept of time *and* the resources that will be borrowed from the system of metaphysics in order to criticize that concept.”¹⁶ Aristotle does not simply reify the presence of the present as “now” (*vñ*); rather, he accounts for the now’s paradoxical nature as both being and non-being, presence and absence:

[o]ne part of it has been and is not, while the other is going to be and is not yet. Yet time – both infinite time and any time you like to take – is made up of these. One would naturally suppose that what is made up of things which do not exist could have no share in reality.¹⁷

The conundrum Aristotle identifies here is that if we consider time to be the coming-to-be and perishing of these nows, then they cannot *be*, for they are in a constant state of becoming. How can time have a share of reality when nothing of which it is composed is ever actually in a state of being?

Moreover, Aristotle notes, “if a divisible thing is to exist, it is necessary that, when it exists, all or some of its parts must exist,” and yet, when discussing time “some parts have been, while others have to be,” and thus it “is not held to be made up of ‘nows’.”¹⁸ If time were represented as a divisible line, then it would not actually be temporal, because it would involve multiple concurrent nows lined up next to each other, and time cannot be composed of more than one now at any one moment, for the now is constitutive *of* this moment. Yet “we apprehend time only when we have marked motion, marking it by ‘before’ and ‘after’; and it is only when we have perceived ‘before’ and ‘after’ in motion that we say that time has elapsed,” and as such, in some sense we must think time in exactly such a fashion – with the now as the point-limit – for it is only via such a conception that time is actually thinkable as such.¹⁹ The strange, dual nature of the now means that “every simultaneous time is self-identical; for the ‘now’ as a subject is an identity, but it accepts different attributes”: there is a certain shared identity to all nows, in the sense that they

16 Jacques Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme: Note On a Note from *Being and Time*” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 60.

17 Aristotle, “Physics,” *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 217b-218a.

18 *Ibid.*, 218a.

19 *Ibid.*, 219a.

must come-to-be, constituting the persistence of time, and yet, each now must also be different.²⁰ The now is always the same (in its being-now) but always different (in its becoming).

In acknowledging this internal tension, contends Derrida, Aristotle establishes “both traditional metaphysical security, and, in its inaugural ambiguity, the critique of this security,” furnishing “the premises of a thought of time no longer dominated simply by the present.”²¹ What is rejected as much in the Aristotelian and Bergsonian accounts of time as in the Heideggerian division of authentic and inauthentic time therefore is “not the *gramme* as such, but the *gramme* as a series of points, as a composition of parts each of which would be an arrested limit”: in both cases, it is acknowledged that to reduce time to a succession of point-limits (nows) is to describe something that is fundamentally atemporal, given that it implies the simultaneous presence of multiple nows.²² This acknowledgement in itself, however, does not demonstrate that the thought of time wholly exceeds representation:

if one considers now that the point, as limit, does not exist *in act*, is not (present), exists only potentially and by accident, takes its existence only from line in act, then it is not impossible to preserve the analogy of the *gramme*: on the condition that one does not take it as a series of potential limits, but as a line in act, as a line thought on the basis of its extremities and not of its parts.²³

To think time metaphysically, the point-limit cannot be conceived of as existing in action (i.e. in its presence) for this would arrest the flow of becoming by which the very notion of time is characterized. The point-limit, therefore, exists only in potential: the now is a non-being, in the sense that is always already past, even whilst it constitutes the very possibility (and impossibility) of being *qua* presence. This point in potentiality, however, is derived from the line in actuality, such that to think time in non-segmentary terms – instead of as a series of present nows – is to think it rather “on the basis of the *telos* of a *gramme* that is completed, in act, fully present, that keeps its *tracing* close to itself, that is, erases its tracing in a *circle*.”²⁴

20 Ibid., 219b.

21 Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 49.

22 Ibid., 59.

23 Ibid., 59-60.

24 Ibid., 60.

The impenetrable circularity of philosophical World-time

We can summarize Derrida's argument as follows: the metaphysical presentation of time always already deconstructs itself – given that it is necessarily premised upon the enigmatic double-nature of the now as both being and non-being, act and potentiality – but it nonetheless remains under the authority of a broader metaphysics of presence insofar as it recuperates this division between the presence of a potential limit-point between a past and a future, and the presence of a complete time in act. As a consequence, the Heideggerian delimitation of a vulgar, ordinary time (comprising both world-time and now-time) from an authentic and primordial temporality of Dasein merely recapitulates in a more explicit manner the originary Aristotelian gesture, dividing the conception of time between the now as point-limit and the now as circle:

Physics IV doubtless confirms the Heideggerian de-limitation. Without a doubt, Aristotle thinks time on the basis of *ousia* as *parousia*, on the basis of the now, the point, etc. And yet an entire reading could be organized that would repeat in Aristotle's text *both* this limitation *and* its opposite. And which made it appear that the de-limitation is still governed by the same concepts as the limitation.²⁵

From the perspective of non-philosophy, however, the discovery of this deconstructive principle within the metaphysics of time may undercut the hierarchical primacy of the present *qua* presence, but it fails to illuminate a more general or universal occlusion – that of philosophical sufficiency. While Derrida is critical of any attempt to straightforwardly enquire into the essence of time, given that this question ends up covertly pre-determining the essence *of* essence in terms of presence (thus inscribing this question *within* the semantic horizon of the time that it seeks to interrogate), his conclusion that the concept of time inevitably “names the domination of presence” nonetheless makes recourse to a certain invocation of essence, tying the concept of time to an elided absence (the trace) by which its coherence is ensured.²⁶ Derrida therefore still subscribes to the “more-than-representative, more-than-

25 Ibid., 61

26 Ibid., 63.

logocentric sufficiency, assurance, and security that *philosophical decision even as illusion is necessary or belongs to the real.*"²⁷

All of these philosophers mentioned – Aristotle, Bergson, Heidegger, Derrida – are fundamentally searching for the essence of time, to delimit the boundaries of time as a concept, and they presume philosophical discourse to be sufficient for this task. Even Derrida, deeply committed to destabilizing the sureties of metaphysical truth-claims, implicitly conceives of philosophy as the ultimate horizon within which all such enquiries can and must occur. For Laruelle, this is indicative of the unitary nature of philosophy as a modality of thought, internalizing within itself its own critique: whilst deconstructionists are more than happy to breach or dissolve the stable character of philosophical reason (in some cases proclaiming the destruction of metaphysics or even the outright death of philosophy), they do so whilst maintaining its overall validity, remaining content to “observe or aggravate the ruinous character of the edifice without daring to really put it at the base in order to construct other things elsewhere.”²⁸ For philosophy to think its other as its condition, as that which limits or restrains it, it must not only already take for granted its own sufficiency to think this alterity, but also project upon the latter a teleological function such that its existence is taken to be meaningful by virtue of its proximate connection to philosophy.

In short, Derrida elucidates the finitude of the philosophical concept in relation to its own other, but does so without ever leaving the borders of philosophical discourse proper, incorporating even *différance* within its transcendental and metaphysical unity. Philosophy, according to the non-philosophical project, is characterized by an operation of mixing or blending, a unity-of-contraries that finds its first overt articulation in the Heraclitean *logos*. Thus, when philosophers strive to uncover the true essence of time, they end up finding it in a mixed or blended form, one which transcends an empirical time-of-the-world in order to locate its transcendental origin or condition. Once again, we witness this unification of contraries even in Derrida, who maintains a causal and productive relationship between the metaphysical construal of time *qua* presence, and the ceaseless scission of *différance* – “a difference still more unthought than the difference between Being and beings” –

27 François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), 184.

28 François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 201.

as its condition of simultaneous possibility and impossibility.²⁹

The problem here is that whilst, as Laruelle observes, post-Hegelian continental philosophy has strenuously attempted to “make of time (of history or even of becoming) the essence of the real, to desubstantialize the latter by the former, to align being with time or time-being with duration,” it effectuates this desubstantialization without ever abandoning the decisional structure whereby the real is bisected into time and its temporalizing conditions, so that these opposed terms may in turn be united through a movement of transcendence that passes from one to the other in a wholly reversible manner (since an *a priori* condition can only be meaningful as such in relation to a conditioned given, and vice-versa).³⁰ Philosophers thus continually try to grasp at the essence of time (and, within the post-Hegelian milieu, that of the real also), and in their failure to do so, fall back into a unitary dissimulation of time that merely reiterates the aforementioned Heraclitean postulate, the One-of-the-dyad.

It is this congenital inability of philosophy to think outside its own self-sustaining aesthetic and logic—given in the sensible data and concepts through which such data are to be comprehended in a single motion, such that the concepts would seem to not only provide the conditions for the existence of sensibilia, but also the means by which it is legislated and judged—with which non-philosophy takes particular umbrage: philosophy is able to make reference to the real (and more specifically, to tout its ability to identify the truth or essence of such) because the image of the world given to us by philosophers is one in which philosophy is deemed co-extensive or even synonymous with reality. By presenting the real in this unitary (hallucinatory) form, the philosopher sustains the illusion that there is nothing outside of philosophy – that philosophy is spontaneously given and uniquely sufficient to speak to and for this world, with all other practices and modalities of thought remaining in a state of pre-philosophical naïvety.

The “anguish and precariousness of philosophy” – its simultaneous fascination and revulsion regarding these regional knowledges – is a result of its internally contradictory outlook in relation to them: on the one hand, philosophy “manifests a *claim* to domination, legislation, grounding, critique,” demarcating a horizon that either always-already includes such proximate

29 Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 67.

30 Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 146.

knowledges within itself, or heralds the desire to colonize them; on the other hand, it must also “recognize the weakness of this claim which is always in the process of realization,” for the mere acknowledgement of such knowledges is predicated upon a certain finitude.³¹ Key to the blinkered viewpoint of philosophy is this delimitation of a horizon that is at once finite and infinite, setting immanent limits to its own capacities (in relation to regional knowledges), only to then overcome these barriers through its transcendental claim to a co-determination of the real:

[t]he superior or dominant place is in effect always occupied by philosophy: within the unification or intersection of two regions, it is still philosophy as over-dominant, if we can put it this way, that triumphs, the satisfaction of the need to philosophize; the synthesis is made to the benefit of philosophy.³²

Philosophy posits itself as its own destiny, inscribed within a teleology that postulates and expects its inherent sufficiency for classifying and analyzing all extra-philosophical phenomena.

This self-inscribed teleology, contends Laruelle, means that philosophers feel they have no need to ever genuinely confront “the narcissism and the historicizing and textual auto-reference within which unitary thought seems to want to consume itself until the end of time.”³³ Non-philosophy is founded upon the (highly instigative and controvertible) premise that the philosopher is the heir to a heritage that she or he merely invests in and perpetuates, rather than ever truly creating anew. Even the success of Plato, for all of his apparent formal and conceptual innovation, is viewed by Laruelle as a consequence of his possessing “the art of ordering and hierarchizing the riches of the past,” driven by the impulse to “save, conserve, or raise up the past.”³⁴ Although philosophers have put forward innumerable variegated conceptions of the future of the world, far less consideration has been put into the question of the future of philosophy itself, and as a result, the passage from philosopher to philosopher, and from concept to concept, tends to be un-critically presented as following “a linear development of thought, a

31 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 44.

32 Ibid., 43.

33 Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, 19.

34 François Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou*, trans. Robin Mackay (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 25-26.

definitive solving of problems or an obsolescence of philosophy” – a feature less obvious in continental (as opposed to analytic) philosophy, but one that still tends to determine the former’s image of thought, inasmuch as it revolves around the seemingly-miraculous arrival of the datable philosophical work.³⁵

Even the Deleuzian metaphilosophy – which attempts to avoid any such linear progression, proposing that whilst the life of philosophers “conforms to the ordinary laws of succession,” their conceptual personae “coexist and shine either as luminous points that take us through the components of a concept once more or as the cardinal points of a stratum or layer that continually come back to us” – still subscribes to a model of endless becoming-philosophy.³⁶ The future of philosophy, from the Deleuzian perspective, is the eternal return of the creative event, carrying on the philosophical legacy by “continually changing concepts without ever changing operations.”³⁷ In short, then, the future of philosophy is comprehended by philosophy in unmistakably philosophical terms, in accordance with the usual, metaphysical presentation of time. Philosophy is treated as an object of the world, even as it retains its supposed co-extensiveness with said world.

The three clones of time

Given that non-philosophy is always in some way parasitic, always based on “a transformation of that self-referential usage of philosophical language which regulates the statements of philosophy, into a new usage,” it would not seem too aberrant to describe philosophy as existing in a state of *fallenness*, in the specifically Heideggerian sense of the word.³⁸ Fallenness (or ensnarement) is of course the ontologico-existential state of inauthenticity for Dasein, the moment at which “Dasein is inclined to fall back upon its world (the world in which it is) and to interpret itself in terms of that world by its reflected light” and simultaneously fall prey “to the tradition of which it has more or less explicitly taken hold.”³⁹ Dasein loses sight of the truth of Being, instead

35 Ibid., 20.

36 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 59.

37 François Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” *The Non-Philosophy Project*, edited by Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjevic (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2012), 46.

38 François Laruelle, “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, edited by Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), 289.

39 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21.

focusing its attention upon those ontic entities that populate the world. World-time concomitantly represents the fallen, inauthentic character of ordinary temporal reckoning, its datable, spanned, and public nature demonstrative of this concern with and absorption in Being-with-one-another.

Insofar as their boundaries remain entirely co-extensive, non-philosophy refuses to treat philosophy as an existent object within a world that precedes it; conversely, it regards the World as a unitary mixture of philosophy and world that is given through philosophical structuration. The World is the primary object of philosophical reflection, the given exteriority from which philosophy takes its departure, the mixture-form of an ontical experience of being grounded in the temporality of world-time and an ecstático-horizantal transcendence, departing from these ontic beings toward the ground of their Being, recognizing the ontological difference that distinguishes these two terms. Put another way, *the World is the philosophical hallucination of the One*: fundamental ontological Being is posited as that which holds primacy and authority over not only all existent beings, but also over the unitary identity of the World, which philosophy effectuates through its traversal of this ontological difference.

If the World is given through philosophy and is, in effect, synonymous with philosophy (marking the precise boundaries of the latter's noetic possibility), then it follows that philosophical thought remains entangled within and operates according to a World-time of its own creation. This is a form of temporality that "elevates time to the World's form under philosophy's authority," marking a specifically philosophical experience of time, "the ensemble of decisions-of-time already carried out or still to come in accordance with the World" – that is, it is within this World-time that the effectivity of the philosophical decision (which in each instance determines the particular terms to be mixed) is temporalized, such that it is made manifest within a datable and linear history of thought.⁴⁰ The philosophical field (what Deleuze refers to as the "plane of immanence") upon which these decisions are effectuated remains in a state of constant re-organization and re-distribution as new concepts are created and old ones revitalized, but this perpetual movement always remains bounded by the horizon of philosophical sufficiency and the undecidable mélange of immanence and transcendence that characterizes the decisional structure of which all philosophers and philosophical concepts

40 Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 147.

partake.

The World-time of philosophy is inhibited by its failure to conceive of the future (of philosophy, and thus, accordingly, of the World also) as anything other than a perpetuation of its invariant structure, for the assurance of a constant re-configuration of its terms within the framework of decision (a guarantee underwritten by the inability of philosophy to speak of the One as anything other than unitary – and thus divided – in essence) means that the future of philosophy is always already filled with content. Philosophy may experiment with this decisional structure, but it never abandons it, and as a result, it can never truly reinvent itself. It can only enact becomings within the confines of its own unitary circularity. It is for exactly this reason that we might describe philosophy as fallen or ensnared in the Heideggerian sense: it is caught within a perennial presence, comprehending the past as an accumulation of prior decisions to be recalled and re-worked in the furtherance of the overall surety of philosophy as a project and a discipline, and likewise the future as a never-ending succession of decisions to come. Philosophical World-time is inherently historical in character, and as such, cannot think outside of the boundaries of the specular philosophical circle. The only end that the philosopher can truly countenance is that of a complete closure, “winding around itself, gathering itself and withdrawing from thought.”⁴¹

As noted in the introduction, part of Laruelle’s goal in proposing a non-philosophical approach to studying philosophy (and hence one that is not necessarily in thrall to historicizing preconceptions) is to “open up the dimension of a radical future” for philosophy, the goal here being not to reject philosophical praxis (in spite of the unnecessarily derisive or even actively hostile tone that his writing often exhibits), but to bring forth “*a radically experimental practice of philosophy that is foreign to its circle or its philocentrism.*”⁴² In order to do this, he articulates a *time-according-to-the-One*, which suspends the sufficiency of philosophical World-time such that it can “only be a material or occasion for naming, indicating and effectuating the vision-in-One (of) time.”⁴³ No longer is World-time treated, as it is in its philosophical usage, as the temporalizing horizon of all thought; instead, non-philosophy clones it as an inert material instance: a perpetual, static present stripped of all pretensions to cognizing

41 François Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” *The Non-Philosophy Project* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2012), 197.

42 Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, 123.

43 Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 146.

either the past or the future. World-time is henceforth regarded not as a temporalizing time in its own right, but as a single everlasting moment – a world-Present – within a broader division of time thought according to the radical, finite immanence of the One. This immanence refers not to the Being or essence of which philosophy attempts to speak, but rather the necessary but insufficient condition of thought; the enigmatic, ineffable, and idempotent identity-in-the-last-instance of philosophy and all of its supposed exteriorities. And makes usage (as material) of the three classical, *ordinary* (Aristotelian) states of time – past, present, and future.

This time is a time-seen-in-One, a purely transcendental and subjective temporality that is cloned from (but is not synonymous with) the present of World-time, and is determined-in-the-last-instance by the One. Most crucially, it can

only be from its position the radical past of pure immanence and of identity, a past which has not only never been present but also will never be present in the future (and for the future) as trace, but which will remain immanent past even in the future that it clones from world-time’s present.⁴⁴

The One is not temporal in any philosophical sense of the word, for it cannot ever be reduced to ontological qualities, but through this process of cloning a certain expression of time is given. This is a time that is given-without-giveness, a time-without-temporalization, grounded in “a time of the past which simultaneously possesses a primacy over both synchrony and diachrony and determines these transcendent dimensions themselves, at least insofar as they form the object of philosophical interpretations.”⁴⁵ It is a radical past, an immanent time “of which one could say that it is-without-existing or even that it is a non-temporal time.”⁴⁶ It is not the past of philosophical World-time, which always remains a present even when it has passed into the past, nor is it an absolute past forgotten thanks to *hypomnēsis* but recoverable through *anámnesis* (which would simply reproduce the classical metaphysical distinction between presence and absence, considering philosophy sufficient to both forget and retrieve its truths) – it is a past that always is and always will be in the past (one might say that it is a past-without-passage, inasmuch as its condi-

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., 147.

46 Ibid.

tion as past is in no way determined by a present that precedes it, and from which it passed from existence into non-existence), such that “even effectuated as future, remains in its necessary sterility and in no way participates in the world-present such as non-philosophy conceives it.”⁴⁷

Such a past would seem immediately reminiscent of the “inefficacious, impassive, and sterile splendor” of the Deleuzian sense-event, which spreads out toward both the past and the future whilst eluding the present, and perhaps also of the motionless Bergsonian memory, irreducible to the present and yet constantly feeding into it.⁴⁸ There are, however, two crucial differences that separate these models of time from the inecstatic clones proposed by Laruelle. Firstly, as Katerina Kolozova writes, both Bergson and Deleuze understand time in terms of a “future always already collapsing into the returning past”: although both philosophers reject the straightforward succession of now-time and clock-time, they do so in favour of an indivisible continuity between past and present, ensuring these two terms’ perpetual convertibility.⁴⁹ Secondly, both of these concepts operate “as functions of a worldly time,” immanent to the field of consciousness (albeit an ontological rather than psychological consciousness), and thus inherently philosophizable.⁵⁰ What Laruelle attempts to describe instead is a past that determines “the present as material for the future,” but does so in an entirely unilateral manner – the past in this account does not commingle with the present (such that it would find itself reversible with World-time, and hence philosophizable); rather, it is a radical past, “*found and experienced only in-past* in its own immanence,” determining the present only *in-the-last-instance* (that is, it constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for the World-time of the present, such that it will always remain foreclosed and indifferent to the temporal horizon of the World).⁵¹

We therefore have two clones or instances of a theoretical time that eludes philosophical temporalization and the presuppositions of sufficiency that come along with it: the first is the past as given, an immanent One-time that does not and cannot participate in the present, whilst the second

47 Ibid.

48 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (London and New York: Continuum, 1990), 23.

49 Katerina Kolozova, *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 61.

50 Laruelle, *Future Christ*, 75.

51 Ibid., 75-76.

is the present of philosophical World-time, which forecloses all thought of this One-time of the past by seeking out the supposed essence of time in the decisional mixture-form of time and World, and from which non-philosophy borrows the metaphysical syntax and idiom (albeit disarming it of its pretensions in the process) by which its theory of time is articulated. The ultimate aim of non-philosophy, however, is only truly articulated in relation to the third clone, “the instance of the transcendental future or of temporalizing force” which is “deployed from the past-in-One to the world-Present.”⁵²

This cloned future, like that of the past, is not merely a present-to-come nor even a thrown projection (both of which would encase it within the divided unity of philosophical time), but the future as “identity cloned or produced on the basis of world-time as One.”⁵³ Such futurity is obtained not by mixing the immobile finitude of the past and the mobile time of the present, for this would simply recapitulate the reversible and undecidable relationship between time and World furnished by philosophy; instead, the future is the transcendental identity of the past unilaterally oriented toward the present-World. This future is what Laruelle often refers to as the force-(of)-thought, a transcendental organon that transforms the philosophical World-time into an inert *a priori* material. It is in and through this future – a future that will never come-to-be, which will always remain as such, ensconced in its futural identity – that the radical past is effectuated under the contingent conditions of World-time (although the unilateral directionality of this determination-in-the-last-instance means that the past is not actually affected by this effectuation), and this World-time is in turn rendered as a material capable of transformation through non-philosophical means. The future, put straightforwardly, signifies the non-philosophical transformation of philosophical material, facilitated by the suspension of the latter’s sufficiency (and with this, its seemingly inescapable circularity).

Futurity and the democracy of thought

Robin Mackay expresses a common frustration amongst those who study Laruelle when he remarks that “it is difficult to avoid the impression of a continual anticipation of the moment when non-philosophy will begin to function” – whilst Laruelle has built up a formidable corpus of work over the past

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

four decades, one can quite justifiably find tiresome his tendency to reiterate, with seemingly minor variation, the same arguments over and over again without ever giving a strong or clear articulation of what a non-philosophical comprehension of philosophy (vision-in-One) actually comprises.⁵⁴ Laruelle seems to continually describe the method of non-philosophy without ever actually putting it into action.

This, however, is not so much a failing of the non-philosophical project as an indication of its attempt to subvert the philosophical (Worldly) structuration of time: the transformation of philosophical materials, the effectuation of the One-time of the past via the inert data of the world-Present, is cloned as a future, but this is not a future-to-come (which would imply its ontological reversibility with the present, such that what is now futural will at some point become present); rather, it is a future that “is foreclosed to past and present History, just as it is foreclosed to the place of places, the World,” hence lacking all positive content (and with it, all possibility of speculation and prediction), remaining entirely “unimaginable and unintelligible.”⁵⁵ Time-seen-in-One is not an object to be thought (as with the metaphysical presentation of time), but a thought in its own right, a thought already given in-the-last-instance. Non-philosophy “makes a clean cut at once with the contents of the past and of the present as well as with their sufficiency, in the name of a radical past and that which does not pass in being-in-the-Past,” and it does so in the name of a Stranger-subject who is synonymous with the ordinary essence of the human individual.⁵⁶

The non-philosophical clone of the future is produced in the form of this Stranger – “the experience of a time of exteriority or stranger time” – who is not thrown into World-time, but instead is directed toward it, indicating those usages of its material that do not make recourse to philosophical presumptions of sufficiency.⁵⁷ The Stranger does not substantiate the future,

54 Robin Mackay, “Introduction: Laruelle Undivided,” *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, edited by Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), 28.

55 Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, 18.

56 François Laruelle, *Future Christ*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 18. On Laruelle’s frequent identification of the Stranger-subject with the so-called “ordinary man,” see Thomas Sutherland and Elliot Patsoura, “Human-in-the-Last-Instance: The Concept of ‘Man’ Between Foucault and Laruelle,” *Parrhesia* 24 (2015): 285-311.

57 Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 148.

for the latter is already given through the One, but it recovers through the transformation of these philosophical materials a futurity “that forces us to invent the present as transformation of the past.”⁵⁸ The Stranger inserts the future into World-time, and thus into history also, but it does so from a position of irreducible exteriority, manifesting a time that cannot be placed within the reversible mixture of philosophical decision. This unilateralized subject, as a force-(of)-thought, transforms philosophy into an occasional cause without itself being transformed *by* philosophy: it does not view the One as an object or Being to be thought, but as that which is foreclosed and indifferent to all thought, but determines it in-the-last-instance.

This movement of transformation is central to non-philosophy, which aims to change the way that we view philosophy, without negating its importance or utility. It involves, as John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith astutely describe, “a revision of philosophy somewhat like a figure-ground shift in perception,” bringing to the fore those elements of thought that philosophy masks in its endless quest for the essence of Being (and its temporalization).⁵⁹ Non-philosophy has no interest in the present, the established, and the pre-fabricated except to the extent that they might be transformed by the futural in order to bring to the fore that which has been excluded or subordinated by the authoritarian impulses of philosophical reason:

[t]his does not concern reshuffling what already exists or what has already *taken place*, of ‘making something new out of the old’, but of discovering the new itself, the statements and forms of thought that are not already given other than through their data but which we ignore because we have not realized them or manifested them and which thus, in a sense, have not yet taken place in thought itself.⁶⁰

The ultimate aim of such a transformation, and of this futurity in general, is “a *new democratic order of thought*” diametrically opposed to the arrogance and specularity of philosophical sufficiency, attempting to avoid “conflictuality between philosophies and between philosophy and regional knowledges.”⁶¹ This noetic democracy has nothing to do with making any

58 Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, 76.

59 John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, “Introduction: The Non-Philosophical Inversion: Laruelle’s Knowledge Without Domination,” *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 5.

60 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 163.

61 *Ibid.*, 13.

claim about things in themselves, as if other disciplines (science, art, etc.) are just as or more capable of speaking to a stable external reality, for this would simply project a philosophical inference upon these extra-philosophical knowledges and practices. Instead, it is fundamentally about the co-existence and equality of all such disciplines and objects (materials), all recognized as incomplete and insufficient, and all determined-in-the-last-instance by the One. Through this non-decisional democracy, a new space of thought is claimed to be created, one outside of philosophical sufficiency, even if philosophical concepts and ideas are incorporated within it. If the World-time of philosophy is characterized by an inexhaustible demand for finality, its operations teleologically oriented toward the preservation of its structure and consequent specular circularity (such that the specific contents of any one decision are of little interest to it), the futurity of non-philosophy, as seen-in-One, is decidedly opposed to all such finality, concerned with “only the usage of means in view of the invention of existence.”⁶² In the last instance, all knowledges, philosophical or otherwise, are “transformed into mere means,” deprived of any presupposed sufficiency such that they may be the catalysts for new, inventive modes of thought outside philosophical parameters.⁶³

It was Heidegger, Laruelle argues, “who unleashed the absurd delirium of ‘total questioning’” – the former, of course, seeking to reconfigure philosophy, directing it away from its concern with ontic beings, and back toward a more fundamental (but largely forgotten) enquiry into the nature of Being itself.⁶⁴ This incessant questioning is, from the non-philosophical perspective, symptomatic of the circularity of the philosophical *logos*, always searching for certitude but never actually reaching it. Philosophy constantly enquires into the essence of being, the nature of the real, but this act of interrogation is precisely the problem: the real is already there, already given to us – as soon as we enquire into its being, however, we are immediately led away from this fundamental truth, finding ourselves ensnared instead within the transcendence of the *logos*. Laruelle instead declares the need to “affirm the primacy of the answer over questions,”⁶⁵ bringing into focus that which is “already *given* even outside every operation of givenness, ontological or scien-

62 Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou*, 24.

63 Ibid.

64 Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” *The Non-Philosophy Project*, 207.

65 Ibid., 207-208.

tific, which would precisely possibilize it,”⁶⁶ and as a result cannot be fitted to an ecstatic unity of time, let alone the successive “nows” of ordinary temporal reckoning. The futurity of non-philosophy, by means of which it attempts to instantiate a time of invention opposed to the temporalization of World-time, is founded upon “an intra-temporal order that supposes the arrow of worldly time oriented from the future toward the past across the present.”⁶⁷

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Where philosophy can only think the future of thought in the terms of its own structural and syntactical recapitulation, non-philosophy by contrast attempts to foreground another future, one that is foreclosed to the effectivity of the present (philosophical World-time), and yet makes usage of this present as an inert and contingent material *a priori*, a radical (and thus finite) immanence expunged of all pretense to sufficiency and teleological auto-legitimacy. This is not an abstract utopia still-to-come, nor a perpetually deferred messianism, but a celebration of a time of thought, a time of the Stranger-subject, which does not aim at teleological ends, but strives instead to emphasize a lived experience incapable of being reduced to such external determinants. The goal of non-philosophy, in this context, is not to diminish or dismiss the ceaseless circuit of World-time, but to remind us that another perspective on time is possible – a time-seen-in-One, that makes no claim to determining the real, and yet is identical with it in the last instance. The future, when thought according to the One, is a transformation of philosophical materials (the inert *a priori*) beyond the horizon of philosophical possibility.

66 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 92.

67 Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou*, 23.