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An Archaeology of Contemporary Speculative Knowledge

Justas Patkauskas, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Rajan, Tilottama, *The University of Western Ontario*
Joint Supervisor: Vanderheide, John, *The University of Western Ontario*
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates contemporary speculative knowledge grounded in the immanence episteme, which is struggling to emerge as a foundation for a new kind of absolute knowledge. Regarding method, I use Michel Foucault's concept of archaeology, situating archaeology in the context of deconstruction. In general, by delineating the various differences and genealogies within immanence theory, I show that immanence is neither a monolithic homogeneity nor a schizophrenic multiplicity but a coherent, if troubled, ground for speculative thought.

In Chapter 1, I define deconstruction as a broad philosophical project concerned with the order of knowledge and the University and its disciplines. I claim that deconstruction opposes the idea of universal order premised on equilibrium, complementariness, and discovery while proposing a different order premised on incompossibility, sense, and exteriority.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate on deconstruction's alternative order of knowledge via Foucault's archaeological texts and Gilles Deleuze's early work on Hume. Specifically, I argue that Foucault and Deleuze mark the limits of reflexive, or self-ordering, knowledge, and I describe the twin procedure of simulation-dissimulation that all bodies of knowledge need to develop to achieve epistemological stability.

In Chapter 3, I carry out an archaeological analysis of biopolitics, a contemporary pseudo-discipline that has entered its reflexive phase while attempting to ascend to the status of an established discipline. Although biopolitics runs into the problems of self-ordering that Deleuze and Foucault described, its position as a pseudo-discipline provides biopolitics with speculative advantages and points to the episteme behind contemporary speculative knowledge: immanence.

In Chapter 4, I consider the research programs associated with the immanence episteme. Specifically, I identify three strongly speculative research programs: the "speculative everything" discourse, the "absolute speculation" discourse, and the "subtractive speculation" discourse.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the immanence episteme itself and distinguish two archaeological figures: immanence as plenitude and immanence as surplus. I find that the transition from immanence as plenitude, which is considered to be the dogmatic version of immanence, to immanence as surplus, which is what immanence theory is focused on today, is mediated by the following three stages: absolute immanence, complete immanence, and pure immanence.

Keywords: archaeology; deconstruction; immanence; biopolitics; Speculative Realism; Foucault; Deleuze

SUMMARY FOR LAY AUDIENCE

Today's popular discourse emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, fact-checking, and pragmatic rationality, without paying attention to what makes such procedures possible. However, contemporary metaphysical philosophy is often hostile to said critical thinking, fact-checking, and pragmatic rationality, arguing, instead, for thinking that is radically creative and inclusive. In both cases, what predominates is a novel form of anti-intellectualism that dismisses reflexive thought in favor of immediately useful knowledge.

I argue that this problematic state of affairs can be better understood by remembering the deconstruction project that thrived between the '40s and the '70s. On the one hand, deconstruction showed that being critical necessarily involves being speculative—that is, criticism cannot help thinking beyond what is allowed by established facts and accumulated knowledge. On the other hand, deconstruction pointed out the acute problems that plague all reflexive thought, namely a tendency towards delirium (believing in fictions) and aphasia (the inability to establish order).

I claim that contemporary metaphysical philosophy writes in the shadow of deconstruction, having haphazardly internalized many deconstructive elements. The "post-knowledge" that metaphysics proposes today is, in general, an attempt to go beyond the limits of delirium and aphasia by developing a new theory regarding the foundations of reality. This new foundational theory is called immanence. According to immanence, reality has a single, knowable ground that supports an infinite, inexhaustible range of things to think about. Supposedly, such a single, inexhaustible ground not only reconciles philosophy with science and criticism with speculation but also promises a radically egalitarian politics.

Besides investigating the concept of immanence in more detail, I point out the multiple issues that arise when scholars propose a single and knowable ground for an infinity of unknowable things. I argue that such a paradoxical position, instead of creating an open and inclusive space for thinking, tends to result in a new kind of universalism and enclosure of thought. In the end, while acknowledging the advances made by immanence theory, I strike a cautionary note and suggest the importance of revisiting deconstruction before leaping ahead into the new speculative terrain.

ACKNOWLEDGENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an archaeological inquiry into contemporary speculative knowledge. Michel Foucault developed the notion of archaeology in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, with the former text describing archaeology as an investigation of the "*positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse" (1966/2005, xi–xii), and the latter stating that "what archaeology tries to describe is not the specific structure of science, but the very different domain of *knowledge*" (1969/1972, 195). In both cases, significant differences notwithstanding—for example, *The Order* emphasized the "conditions of possibility" (1966/2005, xxiv) of knowledge, and *The Archaeology* underlined the "conditions of existence" (1969/1972, 38)—the overall purpose of Foucauldian archaeology is to recast the perception of uncertain epistemological objects, such as emerging disciplines, fields, and research programs, by displacing the evaluative gaze away from questions of normativity (Is this discipline respectable enough to be called a science? Does the truth-content produced by this research program meet the best practices of verification?) towards a critical-speculative evaluation. The phrase "critical-speculative evaluation" may seem like a cumbersome abstraction meant to evade specifying with what exactly archaeology replaces normativity. I will clarify the meaning of this problematic compound in Chapter 1, but for now it can be abbreviated as *theory*—that is, when it comes to dealing with epistemological objects of uncertain value, archaeology shifts the focus away from normative considerations towards theory.

The archaeological shift from normativity to theory is enabled and mediated by a bespoke set of concepts that Foucault developed specifically for archaeology, such as the statement, the positivity, and the episteme. While I am going to elaborate the meaning of these terms in Chapter 2 and over the course of the entire dissertation, one of my intentions is to situate archaeology within a broader intellectual context in order to soften the impression of arbitrariness that Foucault's abstract vocabulary can provoke. Archaeology and its concepts were not invented in a vacuum—rather, the archaeological methodology was part of deconstruction, a broad philosophical project with an ontological and an ontic side. On the ontological side, deconstruction is concerned with the order of knowledge in general: in negative terms, deconstruction opposes *the structure of universal order and dual*

control premised on equilibrium, complementariness,[1] and discovery; in positive terms, deconstruction proposes an alternative order of knowledge premised on incompossibility, sense, and exteriority. On the ontic side, deconstruction deals with the University as the institution for the ordering of knowledge at the point of its disciplines: on the one hand, deconstruction challenges the noble sciences, specifically the pragmatic and anthropological disciplines, and on the other hand, deconstruction maintains a critical-speculative space—that is, the space of theory—while searching for a curriculum of nomadic sciences. Foucault's archaeology contributes both to the ontology of deconstruction (by considering the aphasia that threatens all orders of knowledge) and to the ontic engagement with the University (by the methodology and practice of the archaeological approach). My dissertation is also broadly organized along this ontological-ontic division: Chapters 1 and 2 deal with deconstruction's image of the order of knowledge via Gilles Deleuze and Foucault, whereas Chapters 3, 4, and 5, being a three-part archaeology of contemporary speculative knowledge, investigate the speculative terrain of today's University.

Overall, what my archaeology of contemporary speculative knowledge reveals is not only that *immanence*—the idea of a self-referential, sufficient, and pliable ground upon which new knowledge of the absolute can be created—is the episteme that conditions the pseudo-disciplines of today, which would be an obvious statement to make. Rather, I hope to have brought some general order[2] to the multiple senses of immanence because

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[1] Please note that "complementariness" is not related to "complementarity," a key term in quantum theory scholarship. In fact, I have specifically chosen to use "complementariness" to avoid any confusion with "complementarity"—the latter is a complex concept developed by Niels Bohr (see, for example, Plotnitsky 2013), whereas my own understanding of something being "complementary" in the context of dual control is much simpler.

[2] In *The Archaeology* (1969/1972), Foucault famously distinguishes total history, or total order, from general history, or general order (7–11). The former searches for "the overall form" (9), "the principle," "the significance," and "the law" behind phenomena, allowing the scholar to establish a universal periodization. The latter, general order, seeks to "deploy the space of a dispersion" (10), but not because it aims "to obtain a plurality of histories [or orders]"—that is, the point is not to institute a dichotomy whereby good multiplicity replaces bad unity. Instead, general order, in whose dimension archaeology participates (164), establishes sufficient but incomplete order, the kind of order that, instead of shutting down the possibility of re-

archaeology is a means of ordering: "Archaeology is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses, and to outline the unity that must totalize them, but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures" (Foucault 1969/2005, 159–160). Neither totalizing nor strictly diversifying, archaeology, being a deconstructionist undertaking, is a *figurative* approach to history—instead of being destructive via falsification and debunking or constructive via the savage power of the imagination, archaeology looks for the surplus within established knowledge that allows the archaeologist to redistribute existing order along alternative lines. My archaeology of the concept of immanence that underpins contemporary speculative knowledge has led to the following four figures: immanence as plenitude, immanence as deconstruction, immanence as surplus, and messianic immanence.

In its most general form as an abstract shell or an intuition of an idea, immanence refers to any attempt at converging dualities in order to posit a single foundation for all reality. In that sense, it is not a mistake to say, as Badiou (2000) did, that immanence is a theory of the One (46, 56, 79), although such a preliminary definition still operates at an extreme level of generality. Specifying further, immanence theories tend to conceptualize the convergence of dualities by locating the principle of control—that which coordinates the agreement between the multiple sides of dualities—on the side of existence (as opposed to transcendence, for which control is the prerogative of God) by, for example, skim-coating existence with a logical realm of possibilities that is supposed keep nature rational, knowable, and bounded, something that contemporary immanence theories consider to be a dogmatic solution. The figures of immanence as plenitude and immanence as surplus are opposed to each other on precisely these grounds: according to the former, everything that can possibly exist, must actually exist, resulting in a perfectly balanced reality via the ordering power of possibility, whereas the latter describes existence as radical contingency that is not subtended by a supra-existential realm of logic, implying a much more disjointed image of the real.

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interpretation, serves as a necessary starting ground for an overhaul. Archaeology is a means of such overhauling (26) that replaces universal order with general order. Such an incomplete but sufficient overhaul is what I hope to accomplish in my dissertation in relation to immanence theory.

The various orders of existence proposed by the different figures of immanence also involve incompatible and competing orders of knowledge. For example, the order of knowledge that I call dual control has evident connections with immanence as plenitude: just as the single reality proposed by immanence as plenitude is perfectly balanced out between what exists and what is possible, so dual control sees the progression of knowledge depend on the complementariness of the natural and the rational, or the material and the logical, enabling the scientific discoverer to arrive at the universal order that traverses all things. On the other hand, the order of knowledge implied by immanence as surplus is much less reassuring, not only leaving open the chance that dependable knowledge structures may collapse at any point due to the contingency of existence but also demanding a different theory of knowledge achievement, something that the contemporary speculative research programs[3] that I discuss in Chapter 4 are attempting to solve.

A similar kind of incompatibility or even opposition characterizes immanence as deconstruction and messianic immanence. As I argue in Chapter 2 via Deleuze and Foucault, there is something of a "single reality" theory to deconstruction that is premised on the principles of incompossibility, sense, and exteriority, resulting in a disconcerting image of existence that is on the verge of collapsing into madness. Connected to this image of reality is an order of knowledge, which I elaborate via Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Tilottama Rajan, that maintains a certain undecidability within knowledge through the strategies of unworking, unwriting, and contamination, thus establishing the space for critical-speculative thought, or theory. Contemporary immanence theory could not proceed more differently. Whereas deconstruction maintained its speculative space by un-grounding and im-possibilizing universal knowledge, many immanence theorists propose a new absolute in whose reality and knowledge everyone and anything can

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[3] There is no specific reason why I chose to use the term "research program" other than the fact that, to me, the term seems to convey very clearly the *programmatic* nature of all speculation, especially in the context of pseudo-disciplines. Contrary to common sense and popular discourse, speculation is if not rigid then, at the least, strongly conditioned—one can speculate only about such things as are allowed and considered legitimate by the order of knowledge upon which the speculative endeavour is premised. In other words, every order of knowledge qualifies the boundaries, contours, and forms of speculation by means of a general research program. Such research programs do not have to be explicitly stated, but they are always silently operative.

participate with relative ease. There is but one caveat: you have to accept the new universal ground proposed by the immanence theorist, who implicitly installs themselves as the voice of the absolute. The results promised by such total immanence are immediate and useful—creativity without limits, knowledge without gatekeepers, and power without alienation—as opposed to the difficult and unrewarding labor of speculating about that which forever remains opaque.

It appears that the four figures of immanence are divided into two conflicting couplets: immanence as plenitude versus immanence as surplus, and immanence as deconstruction versus messianic immanence. However, the connections between the four figures are more varied than that. Immanence as plenitude and messianic immanence share the same, though differently modulated, order of knowledge, namely dual control. As I argue in Chapter 1, the development of dual control proceeds from an exclusivist model towards the smooth totality of the absolute via the intermediary figure of reductive universalism that streamlines access to universal knowledge by minimizing the complexity of heuristics. Despite their differences in theorizing epistemic access, the research programs for immanence as plenitude and messianic immanence agree that total knowledge of the absolute, single ground for reality is entirely possible. Similarly, immanence as deconstruction and immanence as surplus also exhibit epistemological similarities, though such similarities may not be strong enough to claim that the two figures share the same order of knowledge. Immanence as deconstruction defends a perpetually incomplete and un-absolutizable order of knowledge, whereas immanence as surplus attempts to instaurate a research program that would be capable of going beyond the limitations of immanence as deconstruction without, for that matter, ending up in dual control. It could be said that immanence as surplus is a response to immanence as deconstruction, both epistemologically and metaphysically, while remaining opposed to immanence as plenitude and messianic immanence. However, immanence as surplus maintains a precarious balance in relation to the three other figures and often appears to almost tip over into the new universalist forms of speculation.

The four figures of immanence and the speculative scholarship associated with them point to a certain uneasy survival of German Idealism in the 21st century. This uneasy survival is most clearly noticeable when I discuss the strongly speculative research

programs in Chapter 4, most of which invoke the names of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling in a variety of combinations—for example, some scholars claim that philosophy took a wrong turn with Kant's supposedly anti-speculative attitude, others argue that it was Hegel who started a bad form of speculation, and yet other maintain exactly opposite positions (that Kant and Hegel are equally misunderstood) or simply drop both Kant and Hegel in favor of the allegedly more underappreciated and radical Schelling. It is not just in the proper names but in the speculative themes as well that one can detect parallels between German Idealism and contemporary speculative scholarship: What is the nature of the absolute? What is the ground and possibility of absolute knowledge? Can nature be understood in the full sense of both its closeness to us as well as its radical alterity? At the same time, it would be a mistake to say that contemporary speculative scholarship is *similar* to German Idealism because theorists today can only pretend as if the last century of philosophy did not happen—as if one could still subscribe to absolute speculation without occasionally remembering the Frankfurt school's implication of rationality with myth and authoritarian politics, phenomenology's marking of the limits of transcendental and reflexive thinking, Marxism's and psychoanalysis's distinct yet related contaminations of abstract thought with economic and social realities, French theory's entanglement of knowledge with language and literature, and multiple other philosophical developments that, at least partially taken together (for who could take *all* of them together?), counteract any chance of an absolute ground. The speculative terrain has been extraordinarily unsettled, and German Idealism survives uneasily as a trove of curiosities that once belonged to a dearly beloved who has long passed away but whose possessions sometimes resurface to remind one of a time that never was and is no longer possible.

Regardless of how impossible a ground for absolute speculation may seem in light of the last hundred years of philosophy, what the phantasm of German Idealism hints at, and what my archaeology of the immanence episteme demonstrates, is the renewed will to absolute knowledge that can be found in contemporary speculative scholarship. In the next chapter, I will begin laying out my argument and research in detail, starting with a description of Foucauldian archaeology's philosophical context.

CHAPTER 1: DECONSTRUCTION AND THE ORDER OF KNOWLEDGE

In the Introduction, I claimed that Foucauldian archaeology shifts the focus from normative questions to a critical-speculative evaluation in relation to objects of uncertain epistemological value. However, as I will show in detail in Chapter 2, Foucault explicitly and persistently stated that the various pseudo-sciences and pseudo-disciplines which archaeology investigates are not the final destination—that is, the archaeologist, rather than defending the honor or intelligibility of these uncertain epistemological objects, uses them as a means to arrive at something else, but what? If archaeology is a critical-speculative evaluation, what is it an evaluation of?

In *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, using the aforementioned vocabulary of positivity, archive, and episteme, along with many others terms, Foucault was preoccupied with the conditions and existence of order in its pure state, before being ordered by an ordering entity—I will call this *the domain of non-order*, and I apologize for referring the reader to Chapter 2 once more, where I provide a detailed discussion of Foucault's archaeological project. Later, in the genealogical phase of his writing, Foucault famously stated that he was concerned with "the history of the present" (*Discipline and Punish* 1975/1995, 31) and "liberating a profusion of lost events" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 1971/1984, 81)—one could say that the philosophical investigation of the atopia of non-order gave way to a series of more concentrated and pragmatically-oriented studies meant to achieve archaeological re-orderings of specific epistemological objects and territories, such as the prison or sexuality. However, Foucault's most extensive reflection on the purpose and ultimate referent of his work can be found in his late essay—so late, in fact, that it had to be published posthumously—entitled "What Is Enlightenment?" (1984), where Foucault described his general project as "the critical ontology of ourselves" (47, 50), or the critical-speculative evaluation of the present.

In "What Is Enlightenment?" (1984), Foucault takes up the cliché that we, those who are modern and live in modernity, are heirs of the Enlightenment, and he deconstructs it using a series of distinctions based on a close reading of Kant's eponymous essay from 1784. First, Foucault distinguishes between the content of the Enlightenment and the attitude, or ethos, of the Enlightenment (42): whereas the content of the Enlightenment addressed the tension between authority, freedom, and critique (35–37) and proposed "the

contract of rational despotism with free reason" (37) as a solution—a set of problems and a solution which, on the one hand, could still be said to concern us but which, on the other hand, are no longer relevant in the specific way that had Kant posed them—the attitude of the Enlightenment involved a new relationship between philosophy and the present. According to Foucault, up to Kant the present was conceptualized either in relation to a past event or an event to come, or as a transition between the past and the future (33–34). Starting with Kant, philosophy began to conceive the present in a "reflective" (44) and "almost entirely negative" (34) manner—that is, in relation to itself alone, or in terms of the "difference" (34) that defines the present as its own exclusive property, as well as in terms of the universal limits that constrain knowledge and action (46). It is this reflexive, negative, and universalist attitude towards the present and ourselves that Foucault found to be the important legacy of Kant and the Enlightenment.

Second, Foucault then distinguishes between the attitude of the Enlightenment and the attitude of modernity, with the latter being a specific modulation of the former (38) that is characterized, via Baudelaire, by a) the heroization of the present (40), b) the desire to escape the present (41), c) the ascetic production of the self (41–42), and d) the treatment of art as the only place where the preceding three features could coexist (42). Third and finally, over the final pages of the article, Foucault implicitly distinguishes his own critical ontology of ourselves, or the "historico-critical attitude" (46), from both the initial Kantian version that was almost entirely negative and the Baudelairean modulation that was predominantly aesthetic. Foucault subscribes to Kantian reflexivity—criticism is an "interrogation on the present and on ourselves" (49–50)—and to Baudelairean escapism— criticism seeks "to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom" (46)—while reframing both elements as a "positive" task. Such reflexive and escapist criticism conceived positively means being "at the frontiers"—that is, criticism does not determine and guard the limits that need to be respected but inquires beyond the "universal, necessary, and obligatory" towards what is "singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints" in order to consider "a possible transgression." Finally, transgressive criticism has to be "experimental" (46) and "turn away from all projects that claim to be global or radical" (46) in order to respond to "an open series of questions" and "make an indefinite number of inquiries" (49). If the Kantian criticism was reflexive,

negative, and universalist, then the Foucauldian critical project can be said to be transgressive, experimental, and general.

The purpose that Foucault assigns to criticism—essentially, to be equally critical (identifying boundaries) and speculative (going beyond boundaries)—imposes a very difficult task because of the compound nature of such work. On the one hand, criticism addresses itself to what already exists, to the present and its state of affairs with delineable objects, beings, and values. On the other hand, to dislodge the present from its moorings, criticism must find some "other" place from which to posit entities that do not already exist. What could this other place be—might it be history, or must it be phantasy? Does "it" have to be a place at all, or can it be a time, and if so, what is the time of criticism if not the present? Finally, the entire edifice of "the present," with which criticism begins, to which criticism addresses itself, and upon whose supposedly secure foundations criticism works its witchery, is itself the most unclear, unavailable, and fictitious ground possible, something that one can hope to know only at the end rather than the outset of the critical inquiry.

It seems, therefore, that criticism, rather than taking off from the solid ground already prepared for it by others, and having no actual place to speak from, has to fabricate its own "everything"—its own beginnings, its own means and alternatives, and its ends. Judging by the standards of modernity, is there a less critical occupation than criticism as such, which discovers nothing and fabricates everything, itself included? *Itself included*—there most likely is not a clearer expression than this to indicate the flagrant betrayal of sound logic that all criticism involves by having to include itself as part of its own operations of fabrication. I must retract what I said earlier: the work of criticism is characterized not by its "compound nature" but by the sheer incompossibility of the different demands that make up the definition of critical work.

Giorgio Agamben (1993/1977)—at the time of writing, infamous for having made borderline conspiracy-theory claims about a certain global health issue—once said that criticism is an "inquiry at the limits of knowledge about precisely that which can neither be posed nor grasped" (xv). Such a definition could not be further from the contemporary commonsensical understanding of criticism as fact-checking, truth-judging, and knowledge-amplification. Bearing in mind that criticism addresses the present, which is

never available, that it must speak from a place and a time that does not exist, and that it must include itself in its own operations, Agamben accurately described criticism as "an absolute and irretrievable negativity" (xvi) that "includes its own negation" (xv) yet "does not, for that, renounce knowledge" (xvi). But what kind of knowledge could such radically negative, groundless, and self-referential criticism claim to possess and offer? It would have to be nothing like the knowledge we have come to expect of criticism—factual, verifiable, and most importantly *useful*.

The knowledge that Agamben used to claim for criticism was concerned with exploring "the topology of the unreal" (xviii) by inquiring "into the void" (xix) by way of "the light of utopia." A beautiful poetic definition, so representative of the '70s, the time when Agamben's *Stanzas* was originally published. Who has time for such abstractions today, when the need for useful research is everywhere emphasized, by the corporate bureaucracies that run universities and dispense public grants as much as by activists, intellectuals, and scholars? Reflecting on the definition of philosophy in 1991, Deleuze and Félix Guattari had already intuited the situation perfectly when they remarked, "To say that the greatness of philosophy lies precisely in its not having any use is a frivolous answer that not even young people find amusing any more" (*What is Philosophy?* 1991/2009, 9). And yet, facing up to the incompossibility that defines the nature of criticism means having to consider that the uses afforded by criticism may, in fact, be extremely different than what we have come to expect because the order of knowledge that makes criticism possible has nothing to do with the order of knowledge upon which useful research is based. Rather than being assertive, criticism is speculative, and rather than approximating the model of physics, criticism treads dangerously close to literature. Today, when speculative and literary criticism is an endangered species of thought, one must speak in defence of useless knowledge more than ever before, even if it means bearing the scorn of the young and old alike.

The idea of a speculative, literary, and useless criticism was not Agamben's invention. Instead, it was endemic to a certain historical period during the second half of the 20th century and was associated with figures like Jacques Derrida, Foucault, Nancy, and others. Agamben himself located the beginnings of speculative criticism in Aristotle— a mean-spirited commentator might note that Agamben locates everything in Aristotle—

and one could point to much more recent precursors, such as Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, all of whom were not oblivious to the question of ground and for whom arriving at legitimate knowledge necessarily involved an encounter—not a duel but a coming together—with unverifiable ideas of reasons, with error and contradiction, and with Dionysiac delirium, respectively. However, to make room for imperfect knowledge, the way, for example, Spinoza did with the imagination and the so-called first kind of knowledge, is not the same as reconceptualizing the order of critical knowledge on non-existent grounds. This kind of phantasm-like reconfiguration of criticism—as well as the opposition to the human sciences and to what I call the structure of dual control—was singular to the *French* critical project that reached its peak in the '60s and '70s. The name of this project was *deconstruction*, if we take deconstruction to be a broad philosophical project aimed at reworking "the relations between knowledge, the university, and the state" (Rajan 2007, 133) along radicalized post-phenomenological lines rather than being an extreme form of literary analysis and formalism.

Deconstruction, Theory, and the University

According to Rajan (2002), the recovery and reconceptualization of deconstruction as a broad philosophical undertaking can be organized along three axes: a) deconstruction's tense relationship with phenomenology, b) its adversarial stance on the human sciences, and c) deconstruction's specifically interdisciplinary "style of thinking" (xv). To begin with, although deconstruction is popularly (self-) presented as a reaction against phenomenology's supposed obsession with consciousness, man, and Eurocentrism, deconstruction in fact "emerged *from* phenomenology in the mid-forties" (xv, my emphasis) as a kind of a conjugation of phenomenology (21) rather than its utter rejection. While it is true that deconstructionist thinkers rebelled against certain elements of phenomenology—namely, Husserl's transcendentalism and Sartre's existentialism— deconstruction also adopted, in the sense of advancing further, important aspects of the phenomenological attitude, such as the preoccupation with method as a form of auto-reflection or self-criticism and the implication of the transcendental with the empirical or the logical with the existential (8–23). According to the deconstructionist perspective, the issue with phenomenology was that it did not examine itself critically enough, resulting in

transcendentalism, and was too complicit with pragmatic humanism, resulting in anthropocentrism—that is, phenomenology became both too detached from existence and too enmeshed in the existential politics of the University of the West. Needless to say, while taking up the critical mantle eventually abandoned by phenomenology, deconstruction was set on avoiding both of these outcomes.

In spite of resisting the transcendentalist and existentialist fates of phenomenology, deconstruction retained the focus on the University—"deconstruction . . . is at heart a project that pertains to the university" (Rajan 2007, 135)—which was understood not simply as a social institution but as the abstract yet real machine for the ordering of knowledge. Unlike the versions of phenomenology gone bad, however, deconstruction did not submit to the mission of the University of the West by buying into its ideology of either purified or pragmatic knowledge. Instead, by selecting the University's disciplines as its point of attack, especially the human sciences, deconstruction aimed "to rethink knowledge as science: internally, through its grammatological unworking; vertically, through its reinscription in a retreating past; and horizontally, through a redistribution of the disciplines along zones of contact rather than confrontation" (Rajan 2002, 29). The purpose of this triple rethinking of the University's disciplines was not just negative, in the sense of deflating said University's transcendental pretenses and exposing its all-too-existential politics, but also positive in terms of searching for "a new interdisciplinary curriculum anchored in a reconfiguration of philosophy" (xix). However, rather than ushering in a new era of radically speculative criticism, deconstruction's deflation of the old University in favour of a new order of knowledge culminated in poststructuralism and its affirmationist and antihumanist disciplines, like cultural studies, which borrowed the mission statement of deconstruction while abandoning the latter's "intensive scrutiny of language" and "magically reclaim[ing] the agency" (37) that the University had been dispossessed of both by its marketization in a post-capitalist environment and by the unworking carried out by deconstruction itself. It is not a little ironic, then, that the fate of deconstruction via its mutation into poststructuralism has been uncannily similar to the combined fates of Husserl and Sartre that deconstruction had specifically set out to avoid: a reinvigorated transcendentalism (as scientific realism rather than geometrical idealism) and renewed pragmatism (this time as antihumanism rather than humanism). Deconstruction unworked

the contents of the human sciences of its time, but their form has persevered, reinvented itself, and even thrived.

In this setting of resisting the fate of phenomenology and combating the structuralist human sciences amid the ruins of the classical University, deconstruction as a broad philosophical project meant to change "the relation between being and knowledge" (xi) reached its apogee in the mid-sixties. At its height, deconstruction's particular style of thinking had a marked "interdisciplinary inflection" (29) premised on double exposure: "on the one hand the 'exposition' of the human sciences passes through the detour of philosophy; on the other hand philosophy itself is exposed to its margins" (28). In fact, the exposure could be said to be triple, in the sense that deconstruction not only contaminates the human sciences with philosophy and philosophy with non-philosophical disciplines but also exposes itself—to the two aforementioned fields of knowledge *and* to its own method of doubting, in which the painter is implicated as much as the painting. Discussing Foucault's *The Order of Things* as an exemplar of such deconstructionist style based on the triple exposure, Rajan described Foucault's said work as "cultural, ontological, and autobiographical" (182), adjectives that could be used as simple abbreviations for deconstruction's three exposures.

To summarize, beginning in the mid-forties as radicalization of phenomenology and culminating in the mid-sixties as an interdisciplinary philosophical project directed at the University and the order of knowledge, deconstruction was characterized by a) a negative disposition to transcendentalism and existentialism, b) a critical relation with the University and its sciences, especially the human sciences, and c) a style of thinking premised on the triple exposure of the object and the author. Would it be too much to claim that deconstruction, uneasily incorporated into the University precisely as a mixed cultural, ontological, and autobiographical discipline, was transformed into what is still sometimes referred to as theory? And has this theory lived up to its promise—and what was the promise to begin with?—or did deconstruction's official entry into the University as a recognized discipline spell the beginning of its end in the affirmative, that is newly pragmatic and transcendentalist, pseudo-disciplines of today, such as biopolitics, Deleuze studies, posthumanism, the various speculative projects, and others?

In "The University Without Condition" (2002), where he considered the possibility of the "new Humanities" (203), Derrida casually defined "theory" as "an original articulation of literary theory, philosophy, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and so forth" (208) that originated "in this country," the United States. The "and so forth" at the end of the quote is interesting—as if the list of what theory was supposed to encompass was not long enough already! Literary theory, philosophy, linguistics, psychoanalysis, *and more*: should we also add Marxism, biopolitics, political economy, gender studies, and postcolonial theory, all of which are taught in theory programs, *and more still*? For Derrida, theory was just a part of the New Humanities, along with deconstruction and legal studies, and did not play a significant role in his vision of the university without condition. Rather, Derrida focused on reinterpreting the notions of work, performativity, and sovereignty to propose a "neutral" and "unconditional theoreticism" (218)—which is neither neutral nor unconditional in the usual sense but *professed*, another exceptional term in Derrida's web— upon which the university without condition and the New Humanities could be founded. And yet, as I will argue below, it is only this voracious and incomplete "theory," always seeking for the more and the so forth, that can approximate the mission that Derrida ascribed to the New Humanities.

In spite of the significant differences in style and argumentation, Foucault's and Derrida's aforementioned texts on critique, the University, and Enlightenment arrive at a common destination: a new kind of criticism that would be critical and speculative in equal parts. In "The University Without Condition" (2012), Derrida proceeds by dis-engaging with Kant and the Enlightenment, just as Foucault did in *What Is Enlightenment?*, though using a different Kantian text, namely *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Derrida develops his argument over a series of minute distinctions, but the chief distinction takes place during the discussion on the different forms of work in relation to performativity (216–219), where Derrida distinguishes between the "doctrine" of knowledge, which is associated with the "constative order," and the "act of professing a doctrine," which is "performative" (218)— in other words, Derrida makes a similar distinction as Foucault did between the content of the Enlightenment and the attitude, or ethos, of the Enlightenment, favoring the latter over the former. The distinction between doctrine and profession allows Derrida to reconceptualize the work of freedom, another notion that was central to Foucault's essay,

as the virtual space of the "as-if" that is "freed from its territorial (and thus national) rootedness" (213)—or, following the earlier formulation to do with knowledge, freed from its disciplinary (and also national) rootedness—and that can, through the profession of faith, "produce the event of which they [i.e., the professions, promises, and commitments] speak" (209). One such professed event would be the university without condition and the New Humanities.

What would this university without condition look like, finally? On the one hand, it would have to be the "ultimate place of critical resistance" (204) that is "more than critical," meaning "deconstructive," in the sense of asking "critical questions" about the very "notion of critique" itself—that is, the university without condition would have to be "the place in which nothing is beyond question" (205). On the other hand, it would also be the place that embraces the principles of "fiction and the experimentation of knowledge" (205) so that one could "say everything" and even "publish it." In short, the university without condition, through its program of the New Humanities, would combine the "unconditional right" (204) to criticize everything, including critique, and the "principial right" (205) to say everything, including fiction. Such university and such Humanities would be the result neither of utopia, science fiction, nor nostalgia (223–224) but, to allow Foucault to intervene in Derrida's speech, of the "patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty" (Foucault 1984, 50) by means of the unconditional profession of "faith in the university and, within the university, faith in the Humanities of tomorrow" (Derrida 2002, 202).

It seems to me that the university without condition and its New Humanities that would be equally critical (nothing is beyond question) and speculative (everything can be said) would require not a complex structure of a myriad of new disciplines but the simplest curriculum based entirely and solely on theory, the only completely virtual discipline that, at least according to Derrida's definition, seems to be composed exclusively of other disciplines. More than that, theory also appears to have no end—the "and so forth" is an integral part of theory's definition, elevating theory from a passing remark on the margins of the profession to the "welcoming and voracious mouth" (Foucault 1966/2005, xviii) where incompossibles can meet and coexist. In fact, such definition of theory as something complete, open, and total, along with its tendency to shift from the sidelines to the center,

makes theory surprisingly similar to the episteme of immanence, with which contemporary theory is strongly preoccupied, as I will show in Chapter 5. Just like theory, immanence too is something complete yet capable of surplus, something that begins as a footnote before turning into an obsession, and something that insinuates itself as the ground for a profession of what is yet to come, namely theory/immanence itself.

I asked whether deconstruction incorporated into the University becomes theory, and I proposed to investigate the promise of theory, which has turned out to be a premonition of immanence and theory itself. Clearly, the kind of theory professed by Derrida has never yet existed in any University—instead, just as deconstruction gave way to affirmative and pragmatic poststructuralism (Rajan 2002, 1–4, 33–43), so the idea of equally critical and speculative theory without condition has often transformed into the figure of messianic immanence. Is this truly surprising? Deconstruction itself has never been more nor less than a phantasm, and its embodiment as theory-in-practice rather than theory-as-profession could only yield partially disappointing consequences. Did anyone ever seriously believe that a University capable of supporting the mission and style of deconstruction could *actually* exist? Such a University would bear no resemblance to the institution behind the name—in fact, such a University could only exist in the non-place and non-time in which speculative criticism operates and which has nothing to do with the order of useful knowledge in which all "real" universities participate. Therefore, I do not find it surprising that the University could only accommodate deconstruction on its own terms, as poststructuralist theory—that is, by substituting deconstruction's difficult work of self-exposure by a series of ritualized confessional gestures that enabled an even stronger return of the Husserlian and Sartrean caricatures. Here, one should avoid the dialectical swing in the opposite direction by treating deconstruction and theory as impossible and originally flawed projects and decrying their results as inevitably bad scholarship, dilettantism, and submission to the worst tendencies of the post-capitalist society, as if the only two options available were mythology or defacement.

Instead of defamation and veneration, it may be better to submit deconstruction to memorywork and to recall that deconstruction was an epistemological phantasm upon the face of the University, a very special phantasm that addressed itself to other phantasms and

strove to uncover the order of phantasmatics itself.[4] Put in less poetic terms, deconstruction was a project aimed at investigating the ordering principles of the institutions whose purpose was to produce an order to knowledge and in whose work deconstruction itself participated. No wonder such a meta-critical and reflexive endeavour could not be rigidified into a stable and consistent discipline that could dwell within the halls of the University. Nonetheless, in spite of its uneasy fate as poststructuralist theory (premised on the figure of messianic immanence) that is taught in a small number of programs worldwide, the phantasm of deconstruction still lingers around the edges of scholarship, perhaps to resurface, perhaps to vanish for good as enlightened ontologies leave no room for doubt as to the universal order of things. Whatever its future, I think it is eminently worth retaining the memory of this phantasm, uneasy, or perhaps even impossible, though the deconstructionist project may be.

In the rest of this chapter, I will begin working out the details of the phantasm-like order of knowledge that deconstruction put forward by discussing the negative side of the deconstruction project—that is, by specifying the kind of order of knowledge that deconstruction opposes. More specifically, I will take up Michel Polanyi, Bruno Latour, and Elizabeth Grosz as examples of the structure of dual control and universal order.[5] Then,

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[4] My use of the term "phantasm" (and "phantasmatics," which would be the study of phantasms) comes from "Theatrum Philosophicum" (1996/1970), Foucault's extraordinary and, in my opinion, entirely overlooked review-essay, in which Foucault considers Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* by engaging them in implicit dialogue with Pierre Klossowski. In said review essay, Foucault claims that Deleuze has invented a metaphysics of extra-being, according to which the world of bodies and actualities is concomitantly populated with phantasms. As I see it, Foucault treats phantasms as non-sensible ordering entities that arrange bodies into series and groups, endowing said bodies with sense. Foucault proposes to call the study of such phantasms "phantasmaphysics," which would seem to involve studying the order of ordering non-entities; in other words, phantasmaphysics would study the phantasms of phantasms, and would thus be a properly deconstructionist undertaking.

Other than in this paragraph where I discuss deconstruction, the concept of the phantasm does not perform an important function in my dissertation. In general, I use the term "phantasm" as a poetic synonym to refer to the order of speculative criticism that speaks from a non-place and a non-time while fabricating itself as its own ground.

[5] It may appear that I am courting logical contradiction here: how can deconstruction be said to oppose that which came "after" it, as is the case with Latour and Grosz, both of whom wrote once deconstruction had

in Chapter 2, I will present the positive side of deconstruction by a) highlighting the thematic and methodological similarities between Deleuze's ontological empiricism in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and Foucault's transcendental positivism in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and b) discussing each of these works and concepts in turn. In the rest of the dissertation, I will carry out an archaeological inquiry into the contemporary critical-speculative scholarship to better understand the episteme of the present University. To this end, I will investigate the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I will analyze the various research programs behind the contemporary speculative pseudo-disciplines. In Chapter 5, I will discuss immanence as the episteme behind the convergence between speculation, criticism, and affirmationism that marks the pseudo-disciplines of today.

Universal Order: Dual Control

I have situated my dissertation in relation to deconstruction, and I have presented deconstruction as being concerned with the order of knowledge. In and of itself, the problem of order is not unique to deconstruction and has been investigated by a variety of disciplines in the 20th century, including, for example, cybernetics. However, deconstruction's proposed order of knowledge is significantly different from both the "classical" understanding of order associated with modernity as well as the notion of order endorsed by certain contemporary thinkers. In this section, I will present the classical

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already been reduced to memory? In my defense, I take "deconstruction" and "dual control" to be concepts rather than strict logico-historical periods, meaning that deconstruction as an idea is fundamentally hostile to the idea of dual control, neither of which is reducible to the publication dates of its associated authors. At the same time, I am not reaching across centuries but only across decades—so, while deconstruction did culminate in the '60s and Latour did formulate his position between the '80s and the 2010s, these dates do not mark unsurpassable barriers as concepts and ideas tend to be at least somewhat "decentered," resonating outwards from their most active periods. Finally, if we take the term "opposed" in a very strict and literal sense, deconstruction could only be said to oppose Polanyi's exclusive universalism because the latter synthesizes ideas from the first part of the 20th century. Still, Polanyi's exclusive universalism, Latour's reductive universalism, and Grosz's total universalism are species of the same genus, dual control, which, in my opinion, is another reason to claim that, in spite of these species of dual control being "written into reality" at different times, deconstruction is opposed to all of them on the basis of their genus.

modern understanding of the order of knowledge and its gradual mutation into the "post-classical," contemporary version via the following three positions: Michael Polanyi's synthesis of the classical position of the philosophy of science (exclusive universalism), Bruno Latour's updated position from science and technology studies (reductive universalism), and Elizabeth Grosz's contemporary speculative approach to order (total universalism). I will argue that, in spite of the apparent differences and disagreements between these three positions, they all rely on the same schema: the structure of universal order and dual control, or dual control in short, to which deconstruction was fundamentally opposed.

According to dual control, everything always adds up—all dualities that describe the foundations of reality, such as nature and culture, matter and form, or the real and the rational, are perfectly complementary and relate to one another in such a way that the totality of existence is in perfect equilibrium, with nothing lacking or in excess. Such complementariness of parts and equilibrium of the whole are guaranteed by there being a universal control principle, which knowledge strives to understand and imitate. Consequently, perceived errors and disbalances are little more than temporary misunderstandings due to shortcomings in accumulated knowledge and have nothing to do with the universal order as it really is. Temporary shortcomings notwithstanding, the outlook for the future of knowledge is bright: there is no reason in principle why the encyclopedia of all knowledge could not be written some day if not soon. This is just a brief sketch of dual control, and the three positions that I explore below will present a much more detailed image.

Polanyi and Exclusive Universalism

Perhaps no book has demonstrated the structure of what I am calling dual control better than *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* by Polanyi (1958/2005), an extraordinary synthesis of the history and philosophy of science. To begin with, Polanyi is writing with full knowledge of the Kantian, Hegelian, Marxian, and Freudian critiques of universal knowledge structures, which is why he constantly restates his distaste for "objectivism" (that is, positivism) and "the scientistic Minotaur" (249, 282; with Marxism and psychoanalysis themselves being the worst examples of said Minotaur). Instead,

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Polanyi wants a philosophy of science based on the fact that knowledge originates "from a centre lying within ourselves" and is mediated by "a human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse" (2), even though a full, transparent account of the centre within and of language is not possible. At the same time, equally keen to avoid the twin evils of subjectivism and relativism, he proposes the so-called "fiduciary framework" for knowledge premised on reasoned "belief . . . as the source of all knowledge" as well as on "tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and cultural heritage, [and] affiliation of a like-minded community" (280). Thus, steering between positivism and constructionism, Polanyi labels his theory of knowledge *personal*.

As a form of scholarly presentiment of the discussion to follow, I would like to point out that in many ways Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge may appear strangely close to that of Deleuze: for example, they both focus on the importance of belief, the imagination, and passion or desire in the formation of knowledge, they both emphasize a certain kind of transcendence in the order of knowledge that the subject cannot account for but which can be approximated, and for both Deleuze and Polanyi institutions play a key role in supporting and extending the capabilities of subjects. Such superficial similarities mean nothing, however, because the underlying conceptions of order endorsed by the two thinkers are entirely incompatible, and the apparently similar importance given to, say, the imagination by both thinkers is, in fact, made to serve mutually exclusive ends in their philosophies. Polanyi, for all his absorption of the various permutations of critical philosophy, instead of turning towards the post-phenomenological unworking of universal knowledge, attempts a post-phenomenological rescue of the classical vision of Science, his dismissal of positivism notwithstanding. Consequently, *Personal Knowledge* is itself like a mythical creature: a Minotaur whose one half is Science and another almost-deconstruction, a case of what contemporary realists would call correlationism, and an example of what Foucault designated as the consciousness-based and man-centered approach to the order of knowledge.

In spite of deploying an immense multitude of concepts—such as the fiduciary belief, tacit understanding, intellectual passion, community of culture, and institutions of verification, among many, many others—to elaborate the role of the personal in knowledge

creation, Polanyi is adamant that "truth lies in the achievement of a contact with reality" (155). How is such contact possible, seeing that knowledge originates from a centre within?

First, Polanyi deductively infers a heuristic principle operating across all animal nature, from earthworms to rats to monkeys to people: "As far down the scale of life as the worms and even perhaps the amoeba, we meet a general alertness of animals, not directed towards any specific satisfaction, but merely exploring what is there; an urge to achieve intellectual control over the situations confronting it" (140). The evidence-based deduction of this heuristic principle carries two major consequences: a) all animals (especially humans) are inherently capable of solving problems and mastering their environment by recognizing order in nature (3–17), and b) the uses afforded by solutions to problems constantly transcend their initial application, thereby proving that what the mind discovers is, in fact, an ordered reality that is independent of the mind itself (33–48). The mind does not manufacture reality but only recognizes order that already exists in nature, and scientific progress consists of refining the mastery of the human apparatus for discovering and translating the order of nature into articulated, verifiable, and objective knowledge.

However, this is only a weak and a posteriori proof of knowledge, leaving open the possibility that scientific progress is based on random chance and utter luck. Who is to say that, in spite of being objectively useful, the theories of science have not been blindly stumbled upon and reveal no fundamental human understanding of reality? Polanyi is not satisfied with a weak, utility-based solution. Quite the contrary, even the idea of evolution concedes too much to randomness and chance and is therefore unacceptable (35–36, 381, 404–428). Having shown that persons *can* discover knowledge, Polanyi must also explain *why*. He considers the following scenario:

> At the border between England and Wales you pass a small town called Abergele. Its railway station has a beautifully kept garden in which, sprawling across the lawn, you are faced with the inscription, set out in small white pebbles: 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways.' No one will fail to recognize this as an orderly pattern, deliberately contrived by a thoughtful station-master. (34)

But on what ground do we recognize the orderliness of the inscription? Polanyi discards any probability-based explanations—for example, that it is highly improbable that the pebbles could have accidentally fallen to form coherent words, meaning that order exists

whenever the probability of a randomly generated outcome is too unlikely—because a) any random arrangement is possible given enough time, and b) we constantly accept highly improbable outcomes if they make sense, such as winning the lottery. Instead, nothing about order makes it orderly other than orderliness itself, whose existence is a "tacit assumption" made by the rational subject: "the presence of significant order" equally implies "the operation of an ordering principle" (35) as well as of an implicit capacity by the subject to recognize order as such. It is on this tautological arrangement—order is order because we recognize it as order, and we recognize order as order because order is order—that the entire structure of Polanyian philosophy depends. In the end, all knowledge is simply order discovering itself through the mouthpiece of persons and language.

At the heart of his philosophy, Polanyi sets up a system of dual control: a proliferating series of mirrored dualities that reflect not so much each other as the controlling principle, or universal order, that traverses both sides of said dualities and guarantees the communication, coherence, and adequation between them. By learning to transition between the two sides of the duality, which are usually related to each other as the sub- and the super-stratum, rational consciousness apprehends the controlling principle whose existence is a necessary presupposition for there to be communication and exchange between the two sides of the duality to begin with. The origin of this controlling principle we cannot know, but its functioning we can approximate and its purpose we can infer: to arrive consciously at the perfect order of the Christian God (35–36, 341–342, 428). Gradually, by recognizing, anticipating, and emulating, within oneself as within nature, the truth of the universal ordering principle and articulating it as increasingly complex and refined scientific knowledge, man becomes order itself, the mind of God in action.

In general, the structure of dual control works by mutual reinforcement: one knows to have discovered the truth in the sub-stratum because it corresponds to the grain of truth possessed by the super-stratum, and the super-stratum can possess its grain of truth and even expand it into a system precisely because there exist correspondences with the sub-stratum. The communication between the two strata is guaranteed by their being traversed by a universal ordering principle (in Polanyi's case, the Christian God), which has deposited itself in nature and in the rational consciousness as its own self-recognition. Again, rational consciousness knows that the order it possesses is true because it

corresponds to intimations of the universal order itself, and the universality of the intimated order is guaranteed by the fact that rational consciousness recognizes it. However, what keeps rational consciousness in a state of perpetual anxiety, in spite of its possession of the truth—no, *because* of its possession of the truth—are false prophets and merchants of doubt, who challenge the rational claim to universality and even dare to propose alternatives, such as Marxism and psychoanalysis (147, 241–255, 259, 304), each a perfect example of a false universal pretender (one could justifiably imagine Polanyi being shocked by the university without condition and its theory that includes psychoanalysis *and more* perversions). Seeing that rational consciousness can prove its veracity only through its own operations, that is through the apprenticeship and induction of acolytes, it must perpetually police its institutional borders to make sure that the tacit assumption of universal order is not misunderstood or, worse, misused.

Order may be universal and its knowledge may be buried in every person and in every atom, but error is still possible due to inherent imperfections in human language and self-perception, meaning that only verified and trusted disciplines can be allowed to take on the work of disseminating verified knowledge. Consequently, knowledge needs to be safeguarded by *an institutionalized* fiduciary system that establishes baseline consensus and accredits the veracity of discoveries by referring them to the best minds of the community (229–236, 259–260). Knowledge production is personal and relies on the centre within man but requires an institutional doxa to stabilize the process. Such stabilizing institutions, the University among them, must remain considerably exclusive to make sure that false prophets, among which deconstruction would certainly have been included, do not make it past the gate to mislead the seekers.

Latour and Reductive Universalism

Polanyi's exclusive universalism, a synthesis of the classical history of science, was ultimately fashioned to defend the privileges of scientific rationality from various interlopers ranging from false prophets to critical philosophers. Since the rise of science and technology studies in the '70s (see Kleinman and Moore 2014; Sismondo 2010; Hacket et al. 2008), the exclusivist position has been gradually replaced with a more inclusive attitude premised on an order of knowledge that leaves room for a multitude of actors and

participants in the creation of knowledge. A leading flagbearer of such an inclusive attitude, and certainly one of the most famous names within science and technology studies and the Humanities at large, is Bruno Latour, who advocates for an order of knowledge that is equally receptive of Marxism and Freudianism as it is of alchemy and astrology. Below, I will closely examine Latour's proposed order of knowledge and show how, rather than doing away with the universalism of dual control, Latour streamlines dual control by reducing its heuristic complexity towards epistemological totalism, a phenomenon that, in the following section on Elizabeth Grosz, I will name total universalism, or messianic immanence.

Although Latour's terminology changes over his career—for example, the "agonistic field" from early on is not be found by the late '90s, while recently Latour has introduced "modes of existence" as a new key concept—his enemies and goals remain surprisingly stable, perhaps because, as recounted by Latour himself (*Pasteurization of France* 1993, 162–163) and eulogized by Graham Harman (*Prince of Networks* 2009, 12–13), Latour conceived the entirety of his philosophy in a flash at the age of twenty-five ("already married," Harman noted pertinently) while "driving his Citroën van along the highways of Burgundy" (Harman 2009, 12). Ever since the eureka moment, Latour has been trenchantly opposed to scientism, dualism, and criticism while endorsing one world for all, the reality and irreduction of nonhuman actants, and open access to the real by everyone.

In *Laboratory Life* (1979) written with Steve Woolgar, Latour aimed to "penetrate the mystique of science and to provide a reflexive understanding of the detailed activities of working scientists" (18) in order to show that even "normal" (31) rather than just "borderline, controversial science" suffers from the intrusion of social factors and does not function in sterile isolation from the wider environment (21). Overall, Latour and Woolgar claimed that even "a body of practices widely regarded by outsiders as well organized, logical, and coherent, in fact consists of a disordered array of observations" (36). The point was not that scientific facts were "merely" constructed—rather, it was to demythologize the practices of scientists by demonstrating their brute and chaotic reality on the way to the facts. Of course, this humble program even then hinted at far greater ambitions, and Latour's anecdote about heroically making the scientists under observation "scurry off to

their assay rooms" (257) is telling: when asked about the lack of clarity in his observations in relation to the precision of laboratory results, Latour supposedly responded that "the difference in credibility accorded to the observer's [Latour's] and the informants' construction corresponds directly to the extent of prior investments" (256)—that is, there is no epistemological difference between the work of the sociologist and the work of the lab scientist, only a difference in material means.

The creation, maintenance, and endorsement of epistemological differences and hierarchies by science is exactly what motivates Latour's opposition to the scientific self-representation (or to modernity, or further still to the Western mythology of scientific facts) and is the object of his ferocious attacks in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) and *The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (2010). In the former text, Latour argued that the entire edifice of modern Western knowledge rests on two operations: the "purification" of categories by Western criticism based on the fundamental separation between nature and culture, and the "translation" that functions between the purified categories to create hybrids whenever needed (which are then to be re-purified, and so on; 10–12). "So long as we consider these two practices of translation and purification separately," argued Latour, "we are truly modern" (11). In the latter text, *The Modern Cult* (2010), Latour continued building on the same ideas by thoroughly dismissing the separation between fact and fetish, or the modern and the savage, which, he claimed, divides people into two categories: those who know and those who believe, with clear implications of the former category's superiority over the latter (1–21).[6] Reflecting on his sociological-anthropological work in the science lab early in his career, Latour claimed that it was then that he "came to understand that all the objects of the exact sciences had to be 'de-epistemologized'" (38). If, as Deleuze (*Foucault* 1986/2006) said, Foucault's greatest virtue was to epistemologize the phenomenological (109), then Latour can be said to be a kind of an anti-Foucault whose goal is to de-epistemologize knowledge in favor of directly accessing reality.

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[6] Seeing that Latour states these points explicitly and reiterates them on an almost page-by-page basis in the first half of the book, it seems highly arbitrary to provide a reference to a specific page. In fact, between pages 1 and 67, across the whole chapter "On the Cult of the Factish Gods," one can open the text at any point and immediately see Latour's opposition to the fact/fetish distinction, which culminates in Latour proposing the "factish" super-category that merges the two.

Latour's arguments above explain why, in most of his books, he dismisses "criticism" (1991, 6, 11; 2010, 22, 81–82), "critical thinking" (2010, 9, 24) and "deconstruction" (1991, 5– 6, 27, 128, 134; 2010, 82) or similar terms—anything that is in any way, shape, or form critical participates in the Western formation of dualisms and the associated hierarchies. Perhaps the most thorough statement can be found in *Reassembling the Social* (2005) when Latour is discussing the third test for distinguishing a good application of actor-network-theory from a bad one:

> A third and more difficult test would be to check whether a study aims at reassembling the social or still insists on dispersion and deconstruction. ANT [actor-network-theory] has been confused with a postmodern emphasis on the critique of the "Great narratives" and "Eurocentric" or "hegemonic" standpoint. This is, however, a very misleading view. Dispersion, destruction, and deconstruction are not the goals to be achieved but what needs to be overcome. It's much more important to check what are the new institutions, procedures, and concepts able to collect and to reconnect the social. (11)

Just as Latour practices the same dismissal of criticism across his oeuvre, so he proposes the same solution with equal tenacity: to blend categories together into something akin to super-categories. In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), Latour proposed being neither modern, antimodern, nor postmodern but nonmodern, which means accepting that the separation between nature and culture has never truly existed to begin with and that phenomena are simultaneously natural and cultural (47, 51, 56, 78, 88, 134–145). In *The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (2010), Latour suggested the category of the "factish," a combination of fact and fetish, which was supposed to allow "practice to pass into action without the practitioner ever believing in the difference between construction and reality, immanence and transcendence" (22; see also Footnote 2 of my dissertation). In short, against the exclusivity of the Western system of categories, thresholds, and criticism, Latour proposed one world for all: "The terrain is now wide open" (*Politics of Nature* 2004, 80).

Latour's open terrain depends on two super-categories: "the actant" and "politics" reinterpreted as the ultimate means for bringing together humans and nonhumans. The super-category of the actant is probably the only aspect of Latour's theory on which his

followers and critics can agree. According to Harman, a follower, Latour's "world is made up of *actors* or *actants* (which I will also call 'objects'). Atoms and molecules are actants, as are children, raindrops, bullet trains, politicians, and numerals. All entities are on exactly the same footing" (2009, 14). According to Ray Brassier, a critic, "Latour, like all postmodernists—his own protestations to the contrary notwithstanding—reduces everything to meaning, since the difference between 'words' and 'things' turn out to be no more than functional difference subsumed by the concept of 'actant'" (52). Both the follower and the critic are correct, although the follower is more mischievous, seeing that in *Politics of Nature* (2004) Latour introduced the super-category actant precisely to overcome the division between subjects *and* objects (75). According to Latour's own definition, provided in a helpful glossary of terms at the end of *Politics of Nature*, an actant "is a term from semiotics covering both humans and nonhumans; an actor is any entity that modifies another entity in a trial; of actors it can only be said that they act; their competence is deduced from their performances; the action, in turn, is always recorded in the course of a trial and by an experimental protocol, elementary or not" (237). In fact, the super-category of the actant consumes more than subjects and objects—it also combines humans and nonhumans. In short, the actant is the basic unit of reality in Latour's metaphysics, just as, for example, Spinoza's reality was made up entirely of bodies.

What is to be done with actants? They must be assembled into an ever-expanding collective (77, 80) that, at last, would do away with the dualism and bicameralism of modernity and inaugurate the "one future common world" (41, 53, 80, 82–87, 91–127, 239). This can only be done by politics, which "gathers everything together" (53) and should be understood as "*the entire set of tasks*" (italics in the original) that need to be accomplished for the unification of the world. In *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (2013), a partially crowd-sourced exercise in writing an encyclopedia of "the moderns," Latour goes even further than he did in *Nature and Politics* by describing the successful outcome of his encyclopedic work as follows:

> If we were to succeed, the Moderns would finally know what has happened to them, what they have inherited, the promises they would be ready to fulfill, the battles they would have to get ready to fight. At the very least, the others would finally know where they stand in this regard. Together, we could perhaps better prepare ourselves

to confront the emergence of the global, of the Globe, without denying any aspect of our history. The universal would perhaps be within their [our?] grasp at last. (xxvii) What began in the '70s as a humble program to bring some reflexivity to science and the study of science has become, some 40–50 years later, a nonmodern project to refashion reality and knowledge from the ground up to the heaven without leaving a single actant or factish behind for the vultures of criticism and deconstruction.

Without doubt building a world in which every actant can fit is a laudable goal, but what price does Latour pay along the way? In his 1979 study with Woolgar, Latour proposed a fascinating pair of terms to describe the progress of knowledge: credibility and cost. Credibility, a term inspired by Bourdieu and meant to be a "synthesis of economic notions (such as money, budget, and payoff) and epistemological notions (such as certitude, doubt, and proof)" (239), refers to the basic resource available to scientists, or anybody involved in knowledge production. To leverage institutions for complex research purposes or to propose a radical hypothesis and be taken seriously, a scientist must have accumulated considerable credibility, while failing at knowledge production could potentially involve a loss of said credibility. To challenge established theories costs credibility as the author's credibility is weighed against the credibility of the institutionalized theory—indeed, "reality" is nothing but "the set of concepts too costly to modify" (243). Consequently, research and knowledge production has nothing to do with truth, being, instead, only a "game" of assessing "the cost of investments compared with their likely return; the game is not played according to a set of ethical rules, which a superficial examination reveals" (243). Essentially, whatever you do not have the credibility to challenge, that is reality.

This would explain why Latour can nowadays engage in writing outlandish statements about universal knowledge without being ridiculed and, on the contrary, being celebrated—as one of the most established academics in the Humanities today, almost an institution onto himself, Latour has amassed the credibility necessary to challenge whatever statement he pleases no matter the cost. According to his own analysis, Latour is richer than reality—richer than reason—which is why he can do with the world as he pleases. At the same time, competitors on the market of knowledge do demand their pound of flesh, and none more strictly so than Brassier in "Concepts and Objects" (2011).

According to Brassier, in purchasing the reality of actants and the one common world, Latour pays with four reductions: "First, he reduces reason to discrimination . . . Second, he reduces science to force . . . Third, he reduces scientific knowledge ('knowing-that') to practical know-how . . . Last but not least, he reduces truth to power" (51). In short, by Brassier's reckoning, "reason, science, knowledge, truth—all must be eliminated" to make room for nonmoderns, factishes, actants, the politics of the new assembly, and possibly even the universal. This assessment may seem harsh, but Latour might not even object to such a description, keeping in mind his hostility to the concepts of Western knowledge. Having thus torched all major categories of the moderns, especially "the epistemological distinction between appearance and reality" (51), Latour fills the void with "a series of allusive metaphors whose cognitive import becomes a function of semantic resonance," with the actant operating as the master metaphor. The master metaphor, like all metaphors "engineered in order to produce an effect rather than establish a demonstration" (53), allows Latour to "unproblematically" explain "everything from hydroelectric powerplants to tooth fairies" (52). In the end, Brassier asserts acerbically, "Latour writes to reassure those who do not really want to know," driven by his "politics (neo-liberal) and his religion (Roman Catholic)," the forces that are "ultimately motivating his antipathy towards rationality, critique, and revolution" (53). Clearly, given my own limited credibility, I could not afford to make these statements myself, but perhaps such language is within Brassier's price range.

Concluding with Latour

Upon closer investigation, the differences between Polanyi's exclusive, or classical, universalism and Latour's new order of knowledge that leaves no actant behind are not as significant as they might appear. For Polanyi, there exists a universal order that traverses nature and rationality, consciousness and God, but the proper knowledge of said order is concentrated in a very limited number of disciplines, institutions, and even parts of the world. For Latour, there equally exists a universal order, except its restraints are entirely removed, and the observing mind can appreciate, understand, and incorporate physics and witchcraft, epidemiology and alchemy, bosons and ghosts. Polanyi rejects falsely universal pretenders, exemplified by Marxism and psychoanalysis, due to their illegitimate

approximation of the universal order. Latour welcomes any and all disciplines and forms of knowledge by reducing their specificities to the same underlying order made up of actants, factishes, and political associations. Both forms of analysis wield universalism and resemblance as their main tools, and both presuppose a consciousness capable of grasping the principles of the universal order, but with different degrees of difficulty. Polanyi endorses a hierarchy among the disciplines and creatures, while for Latour hierarchies are superfluous because distinctions are only nominal, although there clearly exists a real distinction between those who subscribe to the universality of the nonmodern actant-factish politico-metaphysics and those who do not. In fact, the main difference between Polanyi and Latour is that of five decades: whereas Polanyi saw the understanding of universal order as a goal to be achieved in the future, Latour writes when this goal has already been surpassed and what remains, as Kant once optimistically mused, is to write the encyclopedia of all knowledge, which is what Latour has been claiming to do.

We see, therefore, that the chief component of universal order and its structure of dual control is not the two-chamber arrangement, which can be more effectively replaced by a structure of single reality, or immanence, but the presence, reality, and accessibility of the controlling principle. In short, the emphasis is on *control* rather than duality, on the dream of smooth communication between incompossibles arranged in a new universal table and described in a fresh and crowdsourced encyclopedia of all Being, beings, and non-being(s). The promise of such smooth control is that of a reality that is clear, transparent, and accessible to every creature and entity—that is, the promise that Being is equal for all, so long as one heeds the messianic scholar. The exclusivist version of dual control was only an inadequate figure on the way to the single equal reality, or immanence, of the new and smooth absolute. The deconstructionists, in all their diversity, bitterness, and incompatibility, if they ever had a common ground of any kind, it was in their opposition to universalism and its culmination in the smooth machine of dual control streamlined into a totalizing reality. However—and perhaps this is the point that is most interesting to me— deconstruction's opposition was organized around an attempt to articulate immanence and the idea of universal order differently. There is no escaping immanence, and one does not get to just invent something else. Nonetheless, there may be room to understand immanence

differently, not as the messianic voice that promises control, communication, and exchange but as incompossibility, sense, and exteriority.

Grosz and Total Universalism

Today, however, even Latour and his universal order of actants has become too slow. In contemporary scholarship, the total acceleration of dual control is often presented under the label of immanence. Although I will take up the history and the present state of immanence scholarship in the successive chapters, specifically in Chapter 5, here I would like to provide an example of immanence when it is synonymous with the total acceleration of dual control by briefly outlining the major points of Elizabeth Grosz's *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (2017). As do all modern theorists of immanence, Grosz positions herself against "Platonism, Aristotelianism, and their many offshoots" (6) and, instead, advances an ontology of "this one world" (1) that "aims to understand not only the orders of our experience but also the orders of the world well beyond our experience" (6). The one world consists of multiple orders, of which the order of human experience is only one, but such multiplicity is no obstacle to total knowledge because there exists a universal order that traverses them all. Grosz calls this universal order *the incorporeal*, which is "the dimension of ideality that suffuses all things, enabling them to signify and generate representations" (250), and allows to develop a theory of "a nonreductive monism or a paradoxical dualist monism" (249). The oscillation between monism and dualism that is clearly present in Grosz's work is typical of dual control structures—as I have argued, the universal distributes itself across any number of weak dualities only to further enhance its own capacity to guarantee absolute communication between them: "ideality and materiality are not two substances but two ways in which the real is distributed" (251). Indeed, this communicative and controlling aspect of universal order is explicitly acknowledge by Grosz:

> They [organic brains] would be incapable of even the most elementary forms of organization and orientation . . . if these elementary forms of life did not carry with them the ideality, the directionality, the mnemic themes of their material components, subatomic particles and fields, atoms and their molecular connections and composites, aggregates composed of the relations of molecules, if they themselves

were not in some way composed of material-ideal relations. The chain of evolutionary emergence is unbroken not only materially but also conceptually. (250) Ultimately, for accelerated dual control everything already contains everything else, with materiality present in the immaterial and vice versa, with life already pre-prepared in matter and matter itself containing glimpses of thought and experience, and this universal and incorporeal order is *immediately* available for knowledge, with concepts needing no "mediation of their 'inventors'" and being completely "freed from the forms of argument that are developed to support them" (9). If Latour still posed the most minimal requirements for knowledge and access to order, Grosz actually proposes something akin to negative restrictions, whereby history and context are nothing but the dictatorship of the "inventors," pejoratively placed between scare quotes, and any attention to forms of argument only serves to slow down the infinite speed of the immediately available total knowledge of the universal order. For Grosz even more than for Latour, the less you know, the closer you are to the real.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, having discussed the notion of criticism that would be equally critical and speculative, I considered the ground for such speculative criticism by adopting Rajan's definition of deconstruction as a broad philosophical project whose purpose was to reconceptualize the relation between being and knowledge, whose method involved exposing not only logic to existence and vice versa but also implicating the author in relation to both (and, again, vice versa), and whose privileged object of analysis was the University and the order of knowledge. Then, I presented the approach to order and knowledge to which the deconstruction project was opposed, calling it the structure of universal order and dual control, and discussed Polanyi's exclusive universalism, Latour's reductive universalism, and Grosz's total universalism as three modulations of dual control. What became evident from these examples was the increasing acceleration of totalizing thinking that replaced the temerity and the silence of Polanyian universal knowledge with the immediacy of the new absolute (or simply "reality"), an immediacy whose major obstacles were categories, context, and, indeed, the slow labor of education. The more one thinks, the more one is enslaved to the moderns and the "inventors," and the more one is

constrained from thinking all universe like the mind of God—no longer the suffering Christian God, and not even the loving Spinozian God, but the God who knows without having to learn.

The fundamental proposition of dual control is the reality of a universal ordering principle that splits itself into inversely symmetrical dualities and maintains between all sides a relationship of equilibrium. Under such conditions, a) order is nothing but communication, or perhaps the guarantee of communicability, between the different parts of reality, b) knowledge is a progressively perfect imitation of the really existing equilibrium between the parts, and c) error results from false approximations of the universal order. Here, communication must be understood in the strong sense, not as discoursing but as control—that is, maintaining all the parts in a certain arrangement, specifically equilibrium, premised on the exchangeability of a shared resource among the parts, namely knowledge—and as equilibrium, which, rather than being understood in Aristotelian terms as virtue always finding the mean, involves compensating for the lack or excess of one part with, respectively, the excess or lack of another. For example, what thought is missing in certainty it can find ample proof of in the abundance of natural evidence, and where nature appears to possess no sense and to have no organization thought can discover hidden principles based on rational calculation. Everything always adds up— such would be the mantra of dual control. To err is to misunderstand the absolute *complementariness* of all the parts, for example by setting up a false universal, such as the proletariat or desire, or endowing a specific institution with too much access, such as the University. In short, order is communication, knowledge is what is communicated between perfectly exchangeable parts, and the outcome is equilibrium.

Among the scholars who could be categorized as relying on the structure of dual control, differences exist regarding the most efficient way of conceptualizing the specific functioning of dual control, especially in relation to the University, with the tendency being to streamline the framework as much as possible. One influential, sophisticated, and at this point entirely outdated account comes from Polanyi, which he named personal knowledge and which I called exclusive universalism. In my analysis, I argued that exclusive universalism rests on the following four pillars:

a) order is internal and can be found at the hidden depth of every entity;

b) the process of learning proceeds from the ineffable towards its better articulation;

c) the development of knowledge is oriented outwards and functions by refining one's internal mechanisms of communication that come into contact with external reality;

d) the end of knowledge is the perfect imitation of universal order.

The exclusive element of this internalist, communicative, and expansionist account of the order of knowledge comes from the fact that communication between the subject of knowledge, its own internal order, and the external ordered entities is not immediate and therefore liable to misunderstanding and even misappropriation. Therefore, teaching proper communication skills to the subject of knowledge becomes imperative, with few institutions being trustworthy enough to carry out this slow, gradual process correctly.

It should come as no surprise that the more contemporary accounts of dual control have attempted to streamline this framework and increase the efficiency and immediacy of communication, allowing the subject of knowledge to apprehend order much faster. One of the most influential modern accounts of streamlined dual control comes from Latour, whose overall project, which is much more ambitious than the actor-network-theory, I have called reductive universalism. For reductive universalism, there is no need to turn inward, to laboriously develop one's apparatus of communication, and to look for evidence of a shared truth in the internality of other entities. Instead, the effects of order are everywhere present, and order itself is so evident that only the most flagrant ideologue could deny its easy accessibility. Seeing that order is not only universal but its communication is immediate and transparent, everyone contributes to the cataloguing of the effects of order, and what is urgently needed, therefore, is the removal of boundaries and thresholds to amplify participation in knowledge production. Whereas for exclusive universalism the danger resided with falsely universal pretenders, for reductive universalism there is nothing worse than a pretender who is not universal enough, and whereas exclusive universalism defended the slow and ponderous heuristics development, reductive universalism sees only the need for cataloguing the infinite actants of reality—in fact, too much education and overthinking only reduces the speed of exchange. This line of argumentation is then taken to its logical conclusion by certain forms of contemporary speculative scholarship, for which critical

distance, historical context, and hermeneutic undecidability are little more than excuses by greedy gatekeepers who want to monopolize reality to themselves.

I will look more thoroughly at contemporary speculative scholarship in Chapter 4 when I consider the strongly speculative research programs of today. For now, having shown the order of knowledge to which deconstruction was opposed, I will move on to elaborate deconstruction's own framework by focusing on Deleuze's ontological empiricism and Foucault's transcendental positivism.

CHAPTER 2: DELIRIUM AND APHASIA—DELEUZE'S ONTOLOGICAL EMPIRICISM AND FOUCAULT'S TRANSCENDENTAL POSITIVISM

In the previous chapter, I situated my dissertation in relation to deconstruction, a philosophical project concerned with the order of knowledge and the University. After briefly discussing the history of deconstruction, I focused on clarifying the negative side of the deconstruction project by detailing the order of knowledge to which deconstruction was opposed. I called such order of knowledge dual control and discussed its following three modulations: Polanyi's exclusive universalism, Latour's reductive universalism, and Grosz's total universalism.

In this chapter, I will elaborate the positive side of the deconstruction project by discussing its vision for a different order of knowledge, one premised not on clarity and ease of access but delirium and aphasia. To this end, I will first establish thematic and methodological similarities between Deleuze's *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and Foucault's transcendental positivism in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, arguing that Deleuze's early work can be considered to be deconstructionist. Then, I will consider Deleuze's ontological empiricism and Foucault's transcendental positivism, respectively.

Deleuze and Foucault: The Possibility and Existence of Order

Rajan (2007) showed that Derrida and Foucault could be grouped together as deconstructionists due to their shared preoccupation with the order of knowledge and the University, with the former employing a "transcendental" approach and the latter a "mixed transcendental-empirical" (134) method. By focusing on one of his early works, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991), I argue that Deleuze too was concerned with similar deconstructionist themes—for lack of a better word, Deleuze could be said to offer an "ontological" (is there a term more overused today?) complement to Derrida's transcendental and Foucault's transcendental-empirical investigations of order, knowledge, and the University.

To begin with, Deleuze and Foucault are concerned with the same problem: In *The Order of Things* (1966/2005), Foucault famously took up the nonsensical taxonomy from Borges's fictional "Chinese encyclopaedia," and in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

(1969/1972) he equally famously considered a "series of letters, A, Z, E, R, T, listed in a typewriting manual" (86). The point of these two examples is not that order is arbitrary, categories are invented, and the fabricated series are then naturalized by being re-presented in a document, such as an encyclopedia or a manual, that is endowed with institutional power which rediscovers its own effects as the real—all of this is as true as it is obvious. Instead, what Foucault is fascinated by, what holds for him "a power of enchantment all its own" (1966/2005, xvii), is the brute fact that "order *exists*" (xxii). How can the *existence* of order be accounted for, seeing that order is as much the pre-condition of knowledge as well as its outcome—more than that, seeing that order is *arbitrary*, yet its existence is *necessary*? The problem lies not in describing the rules behind a series, which is simple, or discovering hidden higher-order principles behind lower-order organization, which only postpones the question. Rather, the issue is to account for the very possibility of order as such—"the pure experience of order and of its modes of being" (xxiii)—or, said otherwise, for the conditions of possibility for order's existence.

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991), Deleuze inquired into the same problem that fascinated Foucault: "how does a collection become a system" (22)? The question can be reformulated as follows: "how can we form systems of means, general rules, and aggregates which are both corrective and extensive" (42–43)? By being preoccupied with systems, rules, and their constitution, Deleuze was concerned with the same problem of order as Foucault, and by linking the question of order to the formation of knowledge (I discuss this in the following section), Deleuze fits into the framework of deconstruction suggested by Rajan.

Moreover, the means by which Deleuze proposed to investigate order and knowledge are close to Foucault's methodological reflections. Seeing that order is intimately related to knowledge as both its presupposition and outcome, any analysis of order as such is immediately self-recursive and faced with all the logical dilemmas entailed in reflexive inquiries. Consequently, any analysis of order as order needs to inquire not only into knowledge but also into the subject of knowledge, thus posing the following question: must an inquiry into order be transcendental in the Kantian sense?

Foucault and Deleuze answered in the negative. In his investigations of order and knowledge, Foucault emphasized—quite typically for French theory at the time, it should

be added—that a) the knowing subject is "situated and dependent" rather than "titular" (*The Archaeology* 1969/1972, 183; see also *The Order of Things* 1966/2005, xv) and b) the point is not to describe the "genesis" of knowledge and order but the "space" of its operation (1966/2005, xi; see also 1969/1972, 138). In short, Foucault rejected the transcendental and the genetic-empirical approaches. Similarly, in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991), Deleuze distinguished between a "transcendental critique" (which he rejected)—"how can there be a given, how can something be given to a subject, and how can the subject give something to itself?"—and an "empirical" critique (which he endorsed), which adopts "a purely immanent point of view" and asks, "how is the subject constituted in the given" (87)? Deleuze also emphasized that "empiricism is not geneticism" because genesis is itself only the "effect" and the "particular character" of a "principle"—instead of describing genesis, empiricism must "refer to the principles" (108). Like Foucault, Deleuze was equally opposed to transcendental and genetic-empirical methods for investigating the existence and possibility of order.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to state that there is considerable thematic and methodological overlap between Foucault's archaeological project and Deleuze's early work. Both thinkers wanted to arrive at a philosophical interpretation of order, which Foucault described as "pure" and Deleuze as focused on "principles" (more on these concepts in the sections below), and both rejected the transcendental and genetic-empirical means of doing so. Indeed, the very question of *how* to arrive at a philosophical interpretation of order—that is, the question of method—explicitly preoccupied both thinkers. According to Foucault (1966/2005), "what transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply the alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories" (xvii). For Deleuze (1953/1991), the problem was "to think, at the right moment, of a harmony between the unknown powers on which the given appearances depend and the transcendent principles which determine the constitution of a subject within the given. The real problem would be to think of a harmony between the powers of nature and the subject" (89). Seeing that the existence of order appears to be aporetic by its very nature, that it transgresses the major faculties of the mind, and that the constitution of the subject of knowledge seems to be an irruption within order of something that order itself cannot do but still does, coming up with a method suitable for the

investigation of such a paradoxical object becomes a major issue and stumbling block. Unlike Latour, for whom arriving at method is easy and what remains is the elaboration of content, Foucault and Deleuze were engaged in deconstructionist work whereby the object, method, and investigator are exposed to one another in a mutually critical and mutually corrective manner.

The difficulty and, indeed, the impossibility of investigating the possibility of order's existence, logically and methodologically, leads to the final coincidence between Foucault and Deleuze: their shared abandonment of the deconstructionist project over their respective careers. Before demonstrating Deleuze's argument in more detail, I would like to skip ahead and say that, in fact, Deleuze will explicitly find himself unable to adequately elaborate the possibility of order's existence by referring to principles.[7] Consequently, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991) ends abruptly, with a gesture of disavowal rather than resolution and with Deleuze describing any philosophical attempt to explain the possibility of order as "the weakest and emptiest of thoughts" (133), which he had earlier called "the real problem" (89). Although Foucault invests more effort, at a more mature stage of his career, in trying to solve the same problem as Deleuze, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972) is overall a gesture of abandonment as well: "I accept that my discourse may disappear with the figure that has borne it so far" (208). Not long after, in

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[7] By stating that Deleuze abandons deconstruction and the analysis of the possibility of order's existence via principles, I may be exposing myself to criticism: is it not true that Deleuze was concerned with the problem of order all throughout his career, from *Anti-Oedipus* to *What is Philosophy?* and other works? Is it not equally the case that deconstructionist themes can be detected in many other of Deleuze's works, such as *The Logic of Sense* and *Coldness and Cruelty*? The answer to both these questions is a resounding "Yes, of course," but I would still like to maintain that *Empiricism and Subjectivity* is a unique book because it contains a reflexive element that is necessary for deconstruction and that Deleuze's later works omit. In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, in spite of his insistence to the contrary, Deleuze still wonders *what makes the principles possible*, whereas in *The Logic of Sense*, for example, the three syntheses (connective, conjunctive, and disjunctive) are described in terms of how they operate *but not in terms of what makes them possible*. The preoccupation with the possibility of principles and the possibility of order's existence—in my opinion, a reflexive and deconstructive preoccupation—is what distinguishes *Empiricism and Subjectivity* from the rest of Deleuze's books. It is this deconstructive reflexivity that I claim Deleuze subsequently "abandons," meaning he can no longer be classed as deconstructionist according to Rajan's three criteria.

"The Discourse on Language," Foucault will claim, not untruthfully, to change the course of his entire questioning.

The existence of order is a perplexing fact, and attempts to account for the possibility of order quickly escalate into aporetics or, to coin a clumsy term, into a kind of *aporiosis*—an uncontrolled and rapid proliferation of logical inconsistencies and contradictions, a scholarly equivalent of a cytokine storm and auto-immune disaster. Faced with the aporiosis of order, there are three choices: to fall back on a renewed transcendentalism, as Polanyi does, by inferring from the fact of order the formal pre-existence of the ordering principle and the subject of order; to imitate the model of physics and the modernized genetic-empiricism of Latour, according to which the order of the real is susceptible to unproblematic description; or to abandon the issue of the possibility of order's existence altogether. The approaches of Polanyi and Latour, rather than being intrinsically different, are modulations of the same underlying structure of dual control—multiple strata, a universal control principle, a universalizing subject, and all the Same—while abandoning the problem of order's possibility means parting with deconstruction, often in favor of the affirmative poststructuralism. Here, it would be tempting to make a statement and to say that the only real choice is between poststructuralism and deconstruction, which, besides being too simple, would already entail having chosen the former over the latter. Instead, just as deconstruction wrote in the wake of the failures produced by Husserl and Sartre, so the contemporary speculative scholarship operates in the shadows of deconstruction and in the face of the Deleuzian and Foucauldian capitulation before the aporiosis that engulfs any attempt to account for the possibility of order's existence. To write in memory of (rather than in the spirit of) deconstruction, which means attempting to write without dual control, involves, as an initial gesture of laying groundwork, revisiting some of the spaces where deconstruction found its limit. *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* are two such spaces.

Deleuze's Ontological Empiricism: Hallucinating Order

The alternatives explored by Deleuze and Foucault to empiricism and transcendentalism grounded in dual control and universal order were not "revolutionary" in the sense that the word carries today, as full-blown attempts to invent new reality. Instead, proper to the art

of deconstruction, Deleuze and Foucault invented modifications meant to preclude any return to the state of affairs as it was prior to the modification. For Deleuze, an inquiry into the possibility of order's existence should be empirical by adopting *an immanent point of view*—that is, it should show how a structure can transcend itself without presupposing itself as its own inevitable outcome or ground. For Foucault, a transcendental analysis should investigate the *historical* rather than formal a prioris that condition order formations. Overall, the result would be less an elaboration of universal order and more a description of the ubiquitous ordering principles that function via leaps, thresholds, and unbridgeable silences. In this section, I will focus on Deleuze's contribution before covering Foucault afterwards.

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991), Deleuze insists that an inquiry into the possibility of order's existence must be empiricist, meaning that a) "nothing is ever transcendental" (24)—that is, order and ordered entities, such as systems, subjects, and disciplines, must be accounted for without positing any formal a priori conditions for the possibility of order in the subject (29, 64, 85, 87) or in nature (88); and b) everything is a matter of principles (24, 80, 89, 113, 126, 132). Seeing that principles refer to the positive contribution of empiricism, what exactly is a principle for Deleuze?

This is not at all an easy question to answer. First, "principles are not invented" (43), meaning that Deleuze considers principles to be real and, to put it in analytical terms, mind-independent. At the same time, "principles have neither cause nor an origin of their power" (25), and "philosophy has nothing to say on what causes the principles and on the origin of their power" (77). Instead, the existence of principles "presents us with a fact" (114). Deleuze also claims that principles "are inevitably few in number" and makes a strange appeal to Kant for justification: "even Kant did not explain in more detail the number and the kind of categories" (114). So far, we can distinguish three characteristics of principles: they are real, factual, and few.

Seeing that philosophy cannot say anything about the origin of principles, "we should not ask what principles are but rather what they do" (132). However, this situation is not just a byproduct of our epistemological limitations; rather, principles themselves "are not entities; they are functions. They are defined by their effects"—indeed, principles "are purely functional" (133). What is the function of the principles? They establish relations

between particulars (108)—for example, a principle "elects, chooses, designates, and invites" (113) particulars to interact in a certain way—and they constitute artifices (43), systems (80), and subjects (133). In short, the principles are pure functions (rather than beings) that establish order and ordered entities.

Finally, what exactly are artifices, systems, and subjects, all examples of the entities ordered by principles? "To speak like Bergson," Deleuze answers, "let us say that the subject is an imprint, or an impression, left by principles, that it progressively turns into a machine capable of using this impression" (113). Indeed, what defines any ordered entity is its capacity to transcend the conditions of its own creation and to extend the function of the principles that ordered it beyond the principles' initial boundaries (43, 55, 59)—all ordered entities are transgressive of the principles whose function they progressively appropriate and master. Besides being extensive and transgressive, all ordered entities are reflexive, meaning that they develop internal, second-order principles to correct their function of extension (55–65, 85). At last, and one can assume this applies only to the most complex of the ordered entities, they end up "taking over" (129) the inherited functions of the principles and find themselves in a state of madness and delirium, freely extending knowledge as far as it can go and considering the order of order (80–84). To summarize, an ordered entity is an increasingly independent particularization of the ordering principles that engendered the entity and which, at the highest stages of complexity, ends up freely simulating said ordering principles.

What Deleuze proposes in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991) is an ontology of principles, order, and ordered entities—therefore, it would be more accurate to speak of Deleuze's *ontological empiricism*, a label I will use henceforth, rather than simply accepting the designation empiricism. Principles were said to be real, factual, and few, and they were described as pure functions (rather than beings) that establish and organize relations between particulars into increasingly independent, individuated, and complex entities whose ultimate capacity was to freely simulate the ordering principles themselves. Such an account of order seems to have, on the one hand, clear similarities with Polanyi's description: an internal imprint of order within an ordered entity, the gradual mastery of the ordering function, and at last the approximation of the order of God. However, as we will see, all of these points are subtly modified by Deleuze: order is immanent rather than

internal, the mastery of the function is transgressive rather than heuristic, and the free simulation of God is delirious rather than imitative. On the other hand, by simply factualizing the principles rather than providing a transcendental deduction like Kant does, is Deleuze not behaving like a contemporary empiricist thinker, such as Latour, for whom arriving at the principles is unproblematic and all that remains is to write the encyclopedia?

In fact, this is not at all the case, and throughout *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991), in spite of proposing and praising an exclusive focus on function rather than possibility, Deleuze constantly attempts, before ultimately giving up and abandoning the project, to account for how order is possible rather than just explaining what the principles do.[8] To this end, Deleuze establishes a series of isomorphisms by considering multiple formulations of the same problem of order:

> Hume proposes the creation of a science of humanity, but what is really his fundamental project? (21)
>
> the question which will preoccupy Hume is this: *how does the mind become human nature?* (22)
>
> our earlier question can be expressed as follows: how does a collection become a system? (22)
>
> Then again the question may be: *how does the mind become a subject?* How does the imagination become a faculty? (23)

Over the course of the book, the isomorphisms are multiplied, and Deleuze wonders, among other things, how families become a society (39) or how individuals come to form a state (50). These questions are isomorphisms because they share the same cybernetic problem: how is order possible? Therefore, one could extend the list and ask how a set of propositions becomes a discipline or how the sciences become a University. The fact that one can transition between these questions shows that Deleuze is after an ontology of order—rather than attempting to describe the existence of all these specific ordered entities, such as systems, subjects, and universities, Deleuze is attempting to understand the general conditions that make such specific entities possible.

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[8] I would like to emphasize the importance of this statement as I believe this is what distinguishes *Empiricism and Subjectivity* from the rest of Deleuze's works, as I explained more extensively in Footnote 3.

One reason why the questions keep recurring and being reformulated is that Deleuze is never satisfied with any of the answers. For example, on page 64, having asked multiple times how a collection becomes a subject, Deleuze claims that "we are indeed [finally] capable of stating what the idea of subjectivity is." However, a while later, Deleuze poses the question again: "what do we mean when we speak of the subject?" (92) and "How so? . . . When does it become subject" (132)? If the question of subjectivity had already been answered, why keep posing it anew? The reason is that Deleuze burns through multiple lines of reasoning inspired by Hume and ends up discarding all of them—for example, he says that utility is "a fertile principle" for explaining the possibility of order (46) and then claims that "*utility does not explain the institution* [i.e. the ordered entity]" (47), and the same happens with purposiveness (122–133). The problem with all the explanations, including utility, purposiveness, and even Deleuze's favorite faculty, the imagination, is that order cannot be equated with any of the specific functions performed by ordered entities. To treat an end as if it were the condition of possibility would mean transcendentalizing existence, which breaches a core precept of ontological empiricism, namely that there should be nothing transcendental in any legitimate explanation. Instead, Deleuze attempts to account for the possibility of order's existence by way of *immanence*, *transcending*, and *delirium* or *fiction*:

Immanence. Order never proceeds from chaos or disorder to organization. Rather, there is nothing that is not already minimally ordered, and the development of a system or a subject or an institution—these three are all synonyms—always begins with a collection, a group, a heap, a mind, or a memory. In this minimally ordered state, "things are as they appear—a collection without an album, a play without a stage, a flux of perceptions" (22–23). Such minimally ordered entities Deleuze designates as "the given" and states that the axiom of empiricism is not that everything starts with experience but that there is always already "the given" (108), or minimal order.

Besides being "the flux of the sensible, a collection of impressions and images, or a set of perceptions" (87) or any other minimally ordered series, the given is characterized by its *partiality*. Partial elements "exclude one another; they are partial (*partiales*) rather than made up of parts (*partielles*)" (39). This partiality of the given is best understood in conjunction with the idea of the externality of relations, which Deleuze considers to be

Hume's greatest contribution to philosophy and which states that the order and connection of elements within a system cannot be inferred from the elements themselves (x, 66, 98–99, 101, 105, 107). That is, one cannot consider a particular and, in piercing through to its essence, contemplate all the possible relations that the particular could enter into. Instead, the relations between particulars in a system or even a basic series are governed externally by principles and not by the internal constitution of the particulars themselves. Consequently, the integration of partials into a system becomes a major problem because no system is capable of explaining itself by its own composition or purpose (39). Another way of putting this would be to say that order is not premised on resemblance, similarity, or kinship of any kind; rather, resemblance, similarity, and kinship are premised on order. Organization is always externally engendered rather than internally developed, meaning that the order of a particular ordered entity is immanent to the order of the principles in which an ordered entity participates.

Transcending. A minimally ordered series of partials becomes fully ordered as a system or a subject when the partials are integrated in such a way as to be capable of asserting the effects enabled by their grouping beyond the immediacy of their environment. Deleuze calls this function "transcending," which should not be confused with transcendence. Transcending involves three operations: a) inferring from the given something that is not immediately given—"I believe in what I have neither seen nor touched" (24) by maintaining that, for example, "'Caesar is dead,' 'the sun will rise tomorrow,' 'Rome exists'" (27); b) developing second- and third-order rules to correct inferences and to correct the corrections of inferences—"the subject transcends itself, but it is also reflected upon" (85); c) positing independent objects—"we must give the object of the idea an existence which does not depend on the senses. The objects of knowledge must truly be objects" (80). We can see how all manner of institutions could achieve a certain degree of order or systematicity, but only with the emergence of knowledge can order exist in the full. In fact, it would be correct to say that all order involves some kind of knowledge and that where no knowledge is found there can only exist minimally ordered series because any properly ordered entity ends positing its own objects, developing its own rules, and organizing discourse about said objects and rules. Consequently, knowledge is not human- or Man-centric in any way. At the same time, the institutions whose primary

purpose is the organization of knowledge as such, like universities, disciplines, and even thinking subjects, are the privileged objects for the investigation of order because in such institutions all the functions of order, that is of transcending, are developed most explicitly and taken the furthest.

Delirium. It is not only knowledge that is ordered, but all order beyond the minimally ordered series requires knowledge because only knowledge enables transcending the initial boundary and asserting more than what the subject can legitimately say, which is indeed what all ordered entities do. Therefore, seeing that order and knowledge are coextensive, inquiring into the order of knowledge provides privileged access to the problem of order's possibility because one must explain the means by which order essentially orders itself. In the model of physics, which Deleuze passingly endorses (1953/1991, 87) but does not truly adopt, one can investigate objects and their order without paying attention to what makes order possible; not so when it comes to investigating knowledge, in which case the subject of knowledge itself is implicated and must account for its own existence simultaneously as it describes the order of knowledge. Therefore, by investigating the order of knowledge, an ordered entity, which is nothing other than order and knowledge, is forced to reckon with its own conditions of possibility.

Within the framework of ontological empiricism, this recursiveness of order, knowledge, and the subject of order/knowledge accelerates the inquiring ordered entity into acute aporiosis. Without transcendental solutions, order can be said to arise from the minimally ordered series as the given's own capacity to transcend itself, but such a capacity to transcend itself cannot be attributed to the given precisely because that would involve presupposing what one had to explain—and yet, *legitimately* speaking, nothing can come from anywhere else but the given. In short, the given must somehow be able to do what it logically and really cannot do. Consequently, in line with the transgressive function of knowledge, the subject leaps ahead and posits the ultimate externality of order and its principles as the conditions of its own existence. Such a positing of order to which the subject is immanent and which is immanent to nothing but itself involves accepting on the part of the ordered entity that fiction is the principle of principles, which throws the system "into delirious compromises"—"this system is mad delirium" (83). For Deleuze, madness and delirium are technical-epistemological than poetic or clinical concepts: madness is the

resulting condition of a system when it has begun to consider the principles of its own order and is thus plunged into aporiosis, and delirium is the means of reconciling the ensuing contradiction by instituting an external controlling fiction, such as God or World (80–84).

Essentially, Deleuze develops an early version of his own counter-epistemology to Kant's necessary ideas of reason: ultimately ungrounded concepts are not inevitable debris produced by a healthily functioning system, something silly that the system does and that one must excuse the way an adult might indulge a child's occasional whims; instead, such ultimately ungrounded concepts are absolutely vital for the system to reconcile itself with the impossibility of its own order.

To summarize, transcendental accounts of order, which I have earlier exemplified using Polanyi, operate with the following three principles: a) ordering principles are internal to the ordered entity, b) the development of order is heuristic, and c) the end result is adequation between the internal and the external order via imitation of God, the ultimate ordering principle. In short, internalism, heuristics, and imitation. To these three principles, Deleuze's ontological empiricism applies a number of modifications: a) order is immanent rather than internal, b) the development of order is transgressive rather than heuristic, and c) the end result is hallucination and simulation rather than imitation of God. In short, immanence (rather than internalism), transcending (rather than heuristics), and delirium (rather than imitation).

According to the Deleuzian framework of order, there is always minimal order to begin with, and the integration of particulars into any properly ordered entities is not a byproduct of their internal constitution but of an external principle acting upon the minimally ordered series. This is Deleuze's first modification: the internal order of a system depends, at least initially, upon its participation in—that is, upon the system being immanent to—an external order. Then, the development of order is intimately linked to the development of knowledge, which allows the ordered entity to posit the reality of the external beyond what is legitimately sanctioned by the entity's own organization. This is Deleuze's second modification: rather than developing by the slow labor of refining the already-possessed self-order, coming into gradual contact with external order, and meticulously adjudicating between the two, knowledge is formed by transcending the legitimate boundaries of existing order (and by accelerating one's internal capacity that

allows an ordered entity to do so) and positing a greater external reality. Finally, at complex levels of organization, knowledge becomes recursive and focused on the order of knowledge (symmetrically, one could say that advanced ordered entities become preoccupied with the knowledge of order), plunging the ordered entity into aporiosis. This is Deleuze's third modification: the most advanced organizations of knowledge and order, rather than imitating the ultimate ordering principle whose proof they have found within themselves and within the external reality, hallucinate the externality of the external as such—to invoke Hyppolite, "immanence is complete" (1953/1997, 176).

Besides these three modifications—immanence over internalism, transgressing over heuristics, and simulating over imitating—two other consequences are notable: a) order and knowledge are synonyms, for without knowledge there can be only minimally ordered series; and b) immanence, as opposed to transcendentalism or genetic-empiricism and contrary to the contemporary misconceptions (which I will cover in Chapter 5), is strongly, even excessively invested in the reality of exteriority. Order is first affected by an exteriority that orders a minimally ordered series into knowledge, knowledge then plunges into externality by constantly going beyond itself, and finally an ordered entity hallucinates the externality of externality. This seems to be quite different from Deleuze's later works, such as *Expressionism and Philosophy*, where Deleuze describes the mechanics of immanent causation as substance causing itself inward. Perhaps this difference can be explained by the point of view: one can describe immanence as if it were an object that one was standing outside of and observing, which would be the vaunted model of physics, or one can describe immanence from the "immanent point of view" that Deleuze claimed for ontological empiricism and which, in my opinion, is the deconstructionist point of view, or what Foucault called the archaeological method. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, and the logical aporiosis that comes with an immanent point of view is a considerable burden, one that Deleuze himself ends up shirking.

Deleuze's Ontological Empiricism: Remainders

Having thus arrived at fiction as the ultimate principle of principles that makes the existence of order possible—and it is important to remember that fiction involves positing an exteriority to which knowledge/order is immanent and which is immanent to nothing other

than itself—and having encountered madness, delirium, and controlling fictions such as God and World, Deleuze abdicates captaincy and scuttles the boat of ontological empiricism in favor the kind of special pragmatism he develops later on. Indeed, Deleuze concludes *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991) with the following lines: "Philosophy must constitute itself as the theory of what we are doing, not as a theory of what there is. What we do has its principles; and being can only be grasped as the object of a synthetic relation with the very principles of what we do" (133). So much of future Deleuze is contained here, including the endorsement of Spinoza's dictum that one can either preoccupy oneself with the origin of the hammer, which is absurd, or with what the hammer can do. But why exactly are these lines an abandonment of ontological empiricism?

First, any ontology is a theory of what there is in terms of Being, just as any empiricism is also a theory of what there is in terms of the given. If philosophy investigates what we do rather than what there is, it is no longer ontology or empiricism, though of course one could argue that such ontological empiricism is tacitly presupposed by any kind of pragmatic investigation of "what we do" and that Deleuze can only embark on his special brand of pragmatism by disavowing ontological empiricism, an act that allows him to retain the disavowed object through the structure of the ban.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, ontological empiricism culminates in a dead end. Neither the existence of the given nor of the principles is interesting or problematic for Deleuze. What is interesting is that there exists "an accord" between the given and the principles, or "between the powers that are at the origin of the given and the principles that constitute a subject within the given" (109). Understanding this "harmony" between the given and the principles, or between order and knowledge, is "the real problem" (89). However, in the concluding paragraph, Deleuze appears to discard this "agreement" as something that "can only be thought" and that is "undoubtedly the weakest and emptiest of thoughts" (133), proposing instead to focus "what we are doing." Nonetheless, this weakest and emptiest of thoughts is something that Deleuze returns to in his future works, for example in *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967/2006):

> What we call a principle and law is, in the first place, that which governs a particular field; it is in this sense that we speak of an empirical principle or a law. . . . But there is another and quite distinct question, namely in virtue of what is a field governed by

a principle; there must be a principle of another kind, a second-order principle, which accounts for the necessary compliance of the field with the empirical principle. (112) The problem of agreement between the principle and the field is exactly the same problem as of the accord or harmony between the principles and the given. In *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967/2006), Deleuze calls such analysis of second-order principles "transcendental" and the only "specifically philosophical" means of inquiry (111–114), especially because any consideration of conditions—that is, second-order principles—hurls us "headlong beyond to the absolute unconditioned, the 'ground-less' from which the ground itself emerged" (114). It is interesting to note that in *Subjectivity and Empiricism*, the only real philosophical analysis was empirical and anything but transcendental, and in *Coldness and Cruelty* real philosophical inquiry can only be transcendental, yet the fundamental problem in both works is the same, and even the vocabulary of principles is shared. Clearly, Deleuze's opinion on what constitutes the proper philosophical method changes over time and culminates in "transcendental empiricism" rather than just the one or the other. What may have influenced this re-discovery of the value of the transcendental for Deleuze was precisely that ontological empiricism could not approach the real problem of the accord between order and knowledge in any way. Ontological empiricism, with its focus on transcending, culminates in hallucinations and makes the nature of these hallucinations entirely inaccessible because they are the byproduct of an unexplainable leap in all knowledge/order entities. For ontological empiricism, *the most important thing that an ordered entity does*—namely, deploying the transcending power of knowledge premised on the agreement between the given and the principles—*escapes all inquiry* due to the very structure of transcending and the prohibition on transcendental thinking.

The other issue with ontological empiricism in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991) is what the text leaves untouched, namely language and time, although Deleuze does hint at the temporal element of ordered entities by saying, for example, that "the subject, at root, is the synthesis of time—the synthesis of the present and the past in light of the future" (93; see also 96; Deleuze also returns to the issues of language and time in relation to order, knowledge, and madness in *The Logic of Sense*). Any development of order beyond the minimally ordered series involves the ordered entity acquiring a sense of time and a sense of language: claiming that Caesar died in the past, that Rome stands today,

and or that the sun will rise tomorrow designates the arrow of time, while the positing of objects as independent entities entails the capacity to possess a discourse that would designate, articulate, and investigate said objects. The fact that language and time in relation to knowledge and order are not covered by Deleuze is not exactly problem; rather, it shows to what extent *Empiricism and Subjectivity* exists as a very basic, general sketch of certain philosophical problems that face any properly deconstructionist analysis—that is, an analysis of knowledge and order premised on an immanent point of view.

Concluding with Ontological Empiricism

Against the structure of dual control and its modulations as exclusive universalism, inclusive universalism, and total universalism, I proposed to investigate a different framework for the order of knowledge that was obliquely put forward by deconstruction. More specifically, I found that, as a first step, one could begin to elaborate this framework by looking into Deleuze's early book on ontological empiricism, a move that I thought was justified due to the book's thematic and methodological similarity with Foucault's archaeological works, whose pertinence to deconstruction was established by Rajan. In Deleuze's ontological empiricism, I found three important modifications to the structure of dual control:

> a) order is immanent rather than internal, leading to the reality of exteriority;
> b) knowledge is transgressive rather than heuristic, leading to interruption rather than continuity;
> c) mastery is simulation rather than imitation, leading to fiction rather than universals.

For Deleuze, order and knowledge, which are synonyms, do not proceed from the ineffable to the enlightened or from non-order (or non-knowledge) to order (or knowledge) but moves from minimally ordered series towards properly ordered entities. What distinguishes properly ordered entities from the minimally ordered series is the development of knowledge, which always begins with a minimally ordered series being acted upon by an external ordering principle. Consequently, learning is neither internal heuristics nor the registering of external effects but the mastering of an externally engendered ordering principle. Such mastering is neither immediate nor continuous, instead being based on

transcending and the ordered entity going beyond the legitimate limits set by its own ordering principle. A complex form of organization, an ordered entity reflects on the possibility of its own knowledge and enters a state of aporiosis, which it can only be resolved by hallucinating controlling fictions of absolute exteriority, such as World and God.

In general, the order of knowledge described by radical empiricism is characterized by thresholds, leaps, and a radical exteriority of order to the ordered entities. Instead of calling this operation "transcending," which risks considerable confusion, it may be more accurate to say that a major feature of order is surplus, the capacity to engender subjects, disciplines, and institutions where previously only minimally ordered series existed. Rather than there being a universal order that extends itself and its powers across reality, there are ubiquitous principles of ordering that function unevenly, discontinuously, and perhaps even contingently, leaving behind any number of incompossible ordered entities that are self-reflecting and outwardly directed. Such entities can reconstruct with a degree of accuracy the conditions that made them possible, but this is indeed the difficulty and the limit of ontological empiricism, whose ban on transcendental inquiry for fear of allowing dual control back into the picture precludes it from analyzing its own power of knowledge-/order-making. Indeed, the very agreement between knowledge and order, instead of being elaborated upon, can only be exteriorized and further displaced until one reaches the level of phantasms, but then what? This is exactly where Foucault makes headway with and beyond ontological empiricism by means of his transcendental positivism.

Foucault's Transcendental Positivism

In the chapter on "The Limits of Representation" (235–270) in *The Order of Things* (1966/2005), specifically in section six on the "Objective Syntheses" (264–270), Foucault identified "the emergence of a transcendental theme" (264) and "the discovery of the transcendental field" (265) as the major event to whose dynasty "our thought still belongs" (264) and which is "correlative with a certain number of arrangements proper to the modern episteme" (266). In the simplest sense, the transcendental field entails knowledge coming into contact with a new category of entities that participate in the order of knowledge without being locatable within said order. In other words, knowledge discovers an

exteriority that is not without reach but which is, nonetheless, unavailable directly. From the time of its emergence at the end of the 18th century, this tangible yet indeterminate exteriority, or the transcendental field, has inaugurated and conditioned the modern form of Western knowledge, which adopted the transcendental theme as its constituent problem, one that has engendered two intertwined solutions or rather two kinds of transcendental inquiries.

The first transcendental inquiry, which Foucault referred to as *criticism*, "is the analysis of the transcendental subject" that aims to uncover "the formal conditions of experience in general" (264) by finding within the make-up of the subject the processes that allow the subject to participate in the order of knowledge without themselves being clear-cut parts of the order of knowledge. Today, when scholars passingly refer to the transcendental method, they usually have this subject-centered (Kantian) procedure in mind, which Deleuze described as being concerned with how the subject receives the given. The second kind of transcendental inquiry investigates "transcendental objectives (the Word of God, Will, Life)" (266) and "the conditions of possibility of the object and its existence" (265). Foucault called this object-centered transcendental inquiry *positivism*. In short, between criticism and positivism, both of which take up the transcendental theme, Foucault identified two major differences: criticism situates the transcendentals with the subject and investigates the a priori syntheses that are part of the subject's interiority, whereas positivism situates the transcendentals with the object and investigates the a posteriori principles that function in the objective exteriority. Although overtly hostile to one another, the two transcendental inquiries "share the same archaeological subsoil" and "lend one another support and reinforce one another" (266)—for example, by underscoring the very subject-object division that, according to Foucault, culminated in the emergence of Man and his proper sciences.

It is not difficult to see that Foucault's initial sympathies lie with the second kind transcendental inquiry, which also explains why Foucault had referred to himself as a positivist[9] (1969/1972, 125), and the same leanings are equally evident in Deleuze's

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[9] By calling himself a positivist, Foucault was being rather mischievous, seeing that the kind of transcendental positivism he referred to has nothing to do with positivism in its usual sense as an approach to knowledge that privileges experimentally verified and mathematically grounded knowledge over all other forms of

ontological empiricism discussed earlier. However, both Deleuze and Foucault subvert the positivist form of transcendental inquiry by foregrounding the aporetic nature of transcendental knowledge and approaching transcendental order by way of the concept of madness. For Deleuze, as I have already discussed, madness begins when an ordered entity, or simply knowledge, reflects on its own order—in other words, when knowledge encounters the transcendental field—and, unable to grasp what it already knows, institutes controlling fictions that it must approach as true. Foucault, as I will show below, has his own twist on madness, which he defines as the state of being unable to hold down an ordering principle due to a loss of equilibrium between the eye and the mind. In both cases, whether as delirium or aphasia, madness is a transcendental crisis, or knowledge becoming sick with the transcendental.

The Madness between Order and Order

In the "Preface" to *The Order of Things* (1966/2005), Foucault offered some brief remarks on the question of methodology, which was otherwise absent from that particular book, but the manner in which he chose to begin said methodological remarks is peculiar. After opening the "Preface" with the famous recounting of Borges's invented Chinese encyclopedia and discussing language as the "unthinkable space" (xviii) where the most bizarre ordering categories can meet, and having just referred to "the power of enchantment" (xvii) possessed by even the most basic and mundane ordered series, Foucault mentions the "uneasiness" (xix–xx) that accompanies heterotopias and launches into a brief discussion of aphasia that peters off into a description of the Western fantasy of China as the land of eternal order. Then, satisfied that the ground is prepared, Foucault provides more technical reflections on the nature of his project. But what is the purpose of this excursus on aphasia and fantasy?

knowing. However, playfully yet aggressively colonizing the designation and territory of your opponent was common to French theory and deconstruction, with Deleuze's naming of himself as an empiricist being another example of such a strategy. To honor this tradition and to emphasize the deconstructionist approach of reworking an epistemological object from the inside, I have chosen to refer to Deleuze as an ontological empiricist and to Foucault as a transcendental positivist, with each of these two-word designations being a perversion according to the good sense of the history of philosophy.

According to Foucault, what characterizes "the sick mind . . . whose language has been destroyed" (xx) is the compulsion to keep ordering by endlessly arranging, dissolving, and rearranging the objects and categories between which the mind can no longer discern a satisfactory correlation. Therefore, the distinguishing feature of madness is not disorder or an "incongruous" or "inappropriate" order (ix)—rather, madness occurs when the mind cannot sustain a common ordering principle among the "so very different" series that it encounters everywhere. This suggests not one but two features of madness: a) the mind cannot synthesize, and b) the mind is equally capable of discovering too many differences and too many series. Indeed, it is not at all clear which comes first. Does the mind lose its capacity to synthesize before or after it starts seeing series and differences everywhere? Is madness the result of a lack originating from a diminished power to synthesize or an excess originating from a surplus of perception? Is the mind too weak or the eye too strong?

Foucault goes on to state that "there is nothing more tentative . . . than the process of establishing an order between things" (xxi), strongly suggesting that our uneasiness when faced with heteroclite phenomena comes from the fact that the stability of our own ordering processes is questionable and we are perfectly aware of this, which is why Western society has needed to fantasize about "a civilization of dikes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky" (xx). In fact, the fixation with China that Foucault described was only a late example in a series of Western fantasies that stretch back to the initial obsession with Egyptology, whose inception in the early years of the 19th century coincided with the coming-into-prominence of the transcendental theme. Besides the specific tropes of Egypt and China, who is not familiar with the general theme of the adventuring and unsettled Westerner who goes to the Orient to rediscover peace of mind by encountering the eternal order that has been lost in the industrialist Occident? Today, however, seeing that postcolonial theory has deprived many Western academics of exactly this external avenue for relief, and knowing also that the number of series requiring synthesis has increased beyond count, is it a surprise that an *internal* palliative to madness has been found in the form of the voice that speaks universal order to the attentive scholar? Could it be that the theory of immanence that is so popular today is little more than a coping strategy now that all forms of orientalism have been discredited in the academy—a sort of endogenous

exoticism or an in-house fetish that brings back the possibility of eternal and trustworthy order without the need to look to the East?

The description of madness and its palliatives in *The Order of Things* is not just a satirical criticism of the University of the West and its transcendental, encyclopedic, and geometric pretenses. Instead, madness is the problem which the archaeological project responds to because the order of knowledge has been fundamentally saturated with this imbalance between perception and synthesis ever since the collapse of the universal mathesis at the beginning of the 19th century. Moreover, the state of madness is an academic question concerning the order of the University and its disciplines as much as it is an issue that pertains to the condition of society more generally. I will illustrate the former with an example from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and the latter with a passage from *The Order of Things*.

The Archaeology begins with Foucault describing the extant condition of the historical sciences of his day. On the one hand, historians have turned to "long periods" (1969/1972, 3) and "vast unities" (4), but on the other hand, certain historical approaches have been producing "more and more discontinuities" and "irruption of events" (6). Such a state of affairs in the historical sciences is highly reminiscent of the aphasiac's predicament, with the eye running ahead of the mind as the latter vainly scrambles to shore up its failing powers of synthesis. In traditional history, with "the series being known, it was simply a question of defining the position of each element in relation to the other elements" (7). Not anymore as "the problem now is to constitute series" and "to describe the relations between different series, thus constituting series of series" (7)—that is, the problem is to work out the ordering principles as well as the principle for the principles, or the entire edifice of order from top to bottom, which, as we saw with Deleuze, is a delirious undertaking. The historical sciences today, with their constant reworking and retuning of categories, objects, and methods, appear to be similar to the projects of aphasiacs: "no sooner have they [the objects to be grouped] been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again" (1966/2005, xx). Indeed, no sooner has a *longue durée* been established than any number of microhistories fractures the dream of historical periodization once again.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault described a structure of order where, on the one hand, there are "the fundamental codes of culture," and, on the other hand, there exist "the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations" (xxii; xxii–xxiv). Both parts of the structure serve the same purpose of providing the subjects of knowledge with confidence and security that their ordering principles are correct, with one part designating the quotidian procedures for regular life and the other framing these procedures in relation to general principles and universal laws that diminish the apparent contingency, arbitrariness, and ephemerality of the regular order. Between these two sources of mental fortitude, however, there lies a "fundamental" and "intermediary" domain that is "more confused, more obscure, and probably less easy to analyse," but which Foucault makes into his target nonetheless because here, "between the already 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge" (xxii), resides "order itself" as well as "the pure experience of order and of its modes of being" (xxiii). In this middle domain of *non-order*, order is perpetually sick, not because it is poorly established but in the sense that it keeps changing and producing wondrous objects with a precarious lifespan.

Foucault's two examples, as well as the previous discussion on Deleuze, reveal two features of madness in relation to knowledge and order: a) for the critical-transcendental inquiry, madness is correlated with an investigation into the order of order and the inability to arrive at dependable—that is, ultimately grounded—conditions for order's existence, a feature that characterizes multiple disciplines belonging to the humanities and the social science today, including history; and b) for the positivist-transcendental inquiry, madness is constituted by a loss of correlation between the perceiving eye and the ordering mind due to the discovery of a domain of non-order that is infinitely populated with objects to be ordered. When Foucault refers to the purity of this domain, it is important to remember that he is not advocating for a spiritualism that searches for the clearing where Being momentarily reveals itself without contamination, a phenomenology that yearns after a consciousness with unburdened access to the real, or a Kantianism that seeks to identify the formal powers of the subject isolated from empirical interferences. Rather, the pure order that exists in the domain of madness between order and order reveals "the stark fact there exists [sic] . . . things that are in themselves capable of being ordered" (xxii)—that is, the pure experience of order is the encounter with the thing that has not yet been ordered

and that awaits the ensemble of the ordering eye and mind but which is not, for the fact of needing to be ordered, devoid of order. The availability of things for order entails a minimum of order, or "the fact, in short, that order *exists*" (xxii). Without the minimal *existence* of order before the *possibility* of order, there could be no order to begin with, and the very basic existence of things awaiting order hints at the perpetual incompletion, and even inadequacy, of the ordering structures, which rest on a ground that not only prepares all possible orders but escapes them.

Just as the two transcendental inquiries, the critical and the positivist, were said to reinforce each other, it should be evident how the Deleuzian and the Foucauldian accounts of order and madness also serve to strengthen their common archaeological soil. For Deleuze, the minimal existence of order was itself a given fact, and from this minimal existence of order Deleuze could arrive at the delirious fictions that an ordered system must institute to account for its own ordering principles. For Foucault, meanwhile, the opposite is true: starting from the fact that order maintains fantasies and fictions to assure itself of its own correctness, Foucault goes on to discover the radicality of an existence before possibility, or an existence without possibility—an existence that makes possibility possible. In a way, Deleuze and Foucault factualize the different ends of a shared spectrum, which allows each of them to investigate the aporetic structure of the position opposite to that of the fact from which they begin. Combining their two insights regarding order and madness, one ends up somewhere quite strange, where *the effects of order are its own ground* (delirium) and *order exists without possibility* (aphasia).

Archaeology of the Transcendental Exteriority

Regarding Foucault's discovery of the domain of non-order between order and order that houses the pure existence of minimally ordered objects available for ordering without being disordered, two questions remain: what are the benefits of investigating this slippery domain, and how could one even begin to do so, seeing that everything about this transcendental exteriority defies lucidity?

Foucault's wish to not "remain the same" (1969/1972, 17) is extremely well-known and recurs as a leitmotif throughout all his works. It exists as early as his archaeological period and as late as the posthumous "intellectual testament" (Szakolczai 1998, 259) on

Kant and the Enlightenment (1984), where Foucault associated the "patient labor [of] giving form to our impatience for liberty" with the "critical task" of investigating the "limits that are imposed on us" and experimenting "with the possibility of going beyond them" (50). For Foucault, the purpose of writing and pursuing knowledge was always connected to an ethics of emancipation understood as "an attitude that consists, first, in thinking that no power goes without saying, that no power, of whatever kind, is obvious or inevitable, and that consequently no power warrants being taken for granted" (1979–1980/2014, 77). It is important not get fixated on the term power here—one could very fruitfully and justifiably replace it with "order" and arrive at the statement that no order goes without saying, no order is obvious or inevitable, and no order warrants being taken for granted. However, the desire to not remain the same by keeping open the possibility of a different order is not for Foucault a personal, individual disposition—instead, the patient labor of liberty through the transgression of boundaries involves an engagement with history at the impersonal level of knowledge. Nowhere is this more evident than in Foucault's celebrated essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971/1984), where the mission of the genealogist is described as "liberating a profusion of lost events" (81), "the myriad of events" (81), the "countless lost events" (89; see also 76, 80, 86, 89). Such a *historical* emancipation, or an emancipation through the belaboring of the historical, that involves liberating lost orders of knowledge can only happen via an engagement with the domain of madness, or non-order, that exists between order and order. Describing this objective transcendental field in *The Order of Things* (1966/2005), Foucault claimed that only through this domain, "as though emancipating itself," can society "free itself sufficiently to discover that these orders [that are taken for granted] are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones"—indeed, in this transcendental domain of non-order "order liberates itself" (xxii).

Whether in our day and age such hopes sound quaint or not is besides the point. More important are the facts that a) Foucault associated considerable ethical hopes with investigating the transcendental domain where order is sick and uncertain new objects emerge and that b) these ethical hopes form a thread that runs throughout the works of Foucault, liberating, perhaps, a certain lost Foucault who is neither a resistance intellectual nor a neoliberal identitarian but a deconstructionist. The ethics of not remaining the same and the attitude of taking no order for granted by means of engaging with the order of

knowledge and history—these are not the values of an existentialist project focused on the personal nor the values of a neoliberal marketer pushing individual customization but the ethos of a fundamentally impersonal undertaking that folds the interiority of consciousness into the objective exteriority of the transcendental order of knowledge that can be tapped into through history.

This tapping into the transcendental exteriority of knowledge, or non-order, Foucault called "archaeology" (1966/2005, xxiv). It is interesting that, in spite of employing the concept of madness and specifically the paradigm of aphasia as his hermeneutic key to unsettle the established attitudes to knowledge and order, Foucault did not take up the psychological or the psychoanalytic vocabulary to study the middle domain between order and order. Instead, Foucault used the vocabulary of thresholds, levels, and degrees of scientificity common to "the mainstream of French epistemology since Bachelard" (Machado 1992, 3) and evident in the works of, for example, Canguilhem and Althusser, although the purpose of archaeology was implicitly critical of the French epistemological tradition due to the latter's normative submission to science (3–5). Writing on Foucault, Deleuze described his "major achievement" as converting "phenomenology into epistemology" (1986/2006, 109), but of course one should not take this statement literally—in fact, Foucault's archaeological epistemology only makes sense if one bears in mind the frameworks of Deleuze's ontological empiricism or Foucault's own transcendental positivism, which are nothing like what usually passes for epistemological scholarship.

On what ground can Foucault's archaeology claim to investigate the transcendental exteriority of non-order where order exists without being possible? Unlike Hegel, Foucault did not describe the genesis of order and knowledge, and unlike Kant, he did not perform a transcendental deduction to arrive at the formal powers of the subject. Instead, being on the side of the positivist, or empiricist, transcendental inquiry, Foucault had to start in the realm of a posteriori entities. However, differently from the established positivist sciences—"noble sciences, rigorous sciences, sciences of the necessary"—that privilege "mathematics, cosmology, and physics" (1966/2005, ix), Foucault focused "on the so many dubious, still imprecise disciplines that are perhaps doomed for ever to remain below the threshold of scientificity" (1969/1972, 178), such as "psychopathology," "Natural

History," and "political economy"—all of them "pseudo-sciences." At the same time, Foucault was adamant that the pseudo-disciplines serve only a *transitional* function: "such disciplines may . . . serve as starting-points" (178; also 26), but they receive only "a provisional privilege" (30) because the point is to arrive at "the description of positivities" (178), which is why, all things considered, "archeology does not describe disciplines." In other words, the ends of archaeology are not empiricist: "I shall not place myself inside these dubious unities in order to study their internal configuration or their secret contradictions" (26). The archaeologist is only temporarily a researcher before reverting back to being a philosopher. Beginning at the opposite end of the spectrum from the noble sciences—it is important to emphasize that, distance to the noble sciences notwithstanding, Foucault still operates *within* the spectrum of academically acceptable knowledge— archaeology uses the pseudo-disciplines for its own ends, namely to scope out the transcendental exteriority, or the positivity beyond the pseudo-disciplines (169).

This is easier said than done, and Foucault is at his most elusive, some would say at his most confused, when it comes to stating what exactly positivities are. To begin with, as we already saw, a positivity is accessible through the study of pseudo-disciplines, but this does not mean that positivities and pseudo-disciplines have an exclusive connection. On the one hand, "positivities are not merely the doublets of established disciplines" (180)—by arriving at the positivity, one does not grasp the same pseudo-discipline but at a more philosophically respectable or abstract level that happens to be the ontological mirror the empirical. On the other hand, positivities can just as much underlie sciences as they underlie disciplines and pseudo-disciplines. In fact, positivities "can be identified, therefore, neither as sciences, nor as scarcely scientific disciplines, nor as distant prefigurations of sciences to come, nor as forms that exclude any scientificity from the outset" (181). The only privilege that the pseudo-disciplines have in relation to positivities is that, when "dealing with relatively unformalized groups of discourses" (30), the positivity upon which a body of knowledge depends is not yet covered over. Perhaps it would not be too much to make the following inference: the relation between a body of knowledge and the positivity is one of *dissimulation*, with more scientifically acceptable bodies of knowledge succeeding more thoroughly at such dissimulation.

Beginning to describe positivities in more affirmative terms, Foucault singles out two initial qualities: a) "the positivity of a discourse . . . characterizes its unity throughout time, and well beyond individual oeuvres, books, and texts" (126); and b) "it defines a limited space of communication" (126). Unity and communication, the two functions of a positivity—Foucault seems to be hinting, overall, at a function of *control* that is performed by positivities within the terrain of knowledge. Perhaps somewhat frustratingly, however, instead of specifying more closely how positivities control bodies of knowledge associated with them, Foucault switches terminology and states that the "positivity plays the role of what might be called a *historical a priori*" (127). This gives Foucault more breathing room because now he can spend a considerable amount of time discussing the fact that the *historical* a priori is nothing like the *formal* a priori. The latter "extends without contingency," whereas the historical a priori is not an "inert, smooth, neutral element" and does not appear as "a monotonous, endless plain" (128). The reader must once again rely on inference by opposition: a positivity involves contingency and is jagged and discontinuous rather smooth and continuous. Then, when it is time for Foucault to actually say out loud what the historical a priori consists of, he predictably switches terms again and proposes to rename the historical a priori as the "*archive*" (128). Once again, the archive is described negatively: it is not "the sum of all the texts" and it is not "the institutions, which . . . make it possible to record and preserve" (128–129). Following the same procedure of assuming a positive description via negation, we could say that the archive *is* some sort of a totality related to recording and preserving, but in a very different manner than what is understood by these terms usually. As before, Foucault does spare the minimal effort to provide hints at what the archive is on its own terms: "the archive is a particular level," it "cannot be described in its totality" and "emerges in fragments, regions, and levels," and it establishes "differences" and "the play of distinctions" (128–131). Finally, Foucault reasserts that archaeology operates "in the element of the archive (131) and, satisfied that his work is done, moves on to a new part of the book.

No matter how much love one holds for Foucault, it is difficult to not find this conceptual analysis somewhat lacking. And yet, it is not without important content. Foucault moves through three terms that are treated as synonyms: positivity, the historical a priori, and the archive. For the sake of clarity, I will abbreviate them as *positivity*, seeing

that the term receives more attention than the rest and recurs at different parts of the book. The following features of positivity were briefly mentioned by Foucault:

a) Positivities underlie bodies of knowledge, such as sciences, disciplines, and pseudo-disciplines, but cannot be identified with them.

b) Bodies of knowledge relate to positivities in the form of dissimulation, with greater degrees of dissimulation being indicative of greater scientificity.

c) Positivities control bodies of knowledge by endowing them with unity and defining their space of communication.

d) Positivities themselves involve contingency and discontinuity.

e) Positivities are incomplete totalities that cannot be known exhaustively and that, rather than preserving, function to fragment or differentiate bodies of knowledge.

The above list does present a certain kind of image of positivities. Another feature that Foucault mentions frequently but which is difficult to pinpoint in a quotation is that positivities work at the level of the *existence* of bodies of knowledge rather than their possibility. The meaning of this assertion, however, remains unclear, other than indicating that positivities belong to the transcendental exteriority of non-order where order exists before being possible.

Luckily, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault tries his hand at defining positivities one more time, in the chapter on "Science and Knowledge" (178 –195). Remember that earlier Foucault had stated that archaeology worked in the domain of the archive. Now, Foucault claims that "archaeology tries to describe not the specific structures of science, but the very different domain of *knowledge*" (195). Indeed, from early on in the chapter Foucault gradually passes from positivity to knowledge, establishing the last and the ultimate synonym in his sliding vocabulary: positivity, the historical a priori, the archive, and knowledge. While still speaking of positivities, Foucault says that positivities are "rules" (181) that "form the precondition of what is later revealed as an item of knowledge or an illusion" (182). Then, Foucault passes into his description of knowledge, which in the French terminology he refers to as *savoir* rather than *connaissance*. The definition of knowledge includes most features that were previously attributed to positivities in a haphazard manner: knowledge is "the domain constituted by the different objects that will or will not acquire a scientific status," knowledge is "the space" and "the

field of coordination" that controls discourse, and finally all knowledge relates to "a particular discursive practice" and vice versa (182–183). The last point on the connection between knowledge and discursive practices seems to already point Foucault towards a genealogical direction—could it be said that his inability to arrive at a satisfactory definition of positivity *forces* Foucault to look for alternative means of analysis?—but the other features of knowledge closely resemble what has been attributed to positivities earlier on.

An important moment for Foucault occurs when he claims that "knowledge is not an epistemological site that disappears in the science that supersedes it"—rather, "science is localized in a field of knowledge" (184). Earlier, I cited Machado (1992), who claimed that Foucault, while employing the terminology of French epistemology, distanced himself from said tradition by de-prioritizing science. There could not be a clearer indication of this than the quotation just provided, according to which Foucault encloses science as a limited territory within the vast, unavailable, and jagged terrain of knowledge. If there is one thing to be taken away regarding Foucault's idea of knowledge, it is that a lot of discursive configurations are knowledge, but not all knowledge adds up to disciplines or sciences, and the totality of disciplines and sciences forms only a small part of the entire archive of knowledge. Rather than being fully available for encyclopedic mapping, this historically a priori archive can be carved up into fuzzy positivities or spaces of communication that involve a variety of bodies of knowledge with different degrees of scientificity or dissimulation of their conditions of existence.

Actually, I must retract what I have just said: Foucault does add one last synonym to his sliding vocabulary, namely the episteme (191–192). First, the episteme is an overarching term whose definition includes "the analysis of discursive formations, of positivities, and knowledge in their relation with epistemological figures" (191). Second, Foucault proceeds in his usual way, initially by offering a negative definition—the episteme is not "a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge . . . a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand"—and then a hint of something positive—the episteme is "the total set of relations that unite . . . epistemological figures" via "the distribution of . . . thresholds." Basically, the episteme is not *connaissance*, it is *savoir*. Foucault is even more curt when it comes to the episteme than he was about

the archive. And so, as a reader one is left just as amazed at the idea of the transcendental exteriority of non-order and just as perplexed and confused as to how archaeology is said to investigate it.

Concluding with Foucault's Transcendental Positivism

In spite of the rather haphazard conclusion to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault's notion of the transcendental exteriority of non-order that exists between order and order and can be glimpsed by investigating pseudo-disciplines because the latter reveal the seams of non-order before it is ordered is an exceptional philosophical accomplishment, one in whose light a great deal of contemporary speculative scholarship operates, as my subsequent chapters will show. Perhaps I was wrong to state that Foucault offered "an advance" where Deleuze's ontological empiricism ran into a dead-end. Instead, Foucault also runs into a dead-end, unable to explain how the existence of order before possibility, as non-order, can be accounted for from within ordered knowledge, but he reaches the limit having started from the opposite point of the spectrum than Deleuze, in this way revealing another half of the major aporia that faces any deconstructionist framework that attempts to explain the order of knowledge without pretending to stand outside it and wield the universal gaze.

Deleuze showed how an inquiry into the possibility of order, premised on factualizing the existence of order, is ultimately unable to account for its own principles of ordering. Foucault, having factualized the fiction of the ordering principles and the possibility of order, demonstrated that the existence of order is only available as a looming terrain that occasionally, contingently, discontinuously throws up new objects for analysis that the ordering entity struggles to endow with any degree of stability and permanence. In fact, the scientificity of knowledge—that is, the independence, the dependability, and the verifiability of a body of knowledge—is proportionate to its success in dissimulating its dependence upon this ultimately untrustworthy transcendental exteriority that never ceases to transform itself and its objects. Between Deleuze and Foucault, knowledge functions as the *simulation* of the ordering principles and the *dissimulation* of the existence of non-order.

This disquieting image of the order of knowledge could not be further from the comforts offered by the universal voice and the scholarship premised on dual control. At the same time, not everything about the various forms of universalism is obliterated by the Deleuze-Foucault juggernaut; on the contrary, one cannot help but find some elements confirmed. Foucault cannot put his methodology into words, but scholars have recognized that such methodology, though not at all articulable, does encourage interesting research, which essentially confirms Polanyi's idea that learning is a tacit endeavour and knowledge involves a silence that cannot be spoken. Meanwhile, the transcendental exteriority, which Foucault cannot quite grasp but which he approximates with a sliding vocabulary, does have resonance with Latour's methodology of registering the effects of actors as a means of sounding out the terrain of various alien actants. In spite of these similarities, one should also not overstate the correctness of Polanyi and Latour—learning, though tacit, is still simulation rather than imitation as argued by Deleuze, and the contouring of the transcendental exteriority, rather than being transparent and easily available, is a discontinuous, jagged, and aphasiac undertaking as described by Foucault.

What I cannot do, in all honesty, is find something positive to say in *scholarly* terms of the kind of total universalism espoused by Grosz and some other contemporary ontologists. Perhaps it is *morally* commendable to encourage the attitude that the world, the universe, and the real are easily accessible without the need for context, education, and even much effort, seeing that we live in a society that has for centuries weaponized false thresholds of knowledge to maintain various forms of exclusion against dispossessed populations. Nonetheless, substituting exclusivism with an image of knowledge that erases the most challenging aspects of thought by replacing the hard work of epistemological self-reflection with statements whose primary purpose is *to please* is a poor solution. The order of knowledge is extremely unyielding to human cognition, and clearly this difficulty should not be further exacerbated by instituting political boundaries masquerading as scholarly limits, but confusing meaningful institutional reforms at the level of knowledge organization with problems at the level of the existence of thought benefits no-one and only displaces the real issue, which is that education should be freely and equally available without political, economical, and social limitations. Knowledge institutions need to be

without limits and conditions, but the opacity of the transcendental archive is a different matter.

It is by highlighting this opacity of non-order and the troubled reality of knowledge formation via simulation and dissimulation that Deleuze and Foucault, and in larger terms deconstruction as well, remain just as relevant for the present century as they were for the last one, if not, in fact, being more relevant now, when writing encyclopedias and inventing bespoke worlds to order has become a common occupation among speculative scholars. As I showed in the last chapter, Latour continuously dismisses deconstruction as something that breaks reality apart into categories and, therefore, hierarchies, but—and perhaps this is true only according to my own misguided interpretation—the early works of Deleuze and Foucault are a *celebration* of knowledge creation in light of the nigh-impossible difficulties presented by the reality of non-order—nothing is more hard-won than a little bit of order to depend on. What is, however, extremely problematic is the normalization of aphasia that characterizes contemporary scholarship, with new and absolute universal orders appearing and disappearing faster than they can be subjected to investigation and criticism in order to reclaim from the madness of non-order a minimally stable ground for thought, speculation included, to stand on.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I proposed to consider a different order of knowledge—that is, different to the structure of universal order and dual control—by considering Deleuze's *ontological empiricism* and Foucault's *transcendental positivism*. According to my reading, ontological empiricism attacks the standard critical-transcendental inquiry by factualizing the existence of the given and then demonstrating that an ordered system, such as the subject or the University, cannot account for the possibility of order by investigating its own ordering principles. Rather than encountering within itself the ground for its own knowledge that would be uncontaminated with itself—in short, the formal a priori—an ordered entity is inevitably led to positing an exteriority that conditions the ordered entity. This posited exteriority functions as the ordered entity's possibility of order—that is, an exterior condition becomes the internal possibility, resulting in two consequences: the interiority of knowledge always points outwards to an exteriority, but the exteriority, once investigated,

is encountered as the subject's own reflection, cancelling the exteriority of the exterior condition that the subject was seeking to grasp and pushing the subject to look for a greater, deeper, more independent exteriority. This search for the exteriority of exteriority culminates in aporiosis and delirium, and ultimately the ordered entity must posit an exteriority that it could not investigate but which it must imagine and believe in, leading to the principle of fiction as the ultimate ground for the possibility of order's existence.

Transcendental positivism proceeds differently, by factualizing the possibility of order and the need for fantasies and then showing that, between all the established and dependable bodies of ordered knowledge, from the daily codes of regular life to scientific paradigms, there is a domain of non-order where order exists in the radical sense as awaiting to be ordered without, for that matter, being disordered or devoid of order. This domain where order simply, radically exists without possibility—before any possibility is possible—is fundamentally resistant to ordering knowledge and appears as an unstable, contingency-ruled, and discontinuous totality, or archive, that looms beyond all established bodies of knowledge and nourishes them with basic objects that are later converted into series, groupings, and forms. All possible bodies of knowledge set themselves up in contradistinction to this domain of pure, contingent order, and any investigation of this existence of non-order from the position of established knowledge produces aphasia, the loss of stable ordering categories and ordering language, provoking increasing anxiety and loss of trust in organized knowledge. Consequently, all possible knowledge, though it passes through the domain of non-order, resists depending on this domain and strives to extract a measure of stability that non-order itself does not possess.

Between ontological empiricism and transcendental positivism, the following image of the order of knowledge takes shape:

a) Order, which is synonymous with knowledge, proceeds from order to order rather than from silence to discourse or Being to Thought.

b) The possibility of knowledge rests on simulating the exterior ordering principles that condition the ordered entity, principles whose exteriority is ultimately guaranteed by the institution of controlling fictions, such as world or God, set up by the ordered entity itself. In short, the effects of knowledge are its own ground, at least when it comes to fundamental principles.

c) The existence of non-order involves no prior possibility, and the objects to be ordered exist in a domain of contingency, rupture, and discontinuity that is neither ordered nor devoid of order. The scientificity of a body of knowledge is measured by how successfully it dissimulates its dependence on this radical existence of non-order without prior possibility.

The uneasiness produced by such an image of the order of knowledge is considerable. On the one hand, knowledge dissimulates the existence of order in its radical or pure state—that is, as contingency that is neither ordered nor disordered—that knowledge can barely comprehend. On the other hand, knowledge simulates its own possibility, which it locates outside of itself but can never encounter, increasingly searching for the impossible. The real and contingent ground is only poorly covered up, and a stable and necessary ground is only partially successful. In such a state of affairs, any ordered body of knowledge is an exceptional accomplishment, but also the most transient and false of accomplishments, and in general any respite from delirium and aphasia comes at the cost of multiple procedures of falsification.

Much as the theorists associated with the project of deconstruction labored in the shadow of Husserl and Sartre, so do contemporary speculative thinkers operate in the terrain prepared for them by, among others, Deleuze and Foucault—or, perhaps, today we write in light of the effigies of Foucault and Deleuze that they have themselves constructed when, for one reason or another, they abandoned their peculiar forms of the transcendental inquiry for the more solid grounds of affirmationist ontology and resistance scholarship. The legacies of ontological empiricism and transcendental positivism are visible in the following two trends within contemporary scholarship: a) the poetic-speculative attempts to propose the ultimate exteriority, simply designated as "the real," that conditions the possibility of knowledge; and b) the semi-analytic theories of the transcendental domain of contingent objectivity and non-order. These two trends underlie the contemporary speculative pseudo-disciplines, which share an uneasy archaeological subsoil that can be called "immanence," an attempt to convert the contemporary episteme of delirium and aphasia into an explicit, all-encompassing theory.

In the next chapter, I will consider a specific contemporary speculative pseudo-discipline, biopolitics, and show how this discipline has gravitated towards the speculative

questions prepared by deconstruction. Then, in the following chapter, I will take up the various strongly speculative research programs that underpin the speculative pseudo-disciplines of today—if you will, I will look for the positivities behind the pseudo-disciplines. Finally, I will consider immanence as the episteme dominating the speculative scholarship of our time, an episteme that is, unlike those of the past, consciously nourished and cultivated by the scholars who see in it the endless promise of the ultimate ground and reconciliation.

CHAPTER 3: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF A PSEUDO-DISCIPLINE—THE SPECULATIVE DRIFT OF BIOPOLITICS

In Chapter 1, I took up Rajan's (2002; 2007) definition of deconstruction as a broad philosophical project concerned with the order of knowledge and the University—in fact, for analytic purposes, it could be said that the project of deconstruction consisted of an ontological and an ontic side. Up to now, I have focused on interpreting the ontological side by describing a) the order of knowledge that deconstruction was opposed to, which I named the structure of universal order and dual control and b) the alternative order of knowledge that deconstruction proposed, which I explored through Deleuze's ontological empiricism and Foucault's transcendental positivism, with the former using the notion of delirium to unsettle the possibility of knowledge and the latter using madness and aphasia to problematize the existence of order. However, Rajan's definition also emphasized the ontic side of the deconstruction project—that is, the side concerned with the University and its disciplines, often expressed as the search for an interdisciplinary, speculative curriculum that would not culminate either in transcendentalism or existentialism, the related outcomes produced by an anthropological stance on knowledge. In this chapter, by considering the contemporary pseudo-discipline of biopolitics, I will be dealing with the ontic side of the project of deconstruction.

Although deconstructionist theorists share a critical disposition towards the University and its disciplines, there is no single or unified deconstructionist methodology beyond the general framework of the triple exposure proposed by Rajan that I discussed in Chapter 1 and that consists of combining three criticisms, namely the cultural, the ontological, and the autobiographical, in the unworking of the supposedly pure syntax for which every noble discipline strives. However, some kind of an opposition between the properly-ordered and the not-so-properly-ordered disciplines is a common feature of deconstruction, whether between the noble and the relatively unformalized sciences referred to by Foucault or the royal and the nomadic sciences as distinguished by Deleuze and Guattari. In all cases, deconstruction is never on the side of the properly-ordered disciplines; rather, the aim is to unsettle and even unseat the privileged, leading disciplines. At the same time, another feature of the ontic side of deconstruction is the intellectual warfare against all anthropological disciplines, termed either as the human sciences or the

sciences of man. Finally, the opposition to the privileged sciences and the anthropological disciplines should not be understood as the crowning of unreason or poor scholarship. Instead, the preferred outcome of deconstruction would be to establish a set of countersciences or intersciences (Rajan 2007, 133–141), such as archaeology or grammatology, with the purpose, to put it in Foucauldian terms, of liberating lost events and different forms of order.

At the end of Chapter 2, I discussed Foucault's archaeology, which I described as a transcendental undertaking that investigates the domain between order and order—the domain that Foucault called pure order, or the existence of ordered entities before being ordered, and which I proposed to adumbrate as non-order—by inquiring into various academic disciplines and sciences that have not attained a high degree of scientificity. According to Foucault, such pseudo-disciplines and pseudo-sciences can be investigated as pointing to the positivities upon which established bodies of order depend, positivities that condition the space of communication for said bodies of knowledge, positivities that, finally, are dissimulated by scientific disciplines in order to pretend an independence from the pure existence of order. Foucault variably described these positivities as the historical a priori, the archive, or simply knowledge and further suggested that, although the totality of such knowledge could not be mapped, one could arrive at the episteme, which seems to be the broadest category available for the archaeological analysis.

In my opinion, the positive details of Foucault's archaeological project remain somewhat obscure, but an overall approach to the study of the University and its disciplines does emerge with considerable clarity. An archaeologist seeks after that most reticent non-place of knowledge that is the transcendental exteriority or the pure existence of objects for knowledge—a pure existence in the sense that it is neither ordered nor disordered but simply and radically *there*. All bodies of knowledge draw their objects from this domain of non-order, which appears to be contingent and discontinuous, and all bodies of knowledge dissimulate their dependence on non-order, whose being seems to diminish the very idea of dependable, stable, and independent science. For the archaeologist, there is not much to do with disciplines that succeed in such a dissimulation, but the pseudo-disciplines that are only partially successful constitute objects of analysis that can provide glimpses into the functioning of knowledge as a process that struggles to extract some stability from a ground

that offers none or very little. This purely existent ground can never be mapped or truly known, but it can be gradually approximated through degrees of abstraction via the pseudo-disciplines, degrees of abstraction that proceed from the pseudo-disciplines to positivities to the episteme. In short, archaeology reveals the "dirty" process of knowledge formation, not in the political but the philosophical-existential sense.

At the same time, even as I put my understanding of archaeology to work in this chapter, I would like not to lose sight of the discussion of Deleuze's ontological empiricism and what the latter offers to the study of pseudo-disciplines. Every body of knowledge not only dissimulates its dependence on the radical being of non-order—all bodies of knowledge also simulate their ultimate possibility and conditions by externalizing or depositing a fiction that they hope to solidify into an object and a ground. Put otherwise, all disciplines speculate about what they can do, what they can find out, and why they can do so. It would make sense that established and scientifically successful disciplines would be equally successful at simulating their possibilities as they are at dissimulating their participation in the existence of non-order; and, by extension, it is to be expected that pseudo-disciplines would find themselves in the strange position of proposing a fiction that they cannot quite sustain or be entirely convincing about, offering the archaeologist a look into the process of fictionalization that is common to knowledge.

To summarize, an established body of knowledge, in short a discipline, has to succeed on two fronts: a discipline must simulate its own possibility by locating outside of itself the objective ground—in terms of stable objects to be examined, recurring events to be referred to, and the like—that it investigates and upon whose independent reality its research depends, a ground that is actually fabricated entirely by the reflexive procedures of the said discipline; and, a discipline must dissimulate its dependence on the contingency of non-order that conditions the emergence of new objects, categories, and theories while threatening to demolish whatever objective stability has been achieved. A body of knowledge that succeeds at these two procedures of simulation and dissimulation is considered stable enough to be called a proper, established discipline, whereas the rest can only aspire to different degrees of pseudo-disciplinarity depending on the specificity and severity of their failures at the simulation-dissimulation procedure. For an archaeologist,

pseudo-disciplines are a valuable resource in accessing the shadowy reality of knowledge, or the positive unconscious, that exists simultaneously with the enlightened sciences.

As I will demonstrate below, biopolitics is an excellent pseudo-discipline for archaeological work. On the one hand, its struggles to claim a territory of stability show just how difficult the process of extracting a set of objects from the pure domain of non-order is. On the other hand, biopolitics scholars see no end to the possibilities of biopolitics, in spite of the difficulties to do with formalization. Therefore, one can effectively see how the processes of dissimulation and simulation are independent of one another but, nonetheless, are mutually necessary in the formation of a stable body of knowledge.

Finally, when I take up biopolitics scholarship below, I would most of all like to avoid writing another summary of the major sources on biopolitics. I would also like to escape the search for buried interpretations and forgotten texts. There are too many of both: recapitulations of the main points by Foucault, Agamben, and Negri appear at the start of every other article on biopolitics, and the different fields and applications of biopolitical theory have become too numerous to handle without the assistance of machine learning. Instead, I will work with scholarship *about* biopolitics that attempts to draw lines, make distinctions, and create exchanges in order to set up an internal economy necessary for a University discipline. As Foucault said, for archaeology the exact details of such an internal economy are less important than, in my own vocabulary, what it attempts to simulate and dissimulate. For biopolitics, a major persistent problem is its speculative drift and the inability to set limits, fix stable boundaries, and make itself into a coherent discourse—the simulation outruns the dissimulation. At every seam of biopolitics, its speculative absences threaten to break loose, and its unspoken presupposition, immanence, clamors to break out.

Biopolitics's Reflexive Phase

The first introduction to biopolitics, *Biopolitik zur Einführung*, was written in 2007 by Thomas Lemke and published in English as *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* in 2011. Currently, the latest introduction is *Biopolitics* by Catherine Mills, published in 2018. The two books, both excellent scholarly works, mark between them a ten-year period of considerable changes in the study of biopolitics. Although biopolitics has existed for over a hundred years—as a term and a concept, it emerged in the 1920s, though as an idea or a

theme, biopolitics has been traced back to the 19th century and even to ancient Greece—this decade was the first time in the history of biopolitics that introductions, readers, and revisionist article collections started to appear. Biopolitics entered a reflexive phase, or as Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze, the editors of the first biopolitics reader (2013), put it, "We have been witnessing the seemingly inescapable selection of authors and texts, the exclusion of others, the catalogue of genres that characterize the field of study—in a word, the writing of a canon" (1–2). Over its considerable lifespan, biopolitics may have been a concept, a theme, or even a theory. Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, biopolitics has been maturing into a respected academic discipline. As I discuss below, what began as a racist pseudo-science has been approximating a proper academic discipline, with its own canon and a respectable status among the established domains of knowledge

Writing approximately a decade ago, Lemke said he could not "rely on previous [introductory] works or an established canon" (2), so raw was the academic status of biopolitics. In 2013, Campbell and Sitze claimed that the project of the biopolitics canon "remained incomplete" (2) but was strongly underway. When Mills published her own introductory book, the canon remained unsanctified. Just as Lemke (2007/2011) had claimed that his purpose was "to bring clarity . . . by offering a general orientation on the topic of biopolitics" (2), so was Mills (2018) saying that she wanted to bring some order to the "considerable conceptual confusion" (1) that was prevalent in the emerging field and discipline of biopolitics. It seems that, in spite of the promise of the canon, the ten intervening years between the two introductory texts did little to resolve the confused status of biopolitics scholarship. The field remained unstable, and disciplinary clarity was lacking.

However, if we look at the contents of the two introductions and the reader, we will find considerable stability and overlap in terms of (1) the proper names of the major authors and their sequence of presentation and (2) the major topics and themes supposedly covered by biopolitics. In Lemke's book, the names and the sequence of the major authors are Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The themes are organized around keywords like "life" and "living," "politics" and "vital politics," and "power" and "nature." In the case of Mills, the proper names are a little different but essentially recognizable: Foucault, Agamben, Hannah Arendt, and Negri and Roberto

Esposito. The same is true for the themes: "politics," "life," and "subjectivity." The major differences between the two introductions in terms of their organization of content seem to be the apotheosis of Arendt and Esposito to the biopolitics pantheon, a stronger and explicit emphasis on subjectivity as a key area of biopolitics research, and the removal of the notion of nature from the biopolitics field.

Similar developments are confirmed in *Biopolitics: A Reader* (2013) by the aforementioned Campbell and Sitze. Esposito and Arendt are firmly entrenched among the proper names of biopolitics, with further additions made: Achille Mbembe and Warren Montag are included to represent the post-Agamben development of the necro- or thanato-stream of biopolitics, the Italian contribution is expanded with two readings by Paolo Virno, and Donna Haraway, one of the early adopters of biopolitics in the late '90s, is given a place on Olympus. Campbell and Sitze also introduce a smattering of tangentially related works by famous authors to further cement the respectability of biopolitics: Peter Sloterdijk, Jacques Ranciere, Slavoj ŽiŽek, Alain Badiou, and Deleuze are now part of the basic texts on biopolitics. The new additions entail new leading biopolitics themes: death, immunity, and immanence.

Therefore, at first glance, there seems to be considerable disciplinary stability among the two introductions and the reader. The major proper names and the major themes of research remain stable, and the new additions in both areas appear to be justified and manageable. So, what is the confusion that all three texts speak about?

As we will see, establishing a canon—or rather an entire field and discipline—requires more than a common name, a recurring group of authors, and a shared set of research themes. More importantly, there has to be some agreement regarding the elements that make up the complex definition of a disciplinary field: the nature of the object of research, the legitimate methods of inquiry, the end to which the research is performed, a shared understanding of the history and mission of the field, and so on. All these and other important features of the complex disciplinary definition are unclear in biopolitics. In fact, in biopolitics there is *wide agreement* that *no* shared object, *no* shared method, and *no* shared purpose of research exist. As we will see, there are good reasons to think that this is not accidental or a byproduct of the novelty of the discipline—what novelty can be invoked when a concept has been around for a century?—but the consequence of an inherent

limitation within the pseudo-field of biopolitics. Biopolitics appears to be destined to remain a pseudo-science with a pseudo-canon. In fact, it may have already been superseded and rendered obsolete, which is the opinion of a number of scholars working on biopolitics. Whether this impossibility of becoming a respected discipline is good or bad depends on one's expectations. For anyone hoping that biopolitics can count itself among the noble sciences of the world, its failure at academic respectability must be disappointing. For the proponents of nomadic science—the kind that "cuts the contents of royal science loose" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991/2005, 367) by focusing on "singularities" (369) rather than homogeneities—the liminal state of biopolitics can only be a benefit. Too close to academic respectability to become a borderline cult yet too unstable to be allowed full entry and congeal into a sterile analytic method, biopolitics may well be in an excellent position to perform an important *speculative* function within the academy.

Before delving into the complex definition of biopolitics, I would like to briefly discuss the set of texts under consideration. In this chapter, I am only interested in scholarly sources *on* biopolitics rather than sources that directly tackle biopolitics by doing groundwork research into the leading themes. Texts on biopolitics are a relatively new addition to biopolitics studies, but there is already enough density there to carry out discourse archaeology. In this reflexive or canon-building decade of biopolitics, besides the two introductions and the reader, major academic contributions to the attempted establishment of the biopolitics field and discipline have come from edited volumes, specifically from the following collections: *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience* by Beatriz de Costa and Kavita Philip (2008), *Resisting Biopolitics: Philosophical, Political, and Performative Strategies* by Audronė Žukauskaitė (2016), *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond* by Vernon W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar (2016), and *The Routledge Handbook on Biopolitics* by Sergei Prozorov and Simona Rentea (2017). Another major introduction, titled *Nuo biopolitikos iki biofilosofijos* [*From Biopolitics to Biophilosophy*], was published by Audronė Žukauskaitė in 2016, but as the text is only available in Lithuanian, it cannot be considered a major source; nonetheless, as this book confirms the tendencies present in other works, I will occasionally refer to it (more importantly, Žukauskaitė's edited volume expresses the exact same ideas as her standalone work). These four volumes, along with the two introductions and the reader already

mentioned, as well as the occasional groundwork text, comprise the set of main sources for the archaeology of discourse below.

Biopolitics's Aporetic Structure

According to Rentea, "The concept of biopolitics has had a remarkable reception in social science and the humanities in recent times" (2017, 1). Mills agrees that "biopolitics has become indispensable as a theoretical point of reference across the humanities and social sciences" (2018, 1). Žukauskaitė and S. E. Wilmer claim that "the notion of biopolitics recently became one of the main concepts in contemporary philosophy and cultural studies" (2016, 1). Campbell and Sitze (2013) write that "'biopolitics' began to migrate from philosophy to not-so-distant shores, including but not limited to the fields of anthropology, geography, sociology, political science, theology, legal studies, bioethics, digital media, art history, and architecture" (4). This state of affairs is best summarized by Lemke (2007/2011): "A few years ago it [biopolitics] was known only to a limited number of experts, but it is used today in many different disciplines" (1). Biopolitics is remarkable, indispensable, prominent, one of the main concepts—and not only in one or two fields but across the entirety of the humanities and the social sciences! Being a crucial concept everywhere but in the hard sciences, biopolitics would seem to have truly arrived, which will make the confusion surrounding it all the more perplexing.

By the estimation of Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, two exceptionally distinguished scholars, "This contested [biopolitics'] field of problems is more crucial and enigmatic than ever" (2016). According to Lemke, "The intensity of the debate and the prominence of biopolitics indicate that the term captures something essential in our present era" (2007/2011, xi). Campbell and Sitze (2013) note that "biopolitics continues to be featured so prominently in contemporary ontologies of the present" (2). Mills further extends the reach of biopolitics when she writes that "the concept seems to capture crucial aspects of the working of the modern—and, perhaps, pre-modern—world" (2018, 1). This is just a small sampling of what is a major point of agreement in biopolitics scholarship: biopolitics offers *the* best access to the present; it is the royal road to knowing *the* present as well as modernity and its past. For anybody pursuing a Foucauldian agenda of writing

the history of the present, there would seem to be no better object, no better discipline than biopolitics.

Esposito (2016) attributes to biopolitics nothing less than the singular capacity for a philosophical interpretation of the 20th century. More specifically, Cisney and Moran claim that "biopower exposes the structures, relations, and practices by which political subjects are constituted and deployed, along with the forces that have shaped and continue to shape modernity" (2016). However, biopolitics not only enables the detection of the underlying structures of modernity and the present, it allows doing so in a new, unique way: "it [biopolitics] offers a novel perspective on the entirety of the political sphere, including those of its aspects that have been the traditional concerns of political concerns [sic]" (Prozorov 2017, 328). The wish to not only comprehend the present but to touch upon its singular difference is a leading motivation among biopolitics researchers: "today's biopolitical turn is warranted by some sort of desire to comprehend the new, something unprecedented in our present" (Campbell and Sitze 2013, 11). And, just as the interpretive force of biopolitics was not limited to the present but also extended to the past, so too does the capacity to perceive difference extend from the present to the future. "Biopolitics has a speculative and experimental dimension: it does not affirm what is but anticipates what could be different" (123), says Lemke on behalf of the entire emerging discipline of biopolitics.

Without any doubt, the proponents of biopolitics assume it to have infinite reach. Biopolitics is not just an indispensable concept this side of the hard sciences; it is not just the crowned science of the present that reveals the otherwise invisible patterns of life, knowledge-power, and subjectivity; not just the ultimate lens for novelty and scholarly innovation. Biopolitics is also the key to the future, a source of resistance more potent than any divine violence in the form a mass strike—a messianic discipline. With this messianic tendency in mind, it is not surprising that the actual worldly events investigated by biopolitics consist predominantly of crises, disasters, and abuses, either already happening at this instance, looming ahead, or still reverberating from the past. In his testament essay (1984, 33–34), Foucault discussed the three ways of how the present should not be studied—as different from a past event, from a future event, or as the interstice between two events. Biopolitics seems to study the present in precisely these three ways: as the

continuation/interruption of the Nazi camps,[10] as the dreaming period that is sleepwalking into a nightmarish (or utopian) future of unbridled technology and genetic modification,[11] or as the privileged purgatory where both the past and the future are to be decided.[12]

In fact, it would not even be possible to reproduce the list of all the catastrophes, disasters, and slaughters that biopolitics scholars have appropriated as pertinent to biopolitics—such a list would run the length of a chapter. In the most general terms, biopolitics is concerned with everything from healthcare practices and policies to burial rights and rituals, from domestic habits to do with food, child rearing, and sexuality to public uses of hospital beds and sexual reproduction policies, from the latest developments in technology to ancient farming techniques, from the use of identity-neutral language to global surveillance techniques, from immaterial labor to migrant camps, from the war against terror to developments in cloning and gene therapy.

At this point, a major problem with biopolitics should be evident: its unlimited scope in every direction possible. Scholars agree that one of the greatest assets that biopolitics has is the extraordinary range of phenomena it can investigate, but this range also poses the greatest challenge that plagues the would-be discipline. Lemke states that "while many important political issues and theoretical questions have been addressed by employing the notion of biopolitics, it is often used in conflicting or even contradictory ways" (2007/2011, x). Rentea argues that "we continue to witness a lack of comprehensive

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[10] See Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Esposito's *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (2011), and the associated scholarship that, in the edited volumes on biopolitics, tends to be categorized under the headings of "Societies of Control" (Wilmer and Žukauskaitė 2016), "Biopolitics and Security" (Prozorov and Rentea 2017), and "Neoliberalism and Governmentality" (Cisney and Morar 2016).

[11] Often, this trend is represented by authors following the "dark" trend in scholarship, such as Thacker (in, for example, *After Life* 2010). In the aforementioned edited volumes, see the following sections: "Surveillance and Digital Technologies" (Wilmer and Žukauskaitė 2016), "Biopolitics and Technology" (Prozorov and Rentea 2017), and "The Question of Life" (Cisney and Morar 2016).

[12] I would classify the works of Michael Hardt and Negri (such as *Empire* 2000) as belonging to this category due to their treatment of biopolitics as the major terrain of struggle. See the following sections in the aforementioned edited volumes: "Politics, Biopolitics, and Biophilosophy" (Wilmer and Žukauskaitė 2016), "Contemporary Theoretical Controversies" (Prozorov and Rentea 2017), and "Biopower Today" (Cisney and Morar 2016).

overviews able to bring together these frequently disparate engagements" (1). This is partly because "surprisingly little work has been done to develop Foucault's own sketchy suggestions into a set of operational tools for critical inquiry," note Rabinow and Rose (2016). According to Mills (2018), who had already identified "significant conceptual confusion" in biopolitics, "continued conceptual reflection is required in order to prevent the concept [of biopolitics] from submerging under the weight of its own ambiguity" (182). While noting that "there exists no perspective that would allow us to survey and measure the lines that together constitute the concept's theoretical circumference," Campbell and Sitze (2013) nonetheless put a positive spin on the situation: "What at first appears to be an endless process—debating the endlessly blurred boundaries of biopolitics—is at one and the same time something else as well: an occasion for thinking" (2). It would appear that biopolitics holds infinite interpretive potential while being beyond evaluation and beyond systematization. Consequently, this conclusion puts the initial premise of the interpretive power of biopolitics into question: if biopolitics is too confusing to be made sense of, on what ground can anybody know whether it does anything at all?

Most scholars express the hope that the lack of conceptual clarity in biopolitics, while being engendered by the huge scope of its application, will be remedied in time as more and better scholarship on biopolitics emerges. This is problematic on at least two counts. On the one hand, why would a term that has existed for over a hundred years and gone through multiple iterations, a term that has been deployed as an indispensable element in practically every possible discipline, be clarified now rather than before—is it only presently that competent scholars have become available? On the other hand, the very infinite potential of biopolitics is likely to foreclose any possibility of systematization. The two introductions both explicitly state that the amount of biopolitics information is impossible to deal with and will be rarified according to the research interests of the respective authors. The edited volumes, meanwhile, attempt to solve the lack of theoretical labor on the concept of biopolitics by bringing together the best scholars from multiple disciplines, which only serves to further fragment the already-fraught solidity of the field.

These two concerns notwithstanding, biopolitics scholars have proposed multiple taxonomies to at least standardize the categories by which biopolitics research could be ordered. The earliest set of categories was, predictably, proposed by Lemke, who claimed

it was "possible to distinguish naturalistic concepts that take life as the basis of politics and to contrast these with politicist concepts, which conceive of life processes as the object of politics" (3). With this distinction, Lemke was referring, respectively, to the biopolitical discourses that were characteristic of Germany and the United Kingdom in the 1920s, which took a naturalized concept of life to be the source of political normativity, and the discourses that were characteristic of the United States in the '60s, whereby public policy was meant to address and correct the shortcomings that were a result of genetic inheritance. As Lemke himself noted (3), this taxonomy is no longer very relevant.

Nowadays, most scholars agree that a distinction can be made between the ontic and the ontological approach to biopolitics, or between the empirical-historical and the theoretical-philosophical one. The former is usually associated with Foucault and the latter with Agamben and Hardt and Negri. (However, Žukauskaitė, and to some degree Lemke in his 2016 article "Rethinking Biopolitics: The New Materialism and the Political Economy of Life," has hypothesized, based on the works of Eugene Thacker, something of a third category, biophilosophy, whereby biopolitics leaves behind its empirical, historical, and even theoretical concerns and ascends to an explicitly *speculative* project by encountering immanence—more on this in the concluding section of this chapter). Perhaps the most rigorously considered taxonomy along the ontic-ontological spectrum has been proposed by Mills (2018), who distinguishes between the "empirical-descriptive" and the "critical-normative" approach to biopolitics (1–4).

The *empirical-descriptive* approach, said to originate with Foucault's works from his genealogical period (such as Foucault's investigations into the history of sexuality; Mills specifically references *The Will To Knowledge* [i.e. *History of Sexuality Volume 1* 1978]), takes biopolitics to refer to actually existing historical phenomena that can be clearly identified and delineated. According to Mills, this approach has to deal with two challenges: defining the scale and the duration of the biopolitical phenomenon. For example, in his lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978–1979/2008), Foucault claimed that biopolitics began in the 18th century and is localizable in a specific set of Western-liberal institutions, but scholars like Ojankangas (2016) have argued that biopolitical practices extend all the way back to ancient Greece, and Kiarina A. Kordela (2013) has considered biopolitical racism that operates between the Western and non-Western

countries. Evidently, the delimitation of the proper empirical-descriptive field for biopolitical research is a contested matter.

The *critical-normative* approach is said to be inspired by the works of Agamben and Hardt and Negri and is closely related to what other scholars have called the ontological tendency in the post-'90s biopolitical research. The critical-normative approach intends "to describe a more general political logic or philosophy that is said to inform social and political organization at a deeper level" (Mills 2018, 3). Consequently, this approach does not lend itself to questions of scale and duration but concerns itself with the judgement and evaluation of the overall phenomenon of biopolitics. Mills argues that most ontological or critical-normative studies have had a negative attitude to biopolitics, defining it as something to be resisted and overcome. Therefore, the normative aspect comes into play when scholars attempt to formulate positive or alternative biopolitics. As we will see, it is this aspect of the alternative that most clearly opens biopolitics up to biophilosophy and new materialism, centered around the figure of Gilles Deleuze.

The distinction between the empirical-descriptive and the critical-normative approach is not a hard and fast one. Indeed, most major works on biopolitics have a foot in each camp. For example, Agamben seems to deal both with empirical-historical material and with general ontological conclusions based on said material. Even Hardt and Negri's supposedly more speculative works refer to empirical data and studies of contemporary institutions. Aside from Kordela, who used to be mostly alone in bearing the flag of metaphysical biopolitics, it is only recently that biopolitics has begun to embrace speculative thought by including posthumanism (Braidotti 2016), New Materialism (Lemke 2016), and biophilosophy (Thacker 2016) within its range, thus stretching the label of biopolitics almost to breaking point. Most research on biopolitics since Foucault has been a mixture of empirical, descriptive, critical, and normative elements, which makes Mills's distinction seem somewhat forced (albeit still useful).

The problem in establishing the proper taxonomy for biopolitics points to a deeper, more problematic issue: the definition of the studied object. In order to categorize different types of research properly, one should first and foremost know what is being studied. This logic does not apply to biopolitics, or it applies in reverse, with scholars hoping that the right taxonomy will reveal or pin down the object being investigated.

To begin with, the scholars do agree on some sort of a definition of biopolitics, but only in the broadest and most abstract terms possible: According to Lemke (2007/2011), the term biopolitics "denotes a politics that deals with life" (2). Žukauskaitė (2016) defines biopolitics as "the field where life and politics intersect" (16). Cisney and Morar (2016) claim that "the very etymology [of 'biopolitics'] . . . points us toward the emergence of life into politics." Campbell and Sitze describe "biopolitics as the expression of a kind of predicament involving the intersection, or perhaps reciprocal incorporation, of life and politics" (2). Some scholars choose to expand the list of nouns into which biopolitics fractures: "three themes that are unavoidable in thinking about biopolitics – that is, politics, life and subjectivity" (Mills 2018, 8). Rabinow and Rose (2016) propose a different set of three components: "truth discourses about the 'vital' character of living human beings," "strategies for intervention on collective existence in the name of life and health," and "modes of subjectification, through which individuals are brought to work on themselves," which is not all that different to Mills's aforementioned simpler formulation. Prozorov (2017) replaces politics with ideology: biopolitics "refers to the reciprocal problematization of life and ideology" (331). Following the post-Marxist tradition, Negri (2016) talks about the "biopolitical as life put to work."

The problem with all of these definitions, besides their highly abstract nature, is that, instead of clarifying, they displace the burden of explanation onto other highly controversial terms which themselves require clarification. Not only are "politics," "life," and "subjectivity," for example, contested concepts, but the various verb phrases that link them, such as "intersecting," incorporating," and "problematizing," are themselves not obvious. What does it really mean to say, for instance, that biopolitics "deals" with the "field of intersection" between "life, death, and ideology" and "problematizes" all three? The answer depends entirely on the multiple definitions of the complex terms that are brought into the equation. In fact, such definitions can be made to mean anything the author pleases them to mean.

Although it may be an unforgivable pun to say this, the lack of a clear definition reveals the clearest feature of biopolitics: the series of absences that characterize this pseudo-discipline, without seeming to harm either its popularity or its supposed explanatory power. I have already shown the scholars' agreement that biopolitics lacks a

totalizing position or a synthesizing view that could encompass the entire field. In a way, this is partially true of all contemporary disciplines due to the globalization of higher education and the academic publishing machine, but in biopolitics the problem is not just an empirical one. Biopolitics is un-processable because of its very nature, due to its non-definition rather than due to the institutional proliferation of scholarship. Fundamentally lacking an identifiable substance, biopolitics is a differential terrain—an academic multiplicity in the Deleuzian jargon—which explains both its spread across the many disciplines as well as its lack of overarching unity.

Unity is not all that biopolitics lacks. Campbell and Sitze (2013) discuss "the missing origin" or "a missing ground" of biopolitics and point out that it is impossible to look back and say, "It was precisely then that biopolitics was born" (1). Indeed, the perpetually retreating temporal beginning and the constantly expanding borders of biopolitics testify to this. According to Lemke (2007/2011, 9), the term and concept "biopolitics" (that is, the explicit confluence of the concept and the term in a single entity) has had a hundred-year history, with biopolitics's prehistory being attributable to the *Lebensphilosophie* of the 19th century. After Agamben and Esposito, and more lately after Ojakangas, the origin retreated all the way back to the beginnings of Western thought, and the boundaries have been de-anchored from the exclusively Western history of the world. Therefore, it seems safe to say that biopolitics is, indeed, missing both an origin and a ground.

At this point, keeping the previous discussion in mind, the difficulty in identifying the exact object of biopolitics and the method of research should be clear. The object of biopolitics is either a generalization, an imprecise thematic description, or an abstraction. Perhaps the issue of object and method is most clearly evident in the proliferation of neologisms that biopolitics engenders, neologisms that scholars working in this field love to list. For example, Mills (2018) provides only a short sampling: "biolegalities, biocultures, biosociality and biocapital are instigating and defining new fields of scholarship" (1). Campbell and Sitze (2013) delightfully machinegun a longer list of "bioculture, biomedia, biolegitimacy, bioart, biocapital, biolabor, bioscience, biohorror, bioeconomics, bioinformatics, biovalue, biodesire, biocomputing, biotheology, biosociety, and biocentrism, among others" (4–5). One only needs to look at the table of contents of

the *Tactical Biopolitics* (2008) collection to see how inexhaustive these two lists actually are. Therefore, it is not an overstatement or a misrepresentation to claim that biopolitics has only the fuzziest of objects and the most fragmented of methodologies.

Regarding the proliferation of neologisms and the bio- prefix, Campbell and Sitze (2013) make an astute observation:

> And yet even as the content of these terms seemed fresh and new, their form remained familiar, even traditional. It's odd, after all, that the standard nouns of disciplinary reason—art, culture, science, society, economics, capital, and so on—should so consistently repeat themselves at and as the root of these inventions, as if the old objects of existing academic discipline would somehow be transformed simply through the piecemeal addition of the prefix "bio-." (5)

A skeptical interpreter may consider this a sure sign of the parasitic nature of biopolitics, which attaches itself to more substantive disciplines in order to leech from them their academic capital and, potentially, the economic one as well. From an archaeological perspective, this appears to be a strategy of stabilization on two fronts: on the one hand, the infinite appetite of biopolitics pushes it to borrow established categories from successful bodies of knowledge; on the other hand, the instability of its own objects may just as well contribute to the need to borrow already-accepted directions from the disciplines that have managed to solidify their foundations. There seems to be a very evident spectrality to biopolitics that makes this pseudo-discipline somewhat dependent on the substantiality of its academic neighbors—it is not a parasite as much as a phantasm; that is, rather than leeching, biopolitics territorializes the bodies of other disciplines.

Finally, Žukauskaitė (2016) notes that "the proliferation of theories of biopolitics raises the question: Who is the subject of biopolitics" (74)? This question is all the more pertinent for two reasons, one being that many scholars, implicitly or explicitly, add the notion of "resistance" to the definition of biopolitics, without specifying who is to carry out the resistance, and the other reason being that the positive, alternative biopolitics projects also strongly imply an actor who would be capable of bringing forth the potential project into actual existence. The original introduction by Lemke provides an accurate but problematic response: "The term [biopolitics] figures prominently in texts of the Old Right, but it is also used by representatives of the New Left. It is used by both critics and advocates

of biotechnological progress, by committed Marxists and unapologetic racists" (1). The history of biopolitics seems to attest that this concept is not a property of any exclusive group but has been, and will likely continue to be, deployed by many competing actors with many irreconcilable visions and ideologies of biopolitics. There is no reason to suppose that only the emancipated multitude or the enlightened cyborg will take up arms on behalf of a biopolitical project. Indeed, with all the other absences already indicated, and keeping the infinite reach of biopolitics in mind, how could there be the subject of biopolitics, or any subject at all?

Once one delves past the optimistic and extravagant characterizations of biopolitics, past the general thematic descriptions, and past the impossible myriad of biopolitical events and bio-terminology, what emerges is a series of absences, confusions, and excesses: an impossible arch without unity, a missing origin without ground, a fuzzy object without a clear methodology, and an absent subject without purpose.

Biopolitics's Aporiosis: The Structure of a Counter-Science

The discussion so far, and specifically the last paragraph above, might seem very negative and might create the impression that I have been unduly harsh when considering biopolitics. However, I would like to think I have been honest in considering the state of affairs in this pseudo-discipline. At the beginning of this section, I claimed that over the last ten years, biopolitics has entered a reflexive phase. If we remember Deleuze's discussion of the severe difficulties produced by self-reflection, perhaps the fact that biopolitics seems to be equally excessive as it is deficient will seem more understandable. Deleuze argued that self-reflection by an ordered entity leads to aporiosis and delirium: unable to find its own possibility within itself, an ordered entity, such as a body of knowledge or a discipline, extends its scope outwards, which, in turn, produces a greater need for inner ordering and, consequently, an even greater outward extension, resulting in an acceleration that compensates one fault with another, until such a time that an ordered entity in crisis discovers a controlling fiction that it can rely on. Aporiosis seems to be very much the state of affairs in biopolitics, whose scholars are engaged in claiming as much external terrain as possible by prefixing the bio- to a great diversity of established disciplines and discovering biopolitics in a wide range of historical periods and events while,

simultaneously, working on a rather strict canon of biopolitics founders that never seems to be quite enough. Nonetheless, in spite of the seemingly infinite scope of biopolitics, this particular pseudo-discipline has not yet encountered a fiction or phantasm that it could adopt as its controlling principle—that is, the ultimate referent of biopolitics has not been clearly established.

Internally, biopolitics is plagued by the kind of aphasia that Foucault described: a proliferation of ordering categories, objects, and themes that do not solidify into a dependable order. Scholars have invented various internal classifications for the themes of biopolitics, for example dividing the topics as empirical-historical or normative-theoretical, but the complexity produced by the expansionist delirium defies simple ordering attempts. Nor has a clear set of objects emerged: is biopolitics a study of technology, politics, or disasters? Does it deal with rights in the juridical sense or with the transcendental conditions of law as such? The only truly recurring subject of research in biopolitics, life, is itself more of a conceptual absence than a substantial ground, seeing attempts at defining life launch scholars into an exclusively speculative terrain that mixes technical jargon with poetry.

It is here, between delirium and aphasia, in the middle of an aporetic breakdown, that something else begins to emerge in biopolitics—its speculative, deconstructionist potential. Rajan (2002, 29) noted that deconstruction aimed to "rethink" knowledge along three critical unworkings: an internal grammatological unworking, a vertical historical unworking, and a horizontal distributive-communicative unworking. Taking a cue from Rajan's (2002, 182) description of Foucault's *The Order of Things*, I claimed that the positive formulation of these three unworkings would make a counter-science ontological, cultural, and autobiographic. Based on my description of biopolitics so far, biopolitics seems to have all the features of a counter-science, in both critical and positive terms: On the one hand, its perpetual self-reinvention matches the grammatological unworking, its inability to fix itself in the past corresponds to the vertical unworking, and its war-machine attitude to established disciplines is a feature of the distributive-communicative unworking. On the other hand, the scholars attributed to the biopolitics canon encompass ontological and cultural research themes, while the current reflexive phase of biopolitics makes it explicitly an autobiographical undertaking. Indeed, biopolitics appears to be a particularly

accomplished counter-science, seeing how well it matches all the requirements. With all this in mind, biopolitics begins to make sense—not the good sense required of a noble or royal science but the counter-sense envisioned by deconstruction's alternative order of knowledge.

To me, this seems to pose the following questions: Why does biopolitics, being such an accomplished counter-science, strive so much for academic respectability? This may not be difficult to answer at all, seeing that academics working with a counter-science cannot justify themselves to the bureaucratic interpellation machine unless they adopt a degree of respectability. A more interesting question might be this: Does a counter-science have to be consciously a counter-science, or can a counter-science not only emerge but exist accidentally, in the midst of a fraught process of attempting to leave the middle domain between order and order towards order proper? With biopolitics, the answer seems to be that a counter-science does not necessarily have to entail self-awareness of its counter-nature. At the same time, without an awareness and an appreciation of this counter-nature— in fact, with constant attempts to ascend to academic nobility—perhaps the speculative potential offered by biopolitics remains underused and is even endangered.

In the remainder of this chapter, having considered the unsuccessful attempts of the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics to achieve academic nobility but having found, instead, biopolitics's qualifications as a pseudo-discipline, I would like to describe biopolitics's aforementioned speculative drift, which should now appear unsurprising given this pseudo-discipline's status as a counter-science. Since very early on in its history as a term and a concept, biopolitics has been attempting to adopt the notion of "life" as its controlling fiction. The problem, and equally the opportunity, posed by life is that no other discipline has managed to stabilize this concept—no noble science of life has emerged that could afford biopolitics a respectable borrowed ground. Instead, the concept of life remains open to the transcendental exteriority; that is, the concept of life is not scientific but speculative, characterized by contingency, rupture, and obscurity. With the concept of life as its constituent absence, biopolitics has long found itself driven to speculate, which may well be the source of its counter-science credentials and failure to become a royal discipline. Below, in the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the history of biopolitics, provide a possible periodization, and show how the speculative drift in biopolitics, unanchored from

its empirico-historical moorings, leans in the direction of the speculative philosophy of immanence.

The Accelerations and Waves of Biopolitics

In terms of academic output, there seem to be six accelerations of the biopolitics scholarship: (a) the initial appearance of the term in the 1920s Europe, specifically in Germany and the United Kingdom; (b) the re-emergence of a racialized biopolitics in the United States in the '60s, only topographically different from its European counterpart at the beginning of the century; (c) the French re-invention of the term in the '60s and '70s, associated mostly with Foucault but also with Aaron Starobinski and Edgar Morin; (d) the uptake of the re-invented biopolitics by the North American academy in the late '90s, by such scholars as Donna Haraway, Ian Hacking, and Agnes Heller; (e) the massive popularization and ontologization of biopolitics by Agamben and Hardt and Negri in the early 2000s, which, combined with the earlier North American uptake, constitutes what Campbell and Sitze have called the biopolitical turn; and, finally, (f) the approximate period of 2010–2020, characterized by the reflexive and the speculative tendencies within biopolitics scholarship.

I would like to simplify the chronology by singling out three waves of biopolitics, based not so much on the date of publication and the geographical location of the scholars—important as these factors may be—but on the philosophical attitude to biopolitics, which also appears to be tangentially linked to certain historical world events to do with the development of capitalism. Therefore, the three waves of biopolitics are not strictly logico-historical categories proceeding in a linear and simple dialectic fashion, with the later categories supplanting, incorporating, and superseding the previous ones. Instead, the waves are cumulative: each wave adds a new attitude to biopolitics—new themes, new approaches, new proper names and neologisms—that does not obliterate the previous ones but assumes a leading position, becoming the most popular way of studying biopolitics and dictating the academic fashion in the pseudo-field. Only with reservations could each wave be called a "paradigm shift" within biopolitics. The cumulative, almost democratic nature of biopolitics is partly responsible for the expansive and prolific character of this pseudo-discipline.

The three waves are these: the first one dominates from the emergence of the term, biopolitics, until the appearance of the Foucauldian *urtext*, the second one dominates until the reflexive phase of biopolitics, and the third, the simultaneously self-disciplining and uncontrollably speculative, wave is dominating now. In the next sub-section, I will discuss each wave in detail.

The Three Biopolitics Waves

The biopolitics waves are characterized by differences in philosophical attitude. The first biopolitics wave was defined by the zone between the two poles of politics and biology (rather than life). The problem that pained this particular form of biopolitics attitude was to establish an arche-norm that could balance out the relations between the population, the state, and the advancing Fordist production via corrections based on the proper understanding of the politics/biology couplet. The politics/biology couplet was a source not of problems but of solutions, fixes, and adjustments. The principle of this wave, therefore, was not in whether it placed biology before politics or vice versa; the hierarchy was perfectly invertible at all times. Nor was this wave predominantly characterized by a bad empiricism and a crypto-normativism as opposed to the more refined empirical studies and the more honest ontological considerations of the second wave. Every form of biopolitics is a mélange of empirical, historical, normative, critical, and ontological statements. No, the point of the first wave of biopolitics, based on the generative interaction between politics and biology, was to discover means of governance and stabilization. This biopolitics raised only such fears that it could solve, fears that would stay well within the established limits of the institutional order.

The second wave of biopolitics includes Foucault, Agamben, and Hardt and Negri. In my opinion, the division according to which some scholars classify Foucault as being too "empirical-historical" to be classified with the ontologizing Italian theorists is unjustified. Between Foucault and his successors there is a break in time but not in attitude. There is an ontological commitment and a speculative interest that runs throughout the works of Foucault, including his genealogical period and the texts on biopolitics. As Judith Revel argued in "The Literary Birth of Biopower" (2016), "Foucault's interest in literature no doubt anticipated much of what will enable the 'biopolitical response' to biopowers"

(44). Therefore, Foucault is just as much a part of the second wave of biopolitics as the theorists writing twenty years after his death.

In the second wave, the concept of biology is replaced by the much more open-ended notion of life. Biopolitics is no longer understood as the search for norms, fixes, and stabilizing corrections. With the notion of life replacing biology, the study of biopolitics is thoroughly philosophized. This does not mean that biopolitics is exclusively ontological—rather, as Esposito argued (2008), biopolitics becomes historical in the philosophical sense, with the full range of history at its disposal, as well as with all the implications of historical study, including the normative, the empirical, the critical, and the ontological dimensions among others (638–644). The problem is no longer how to fix the relations between the state, the population, and the means of production but to identify the long and silent norms that operate in the background, without direct institutional intervention, norms that condition institutions as much as the objects of the institutions. Therefore, biopolitics no longer deals with the problem of governance but with one of control. As Deleuze stated in *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967/2006), to know the principle of a particular field is one thing, but to know how and why a principle and a field come to be linked together—to know the principle behind a principle and its field—is the more important question (112). By becoming a control- rather than governance-oriented study, biopolitics develops profound and meaningful affinities with cybernetics. By investigating the notion of life as one of its poles and designating the terrain of history as its resource, the second biopolitics wave attains a properly philosophical character and prepares the conditions for its own dissolution.

The biopolitics attitude that predominates now, during the third wave, is a thoroughly contradictory one. On the one hand, the third biopolitics wave is the attempted and failed culmination of biopolitics as a legitimate, established, and respected academic discipline. The concern for norms and stabilization that used to characterize the first biopolitics wave is internalized as the self-disciplining tendency of biopolitics: the preoccupation with the arche-norm of the university, not of the state, regarding the normalization of biopolitics research. On the other hand, against this trend towards contraction, biopolitics extirpates itself into a thousand different subjects, themes, and neologisms. It reaches the peak of its speculative, and anti-normative, drift initiated by the

second wave. In Hegelian terms, we could say that the third wave is the Golden Age of biopolitics and its simultaneous abandonment by Spirit. The series of different proper names, themes, and research fields reach such a fever pitch that biopolitics, in spite of the grounding attempts via reflexive scholarship, all but disappears. On the speculative side, biopolitics morphs into biophilosophy, or into bio-onto-semio-politico-epistemo super-non-philosophy. In short, biopolitics races to become a fully liberated metaphysics at the same time as it closes ranks around its would-be canon.

The change towards metaphysics appears to have happened overnight. The urtext is no longer Foucault's "Right of Life and Power of Death" but Deleuze's "Postscript on Societies of Control." Historically and etymologically grounded ontology, the kind practiced by Agamben and Esposito, is replaced by the speculative ontology of new materialism. At some point, biopolitics seems to have become synonymous with immanence. But when, and how?

Three developments account for this apparently abrupt shift in biopolitics attitude: (a) changes in the form of capitalism, (b) changes in the philosophical landscape of the 21st century, and (c) the explicit development of an implicitly speculative nature of the concept of life that replaced the concept of biology at the initiation of the second wave. Most scholars focus on the first two developments, capitalism and the scholarly terrain, but I believe the third development to be just as important as the first two, at least in terms of priming, or making possible, this transmutation of biopolitics. The developments in capitalism and scholarship affect many disciplines and fields, but not all of them go into speculative aporiosis; in fact, very few academic disciplines exhibit the kind of reaction that biopolitics is undergoing. Therefore, there must be something internal and specific to the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics that makes it react to changes in capitalism and scholarship as a full-on acceleration towards metaphysics.

Three scholarly reactions are exemplary here: by Rosi Braidotti, Thomas Lemke, and Eugene Thacker. Braidotti (2016) claims that "biopolitical analysis is central to this discussion [of advanced capitalism], but in its current context it has moved beyond the premises articulated by Foucault" (44). Foucault, and biopolitics, is simply too out of date because Foucault wrote under a different regime of capitalism. As capitalism has moved on, so have technology, violence, and ontological reflections. Consequently,

"contemporary neo-Spinozist monism goes beyond Foucault's idea of the biopolitical in that it implies a notion of subjectivity and self-organizing matter, an embedded form of 'matter-realism' that is intrinsically connected to the posthuman definition of Life as *zoe*, or a dynamic of non-human force" (33). As capitalism has achieved its advanced form, so has scholarship evolved as well, leaving Foucault's supposedly anthropocentric critique of the liberal democratic order in the dustbin of academia. In the place of biopolitics, there is now the modern and up-to-date Deleuzian speculation on the various rhizomes, multiplicities, and assemblages, consisting of innumerable types of actors, many of them non-human.

A similar analysis is provided by Lemke in "Rethinking Biopolitics: The New Materialism" (2016): "The research on the bioeconomy and the new materialism poses important challenges and seriously affects the concept of biopolitics" (62). As with Braidotti, there is the double justification for "speculativizing" biopolitics. One, Foucault was anthropocentric, and new materialism is the necessary and proper correction that takes knowledge beyond anthropocentrism—this is the *philosophical-academic* justification. Two, capitalist valorization has become increasingly driven by new forms of value-extraction technologies that did not exist when Foucault was writing—the *historical and political-economic* justification. And while Lemke defends Foucault by pointing out the latter's political economic analyses as well as the notion of the government of things that Foucault had put forward, the consequences for biopolitics are the same as for Braidotti: biopolitics needs to move on, or perhaps has already moved on, to become more speculative.

However, perhaps this speculative tendency is propelled by something other than just capitalism and academic progress—namely, by the philosophical instability that characterizes the notion of life, a key half of biopolitics since Foucault. In his book *After Life* (2010), Eugene Thacker effectively summarizes this openness of the definition of life:

> What if life is never self-evident in lived experience? However, once one entertains these questions, a whole host of other questions present themselves. The very concept of life itself begins to dissolve and dissipate, while still remaining in use and in circulation. What if life is not assumed to reach its pinnacle in human life? What if life is only incidentally, and not fundamentally, an anthropocentric phenomenon?

And what if life actually has very little to do with the presumed self-evident nature of the living? (x)

The moment biology, a relatively well-defined field, is pushed out by the concept "life," biopolitics can be considered a speculative discipline due to the absences and redirections that characterize the notion of life. However, the key difference between the second and the third biopolitics wave is the relation between the two poles of politics and life: whereas for the former the two defining parts of the duality were in an integrated and generative relation, the third wave—perhaps concomitantly with the general tendency towards polarization that exists in our time—is characterized by the distancing of and antagonism between the two sides of politics and life. Either one sides with the reflexive and self-normalizing tendency that sees biopolitics as an academic discipline among other royal and governing sciences of the realm of knowledge, or one chooses to go down the speculative, open, and endless path of speculating about life, non-life, and the real.

In "Biophiosophy for the 21st Century" (2016), Thacker argues that there have been three dominant ways of perceiving life within Western thought: "soul, meat, and pattern" (132), the first one associated with Aristotle, the second with Descartes, and the third with cybernetics. All three, in spite of the different ways in which they arrange hierarchies internal to the concept of life, rely on the double strategy of articulating boundaries between different kinds of life and what is outside life on the one hand and positing a transcendental principle of life on the other hand. Against this, Thacker proposes a fourth, Deleuzian, approach: "Whereas the philosophy of biology is concerned with articulating a concept of 'life' that would describe the essence of life, biophilosophy is concerned with articulating those things that ceaselessly transform life. *For biophilosophy, life = multiplicity*" (135). Such biophilosophy would recognize the non-life of "microbes, epidemics, endosymbiosis, parasitism, swarms, packs, flocks, a-life, genetic algorithms, biopathways, smart dust, smartmobs, netwars—there is a whole bestiary that asks us to think the life-multiplicity relation" (136). Against the ordered and principled conceptions of life, biophilosophy puts forward incomplete ontologies, invaluable and non-exchangeable life and non-life, and the means for reinventing the new but already tired millennium.

When it comes to the speculative tendency in the third biopolitics wave, Braidotti, Lemke, and Thacker most clearly represent its three dominant trends. The hold-out

Foucauldians, like Lemke, acknowledge that something in biopolitics has changed, and they agree that the causes are Foucault's own limitations and the changes in capitalism but argue that Foucault is still relevant—perhaps for the attentive reader. For scholars like Braidotti, Foucault is a means to reach Deleuze and kick off into an entirely different realm that has nothing to do with biopolitics. Even Agamben is no longer useful because he is too negative, not joyful enough. As Braidotti says, his vision of life, politics, and technology is too "gloomy and pessimistic" (2016, 38)—optimism is a scholarly norm. New materialism and its affirmative, positive attitude to resistance and technology, with Deleuze as a master, takes over where biopolitics left off.

Whereas Lemke comes across like a stuffy old professor defending a dusty method and Braidotti sounds like a New Age spiritual healer with an updated vocabulary, Thacker could be giving life-coaching lectures at the Silicon Valley. His notion of biophilosophy, mixed with the vocabulary of horror cinema, techno-accelerationism, and the non-life of objects, is thematically and stylistically proximate to the Speculative Realism movement, the avantgarde of contemporary speculative metaphysics. In spite of their differences, all three scholars and the trends they represent are aligned in their view of biopolitics: Lemke's Latourian focus on the governance of things, Braidotti's new materialist affirmative ontology, and Thacker's dark speculationism all seize the speculative surplus that the concept of "life" introduces into biopolitics. Biopolitics, through the speculative payload of the concept of life, branches out into contemporary metaphysical movements. In a sense, biopolitics and contemporary metaphysics offer supplemental completion to one another: biopolitics has always implied, tacitly and reluctantly, a speculative metaphysics, whereas the speculative metaphysics has always been uneasily political—that is, biopolitical, concerned with reinvention of subjectivity, knowledge, and power, the primary biopolitical concerns.

Therefore, in an overly simplified and diagrammatic form, one could depict the hundred-year history of biopolitics as a term and concept using the following table:

First wave	Second wave				Third wave
Biology and Politics	Life and Politics --> *Life* and Politics				Post-life "Politics"
normativity	*history, resistance, ontology*				*speculation*
1st acc.	2nd acc.	3rd acc.	4th acc.	5th acc.	6th acc.
1920s	1960s	1960s–70s	Late '90s	Early 2000s	~2010–2020

Note. "Acc." stands for "acceleration."

What does this history—that begins with biology and finishes with speculative non-life, that starts with politics understood as the search for the arche-norm and ends up with politics that searches to escape all norms—spell for the future of biopolitics? It seems there has never been a better time to be a biopolitics scholar. The number of approaches, methods, and attitudes available to study biopolitical semi-phenomena is vast and accommodates many different scholarly orientations. The themes, topics, and pantheon of biopolitics are open yet defined with enough solidity to apply for research grants. Now is the Golden Age of biopolitics, which also means that biopolitics has been "completed"—after the simultaneously reflexive and speculative stage, different forms of biopolitics can only return, perhaps with a difference, but the underlying statement of biopolitics leaves no room for further innovations. For inspiration, scholars turn to science and technology studies, new materialism, and speculative realism.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter, I detailed the reflexive phase that biopolitics has entered into over the last ten years. During this period, biopolitics scholars have labored to convert biopolitics into a coherent, stable, and respectable discipline with a methodology, a set of objects, and a canon. However, underneath the building blocks that were supposed to solidify biopolitics into a recognizable academic structure, my analysis revealed a series of absences: an absence of limits, an absence of ground, and an absence of object. I showed how, in spite and *because* of these reflexive efforts aimed at academic respectability, biopolitics has actually accelerated into a state of aporiosis that Deleuze had described as awaiting all ordered systems that attempt to work out their own ordering principles. Then, in the middle of the chapter, I claimed that, although biopolitics has not managed to

simulate a solidified controlling fiction and dissimulate its connection to the transcendental exteriority needed to become a royal science, biopolitics "meets" the requirements for a deconstructionist counter-science with flying colors. In the last section above, I wanted to show the philosophical development of the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics, a development that rests on changes in philosophical attitude rather than changes in capitalism and academic fashions.

Ever since the beginning of the second biopolitics wave in the second half of the 20th century, biopolitics has adopted the notion of life as its controlling fiction, as the ultimate exteriority that makes the discipline of biopolitics possible. However, basing the possibility of biopolitics in the concept of life all but seals biopolitics's fate as a counter-science because the notion of life is itself defined by absences and an impossibility of definition—by a series of unworkings—that push biopolitics further and further away from a respectable position towards an intermediary place contaminated with philosophy, disciplines and pseudo-disciplines, and various other bodies of knowledge; a place that is speculative in the deconstructionist sense of the term as being negatively characterized by the grammatological, vertical, and horizontal unworkings and positively by mixing cultural, ontological, and autobiographical analyses. In short, the moment biopolitics replaced biology with life in its internal economy of concepts, biopolitics found itself within the speculative drift.

This speculative drift has peaked from the third wave onwards, when scholars explicitly turned to speculative philosophy in search of the definition of life, thus consolidating biopolitics's fate as a pseudo-discipline that remains partially open to the contingency of the pure domain of non-order. In the third wave, the concept of life functions not as a substantive ground for biopolitics to lean against but a distributive concept that further destabilizes, fragments, and expands the scope of biopolitics—that is, instead of referring to something clearly definable and particular, life points to another exceptionally unstable entity: immanence. For example, Mills (2018) claims that "relatively recently . . . there has been a turn [within biopolitics] to attempting to develop a new philosophy of life" (154) due to the fact that biopolitics shifted the Foucauldian to the Deleuzian urtext. However, when Mills surveys the definition of life proposed by post-Deleuze biopolitics thinkers, such as Agamben, Negri, and Esposito, among others, what she finds is that life

is "absolute immanence (50), "radical immanence" (103), and "pure immanence" (104)—or, put otherwise, modern biopolitics works with "a conception of life as immanent to itself" (180). Indeed, claiming that biopolitics is the study of life and politics (or life and technology, or life and subjectivity—the noun after the "or" varies, but it is always *life* "and" X) and then defining life as "immanent" or as some kind of "immanence" is extremely common in immanence scholarship belonging to the current reflexive period. This externalization of the definition of life onto immanence is problematic because immanence itself is not an object or a concept—rather, as I will argue in Chapter 5, immanence is somewhat akin to an ultra-fiction whose purpose is to simulate the possibility not of a single discipline but of an entire order of knowledge; immanence is a simulation at the level of the episteme. Therefore, where biopolitics would like to instaurate a controlling fiction, life, and to compensate for the absences that characterize this fiction by referring it to immanence, what biopolitics actually ends up doing is installing a double vacuum at its core, or doubly empty reference. In fact, it would not be too much to say that biopolitics replaces one dark night with another one whose opacity is meant to be the end of all darkness. For academic respectability, such a procedure is lethal, but for a counter-science, a very promising start.

Discussing his archaeological methodology, Foucault repeatedly claimed, as I showed in Chapter 2, that an archaeologist does not investigate pseudo-disciplines. Instead, an archaeologist is after something that reveals itself through the failures of the pseudo-disciplines to become sciences. What my own analysis has shown in this chapter is that biopolitics cannot attain academic respectability because of its a) speculative nature and b) encounter with immanence via the concept of life. In the remaining two chapters of my dissertation, I will respectively address both the nature of contemporary speculative scholarship and the strangeness of the super-fiction of immanence.

CHAPTER 4: ARCHAELOGY OF POSITIVITY—THE STRONGLY
SPECULATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMS

In the previous chapter on the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics, I argued that an archaeological analysis of biopolitics reveals the following two developments: on the one hand, a certain kind of speculative space starts to appear in the second half of the 20th century that promises extraordinary interpretive scope; on the other hand, biopolitics increasingly externalizes the definition of its attempted leading fiction, life, upon the notion of immanence, to the point where one could argue that biopolitics is becoming not the study of life and X (whether politics, technology, or subjectivity) but the study of immanence as the latter relates to various concepts from political philosophy. These two developments, the emergence of a new speculative space and the coming to the forefront of immanence, are, in fact, two sides of the same phenomenon understood on the distinct levels of the positivity and the episteme.

The way Foucault orders and describes the different levels of archaeological analysis in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is quite schematic: one starts with the statement, proceeds to the positivity via the pseudo-disciplines, and then ends up with the episteme. Along the way, particularly around the positivity level, the categories overflow, and the whole archaeological edifice threatens to fall apart. The fact that Foucault struggles with the notion of positivity is evident from the number of synonyms he introduces to work out the level of the positivity: the historical a priori, the archive, and knowledge. At the same time, it is not completely clear whether these three terms are synonyms of positivity or the episteme—that the historical a priori is related to positivity seems likely, but the archive and knowledge, described by Foucault as partial totalities, could also double for the episteme. Finally, the episteme itself has certain features of the positivity, in the sense that the episteme, like the positivity, serves a mediating, communicative function by being "a constantly moving set of articulations, shifts, and coincidences that are established, only to give rise to others" (1969/1972, 192). In fact, all of Foucault's archaeological categories operate in what could be described as a fractal arrangement: the structure of the statement is exactly the same as the structure of the episteme, but an episteme, consisting of a great many repetitions of statements, achieves its own level of distinction, in spite of sharing an

isomorphic structure with the statement. In such a fractal scenario, the number of possible archaeological levels would be infinite and therefore trivial.

Rather than being pedantically schematic or entirely promiscuous with the archaeological levels of analysis, perhaps it would more productive to ask why Foucault saw the need to introduce multiple categories before the episteme to prepare the terrain for arriving at the episteme. In my opinion, the answer is this: in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972), Foucault is preoccupied that the episteme might appear too much like an immobile totality (192) or some sort of a unity (21–31), yet there is something fixed about an episteme in that the latter is a "set of constraints and limitations" (192). At the same time, Foucault is superbly keen to emphasize that the episteme is not only limiting but productive: the episteme, "in the positivity of discursive practices, makes possible the existence of epistemological figures and sciences" (192). To capture this productive aspect of the episteme, Foucault introduces the notion of positivity, which is nothing but the episteme considered in its productive, generative mode. The reason why Foucault struggles so much with the vocabulary is, as I see it, exactly because he does not want to call this side of the episteme generative or productive, which would bring the episteme dangerously close to the Spinozian substance or the Hegelian subject. Instead, Foucault opts for caginess and talks about positivity as the space of communication.

Therefore, for my own purposes, I am interpreting the positivity and the episteme to refer to the same archaeological phenomenon grasped in two distinct modes of being: in both cases one is looking beyond the pseudo-disciplines towards the domain of non-order, but the positivity describes the rules for *how* bodies of knowledge are allowed to investigate the existence of order, whereas the episteme refers more to *what* the bodies of knowledge are supposed to investigate. In other words, the episteme defines which types of objects, topics, and themes are legitimate and promising for study, whereas the positivity enables the different manners of speculating about the episteme—in short, the range of the research programs. Consequently, when I argue that the two developments revealed by biopolitics point to the same phenomenon, I mean it exactly along the lines suggested above: immanence is the episteme that looms through the seams of biopolitics, and this episteme also carries with it a new manner of speculating, or positivity, that is instantiated through any number of research programs. There is never an episteme without its own specific

forms of speculation, and so the emergence of an episteme is always marked by the appearance of new means of speculation and novel research programs.

Until fairly recently, one major positivity was the speculative-critical space drawn up by the deconstruction project and characterized by the following three strategies: a) to unsettle totalities, b) to unwrite histories, and c) and to contaminate purities. The first strategy is aptly summarized by Jean-Luc Nancy (1973/2001):

> That is to say that the rapid and incessant movement that goes simultaneously for and against the "proposition" in order to achieve "speculation" and, more generally, goes for and against language in order to reach thought, in order to free thought *from* language but *in* language, that this movement, then, troubles the sovereign power of the *Aufhebung*, disrupts the essential mainspring of the system, and therefore makes the system restless, makes it anxious, drives it wild, prevents absolute knowledge from absolutizing itself. (148)

Working for and against, from but in—in order to trouble, disrupt, and prevent; that is, in order to encounter within an order of knowledge something of a surplus that the order of knowledge could neither appropriate nor disavow, being forced, therefore, to stay incomplete, uncertain, and open. This war-machine attitude to various absolutes—such as absolute knowledge, knowledge of the absolute itself, or the absolutist University—underpins all three specific modulations of the critical-speculative, or deconstructionist, positivity. For example, Agamben's (2009) approach of unwriting, or writing the unsaid, strives for a recognizable outcome:

> It [archaeology] wants, on the contrary, to let it [the past] go, to rid itself of it, in order to gain access, whether before or after it, to that which never has been, to that which never has wanted [sic]. Only at this point the un-lived past reveals itself for what it really was, namely contemporaneous to the present, and becomes for the first time accessible as a "source." For this reason, contemporaneity, the co-present to one's present, is rare and difficult, as it implies the experience of an un-lived [sic] and the memory of an oblivion. (225–226)

The vocabulary employed by Agamben is different to Nancy's, and the two texts are separated by some thirty-five years, yet the kinship between, on the one hand, that which the system cannot digest and, on the other hand, that within history which has never been

lived yet can be recalled, is evident. In both cases, one looks for a surplus that, even upon revelation, remains opaque: "Like all authentic quests, the quest of criticism consists not in discovering its object but in assuring the conditions of its inaccessibility" (Agamben 1977/1993, xvi). Whether one deals with unsettling totalities or unwriting history, the purpose of speculative criticism is not to open previously inaccessible frontiers to encyclopaedic settling but to discover within existing encyclopedic territories those speculative objects that equally resist the gaze as much as they attract it. The final strategy of the speculative-criticism positivity—contaminating disciplinary purities through "zones of contact" (Rajan 2002, 29)—is the most empirical means for reaching the same objective, namely using the tools provided by the order of knowledge against the image of knowledge that is premised on absolute knowing.

The positivity and the research programs that have been hinted at by biopolitics and that I will survey in this chapter could not be more different from this deconstructionist model of critical speculation. The research programs most popular today have more or less entirely abandoned the "critical" part of their predecessors, without necessarily becoming pre-critical or dogmatic for doing so. Instead, the speculative programs are nowadays defined by the following three features: a) a renewed engagement with the absolute, in terms of the absolute as such, absolute knowledge, and even absolute institutions; b) the use of a specific poetic language that is characterized by "the severe poetry of what is said" (18), as Deleuze (1986/2006) described Foucault's style in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*—that is, a logical poetry purposefully overburdened with jargon; and c) an attempt to conceptualize an order of knowledge beyond both the universalism of dual control and the double aporiosis pointed out by Deleuze and Foucault in terms of delirium and aphasia. The research programs that meet the three criteria above I call *strongly speculative*, as distinguished from the *weakly speculative* research programs, such as New Materialism, that I do not take up. First, weakly speculative research programs do not make assertations about absolute knowledge, and they are usually speculative—that is, transgressive in relation to established boundaries—primarily within the social-political sphere, where they argue for various reinventions of subjects, categories, and institutions of society. Second, weakly speculative research programs tend to still belong to the critical-speculative positivity, whose ultimate goal is to unsettle, unwrite, and contaminate rather

than re-engaging with the absolute. Third and finally, weak speculative research programs often consider themselves to be carrying out the mission of good old science rather than openly engaging in fictionalizing existence. In short, whereas the weakly speculative research programs still retain some loyalty to the contrary ideals of noble science and deconstruction, the strongly speculative programs operate within a post-aporiosis setting.

With this distinction in mind, I will review three strongly speculative research programs: the "speculative everything" discourse, whose academically acceptable version is Object-Oriented Philosophy; the "absolute speculation" discourse, premised on a philosophico-literary approach and often associated with a Hegelian revival; and, finally, the Speculative Realist program, "subtractive speculation," that relies on "registering" the unintelligible.

Speculative Program One: Speculative Everything

If the world were perfect, everybody would speculate. Granted that society can only be better or worse rather than perfect, it would be desirable for more and more people to join into speculating over time. For example, Leon Niemoczynski (2017) concludes his introduction to Speculative Realism by stating that he hopes readers will "use the concepts and ideas they [the speculative realists] have fashioned to then fashion one's [sic] *own* speculative philosophy that extends even further the speculative philosophical enterprise" (135). To each man, woman, and child their own speculative philosophy—a democracy of speculation, perhaps bringing to fruition something like the Kantian ideal of the absolutely free use of public reason. However, Niemoczynski does not explicitly state why, exactly, such a totalizing and individualizing democratization of speculative philosophy would be desirable.

A very honest proposition regarding the importance of speculation is provided by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby in their *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (2013). While the book is ostensibly a rallying call addressed to "designers" and people working in "design," it might as well be the slogan, manifesto, and platform for most contemporary theory, from New Materialism and Speculative Realism to biopolitics and post-Marxism. According to Dunne and Raby, "by speculating more, at all levels of society, and exploring alternative scenarios, reality will become more

malleable and, although the future cannot be predicted, we can help set in place today factors that will increase the probability of more desirable futures happening" (6). Indeed, although the future is not predictable or subject to deterministic laws, speculating can "open up all sorts of possibilities" (6) and "provide complicated pleasures, enrich our mental lives, and broaden our minds" (189). Such a project would involve all manner of experts—"ethicists, political scientists, economists, and so on" (6)—but without establishing a new top-down hierarchy because "viewers can make up their own minds" (189). Much like biopolitics, speculating is said to have infinite potential, without any limits to what it can accomplish. In fact, this seems to be implied in the most basic and common definition of speculating as an act that goes beyond established boundaries. Beyond boundaries, anything and everything is possible. Consequently, generalized speculating is the most direct path to liberation, democracy, and a better future—or any other outcome one could wish for.

Clearly, the definition of speculation and its mission provided by Dunne and Raby is too vulgar and too simplistically cheery to be adopted by theory scholars. The academically acceptable version of this "speculative everything" discourse is Object-Oriented Philosophy. Although there are a number of proper names associated with this theory—Levi Bryant, Timothy Morton, and Ian Bogost, to name the big ones—its dogmatic body along with its research program has been invented, nurtured, and disseminated primarily by Graham Harman, to whose position I now turn.

The initial program of Object-Oriented Philosophy was humble: "to illuminate those ultimate questions that the general public widely associates with philosophers, but which philosophers, partly through ascetic conceptual rigor but partly through lack of imagination, have been failing to address at all" (235), wrote Harman in *Guerilla Metaphysics* in 2005. The point was to advance "a theory that would map out key domains of specific objects and articulate where one ends and another begins," but such a theory "could not be expected to deal with every possible object" (237). The expected outcome was "a renewed discussion of some of the traditional problems of metaphysics" (237), on the condition that Object-Oriented Philosophy managed to distinguish itself from "present-day ontology" by becoming more concrete and by not being "too global" (235). It would be perfect if Object-Oriented Philosophy managed to avoid relapsing into critique, "the

most deeply rooted intellectual habit of our time" (237), and, instead, would erect "new towers or monuments" over the "ruins" of "the traditional cathedrals of metaphysics" (256). A poetic attitude, especially common to the early writings of Harman, and a limited research program to take up interesting but ignored questions, renew metaphysics, and oppose criticism for the sake of criticism. Surely nothing in the above could justify Harman being accused of singlehandedly choking the life out of the Speculative Realist movement, as some (Brassier 2014, 421; Wolfendale 2014, 3–7; Niemoczynski 2017, 21–34) have done?

Compare the above with the following statement, from the latest book by Harman, tellingly titled *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (2017): "In my view, the 'theory whose range of applicability is limitless' can only be found in philosophy, and especially in the type of philosophy called Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO)" (23)—a statement to match Latour's own ambition. From a guerrillero to the new dictator with revolutionaries on his doorstep, Harman's trajectory matches the most stereotypical model of political development, repeated all over the world by those fringe groups whose projects are met with unexpected success. And, according to Harman himself, the success of Object-Oriented Philosophy has been extraordinary:

> OOO has provoked strong reactions—both positive and negative—in such fields as African-American studies, archaeology, architecture, choreography, design, ecology, education, feminism, history, literary theory, media studies, music, political theory, psychoanalysis, social theory, theology, videogame theory and the visual arts, not to mention philosophy itself. (10)

If this sounds familiar, it may be because a similar level of global impact was claimed by biopolitics scholars. However, unlike biopolitics, Deleuze studies, or any other contemporary competitor, Object-Oriented Philosophy has triumphed in ways undreamt of by other academics, "with the popular musician Björk having engaged in correspondence with OOO author Timothy Morton, and the actor Benedict Cumberbatch having listened attentively to one of my lectures at a private residence in London in 2014" (8). If Björk and Cumberbatch are on board, and are even listening attentively, what other proof of global success and infinite potential is required for an academic discipline?

As with biopolitics, I do not want to reproduce the basic claims of Object-Oriented Philosophy. Instead, what interests me is the research program, which is certainly a peculiar one. To begin with, Harman (2017) is highly critical of the usual definition of knowledge premised on truth, with truth understood as adequate description of reality, usually based on the scientific method (1–19). The problem with knowledge as scientific truth is fourfold (38–41): *physicalism*, the devaluation of immaterial entities; *smallism*, the over-privileging of reduction; *anti-fictionalism*, the devaluation of aesthetic phenomena; and *literalism*, the disregard of metaphoric language. Against the ills of the world, "the best remedy . . . is not the truth/knowledge pair . . . but reality" (6). Indeed, Harman even goes on to state that "charlatans" (7) in politics and elsewhere would be best checked not by facts but by reality—as if reality were easily accessible, much more easily so than truth, which "no one actually has" (7) because it is not clear "where we are supposed to find" (5) it. Truth and knowledge are rare and questionable, whereas reality is ubiquitous and there for everyone.

If one were to understandably assume that, consequently, Harman subscribes to easy and wholesome access to the real, one would be mistaken. Nothing could be further from the truth: "OOO is completely opposed to the idea of knowledge as direct access to the real" (168); "it is axiomatic for OOO that no direct access to the reality of this hospital [a given example] is possible" (186); and "from a [sic] OOO perspective, there is no truth: not because nothing is real, but because reality is *so* real that any attempt to translate it into literal terms is doomed to fail" (192). While appearing to be contradictory at first—how can one argue that the reality replaces knowledge when the real is radically withdrawn from being known?—this statement makes perfect sense within Harman's framework. The real is not directly available to knowledge, but that does not mean that it is not directly available to forms of cognition that are not knowledge-based, which would be all the aesthetic forms of cognition. The real is too real *for knowledge*, but the real is not too real for metaphor and sensibility. "The mistake," argues Harman, "is to think that if Socrates has no knowledge, then the only alternative is that he must be utterly ignorant" (52). Quite the opposite seems to be the case for Object-Oriented Philosophy: the less knowledge one has, the less ignorant one can be. If this seems like an unfair interpretation of Harman's work, one only needs to remember the poetic conclusion to *Guerilla Metaphysics* (2005), where Harman argues extensively that what sets good philosophers apart from the bad ones is a naïve fascination

with the world. Wisdom is not knowledge but "the ability to be surprised because only this ability shows sufficient integrity to listen to the voice of the world instead of our own prejudice about the world" (2005, 239). The problem with political charlatans, therefore, is not that they participate too little in the truth but that they partake too much in knowledge, losing the ability to be wise and to hear the voice of the real.

Throughout his works in general and in *A Theory of Everything* (2017) in particular, Harman repeats that "we cannot know for sure" a great variety of things, such as the existence or non-existence of soccer moms or spies pretending to be our loved ones (51–54). However, the emphasis here has to be on the word "to know"—we cannot *know* for sure, but there are other ways to *be* for sure. Such a method of radical uncertainty as a justification for a theory of everything is certainly a novel move by Object-Oriented Philosophy. At worst, it can be interpreted as the facetious statement that, because we cannot know anything for sure, then Object-Oriented Philosophy, or something else that is appealing, might as well be true. This is clearly not the intention of Harman's program. Knowledge is nigh impossible, and epistemic access is radically uncertain—therefore, the program that takes this into account and explains with certainty the uncertainty of knowledge could, in principle, aspire to extraordinary status; in other words, a twist to the finitude paradox described by Foucault. However, the question becomes paradoxical because it can be turned around: is Object-Oriented Philosophy itself not knowledge and, therefore, radically "not sure" of what it is saying?

To his credit, Harman grapples multiple times with the question of incompetent knowledge versus competent knowledge in the framework of Object-Oriented Philosophy. Clearly, a theory of everything that claims to be better than the others must have the means to not end up endorsing radical epistemic relativism. For anybody who has read Harman's chapter on "Indirect Relations" (2017, 149–193), however, it should be clear what a struggle it is for Object-Oriented Philosophy to explain the phenomenon of competent versus incompetent knowledge. In said chapter, Harman poses the following problem: "Whatever the difference between better and worse medicine may be, it cannot consist in good medicine having a more accurate picture of reality than bad medicine does: for between any picture and the reality it depicts, the gulf is unbridgeable" (169). And yet, there is a difference between "the superior expertise that can be found to a greater degree

in some human masters, places or historical periods than in others" (186), which is why Harman was writing "this sentence from a hospital ranked number one in the United States in a particular specialty" rather than seeking medical assistance from an English graduate well-versed in Shakespeare. Indeed, not only is expertise real, "we do have a certain knowledge of the knowledge possessed by the specialists in this hospital" (187). Where does this leave Harman, who has previously argued against truth and knowledge in favor of reality?

In the uncomfortable position of having to "rehabilitate the word 'knowledge' in order to refer to a positive phenomenon that unmistakably does exist" (186), namely expertise. The rehabilitation is not very complicated: we cannot possess truth because we have no access to real objects due to the radical surplus of any object that prevents any and all descriptions (186; 192), but we can possess different degrees of knowledge because "*the qualities* [of objects] are real rather than sensual" (187, my emphasis). These real *qualities* of unavailable objects, "such as a medical disorder" (188), do not come "from the object itself . . . but from qualities belonging to the beholder." So, objects are radically withdrawn, but they have real qualities, and the real qualities that are the source of knowledge come from the beholder rather than the object. As Harman notes, this is "perplexing" and begs the following question: "in what sense does the beholder supply real qualities for a sensual object" (189)? Here, for backup Harman appeals to Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Marshall McLuhan, and Soren Kierkegaard in very quick succession, over three pages in fact, before rather abruptly finishing the chapter, but the proposition is this: our "tacit familiarity" (182, 187) with "background assumptions" (189, 191) allows us to somehow synthesize or to dependably know real qualities of aesthetic objects that substitute for the real objects that we can never know due to their radical surplus, and this tacit synthesis of background assumptions is, I assume, what constitutes expertise and distinguishes bad knowledge from good knowledge and top hospitals from low-ranked ones. In the previous sentence, I used the words "somehow" and "I assume" in their specific sense—that is, one "somehow" extracts these real qualities from background assumptions because Harman does not specify how exactly, and "I assume" this is what constitutes expertise because Harman does not return to this point. In the end, once Object-Oriented Philosophy has to account for expertise, its radical potential is diminished and its epistemology strongly resembles three

anterior and related tendencies: Latour's registering of the effects produced by actors/actants, Polanyi's emphasis on tacit over rational-scientific knowledge, and the general analytic tendency to dismiss the word "truth" (and in Harman's case "knowledge") while going to lengths to transfer all privileges of truth to another term, such as knowledge (or in Harman's case, rehabilitated knowledge).

What is the status of Object-Oriented philosophy, then, if truth and un-rehabilitated knowledge cannot be relied on, but Object-Oriented Philosophy can, nonetheless, propose a theory of everything, which is a form of absolute knowledge? Such a research program is only tenable a) if it proposes a brand-new order of knowledge from the ground up, and, moreover, b) if it can avoid the reflexive aporiosis that awaits all bodies of knowledge that attempt to account for their own possibility. In fact, Object-Oriented Philosophy seems purpose-built to avoid the problem of aporiosis altogether. By, on the one hand, endorsing the reality of fictions and immaterial objects and, on the other hand, not preoccupying itself with the details of its own epistemological access to the real because such access is ruled out from the start, Object-Oriented Philosophy can claim to investigate without contradiction that which classical knowledge cannot, namely reality in its absolutely real state. And although this absolute knowledge will never be perfectly accurate or complete, it will nonetheless be absolute because *the real is not perfectly available to itself either*. The absoluteness of Object-Oriented Philosophy comes from its speculative program supposedly replicating or matching the structure of reality, which is obscure *in and of* itself as well as *for* itself. Indirect, incomplete, uncertain—that is the best that the real can do in relation to itself, and so it is the best that a theory of everything, which is not knowledge but some sort of a post-poetic cognition, can do as well.

The problematic aspects of the "speculative everything" discourse, in part a consequence of the enthusiasm generated by the Speculative Realist event, have not gone unacknowledged by some speculative realists themselves. For example, Brassier has recently passed from the full frontal assault on correlationism undertaken in *Nihil Unbound* (2007) to a sort of rearguard position, where, like an academic catcher in the rye, he saves young scholars from falling into the abyss of Object-Oriented Philosophy. In "Concepts and Objects" (2011), Brassier spoke out against "dispensing with those hard-won dualisms that have helped clarify what distinguishes scientific representation from metaphysical

fantasy" (65), and in "Postscript: Speculative Autopsy" (2014), Brassier admitted to having "indulged in indiscriminate anti-correlationist rhetoric which I now regret" (412, Footnote 4). The former article was a demolition of Bruno Latour and Deleuze-inspired univocal network theory, the latter of Harman and the new metaphysics espoused by object-oriented ontologists.

The criticisms deployed against univocity and easygoing definitions of immanence will be surveyed in the coming chapter. But what criticisms are levelled against Object-Oriented Philosophy specifically? According to Peter Wolfendale in his *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes* (2014), it is a form a philosophy that "attracts followers on the basis of grandiose promises" (xiv) while being composed of "no core argument but rather a patchwork of argumentative fragments, rhetorical devices, and literary allusions" (xiii). In the end, Object-Oriented Philosophy promises "ontological egalitarianism" (4) but delivers only poor thinking because "it is speculative in only the most facile way, and realist in only the most impoverished fashion. It has diluted Speculative Realism until nothing is left but Specious Realism" (402). This "dilution" has taken place because Object-Oriented Philosophy does not seriously inquire into its own conditions of knowing, preferring to circumvent such questions and simply focus on showing what its research program can do. For Wolfendale, this results in a kind of extroverted solipsism whereby any personal intellection or imagining can be assumed to have full, that is real and material, existence.

In a postscript to Wolfendale's book, Brassier (2014) agrees that, "stripped of the specific philosophical meaning . . . the term 'speculative' is reduced to its ordinary adjectival sense, meaning 'conjectural, fanciful, unsubstantiated by evidence or fact.' Prefixed to an ill-defined 'realism,' it becomes the alibi for a doctrine that wishes to spare itself the trouble of justification" (415–416). What a difference some ten years have made! Harman has gone from the humble wish to inspire philosophy students to giving private lectures to celebrities on the theory of everything, and Brassier is sending out a search party to retrieve Kant from exile. Reminiscing about the early days of the Speculative Realism movement, Niemoczynski recalls that his own "impression of that activity . . . was one of moral outrage, if not disgust" (2017, 31). Anger, regret, revision—the incoming reflexive

phase of Speculative Realism seems fuller of sad passions than the one undergone by biopolitics.

Object-Oriented Philosophy may well be the academically accepted version of the "speculative everything" sentiment so deftly expressed by Dunne and Raby. However, just as one should not dismiss the latter two merely as puppets of the Silicon-Valley capitalism and its creative spirit, so one cannot do away with Harman, Levi Bryant, and Object-Oriented Philosophy by pointing out its voracious appetite for branding and lack of regard for epistemological justification procedures. If not Harman and object-oriented ontology, it will be, say, Barman and the subject-disoriented hantology because the tendency towards "speculative everything"—towards the absolute, optimistic, and fanciful speculation—is the inevitable correlate of a research program that attempts to avoid aporiosis by openly endorsing the principle of fiction, just as the inevitable correlate of rigorously quantified and justified social sciences is ossified and trivially objective research.

Finally, Harman's extensive, almost doppelganger-like resemblance to Latour should be evident and, perhaps, unsurprising given the former's eulogizing of the latter. More importantly, the speculative everything research program, though operating in the shadow of aporiosis and attempting to explicitly incorporate fiction into its procedures of knowing, relies not on the deconstructionist order of knowledge but on a mixture of Latour's reductive universalism and Grosz's total universalism in order to claim that the absolute knowledge (or knowing reality, to put it in Harman's terms), though not transparently accessible due to the ultimate opacity of objects, can nonetheless be attained via what I have called post-knowledge, a combination of philosophical reflections, rhetorical devices, and appeals to literature and art.

Speculative Program Two: Absolute Speculation

A common trope in contemporary speculative scholarship is the reference to a founding bifurcation in the history of modern philosophical thought. At some indistinct, extended point in the past, "Continental" philosophy was faced with a choice, "to follow Kant critically or Hegel speculatively" (Niemoczynski 2017, 34), and it chose wrongly to go along with Kant, resulting in the long chain of anti-speculative thinkers "from Kant right through to Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Ponty [sic], Foucault, and Derrida" (35). The

mission now is to correct this historical wrong and "reject Kantian finitude and embrace the Hegelian speculative moment" (34). It is as if a century and a half of theory could be safely ignored, being little more than a mistake.

A similar point is made by Gabriel Catren (2011), who claims that the "Hegelian speculative absolutism (and its Marxist outcome) is the most powerful weapon against the Heideggerian critical fundamentalism and the concomitant pre-modern theo-philosophical landscape" (367). The absolute, "far from being a lost homeland or an eschatological kingdom" (348), or something unavailable to adequate understanding, "is always already with us" and ready to be accessed by the speculative thinker. What we must do, now, is "reactivate and generalize the Hegelian gesture through which *intentional* science and *transcendental* critique are subsumed in the self-reflection proper to *speculative* knowledge" (341). Speculative knowledge is knowledge of the absolute, and the latter is neither in the past or in the future, nor barred by a critical injunction, but simply, well, *available*.

The explicit focus on returning to the absolute and absolute knowledge, often by way of Hegel, is indicative of the second strongly speculative research program in contemporary speculative scholarship, which I call the "absolute speculation" discourse. In the sub-section below, I will discuss two recent texts that, in my opinion, are exemplary of absolute speculation: *The Dash—The Other Side of Speculative Knowing* (2018) by Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda and *Remnants of Hegel: Remains of Ontology, Religion, and Community* by Félix Duque (2018). Then, I will consider how the renewed focus on the absolute contributes to moving beyond the instability that characterizes dual control, which, rather than being in equilibrium due to the complementariness of parts, is actually in a state of constant internal conflict. Finally, I will claim that, just as absolute speculation provides significant avenues for going beyond dual control, so it introduces a new problematic trend within scholarship, namely the tendency to conceive of the absolute along the ideological lines that match the politics of the speculative thinker. I will conclude this section by emphasizing absolute speculation's connections with the different figures of immanence and arguing that, in responding to Foucault's concerns about the aphasia induced by non-order, absolute speculation exhibits great promise but ultimately leads to universalism.

Speculation beyond Experience

Both *The Dash* and *Remnants of Hegel* aim to re-evaluate the role that the *Logic* texts play in the Hegelian corpus but do so on somewhat different grounds. On the one hand, Comay and Ruda propose to read the *Logic* in conjunction with its supposedly inseparable doppelganger, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, with neither of the two being detachable from each other. On the other hand, Duque proposes something similar but connects the *Logic* with the *Philosophy of Nature*, arguing that the latter text functions as a necessary corollary when interpreting the former. Whereas Comay and Ruda use a speculative-logical text and a philosophical-anthropological one, Duque uses a speculative-logical text and a completely discredited, disowned, and dismissed one. Perhaps this can be partially explained by the different motivations for writing each book. Comay and Ruda want to recover the speculative Hegel as much as Duque does, but the former two also have a political agenda: "we are attempting to return to what is salvageable of the left-wing Hegelian legacy" (9). *The Phenomenology* is an eminently political and historical text; the *Philosophy of Nature* is not, at least not explicitly. Therefore, starting from the common point of the *Logic*, the two writing assemblages pick different interlocutor texts for steering or perverting the established vision of the *Logic*. But why take up the *Logic* at all?

According to Comay and Ruda, the "traditional view of Hegel's *Logic* (usually presented as a criticism) is that Hegel is not only expounding the eternal laws of reality but thereby trying to prove the omnipresence and omnipotence of reason" (3). In response to this criticism, some contemporary scholars have attempted to rescue the *Logic* by de-metaphysicizing it and claiming that "the *Science of Logic* describes the ever-evolving protocols of rational discursive activity" (4). The *Logic* is treated either as "dogmatic rational metaphysics," quite in the manner of the speculative realists who accuse Hegel of totalizing correlationism, or as "an exercise in critical philosophy" (4). Unlike these two approaches that either denounce or declaw Hegel's metaphysics, Comay and Ruda propose to read the *Logic* literally and hyperbolically in order to induce the aporiosis of knowledge, which can be fruitfully exploited "to think from the standpoint of the impossibility of experience without finding refuge in a realm beyond experience" (42)—in other words, the *Logic* is an "immanent" means for encountering the Great Outdoors that correlationism had prohibited.

Comay and Ruda claim that "the *Logic* depicts a state before the creation of nature" (25) and, in fact, before the existence of spirit—"a 'pure life' that precedes the opposition between nature and spirit," the knowledge of which constitutes the knowledge of the absolute. The method for reaching such knowledge of the absolute can only be described as a kind of speculative accelerationism: the only way "to provide a rigorously nonmetaphysical rendering of Hegel is by affirming what is normally taken to be Hegel's most moribund metaphysical baggage" (2) and pushing "Hegel's project to its limits" (3). Such boundary-breaking, reminiscent of Foucault's idea of the speculative (that is, transgressive) part of criticism, leads to "the point where experience turns into an experience of the impossibility of experience" (4)—that is, by using Hegelian metaphysics to induce an aporiosis of reflexive knowledge, the speculative thinker can use said aporiosis to arrive at the immanent absolute upon which all experience rests. Put otherwise, Hegel's *Logic* shows "that 'spirit' must not only be denaturalized but also despiritualized" and "elaborates a life that belongs neither to nature nor to second nature" (25)—the pure life of the absolute. Through a rigorous philosophical logicism, the *Logic* enables thought, human thought, to range beyond its a priori boundaries and, essentially, to encounter the mind of God in its pure state.

What allows Hegel to accomplish this is the fact that "Hegel does not shy away from either empiricism or formalism but rather radicalizes both in full acknowledgment of their ultimate convergence" (21). Hegel manages to articulate, via the hyper-formalism of philosophical logic, the convergence of traditionally opposed forms of knowledge, and, by doing so, to unsettle categories of experience by showing that experience implies something other than experience that is, nonetheless, not transcendent to experience. Here, one can detect a certain resonance with the domain of non-order that Foucault had uncovered using a similar procedure of aporiosis. However, whereas Foucault emphasized the ultimate instability of all orders of knowledge, Comay and Ruda seem to imply that what lies beyond order is not aphasia but some kind of absolute knowledge, which, although it "completely reshuffles the cards not only of substance but equally of subject" (4) and "brings anxiety to an unprecedented pitch" (26), nonetheless leads to something positive or enlightening.

While Comay and Ruda are very deft at establishing the program of what speculation, guided by Hegel's *Logic*, should achieve, they are, in my opinion, somewhat

less effective at showing how exactly this takes place. Two specifying questions remain unanswered: why does the convergence of different epistemic categories unsettle experience, taking experience beyond itself, and why does experience necessarily imply the absolute? Luckily, these gaps can be effectively filled by two other books on speculation, the aforementioned work by Duque and another by Didier Debaise.

In *Speculative Empiricism: Revisiting Whitehead* (2017), Debaise arrives at almost identical conclusions on the nature and consequences of speculation by following Whitehead rather than Hegel. To begin with, "speculative construction has as its function . . . the elucidation of immediate experience" (17). This may well be the axiom that one has to take as given for the following line of thought to work. However, speculative thought, in order to be more than fancy, functions within "strict constraints," those constraints being "empirical and rational in equal measure" (17). Unlike the regular form of knowledge that chooses sides, speculative interpretation "brings the empirical and the rational into continual communication" (17) and, therefore, is "able to interpret everything" (17). Just as in Comay and Ruda, speculation is defined by Debaise as the capacity to converge the empirical and the rational.

The consequence of such speculative interpretation is the reversal of the habitual course of thought: "it [thought] no longer moves from experience towards simplification but rather from simplification to experience" (163). Going through the speculative machine according to which the empirical and the rational are constantly put into communication, the initial experience—it might as well be the initial idea—that launched the inquiry is radically unsettled (165). What becomes self-evident is that self-evidence as such is what requires an explanation the most: "The qualities of events—duration, extension, and change—rather than being the foundation of speculative philosophy, must, at every stage, be replaced by a constellation of concepts that makes possible their conceptual expression" (166–167). A strange upstaging in thought takes place: what seems ultimately capable of explanation, and therefore that which is ultimately real, is neither experience nor thought but *concepts*—that is, creations of philosophical logic that are not simply formalizations of experience. "Speculative empiricism is indeed a radical empiricism," concludes Debaise, "but it is based on methods alien to empiricism, techniques of a whole other order: the invention of abstractions and techniques for interpreting experience" (167). Consequently,

experience and habitual thought are radically destabilized, but, as with Comay and Ruda, the consequence is not aphasia but an encounter with the absolute and the marginalization of experience and thought in favor of concepts, logic, and abstraction.

This somewhat complicated procedure is expressed in a simpler and quicker syllogism by Duque (2018):

> it must also be recognized that whereas possible experience is, in any particular case, something contingent, the *possibility of experience* as such is absolutely not contingent, for it ultimately depends on an absolute presupposition. Or to put this in another way, it depends on the hypothesis of the *Absolute*. (vii-viii)

Possible experience is contingent, meaning it can happen, or not happen, in all manner of ways, usually depending on the physics of bodies. The possibility of experience, however, is absolute—whatever the contingent actual experience, there cannot *not* be experience. Knowing that possible experience *is* contingent, what guarantees it necessarily taking place cannot be that experience itself—it must be something not contingent, hence absolute. And as the only phenomenon that is absolute is the Absolute, one could say that experience, though contingent, necessarily implies something other than itself as its own guarantee, specifically the Absolute. Therefore, starting from experience, one should arrive at the *beyond* of experience, for the Absolute can form no part of the experience itself. However, this Absolute, though not of experience itself, is not beyond it in a transcendent manner, being, as it is, somehow involved with, or implicated in, experience. Consequently, by following this vertiginous line, the subject of experience could only end up being radically unsettled (and, potentially, enlightened?).

The question that remains is how one can study this Absolute that is immanent to experience while forming no part of experience. Like Comay and Ruda as well as Debaise, Duque agrees that speculative knowledge is a kind of convergence "where certainty and truth, *theoria* and *praxis*, the I and the world, come to coincide" (viii). However, perhaps the distinguishing feature of the contemporary speculative Hegelians is the recognition that such a convergence cannot be entirely successful: "The Hegelian system, impressive as it is, ultimately reveals itself as a miscarried attempt to reconcile nature and *theoria*, individuality and collective *praxis*" (x). Absolute knowledge cannot be realized because at the "moment of self-realization, thinking rather grasps that there is something that eludes

the grip of the Begriff. The object passes, *it goes,* without indicating a direction, sense, or meaning" (Comay and Ruda 2018, 28). This is not just Hegel's problem but the inevitable outcome of any attempt at "closing" the Absolute: "The truth is that the complete self-suppression of every synthesis of logical determinations that aspires to express the Absolute once and for all is also precisely what signifies the human way of approaching the Absolute *a contrario sensu*" (Duque 2018, ix). For Duque, this is the lesson of the *Philosophy of Nature*, that, in the end, any attempt at synthesizing the Absolute produces unsynthesizable waste—a constitutive error that, perhaps, reveals the very essence of the Absolute itself: surplus. Whether absolute knowledge is ultimately possible or not is a matter of different ideologies within the "speculative everything" episteme. Regardless, there is shared agreement that speculative knowledge is the kind that converges divisions, joins together chasms, and overcomes dualities. But just why is it important to overcome these dualities, which, as Brassier (2011) argued, have been so hard to win over the centuries? According to Duque, convergence of different forms of knowledge is required to straighten out one of the oldest and strongest errors in philosophy, namely dual control.

Speculation against Aristotle and Dual Control

Speculative knowledge, since its foundation as classical Greek metaphysics, begins with an observation of two apparently contradictory phenomena: permanence and change, being and becoming, the thing and the name, the ontic and the ontological, the hyle and the morphe, the revolution and the reform, the empirical and the rational—there are very many of these dualities, with different philosophies picking one of the two and presenting it as *the* founding duality. In the chapter on "Substrate and Subject (Hegel in the Aftermath of Aristotle)," Duque (2018) abstracts from all the specific dualities in order to expound the general logic of their interplay that has been characteristic of Western knowledge. "The initial problem of metaphysics," writes Duque, "lay in 'counterposing two modes of 'being' or existence: that of the *hypokeimenon* or *subjectum*, and that of the *antikeimenon* or *objectum*" (11). At the most basic or formal level, we have two terms to work with: "the *hypokeimenon* and the *antikeimenon*—namely 'that which lies beneath as ground or foundation,' on the one hand, and 'that which lies before or over against us,' on the other" (1). The benefit of these two terms, the *hypokeimenon* and the *antikeimenon*, lies precisely

in their general and abstract nature: that is, in their logicized nature, according to which, on a specific need basis, either or both of these terms could be replaced with more concrete ones, such as, say matter and form. Finally, Duque claims that "the task that falls to metaphysics is to transform this opposition [between the hypo and the anti] . . . into a relation of subordination . . . the *dominion* of the former over the latter" (2). With this setup, the long history of philosophy as a form of power-knowledge is inaugurated.

On the one hand, there is that which comes underneath and should, by commonsensical definition, provide the stable foundation for knowledge. However, the foundation does not say its own name and does not enunciate itself; rather, it is enunciated, that is named, defined, and revealed, by something that depends on it and comes after it— that which lies over. Without this secondary substance, the primary one could neither be articulated nor determined nor known—that is, it might as well not exist. It seems that what was secondary in the order of existence installs itself, in terms of logical or knowledge-based priority, "under" that which was existentially prior. Existentially, that which is logically prior is posterior, and logically, that which is existentially prior is posterior. No convergence of reconciliation of this paradox seems possible. And as we know from Aristotle's *Categories*, *priority* is *the* fundamental category for knowledge. So, which comes first—the *hypokeimenon* or the *antikeimenon*, logic or existence, discourse or practice, and so on and so forth. "Thus the *hypokeimenon* is contrasted—as if it were the *antikeimenon*—with the *eidos*," writes Duque, "which in its predominant action or even assault (*hyparchein*) transforms what is primary or first-born, so to speak, into what is secondary or subordinate, into something or someone that is literally *commanded*" (6–7). And yet, a keen philosopher can—in the centuries to follow, right up to Marx and afterwards, this will become the very basis of the critical method—reverse the undercut, reverse the primacy of secondary substances to find that, indeed, the primary substances are the thing without which the whole discussion would not even be possible. Proper order is restored. And yet, without the secondary substances… In this way, a perpetual battle is installed at the heart of all philosophy, turning philosophy into politics, into a political technology of domination, governance, and control.

The play of subordination between primary and secondary substances never finishes. This logical play is brutally evident today still, in so many analyses. One can

simply recall the ubiquitous post-Marxist discussions on the relation between capital and the working class. Which is primary and which is secondary? The analysis is infinitely reversible: there is no capital without the primary substance of the working class, but all the determinations of the working class that make it the working class as such come from capital, the secondary substance. Endless angry debates ensue as to the proper ordering between the working class and capital, and the discussion is immediately invaded by a proliferation of names and strata: the name of the working class is inadequate and must be split into a multiplicity of elements, just as capital is also found to be multiple. Between these subdivisions, order and priority must also be established, but without success. Finally, all the differences are held within the term capitalism, the name of the third thing, but the name itself seems inadequate, and the name of the name has to be introduced, for example, value.

Aristotle clearly states that the thing that is prior is the thing that comes before, and priority, the coming before, is also *superiority*, considering that ultimate knowledge is the knowledge of primary or prior things. However, Aristotle's principle of the superiority of priority is difficult to sustain and turns out to be unstable. What comes prior is the primary substance, that without which the thing could not be; that is, the *hypokeimenon*, the subject, the *ousia*. However, not much can be said about primary substance as such, it seems to lack determinations. Only secondary substances give a thing its determinations, its definition and its species, understood as the particulars that allow a thing to be specific. Therefore, what is prior in importance is what has been designated as secondary. This is more than just a confusion of epistemological and ontological criteria, a compartmentalized solution that will come later. Indeed, the logical description of the thing as object and the thing in its nature as subject are both parts of the definition of an entity. The priority, and consequently the superiority, of ontology and logic are very difficult to establish, but that is exactly what knowledge requires—ordering.

The instability of such a system is evident, as is its generative or productive nature, spawning a great number of discourses, each of which can, without contradiction, claim to be true because all of them inhabit *the* contradiction engendered by the superiority of priority principle. From the perspective of ordered knowledge, however, such an unstable and interminable situation is greatly troubling. The clearest solution—really, *the* solution

by any speculative knowledge—is to introduce some sort of a third entity within this dual principle that could stabilize, harmonize, and tranquilize the situation. In the most contemporary speculative discourses (as my next chapter will show), the theory of this third thing is called immanence, but for Aristotle, the third thing was not a substance, either primary or secondary, but an individual (Duque 2018, 13)—a very peculiar individual, which "cannot be a subject. It would therefore have to be *ousia* even though it can never be *ousia*" (8). This third thing, whose purpose is to control the unstable duality of the *hypo-* and the *anti-keimenon* and its permutations, would have to be the strange entity of which nothing could be said: "this Monarch for its part cannot be a subject of predication—one can say nothing at all about it—for in that case it would possess features and determinations in common with other subordinate beings" (8). To subject an entity to knowledge, or at least to knowledge understood in its Western tradition as the interplay of governance and domination in the process of proper ordering according to the principle the superiority of priority, would mean to open that entity up to the possibility of being *undercut*. Therefore, an entity that *controls* governance, that is beyond the critical undercut, cannot be either an object or a subject of knowledge. It could be the object-subject of faith, of belief, of fanciful reason, but not of knowledge. The second strongly speculative research program of absolute speculation is set up within the terrain of this problem: to avoid situating the control principle outside the boundaries of knowledge by expanding the scope of speculative knowledge to include the absolute but without regressing into dual control.

So, this is why speculative knowledge has to be a convergent knowledge, a kind of knowledge that does not simply extend an already-infinite affair of ordering, priority, and governance. Speculative knowledge has to do something more fundamental: it has to address the problem of control by situating the controlling principle not somewhere outside of knowledge but within the reach of knowledge, yet without allowing it to be undercut by the typical knowledge procedure based on priority. This is the source of the opposition to dualism that speculative thought exhibits, even if some of its consequences are dubious. This is also the reason why the speculative proposition is the proposition of immanence: the accessibility of the absolute, the principle of control, within knowledge but without the violence of the superiority of priority.

A Vanguardist Outcome

For the "absolute speculation" research program considered in this section, speculative knowledge is the convergence of the empirical and the rational, of the ontic and the logical. This convergence operates on the content of experience, such as duration, extension, and change, in order to defamiliarize, dehumanize, and desubjectify experiential phenomena. This vertiginous reworking of experiential content demands the invention of concepts to explain experience in non-experiential terms, terms that are not fancifully invented but enable the understanding of the absolute necessity of experience and of the de-experientialized Absolute itself. And while such a program cannot be entirely successful, meaning it cannot result in absolute knowledge, it can, at least, result in discovery, invention, and, for lack of a better term (though, in fact, the term seems quite fitting), personal enlightenment.

The major question now is to know *how* to speculate. What is the method of interpreting the Absolute speculatively? As I will show below, Comay and Ruda as well as Duque agree on the following major features of the speculative method: speculation must consider everything, without any judgement; then, it must make an arbitrary judgment and judge hyperbolically; finally, by subtracting from "everything" via the overzealous yet naïve judgment, the speculative philosopher will arrive at a rejuvenated use of reason.

Scholars like Duque agree that for Hegel, only the Absolute counts as a worthy goal of knowledge: "All the rest is error, confusion, opinion, striving, arbitrariness, and transience" (Hegel, quoted in Duque 2018, ix). But as Duque notes, all the rest happens to be no less than the rest of the *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and, indeed, the whole of actuality. Therefore, if everything but the Absolute is error, and knowledge of the Absolute does not begin immediately with the Absolute itself, then no error is beyond consideration on the road to the Absolute. In the words of Comay and Ruda (2018), "everything counts; every detail must be taken into account" (97), even if "it appears so banal and trivial that it can seem unworthy of consideration" (6). This is because, as everything but the absolute is equally transient, there may occur "a lapse of spirit from which speculative spirit may arise at any point" (5). On the road to the Absolute, nothing is too unworthy to be considered—the speculative spirit may gush forward equally from Hegel as from the Montauk conspiracy, to use Brassier's example (2014, 416). "This is why," Comay and Ruda (2018)

conclude, "the philosopher must take up not only what is given but what barely seems even to appear as such: all the deficiencies, refuse, and remnants of the world of appearances" (28). In fact, not only are the ruins and refuse capable of enticing the speculative spirit, they seem to be the *privileged* content for speculative interpretation. The speculative thinker has to become an archaeologist of waste, trawling through forums of the flat earth society.

It may seem that I am exaggerating and reading Comay and Ruda unfairly, but consider the following line:

> to read speculatively—to read at all—one needs to suspend every advance decision about what is major and what is minor, what is essential and what is inessential. There is no preexisting standard by which to assess what may be significant; you must proceed as if anything and everything is important, as if there is a necessity at work in the most ordinary contingencies of existence. (5)

Knowing that everything but the Absolute is equally pointless, all that is pointless is equal to anything that may be considered, for example, good theory. Duque thinks along similar lines, though he explicitly reserves this "speculative everything" method only for reading Hegel: "the most productive and appropriate mode of exegesis of Hegel's texts is, in my opinion, to accept that all of his expressions (including the specific features of punctuation) are significant" (2018, 62). However, if speculative Hegelian philosophy is, indeed, a general method, then this particular reading strategy is also generalizable. Therefore, it is not an overstatement to say that the primary requirement for the speculative method is to have no judgements, no standards, and no taste of any kind when selecting material. If anything, there is a bit of a hidden selection criterion: the more borderline the content, the better.

"It is not that everything is significant," argue Comay and Ruda (2018), "only that anything might be, and you can't know in advance what that might be" (5). Not being able to judge anything in advance, one has to read everything, and then read it "'naively'—to discover in ordinary language the conceptual accomplishment of philosophy" (6). A naïve reading demands "a kind of mindnumbing literalism: one must risk triviality to the point of pedantry" (4), even if this results in "a certain obsessiveness and even paranoia" (5). One must take literally every single word literally because nothing is beyond possibility of producing the speculative spirit—spirit's decisive lapsus may occur at any point. Duque

(2018) is in complete agreement with the importance of naïve reading for the speculative method (23, 27, 64), which is clearly demonstrated when he proposes to read Hegel's phrase that death is a gulp of water literally (63). Death *is* a gulp of water "(and certainly a bad one)" (63): the more literally one reads this, the more one is taken towards the beyond of experience.

The indiscriminate and naïve speculative approach produces an obvious methodological issue in the sense that it is clearly impossible to put it into practice. One simply cannot read everything nor be attentive to every single word. Also, as Duque notes, "Hegel concedes of course that the beginning of philosophy has to be found in a negative activity" (2018, 20), which is clearly opposite to the "speculative everything" reading method. So how does one choose when all choice is prohibited? "One cannot choose—and therefore one cannot but choose, and furthermore there is only one choice possible," explain Comay and Ruda (2018, 13). The impossibility of choosing, or perhaps the impossibility of choosing adequately, pushes one to the point where a choice must be made—*any* choice, simply to alleviate the burden of not being able to choose. Moreover, the choice is not even arbitrary: "To remain faithful to critique requires relinquishing the ego ideal of uncontaminated universality and affirming a commitment to the impurities of idiosyncrasy and partiality: true universality is partisan" (19). The term "partisan" in the vocabulary of Comay and Ruda is not neutral but signifies ideological partisanship; the authors stated their own partisan defense of the "left-wing Hegelian" politics at the very start. This is not against the notion of the Absolute, which is pure of all actual errors, but its epitome: "Absolute knowing is rather the acknowledgment of the partisanship inherent in thought as such" (7). Faced with the necessity to not choose anything, one chooses, seemingly arbitrarily, but, in fact, chooses ideologically, which is nothing but the absolute choice in practice.

Having made this ideological choice, one must not stop but accelerate "by inflating what might seem at first glance to be most trivial" (6). In fact, one must "unapologetically exaggerate what seems most irredeemable" (3) until the form of thought can "twist out of the givenness of every context" (14). Having begun as a naïve reader, one continues to become an ideological reader, and one finishes as being, properly speaking, an ideologue.

What began as naïve ends up being maliciously, almost comically, hyperbolized and targeted. A dialectical reversal is complete—the Hegelian method is perfectly applied.

It is difficult to know what to make of such a speculative program. One must read naively, meaning one should open oneself to being exposed to accidents, randomness, and contingency in thought. But one must also read in the most biased manner and even celebrate this. Consequently, the naïve speculative reading suspends everything but ideology, and one is left wondering whether this amounts to more than simple submission to and capitulation before said ideology. Perhaps, by submitting to an ideology so much, so thoroughly, so hyperbolically, one can, in fact, escape ideology by becoming aware of its fallacies and shortcomings in their most magnified, grotesque form?

Possibly so, but in truth the discourse of Comay and Ruda is much less interesting than this. Instead, one ends up being encouraged to discard all ideologies but one, the authors' preferred ideology (the aforementioned "left-wing Hegelianism"), which, in my opinion, is as anti-speculative as it is anti-intellectual. If, according to Brassier and Wolfendale, Object-Oriented Philosophy ends up producing specious speculation, here we see another possibility of an undesirable outcome: vanguardist speculation. How is one supposed to achieve the speculative aporiosis needed to brush against the surplus of the absolute? By suspending judgments, by reading naively, and by being open to the chance encounter with the speculative swerve. At the same time, the naïve reading is more significantly underpinned by ideological partisanship that is described as the unavoidable correlate of the speculative method and, imaginably, part of the speculative acceleration of contradictions meant to induce aporiosis. The outcome, in my opinion, is the suspension of all judgments bar the ideological ones as guided by the enlightened speculative scholar—a clear moment of cult logic and the kind of anti-intellectualism related to the figure of messianic immanence.[13]

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[13] I would like to defend myself from recrimination by summarizing the problematic arguments that I have already identified in the scholars associated with the new forms of universalism in order to substantiate my charge of anti-intellectualism. First, I would like to point out again Latour's consistent derogation of criticism, critical thinking, and deconstruction. Second, I would like to recall Grosz's statement that the original context of an argument or concept is little more than an unnecessary burden. Third, I do maintain that arguing, as Comay and Ruda do, that speculation needs to suspend all judgments, then saying that absolute knowledge

Concluding with Absolute Speculation

In spite of the criticism above, it would be unfair to reduce this entire speculative research program to vanguardism. All speculative research programs, by treading beyond established grounds, carry with them specific and unique dangers, and by being aware of these dangers we can, perhaps, avoid them to better make use of the advantages offered by the news forms of speculation. One significant advantage of the absolute speculation research program is its astute criticism of the perpetual conflict that characterizes dual control due to the principle of the superiority of priority and the ontological undercut that the said principle enables. This opposition to dual control is indicative of the strong affiliation that absolute speculation has with the episteme of immanence and its four figures. As I argued earlier, in its most abstract shell, immanence refers to any attempt at converging dualities in favor of a single reality. For the scholars I have discussed in this section—Comay and Ruda, Debaisse, and Duque—the passing yet tangible enlightenment that comes from brushing against the surplus of the absolute is the result precisely of the absolute's holding together of the various dualities, such as nature and spirit, experience and thought, or theory and practice. In fact, the absolute not just holds them together but is the pure ground that exists before the emergence of distinctions. Accessing, however fleetingly and temporarily, such immanence of categories is what absolute speculation offers to its readers.

The order of knowledge upon which absolute speculation depends appears to be conflicted. On the one hand, absolute speculation is opposed to dual control and universal, encyclopedic knowledge, striving, instead, after surplus—this would seem to relate absolute speculation to the figure of immanence as surplus and to something like deconstruction's order of knowledge premised on the contingency and incompleteness of knowledge. However, the vanguardism I have detailed above is a clear feature of messianic immanence and the total universalism that characterizes the most advanced form of dual control. What can be made of this contradiction? Earlier, I argued that the new forms of

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is absolutely partisan, and finishing with an endorsement of a specific ideology as a ground for a speculative reading is extremely disturbing. In my opinion, these are not isolated occurrences but examples of the tendency towards anti-intellectualism that is present among numerous contemporary speculative scholars.

speculation tend to be precariously balanced between the different figures of immanence and the different orders of knowledge; absolute speculation is a case in point. At its best, it leans towards non-totalizing thought, but at its worst, it participates in the vanguardism of messianic immanence.

Finally, my own disappointing conclusion is that absolute speculation is more inclined towards the worse rather than the better outcome. This is because the absolute speculation research program writes—perhaps not entirely knowingly, as was the case with the speculative everything discourse—in response to one of the limits marked by Foucault, namely the aphasia that characterizes the domain of non-order. For absolute speculation, the goal is evidently to show that the aphasia—that is, the shuffling of the cards of the subject and the fever-pitch of anxiety—is only temporary and, in fact, brushing up against the absolute surplus is, overall, an enlightening affair because it reaffirms the absolute necessity of order and experience. However, with the absolute necessity of experience, one is only a step away from immanence as plenitude and, consequently, the order of knowledge premised on dual control. If absolute speculation is ultimately a comforting and "recuperable" affair, then the guiding voice of the master is the inevitable outcome, which is why I see the third strongly speculative research program as being the best approach to speculation beyond aporiosis: subtractive speculation does not offer hope.

Speculative Program Three: Subtractive Speculation

While Speculative Realism has become a household name in the academy, its status is a contested affair. On the one hand, there are those who defend Speculative Realism as a substantial entity: "Though there are still tough tests ahead concerning the breadth and durability of Speculative Realism, it has long since passed the 'existence' test to a far greater degree than most of its critics" (Harman 2013, 22). On the other hand, there are equally established authors who dispute its substantial nature: "If existence is to be measured in terms of blogs, books, and Google hits, then Speculative Realism lags woefully far behind Bigfoot, Yeti, and the Loch Ness Monster, all of whom have passed Harman's 'existence test' with flying colours" (Brassier 2014, 410). In the two quotations above, both authors are correct because it is not the existence of Speculative Realism per se that is the question but its *normative status*. For Harman, Speculative Realism exists as a recognized

and even celebrated scholarly entity with institutional legitimacy, and for Brassier, it is nothing more than a fringe clique. Between those two options, many other evaluations are possible, but in general, the issue is not unlike the one faced by biopolitics: is Speculative Realism a proper academic undertaking, or is it just an academic fad that encourages bad research?

In this section, I will argue that what distinguishes Speculative Realism is not a list of proper names or the number of publications that invoke the term but a unique strongly speculative research program. Whereas the speculative everything discourse argued that reality can be accessed via some form of post-knowledge, and the absolute speculation discourse argued for a new kind of absolute knowledge (often relying on Hegel for inspiration), the subtractive speculation discourse that underpins Speculative Realism, much as it opposes Kant and correlationism, does not ignore the Kantian problem of epistemic access and proposes subtractive speculation as a means for conceptualizing absolute knowledge. Below, I will consider the disciplinary status of Speculative Realism and the new kind of poetic language associated with it. Then, I will discuss subtraction, describing it as a means of registering the unintelligible encounters with the absolute and comparing subtraction with the more standard procedure of abstraction.

Speculative Realism and the Kantian Question

Like biopolitics, Speculative Realism has entered its reflexive phase, evidenced by the number of introductory and canon-building works. In *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (2014), Peter Gratton describes Speculative Realism as "an area of philosophy" and a "Continental philosophy splinter group" (1) but claims that defining it would be "like trying to say what's the same for all animals in a zoo" (3). Nonetheless, he identifies two common features: negatively, the opposition to "European philosophy since the time of Kant" that has foregone reality in favor of a limited-access epistemology, and, positively, the project "to give the real its due" (5). For Gratton, Speculative Realism seems to be a loosely unified group brought together by a rejection of Kant, phenomenology, and French post-structuralism (all supposedly correlationist theories) and by a shared appreciation for the real, upon whose nature there is no agreement.

Similar conditions are identified by Steven Shaviro in *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (2014), who agrees that "the speculative realists are united by their rejection of correlationism" and by their commitment "to metaphysical speculation and to a robust ontological realism" (5). He adds that "the status of thought remains a vexing problem for speculative realism" (108). This last addition is important, in the sense that it is one of the features that distinguishes Speculative Realists from the new materialists, who "are far less concerned than the speculative realists are with the particular paradoxes of correlationism" (11). Although Speculative Realism, like all the other speculative programs, is driven by opposition to Kant, it has a strong tendency to reactivate the same problem that animated Kant: on what grounds can reality be known? This is one feature that strongly distinguishes Speculative Realism from the "absolute speculation" program described earlier—the former, while disagreeing with Kant's response, does not ignore the Kantian problem, whereas the latter ignores the response and the problem equally.

Niemoczynski and Harman, though ideologically opposed, find a certain common ground in their respective introductory books on Speculative Realism. In *Speculative Realism: An Epitome* (2017), Niemoczynski argues that, as a coherent entity, "speculative realism is no more (or never was)," yet "there still exists the opportunity to engender the sort of spirit which initiated the speculative turn to begin with" (3). Harman makes a similar point in *Speculative Realism: An Introduction* (2018)[14] when he claims that "Speculative Realism's initial audience consisted primarily of younger readers" and invites a new group of "young readers" to "supersede the various Speculative Realist currents after first digesting what has made them important." For both authors there appears to be a surprising, and a somewhat paternalistic, common ground in the sense that something about Speculative Realism has not aged well and requires addressing, which incoming generations are urged to do. Equally commonly, for Niemoczynski as for Harman, a key characteristic of Speculative Realism is not necessarily doctrinal coherence but something more abstract, like an attitude or a spirit of doing philosophy.

The doctrinal elements themselves are not as unstable as the disagreements among the speculative realists might lead one to think. When it comes to proper names and the

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[14] Please note that this particular source is available to me in .epub format on an e-reader, which means page numbers are not available or are irrelevant as the text is divided according to the size of the reading device.

associated canonical texts, the aforementioned and other canon-building Speculative Realism scholars show considerable agreement (e.g., Brassier 2014; Harman 2013; Kotsko 2013; Norris 2013; Roffe 2013): there is the core group consisting of Meillassoux, Harman, Brassier, and Grant; then, the satellite group made up of Shaviro, Bogost, Morton, Wolfendale, and others; and finally, there are the thematically related famous names from bordering disciplines, for example Catherine Malabou, Jane Bennett, and Elizabeth Grosz or Adrian Johnston.[15] There is also overarching agreement as to what correlationism is and why it must be opposed. When it comes to identifying the object of research, every speculative realist agrees that the object is "reality" or "the real," though there is no accepted definition of the object upon which to build a consensus. Still, this may not be as big an issue as one might think because arguments over basic definitions are a regular occurrence in every discipline—for example, if one were to ask five sociologists from five different schools as to what "society" meant, one would likely receive five different responses and five competing methodologies. Simply agreeing that there *is* a shared object of investigation is more important than agreeing on its exact definition. With all this in mind, it seems, in fact, that Speculative Realism is in a much more stable disciplinary position than biopolitics.

Consequently, besides tribal infighting, is there anything about Speculative Realism that makes it fundamentally unstable? In fact, there is, and the analytic vocabulary I have

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[15] At the same time, this settled picture is problematized by two issues: a) the antagonistic split between Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology and b) the unwillingness, or the unstable willingness, of some canonic members of Speculative Realism (or Object-Oriented Ontology) to be associated with the group. Regarding the first issue, Harman, for example, is the flagbearer of Object-Oriented Ontology, has written an introduction to Speculative Realism, and considers Speculative Realism to be the overarching movement within which Object-Oriented Ontology dwells. As I have already discussed, scholars like Wolfendale and Niemoczynski would disagree with Harman on all points, considering him to be an enemy of Speculative Realism. Regarding the second issue, various scholars disagree with the labels attached to them—for example, Brassier, as already discussed as well, used to consider himself part of the Speculative Realism movement but no longer does so now and even argues that most people associated with it do not either. Therefore, the seeming stability of the canon may be a rather artificial by-product of introductory volumes and articles rather than an accurate representation of the actual state of affairs. For my own purposes, the differences in research programs are more important than categorizing proper names, and I find the research programs of Object-Oriented Philosophy and Speculative Realism to be significantly different.

been developing over the course of this dissertation allows making that subterranean imbalance explicit. The battle is not just between personalities and different views on what constitutes good scholarship. Rather, there is a struggle between incommensurable research programs. As Brassier (2017) noted, the "speculative" part of Speculative Realism seems to include too much—namely, the two speculative research programs I have already reviewed as well as a third one. For example, Harman considers himself and Object-Oriented Philosophy to be a sub-category of Speculative Realism, and Catren, who argues in favor of a Hegelian-Marxist speculative revival, is included in the major edited volume on Speculative Realism (Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman 2011), even though Harman belongs to the "speculative everything" program and Catren to the "absolute speculation" program. Besides these two, there is also a third research program competing for dominance in the Speculative Realism pseudo-discipline, pursued by Meillassoux, Brassier, and Laruelle as its main figureheads.

This warfare over the research program of Speculative Realism is visible in the discourse about the absolute, speculation, and metaphysics, a discourse initiated by Meillassoux in *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2008). In the book, following the discussion on ancestrality and the arche-fossil in Chapter 1—which can be summarized simply as recognizing that there are scientifically verified propositions about reality without thought; that advances in geological dating have firmly established the existence of a real completely devoid of and untouched by thought, supposedly unsettling the correlationist idea that thought and being must always be somehow correlated—in the subsequent chapter on "Metaphysics, Fideism, Speculation," Meillassoux claims that the task for philosophy "consists in trying to understand how thought is able to access the uncorrelated . . . a world capable of subsisting without being given," which means "we must grasp how thought is able to access an absolute . . . whose separateness from thought is such that it presents itself to us as non-relative to us, and hence as capable of existing whether we exist or not" (28). This is not only a philosophical task but an imperative that comes from the discoveries of the most modern science.

Meillassoux asks whether this means "that we must once again become pre-critical philosophers" (28–29) and responds immediately by stating that "we cannot go back to being metaphysicians, just as we cannot go back to being dogmatists. On this point, we

cannot but be heirs of Kantianism" (29). Based on this need to study the absolute and the distinction between a good and a bad way of going about such study, Meillassoux proposes the following terminological distinction:

> Let us call "speculative" every type of thinking that claims to be able to access some form of absolute, and let us call "metaphysics" every type of thinking that claims to be able to access some form of absolute being, or access the absolute through the principle of sufficient reason. If all metaphysics is "speculative" by definition, our problem consists in demonstrating, conversely, that not all speculation is metaphysical, and not every absolute is dogmatic—it is possible to envisage an *absolutizing* thought that would not be *absolutist*. (34)

The distinguishing feature of metaphysics, the bad access to the absolute, consists of not just positing a transcendental principle of necessity, which orders the world in such a way that nothing else but the present state of affairs could have emerged, but of making such a principle "thought-like": even though there was a time when human thought did not exist, Thought as such always has, either as "the Leibnizian monad; Schelling's Nature, or the objective subject-object; Hegelian Mind; Schopenhauer's Will; the Will (or *Wills*) to Power in Nietzsche; perception loaded with memory in Bergson; Deleuze's Life" (37), and the like. Whether Meillassoux is doing justice to these listed thinkers is not the point, and many other scholars have defended each of them as a hardcore realist. Instead, whatever his examples, Meillassoux is arguing that metaphysics absolutizes either an absolute thought or a reversibly extendible possibility of thought, whereas *speculation* attempts to grasp the real that exists and has existed for incomprehensibly long without any kind of thought whatsoever. In a sense, thought is not superfluous to our knowledge, but it is superfluous to the real. Thought is contingent, the real is absolute, and the attempt to understand how thought can know something that is completely unlike itself is what "speculation" rather than "metaphysics" does.

As I argued before, this is a revitalization of the Kantian question rather than its abandonment, and it is the distinguishing feature of the third speculative research program. Poetically, this research program is characterized by a certain kind of aesthetic asceticism in relation to the absolute. For example, take this statement by Harman (2011), "the

'speculative' part of the phrase, which hints at starry landscapes haunted by poets and mad scientists" (21), or the following one by Catren (2011):

> The philosopher, that is the local subjective support of this speculative absolunautics, glides in coalescence upon the surfaces of the extended phenomenal plane, composing concrete mediators out of the prismatic vectors of scientific, artistic, and political disindoxication, potentializing the phenomenological unfolding of the self-experience of the absolute which is always already with us. (367)

The poetics of both these phrases clearly reveal them to belong to entirely different research programs, both in relation to each other and in relation to the project Meillassoux argued for. Particular to the "speculative everything" program, Harman emphasizes the alluring, mysterious, and exuberant nature of the absolute or the real—an aesthetic nature that is bristling with almost-human forms of creativity and which is accessible to unique or special individuals such as mad scientists, romantic and naïve philosophers, or, why not, enlightened designers and attentively listening celebrities. For the poetics of the "speculative everything" program, Bjork can sing more about the real than a professional physicist could ever say about it, and from the perspective of the "speculative everything" program this is not even a put down.

Catren, on the other hand, participates in the "absolute speculation" program, which relies on the idea of using the power of the subject to break out of the subjective bubble towards the object and the real—or, to reformulate this in terms of the "absolute speculation" program, one must use the power of experience to go beyond experience itself towards the absolute that is implied in said experience. The absolute may not be thought-like, but is somehow *experience*-like, in an alien, strange, and unsettling way—and yet, it is experienceable, in an almost mystical register that inevitably appears in the "absolute speculation" program, a kind of a hyper-rational mysticism of super-conceptual experience. One does not meditate or take up a vow of silence, but one can think the absolute to the point where the experience of thought is no longer a subjective or a personal one, becoming instead the absolute experience, at least for an instant.

In short, the "speculative everything" program assumes an absolute that is accessible to creative genius, and the "absolute speculation" program assumes an absolute that is accessible to the extraordinary intellect. The absolute assumed by Meillassoux and

taken up by Brassier is not at all like either of these two. Instead, for the third speculative research program, access to the absolute depends on the power of the real to "mime" itself as knowledge via a complicated, almost mysterious, process of unilateral self-deposition:

> Scientific representation operates on the basis of a stance in which something in the object itself determines the discrepancy between its material reality—the fact *that* it is, its existence—and its being, construed as quiddity, or *what* it is. The scientific stance is one in which the reality of the object determines the meaning of its conception, and allows the discrepancy between that reality and the way in which it is conceptually circumscribed to be measured. (Brassier 2013, 55)

Brassier goes on to qualify this statement by assuring his readers that "it is not a dogmatic or a pre-critical" approach because it does not assume "that concepts furnish self-evident indexes of their own reality and internal structure" (56). Consequently, the problem becomes "basically that of how to adjudicate the relationship between conceptual thought and non-conceptual reality" (64). For the most part, this seems to require the correlation-based forms of knowledge, such as philosophy, to resort to supplemental assistance from external and scientific disciplines, such as mathematics, geology, and physics, among others, or to invent a form of philosophy that itself becomes almost like a form of conceptual poetry.

This conceptual poetry endemic to the third research program is best represented by Francois Laruelle. Consider two quotes by Laruelle (2013) on the notion of the generic: "We are searching for the generic as a radically idempotent non-place, in rigorous terms as a unilateral or unifacial plane, as Stranger of unique being" (247), and, "It [the generic] has the being of a Stranger, at least insofar as one does not dissolve it in philosophical circulation. *Man is not in the midst of the All or the World, opened up to it by its two faces; she is the radical identity of the Mid-place*" (249). Laruelle's writing is famous for its complexity or infamous for its almost comical density, but neither of these two evaluations are adequate. Laruelle is primarily a conceptual poet, and I do not mean to offer this as a disparaging judgment. There is certainly a great deal of analytic precision in his work, but it is also entirely based on the specific poetry of the third speculative program, a poetry of concepts and philosophical neologisms whose purpose is to transmit in correlational

terms—for those are the only terms available to philosophy—what is supposed to be non-correlationist insight into the real.

I have lumped together Meillassoux, Brassier, and Laruelle on the basis of a supposedly common research program. It is true that they all share a preoccupation with, or even modernize, the Kantian problem of access to reality and use "science" as a reference point for the speculative method. It would be tempting to assume, as many have, that describing science as the reference point for investigating the real means treating oneself as a second-class citizen in relation to science and subordinating philosophy to the role of the underlaborer of science, but this is not the case with Meillassoux, Brassier, and Laruelle, who use the idea of science as inspiration and an evaluative criterion but not necessarily as a fetish. However, how can I group these people together, seeing how different their views on science are? Meillassoux has a Badiouan appreciation for mathematics and set theory, Brassier for the neuro and the natural sciences, and Laruelle uses the term science most abstractly rather than privileging a specific scientific discipline. Moreover, having just stated that language in general, and philosophical language in particular, is correlational, how can I claim that they get to know the real and then transmit it using their own poetic discourse? Is it just from science that knowledge of the real comes, to be translated by poet-philosophers, or is there some other way?

It is precisely because they all share, regardless of their differences in choosing a favorite scientific discipline for inspiration, a shared epistemology of access that underpins their common research program. That epistemology of access consists of *registering the unintelligible*. However, neither of the thinkers states this epistemology of access explicitly, especially not in the terms that I am attributing to them. Therefore, in all honesty, this is an interpretation based on their works rather than a close commentary based on reproducing textual evidence via quotations. As such, I am going to present this interpretation largely in my owns terms, but to meet the academic standards of honest citation, I would like to explicitly state the sources upon which this interpretation is based: by Meillassoux, *Beyond Finitude* (2007), especially the first chapter "Ancestrality," and the article on "Potentiality and Virtuality" (2011); by Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (2007), especially chapter four on "Unbinding the Void" that deals with the notion of subtraction, and the article "Concepts and Objects" (2011); finally, for Laruelle, I only use the article

"The Generic as Predicate and Constant: Non-Philosophy and Materialism" (2011), as well as Brassier's summary of Laruelle in *Nihil Unbound*.

Subtraction: Registering the Unintelligible

The arche-fossil dilemma proposed by Meillassoux (2008, Chapter 1: "Ancestrality") is reducible to the following insight: verified scientific discoveries have begun producing knowledge that is no longer intelligible to thought. For something to be intelligible to thought, it has to occur within the possibility of givenness to thought—an intelligible entity is either given to thought or is potentially given to thought. However, science now reveals perfectly verifiable discoveries about "a time" when no givenness was possible because no thought was possible. This is not a question of events from long ago but a question of events before thought, before experience, and before givenness; that is, before any kind of distinction between long or short is possible. Faced with an ancestral proposition, there are two options. One can say that an ancestral proposition is true only from the position of present knowledge, which robs the referent of the proposition of having had any actual reality. Or, one can accept the ancestral proposition as referring to a completely real referent, which means accepting the reality of an impossible object, an object that cannot be given and therefore cannot be verified by thought.

Such an acceptance breaks the ontological contract that has founded the Enlightenment, science, and modernity. The Enlightenment, after centuries when speculative thought raced ahead of Being towards unverifiable knowledge of God, established something akin to an ontological contract that regulated and normalized the relations between Being and thought, with neither allowed to exceed the limits of the other. More than any specific breakthrough in a discipline or the development of some general disposition, it is this ontological contract that constitutes the foundation of what is popularly called science today, according to which a discovery is only verifiable if it is both theoretically sound and empirically reproducible, allowing for neither purely intellectual nor purely material entities in properly scientific knowledge (on verification in science, see Polanyi 2013/1958, Chapter 1: "Objectivity"). For knowledge to be scientific, it must be an adequate correlation between these two disparate forms of addressing reality, forms that correspond to the previously discussed split between the hupokeimenon and *antikeimenon*

in Aristotle. Kant may have formalized correlationism into a philosophical theory, but it was neither his invention nor exclusively a philosophical project. Instead, the ontological contract to stabilize Being and thought within shared boundaries is a means of control, a way to harmonize the order of knowledge and to avoid the endless play of undercutting that characterizes classical knowledge based on the principle of the superiority of priority. (And not just classical knowledge: by relying on the model of the undercut, a great deal of contemporary critical theory actually runs on the pre-Enlightenment understanding of knowledge.)

Nowadays, the Enlightenment's ontological contract between Being and thought is being broken on the side that was supposed to be its greatest guarantee: the material, or the ontic, part of Being. It appears that thought can be disciplined by training a certain kind of subject to contain it, but Being, the real, or nature—not quite synonyms but, nonetheless, all terms referring ultimately to that which is not thought and not human—does not stay within the established parameters meant to control the duality of thought and Being. The correlationist form of control has been breached, threatening to suspend, if it has not already done so, the entire ontological contract that was one of the major inventions which initiated the long modernity. After all, if Being "speculates," why cannot thought? If there is a real without time and thought, why rule out a surplus on the side of thought as well?

Unlike philosophy, contemporary scientific practices seem to have coped with the breaking of the Enlightenment's onto-epistemological contract with much more success. Without agitation or even reflection, the scientific disposition keeps to its course. Verifiable and verified discoveries still happen. However, the knowledge extracted from scientific propositions has changed in nature. Some discoveries produce verified but unintelligible knowledge. The theory is sound, the experiment is reproducible, and the observers are qualified and trustworthy, but the knowledge that results from such propositions cannot be called "knowledge" in modernity's sense of the term—not because such knowledge describes difficult phenomena, something that scientific practices have always done, but phenomena devoid of sense. Such phenomena should not be confused with sublime phenomena. It is not the scope of the initial beginning of the universe or the great temporal distance of its occurrence that escapes sense. Rather, sense does not even appear as a possibility because one is describing a real without conditions for thought—a real without

time, without representation, even without the Absolute insofar as the Absolute is already said to presuppose thought.

According to the arche-fossil and the ancestral dilemma, we discover things about the world that thought cannot comprehend, though comprehension is not even the right term. Thought cannot comprehend or miscomprehend such ancestral phenomena because there are no conditions for them to be given to thought to begin with. This begs the obvious question: how can one *know* that there are phenomena that cannot be *known*? One response is to say that we must simply wait for knowledge-building to catch up, for more experiments and more discoveries to be made, in science and in philosophy, which will reveal that, in fact, what appears to be senseless has not been so all along. The problem is a limitation of knowledge, not of thought. Meillassoux and Brassier discard this option by arguing that no amount of knowledge-building can open to thought and time the part of the real that is thoughtless and timeless.

Two other responses are possible. On the one hand, perhaps there is a secret faculty of the mind that we are not yet aware of explicitly which would allow us to access what currently appears to be inaccessible. On the other hand, perhaps there are simply things that can be discovered without being known. It is the second response of these two that distinguishes the research program of Speculative Realism. A discovery that produces knowledge without intelligibility, without understanding, and, ultimately, without knowing can be called *registering*. To register something implies the most minimal functioning of the epistemological apparatus, the most minute passage from mere information towards an insight. In more literary terms, Adorno once famously said that Hegel was the only literally unintelligible philosopher, but unintelligible here does not mean incompetent, devoid of meaning, or drivel-like. Rather, unintelligibility in such a case refers to the inability to locate the insight being transmitted. There has been contact with cognition, but the contact was too transient to be processed. Perhaps, in more modern terms, it could be said that registering implies a non-relation to the registered entity: a unilateral relation whereby cognition is minimally piqued without being able to respond. One could put it in Aaron Schuster's (2016, 148–150) literary description of the Sartrean dog, who remembers having forgotten what it had just understood. When it comes to registering and accessing that which has been registered, a memory-based metaphor is appropriate. Registered non-

entities, if they can be said to be "available" at all, are only so through memory rather than aesthetic intuition or categories of the understanding. To begin accessing the registered is a form of memorywork.

Perhaps it is true that such memory-based attempts to parse and make intelligible the registered trace of the non-entities of the real can only be a subtractive process. One way to approach subtraction as a method is by comparison to abstraction, understood not in the pejorative sense of making unfounded claims or dehumanizing persons but as a means of arriving at *general* propositions. A general proposition is one that is not always true; rather, it is a proposition that is true more often than it is not. One arrives at general propositions, or abstractions, by adding up isomorphic features extracted from a multiplicity of empirical cases. The more cases so processed for their isomorphic features— that is, reviewed, compared, and cut down to size according to a shared schema, in short abstracted—the greater the possibility of an abstract proposition being generally true. Therefore, there is some degree of negation at work in abstraction, but the latter is ultimately a cumulative and self-reinforcing process, aimed to arrive at positive propositions about real probabilities.

Not so with subtraction. In the simple sense, subtraction is not a process of addition and cumulation but of diminution: in its simple form, abstraction is a procedure of clearing away, of removing, of apparently destructive negation without recuperation. However, for a procedure to be subtractive, it is not enough for it to utter criticism and to discard propositions by pointing out their logical contradictions or slips in argumentation. To stay with the opposition between abstraction and subtraction, whereas abstraction relied on the process of partial negation to arrive at general affirmative statements, subtraction relies on quasi-affirmative action to begin with because one does not clear away useless things. Instead, one subtracts from what is useful but inadequate. A subtraction, therefore, first and foremost relies on a relation between the proposition it clears away and the discovery that had been registered. And while this relation cannot be entirely clear and adequately grasped itself, yet it is the active basis of the procedure of abstraction and implies memory. As the registered non-entity cannot be actively grasped, any connection to it can only be established through association in memory.

Consequently, abstraction is not a precise procedure but one that relies on memory-based associations between something that is intelligible and the non-intelligible registered non-entity, which one ends up approximating by the quasi-affirmative process of clearing away the associations with the unintelligible non-entity. In the end, while abstraction attempts to arrive at the most generally true proposition, subtraction seeks after a singularly true proposition about the unthinkable real, sifting through inadequate intelligibilities tenuously associated with something that has been minimally registered without being able to pass into the horizon of sensibility or the understanding. Therefore, it seems that subtraction itself is not an entirely "available" method: it is not an intuition, a feeling, a negative theology, or tacit knowing that a teacher could impart to a willing student or an attentive celebrity. Rather, subtraction is a means of grasping after an accident and something that exists without having happened. Belonging as it does to that which cannot be known, subtraction is itself only a countouring rather than a proper method. For the most part, what this pseudo-method, or speculative method, discovers is nothing useful, nothing that could be turned into value in the circulation of knowledge. If there is an affect associated with subtractive speculation and its peculiar discoveries, it would have to be anxiety and self-doubt rather than the joyful affirmation and passionate enjoyment described by Polanyi, the creative satisfaction experienced by the "speculative everything" philosopher, or the personal enlightenment brought about by contact with the absolute in the "absolute speculation" program. Subtraction results in the poverty of philosophy, in pseudo-knowledge that has no value in the great circulation of academic truths. Therefore, for those who register the real, it never appears as a field, a plane, or a clearing, a lighted valley whose vistas one could overlook and exclaim, I have seen *it!* Instead, pseudo-knowledge about the real is registered in morsels, in packets, in bites and bits and pieces.

This "subtractive speculation" program, like the previous two speculative programs, can lead to a number of problematic outcomes. On the one hand, as Isabelle Stengers noted, (2011) subtractive speculation can end up in aggressive eliminativism that reduces all standard knowledge to little more than material to burn through and throw away on the way to the real. On the other hand, one can imagine a proliferation of qualified nonsense propositions about the real that, due to the epistemology of registering and unintelligibility, would be effectively beyond any dependable standards of criticism. At the

same time, intellectual dangers notwithstanding, one counterclaim could be that such nonsense or valueless propositions about the real are the only truly radical openings for philosophy at a time when knowledge production and capitalist valorization have become all but synonymous.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by offering the following interpretation of the archaeological schema from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: the positivity and the episteme refer to the same archaeological level considered from two different angles, with the positivity being the space of communication that defines legitimate modes of speculating and carrying out research, whereas the episteme—although still "productive" in the sense of not being a looming and rigid structure that is set once and for all—performs a constraining function by being "the thing"—a collection of objects, principles, ideas, and images—to be investigated. In my opinion, one should not conceive the separation between positivity and the episteme too rigidly, seeing that the method of investigation, or the research program, is never truly separate from the kind of objects that are investigated and from the kind of image of totality that one is operating with.

Then, in the rest of the chapter, I analyzed three strongly speculative research programs, and now I would like to review each in turn. The first strongly speculative research program, the "speculative everything" discourse, is geared to avoid the problem of aporiosis by a) adopting the principle of fiction, or the outcome of delirium, as an explicit and fundamental part of its inquiry and b) feigning disinterest in directly reflexive questions by postulating an ontology of radical withdrawal, according to which unknowability is the fundamental feature of reality, seeing that all objects, and therefore the real itself, withdraw from themselves due to the radical surplus they possess. While this program does avoid aporiosis and produce an interesting twist on the finitude paradox discussed by Foucault, it faces two major dangers: a) it cannot adequately account for normative judgments of knowledge, and consequently b) it can turn into specious speculation very rapidly.

The second strongly speculative research program, "absolute speculation," attempts to overcome dual control and the problems of the undercut that comes with the principle of the superiority of priority by postulating a knowable absolute where dualities are resolved

and which is knowable through radically speculative thought that reserves judgment on content in order to stay radically open to the encounter with said absolute. Besides struggling to account for the normative knowledge judgments just as the "speculative everything" discourse did, the "absolute speculation" program grapples with an unsustainable research method and strays into the territory of crypto-normativity, whereby knowledge judgments inevitably come back reinforced due to the sheer weight of supposedly unbiased material that needs to be processed "literally." The specific danger of this research program is vanguardist speculation that, under the banner of total suspension of judgment for absolute speculation, ends up introducing a new form of exclusivism.

Finally, "subtractive speculation," the third strongly speculative research program, is the only one of the three to openly consider the issue of epistemological access to the absolute and proposes a methodology that I have called registering the unintelligible, according to which the speculative thinker engages in a form of speculation meant to find deposits of singular contact with the absolute that is beyond human cognition in terms of intelligibility—that is, in terms of being approachable via concepts and representation—but that can still be registered via encounters that leaves marks in memory, or rather in the archive. I argued that the dangers associated with this program are a tendency to epistemic violence and the production of unverifiable statements due to the unintelligible nature of the phenomena under investigation.

In general, all three programs operate in the terrain prepared for them by deconstruction's investigation into the order of knowledge that uncovered delirium and aphasia as two moments of the aporiosis awaiting any *fundamental* inquiry into the grounds of knowledge. In their positive contribution to scholarship, the three research programs expand the scope of intellectual inquiry by considering objects that would normally be dismissed out of hand and continuing the work of looking for a new order of knowledge beyond the structure of dual control and universal order. However, all three programs exhibit a problematic tendency towards anti-intellectualism and messianic immanence.

CHAPTER 5: ARCHAEOLOGY OF AN EPISTEME TO COME—IMMANENCE

At the start of my first chapter, I argued that, by the standards of modernity, criticism is the least critical undertaking due to its contradictory or incompossible nature: a) it must begin from the point at which it is meant to arrive, namely the present, or existence, and b) it must speak from a place or a time that does not yet exist, meaning that criticism must make itself possible by itself alone. In short, criticism is groundless, self-referential, and, consequently, potentially and quite likely arbitrary—or at least so it would appear to be judging by the standards of modernity's established order of knowledge. However, according to the position of "post-modernity" espoused the scholars associated with the project of deconstruction, criticism is not arbitrary but speculative; in fact, it makes much more sense to speak about theory, which encapsulates critical activity as much as speculation. In the remainder of my first chapter and, later, in the second chapter, I began to consider how an alternative order of knowledge capable of accounting for speculative criticism, or theory, might look like. To this end, I took up the philosophical project of deconstruction, and I claimed to have discussed both its negative side—that is, deconstruction's opposition to dual control and universalism—as well as its positive side, but this description was not accurate because even the supposedly positive side of the project of deconstruction revealed obstacles, or aporias, rather than a new ground for knowledge as such. The obstacles to an alternative order of knowledge, which I extracted from Deleuze and Foucault, are delirium—the need for any reflexive ordering endeavour to institute a controlling fiction as its own possibility—and aphasia—the uncertainty that all emerging orders of knowledge have to overcome due to their dependence on the transcendental exteriority, or the domain of non-order, that is contingent, unstable, and discontinuous. Together, delirium and aphasia constitute the aporiosis that plagues any reflexive, or self-conscious, attempt at inventing an order of knowledge, and any order of knowledge hoping to avoid the twin dangers of aporiosis must simultaneously succeed at simulating its own possibility and dissimulating its own dependence on the contingent existence of non-order.

In Chapter 3, I proposed my own interpretation of Foucault's *Archaeology* as the means to investigate the state of speculative knowledge today. Since the very beginning, I have been hinting at various related definitions of the notion of speculation, such as transgressing epistemological limits, taking no established order for granted, or

contaminating totalities and purities via triple exposure. I have resisted a clear and set definition of speculation because, as I have tried to show in Chapter 4, speculating involves a research program, and such research programs are themselves historically conditioned by the positivities that underlie them. Therefore, more important than a specific definition of speculation is, in my opinion, the deconstruction project's general legacy of searching for an alternative order of knowledge that would not be based on universalism and dual control and that could account for speculative criticism. With this in mind, in Chapter 3 I proposed an archaeological looking-through of the contemporary pseudo-discipline of biopolitics in order to begin arriving at the positivity-episteme that vitiates speculative thinking today. I found that the pseudo-discipline of biopolitics seemed to involve speculative research programs that were very different from those proposed earlier by deconstruction, and in Chapter 4 I specifically analyzed contemporary speculative research programs, singling out three: the speculative everything, the absolute speculation, and the subtractive speculation program.

Rather than detotalizing, unwriting, and decentring, all three research programs sought to arrive at knowledge of the absolute while equally rejecting established philosophical notions regarding absolute knowledge, which the programs saw as being metaphysical in the pejorative sense of the word. In short, all three research programs postulated there being some sort of a ground and possibility for achieving knowledge of the absolute. At the same time, all three research programs wrote in the shadow of the limits of deconstruction, attempting to find solutions to the delirium and aphasia awaiting any reflexive attempt at instituting an order of knowledge. To this end, the speculative everything program proposed to abandon epistemological self-reflection by making a kind of negative, withdrawal-based surplus into the foundation of the real and arguing for the real's knowability via fiction-based "post-knowledge." The absolute speculation program attempted to maintain a radical openness to the domain of non-order by suspending normative judgments in favor of naïve readings that would reveal an absolute beyond the instability of dual control. Finally, the subtractive speculation program put forward a methodology that I called registering the unintelligible, whose purpose was to search within memory, or the archive, for singular contacts with the absolute, contacts that leave a mark without being translatable into representation-based knowledge.

Clearly, the knowledge that all three programs hope to arrive at is nothing like the image of verifiable, factual knowledge characteristic of modernity. Indeed, one could call such knowledge counter-knowledge or post-knowledge, and some of the dangers and problems associated with this alternative type of knowledge, like speciousness, vanguardism, and epistemic violence, I have already mentioned. Regardless of the benefits and dangers of speculative knowledge, or counter-knowledge, it seems evident enough that all of these programs involve not just forms of speculating but also point to a set of objects, principles, and processes that hint at something like a totality or an image of order—that is, behind the positivity of speculating there is the episteme of what is being speculated about. The name of the episteme undergirding the contemporary counter-knowledge is immanence, and in the rest of this chapter, I will present a) an overview of immanence in contemporary scholarship, b) outline a brief history of immanence, and c) propose a re-ordering of the philosophical development of immanence.

Immanence: An Overview

As a term, immanence figures very frequently in contemporary speculative discourse. For example, in relation to Speculative Realism, Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman (2011) state that "theories of immanence" are "a common theme amongst the emerging realism and materialisms" (18). In his introduction to Speculative Realism, Gratton (2014) talks about the "immanentism" of Spinoza and Deleuze as an ontology based on the affirmative and self-constituting power attributed to life, an ontology that struggles to be coherent and to develop an ethics—and also an ontology that somehow haunts most of the speculative realists he presents in his book. However, whether the presence of immanence in speculative scholarship is a desirable fact or not remains a contested question.

For some, immanence is a major theoretical defect: Brassier (2011) states that "the celebrated 'immanence' of Deleuzean univocity is won at the cost of a pre-Critical fusion of thinking, meaning, and being, and the result is a panpsychism that simply ignores rather than obviates the epistemological difficulties" (48). If nothing else, at least immanence can be said to bring together irreconcilable enemies, with Latour, whom Brassier considers to be his own antithesis (a sentiment Latour would probably reciprocate), also dismissing immanence as a dogmatic remnant: "Let's leave the phantasm of immanence to those who

believe in being *qua* being" (2011, 327). Shaviro (2014) too is of the opinion that immanence is a kind of "generalized panpsychism (proclaiming the immanence of thought everywhere)" (12). Comay and Ruda (2018) share the negative attitude towards immanence and claim that their proposal for absolute speculation "is not an endorsement of historicism or a plea for immanence" (8) because the latter would mean returning to "a precritical, dogmatic metaphysics" and speaking "from the perspective of an ontotheological plenum where thought coagulates or copulates with being" (3). Harman (2016) argues that "pure immanence would be oppressive" (16) because "pure immanence cannot account for change, and therefore leads to the notion that what is currently expressed in the world is all the world has to offer" (33). *Indistinction*, *plenitude*, *necessity*—these are the standard accusations that have been brought against immanence for as long as the concept has existed, and these concerns still preoccupy some of the most important contemporary speculative thinkers.

Although Meillassoux is more complex in his attitude to immanence, being the author of a major article dedicated to exploring immanence within the modern speculative setting (2010), he is also suspicious and distinguishes between the bad and the good form of immanence. In "Potentiality and Virtuality" (2011), Meillassoux presents bad immanence when discussing the standard theories about the emergence of life: "Either a 'continuism,' a philosophy of immanence—a variant of hylozoism—which would have it that all matter is alive to some degree; or the belief in a transcendence exceeding the rational comprehension of natural processes" (235). Besides further lending gravity to the concerns about immanence and panpsychism, or "panlifeism," the above quote introduces another exceptionally common strategy for defining immanence—that is, *juxtaposing it against transcendence*. In the same article, Meillassoux also uses the notion of immanence positively, to describe the emergence or irruption of future possibilities "from nothing, since no structure contains them as eternal potentialities before their emergence: we thus make irruption ex nihilo the very concept of a temporality delivered to its pure immanence" (232). What governs time, or rather what time is, is nothing other than "the pure immanence of its chaos, its illegality," meaning that "the present is never pregnant with the future" (232). Such chaotic temporality without an underlying necessity, which makes the emergence of the absolutely unexpected possible, is virtuality: "a time that nothing

subtends" (235), also defined as pure immanence. Unlike Brassier, for whom all theories of immanence seem to be a dogmatic joke leading to the night when all the cows are black, Meillassoux, while being concerned about dogmatic immanence, also distinguishes a good kind of immanence, the pure immanence of the virtual.

A similar *distinction between bad and good immanence* is made by Laruelle (2013), who holds that philosophy "is a system with double coordinates, immanence and transcendence variously balanced, no doubt, but reciprocally presupposing each other" (239). The problem with both is their crypto-anthropocentric fetishism (that is also the basis of all philosophy and the reason to develop non-philosophy), which, enchanted with "the philosophical All as a power of autobewitching itself, re-enveloping itself, and auto-legitimating itself," either transcendentalizes a human telos into a theological object or immanentizes a human faculty of cognition as the transcendental principle of the Real's self-deployment (for more on Laruelle and immanence, see Brassier 2007). Instead, to not repeat these dogmatic and philosophical fallacies, non-philosophical immanence would have to be idempotent, without a subject, and unilateral and simple (242–252)—Laruelleian poetry-jargon meant to indicate that knowledge must be conditioned from the object-side of the subject-object divide and without formal a priori categories that pre-establish possible boundaries; in short, a strong anti-correlationist stance.

A handy and simplified summary of Laruelle's position on immanence is provided by Srnicek (2011), a position that may also be tentatively attributed to Brassier, who openly acknowledges Laruelle's influence. According to Srnicek, Laruelle's overall project "is an attempt to limit philosophy's pretensions in the name of the Real of radical immanence. It is an attempt to shear immanence of any constitutive relation with the transcendences of thought, language, or any other form of ideality, thereby revealing the Real's absolute determining power" (166). A curious *reversal of priority* can be noted in Meillassoux's and Srnicek's definitions of immanence. For example, for Meillassoux pure immanence begins as a supplementary concept, and the true objects of analysis are surchaos, time without necessity, and the virtual. However, these three terms, while highly related, are not synonyms; in fact, if they were synonymized, Meillassoux would be risking dogmatic indistinction and pre-critical copulation. Consequently, the supplemental term, pure immanence, attains new importance as being the only term capable of holding these distinct

yet highly related notions together in a coherent manner while still preserving their specificity, a manner that seems to suggest that immanence, rather than being a supplement, is surprisingly a real "supra" phenomenon or entity itself. A similar reversal happens with Srnicek as well. He talks about the Real *of* radical immanence, when, in fact, no Real *of* anything is strictly possible—the Real, being the absolute ground for everything, cannot be in the position of a predicate, which technically means that one could only speak about the Real's radical immanence but not of the Real of radical immanence. And yet, whenever immanence is not completely ruled out from the very start, it creeps from the position of a placeholder or a supplement to occupy the entire horizon.

When it comes to the positive definitions of immanence, another speculative poet, Catren (2011), argues that we must "conceive the absolute as a phenomenal plane of abyssal immanence" (350) that ungrounds "every *metaphysical foundation*" (357) by allowing the speculative philosophers to engage in "a free-falling immersion into the inner abyss" of this "immanent transcendence" (357). Despite their very different poetics, related to incompatible research programs, Laruelle and Catren agree on the general nature of immanence, much like Brassier and Latour could agree in generally dismissing immanence. Laruelle (2011) argues that "immanence is not at all an interiority, fold, and folding (Deleuze), nor a pleating (Foucault) . . . but it is precisely what is radically unfolded and precisely *forever unfoldable*" (Laruelle 2011, 248). In the words of Catren (2011), "We do not fall from the absolute into the world, it is the worldly blossom that falls and opens endlessly in the immanent absolute" (354). Both agree that immanence refers to something that is *infinite in processual scope*. These are highly poetic and imprecise definitions, allowable for poets, and their value resides in showing how, for a certain group of speculative poets and scholars, immanence carries immensely hopeful potential to be the concept that refers to the absolute, the total, the everything, the potential to be the ultimate conceptual explanation, which strangely makes one forget the previously declared ultimacy of the Real.

Finally, the last group of speculative thinkers uses the noun immanence and the adjective immanent as if these were the most obvious and commonsensical words whose meaning needs no introduction. For example, Reza Negarestani (2011) talks about "immanent exteriority" and "immanent space," as if the adjectival form was self-evident.

Duque (2018) deploys "immanent" to qualify multiple nouns, without any specificity. Grant (2006) occasionally uses both the adjective and the qualified noun phrase ("physical immanence") without pausing to give any explicit attention to these terms. Shaviro (2014), while having denounced the noun form immanence as referring to a generalized panpsychism, retains the frequent and positive use of the adjective "immanent," again without clarifying the meaning of this loaded term. These are all examples from major sources, but, in fact, it is difficult to find an article or a book in contemporary speculative theory where the noun or the adjective form, usually both, would not make an appearance, usually with minimal consistency and clarity but frequently with great exaggeration.

This very brief survey of immanence in Speculative Realism already reveals in a nutshell everything there is to be said about immanence in general. The brief survey above showed three general uses of the term immanence: a) the negative, which takes immanence to be a synonym for indistinction, dogmatism, panpsychism, and every other evil in the world and in philosophy; b) the positive, which often sets itself up through a distinction with transcendence and sees in immanence, consciously or less so, the concept for explaining nothing less than everything, whatever that may be held to be; and, finally, c) the unreflexive or uncritical attitude that takes the noun and the adjective to be established philosophical jargon that requires no specific explanation. However, whether immanence is seen as the Great Adversary, the Great Hope, or the most mundane notion, it has become ubiquitous among speculative theorists.

So far, in this extended introduction meant to show that immanence exists as a dominating figure among the various scholars engaged in strongly speculative programs, I have given away most of the game and revealed what I intend to say in the rest of this chapter. Therefore, I may as well recall and summarize the main features of immanence already stated, before going on to elaborate them in more detail and using more sources:

a) The chief characteristics, problems, and virtues or evils of immanence are its groundlessness, auto-referentiality, and arbitrariness.

b) There is a strong tendency to define immanence in juxtaposition to transcendence and to distinguish between bad and good immanence.

c) Bad immanence is said to be dogmatic: pre-critical in its epistemology, leading to categorial indistinction, and static in its ontology, resulting in the paradigm of plenitude and necessity.

d) Good immanence is referred to under a variety of qualified names, including radical immanence, pure immanence, abyssal immanence, and others.

e) Bad or good, immanence enacts a reversal of priorities and shifts from being the supplement to becoming the absolute.

f) Immanence is distinguished from the world[16] while maintaining a complex relationship to the world, often being described as an infinite and engendering process of some kind.

The situation is not altogether different in biopolitics, where, whenever anybody speaks about the definition of life, the definition includes the phrase that life is "immanent" or based on "immanence." It is enough to take a cursory glance at canonical biopolitics authors listed in Campbell and Sitze's reader to see the prominence of immanence in biopolitics: not only Foucault but Agamben, Hardt and Negri, Esposito, Deleuze… All theorists who are famous for making some concept of immanence central to their work, specifically to their definition of life. Ever since Foucault and the initiation of the second biopolitics wave that substituted biology for life, biopolitics has been working through the notion of life based on the paradigm of immanence rather than transcendence: "No timeless, transcendent life and death laws determine the destiny this [human] species, only changing, immanent measures that allow for the evaluation of varying degrees and kinds of living" (Campbell and Sitze 2013, 10). This realization of the immanence of life—notice the ease with which the adjective "immanent" is deployed in the quotation—is the defining feature of modernity

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[16] In my dissertation, the concept of "world" is never strictly defined, even though there is an extensive body of literature on this concept, from theories of modality and counterfactuals to Deleuze-inspired scholarship on world-building to Speculative Realist works that criticize the legitimacy of the concept. However, in immanence theory, the concept of world is rarely, if ever, strictly defined and is used in two implicit ways: a) as a general synonym for terms such as "level," "plane," "realm," and so forth when discussing the separation between this-world and other-world, and b) as a term that refers to a specific portion of actual existence that is distinct from the more overarching, total reality of immanence. Seeing that immanence theory employs the concept of world quite loosely, I chose to leave the term undefined as well.

and clearly presupposes immanence as some sort of a framework within which politics, knowledge, and being are articulated.

Among biopolitics scholars from the second wave onwards, references to immanence—as that which a) distinguishes the contemporary conceptions of life, b) underpins the contemporary paradigm of knowledge by which life can be known and interpreted, and as that which, for better or worse, c) characterizes contemporary politics—are legion. It is not even possible or useful to cite these instances, for they are too numerous, and they follow closely the pattern exhibited by the speculative theorists and summarized above: The adjective "immanent" is deployed with great frequency as a self-evident term. Immanence is defined primarily as being opposed to transcendence, positive definitions are provided via Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, Agamben, Esposito, and Hardt and Negri among others, and immanence in positive terms is always qualified, for example as absolute immanence, radical immanence, or pure immanence. Seeing that multiple third-wave biopolitics scholars also participate in the New Materialism pseudo-discipline, whose major influences include Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, the same tendencies in relation to immanence are also unsurprisingly present in New Materialism as well.

In fact, the only contribution by contemporary biopolitics and new-materialist scholars to the summary list above would be the following point:

g) While immanence is distinguished from the world and maintains a complex relationship to the world, life and immanence are said to be coextensive.

It is very likely that this coextensive relationship between life and immanence, which is said to found modernity along with all its most distinctive features while also offering a way out of modernity and into a post-non-human future, is what the speculative realists are reacting to when they claim that immanence leads to panpsychism and vitalism. In general, when it comes to contemporary pseudo-disciplines, such as biopolitics, New Materialism, Deleuze studies, and Speculative Realism, to name but a few, immanence is *the* presupposition that links them all together, in spite of their differences, divergences, and conflicts.

In the rest of the chapter, I will survey predominantly contemporary literature on immanence. Today, immanence literature, partly synonymous with Deleuze studies but mostly its own phenomenon, is a massive industry. I do not pretend to have read the entirety

of this literature, mostly because I ran out of funding before I could do it, and I ran out of funding partly *because* I tried to read all the literature on immanence. I will refer to this vast body of literature as *immanence theory*. Unlike with biopolitics or Speculative Realism, immanence theory has few signs of being or even wanting to become a discipline or a pseudo-discipline. Its scholars come from a variety of backgrounds and use a variety of methods to approach immanence, and this poses no problems. Nonetheless, all these distinct scholars are topically unified in the sense that they study the same name but also in that they repeat, as I have already mentioned, the same patterns of discourse.

Immanence: A History

When it comes to immanence theory, a major problem for scholarship is systematization. Within the mass of literature, which spans centuries, multiple disciplines, and frequently incompatible authors, no clear ordering principle seems to be available. The scholarship on immanence attests to this double difficulty of *unwieldy scope* and *haphazard complexity*. To control for the scope, texts on immanence tend to be either strictly limited to only a narrow selection of sources, or they tend to be highly general due to over-incorporation of material—the former produces tunnel vision, and the latter results in meandering argument that does not arrive at a proposition. The problem of ordering and control that dovetails the unwieldy scope and the haphazard complexity of immanence leads to its seemingly *unsynthesizable* nature, condemning scholarship to interminable analysis and commentary, as if looking for that missing text or insight that would unearth a functional hermeneutic key to bring immanence theory to heel.

For my own part, to contextualize the contemporary scholarship on immanence before providing a periodization, I will rely on Arthur O. Lovejoy's (2001/1936) work in the section below, but it is important to note that other historical explanations have been proposed. In general, when introducing immanence, it is common for scholars to refer to it as an "ancient and well-travelled notion" (Kerslake 2009, 1), to describe *The Adventures of Immanence* (Yovel 1989b), and to talk about the incorporation of immanence from its "native sphere in philosophical thought" (Platt 1915, 14) to "the new and strange, though not wholly alien, country [of Christian theology]" while cautioning against treating immanence "as a citizen who was 'born free'" (15). It would seem that immanence is

something of an Odysseus among concepts, travelling and pillaging cities, insinuating itself where it should not, and being captured in certain places and welcomed openly in others.

Within this overall tendency to spread immanence across the entire historical landscape, a number of more specific lines of descent have been proposed by immanence scholars: Yovel (1989b) finds immanence to begin with the pre-Socratics, as do Platt (1915) and Miguel de Beistegui (2012), although the latter credits Deleuze and Guattari with locating the roots of immanence with the pre-Socratics. Yirmiyahu Yovel (1989a, 1989b) argues that although immanence emerges as a fully-fledged system with Spinoza, the conditions for Spinoza's authorship of immanence lie in the culture of the Marrano Jews and the picaresque novel, epitomized, for Yovel, by Fernando Rojas's *La Celestina*.[17] Stuart Peterfreund (1988) claims that immanence is the invention of Coleridge and the Romantics in reaction to Newtonian physics and its supposed corpuscular view of the world. There has also been a very strong engagement with immanence in Catholic Modernism (see Daly 1980; Jodock 2000), and Moss (2004) points out the importance of immanence for the philosophy of Italian Fascism in the 20th century.

It would be important to consider the details and specificities of all of these different historical backgrounds of contemporary immanence theory. However, being unable to do so, below I will recount a kind of a philosophical history of immanence, which, I hope, will help pose the *problem* of the *contemporary* immanence theory more clearly.

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[17] The term Marrano, at least partially pejorative in its origin, refers to the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula, who, beginning with the 1391 pogrom in Seville, endured centuries of increasing intolerance and violence, in both Spain and Portugal, and were ultimately forced to convert to Catholicism (which only partially assuaged the violence) or flee into exile.

The violent pressure exerted upon the Jewish population in the Iberian Peninsula caused said population to fracture into many destinies: there were those who migrated, for example to Portugal or the Netherlands, specifically to Amsterdam, in search of a more liberal and tolerant environment; there were the *conversos*, who adopted Catholicism either for prudence or passion, and stayed; there were the secret Judaizers, who, under the mask of conversion, held on to their Judaic beliefs in secret—the perpetual excuse, as much invented as real, for continued violence against the conversos; there were the *alumbrados*, a specific kind of Catholic mystics who appeared in Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries, offering salvation outside the official Church and often coming from converso backgrounds; and, finally, those who turned to secular values overall, with differing degrees of overtness and tone, epitomized by Rojas and Spinoza in their very different forms.

Lovejoy and the Aporias of Immanence

Even in the brief discussion of immanence among the speculative realists at the beginning of this chapter, it quickly became clear that immanence is ascribed not only desirable lines of descent but also a problematic one, a legacy that few want to participate in. This stock is invariably invoked when those who hate immanence triumphantly accuse it of being a metaphysics, as if no other explanation was required. This stock is also present whenever immanence scholars disavow the bad forms of immanence that supposedly lead to absolutism, determinism, and other philosophical debaucheries. However, among those critical of immanence, no scholar has gone into details about what is wrong with immanence and where the source of corruption is located.

Luckily, the history of the philosophical issues associated with immanence has been written under a different name by Arthur O. Lovejoy, author of the magisterial study *The Great Chain of Being* (2001/1936). Lovejoy's work does not name immanence as its research object directly—instead, he claims to investigate the history and the gradual development of a set of theoretical positions which, up to the publication of his work, had not been treated systematically as forming a coherent, overall philosophical structure. He names this philosophical structure *the principle of plenitude* (52), but the major components that he identifies as constituting plenitude match perfectly the accusations that are levelled against immanence. Due to this uncanny thematic similarity between plenitude and immanence treated as a dogmatic problem, it is not an overstatement to attribute to Lovejoy the privilege of having thoroughly investigated the descent and transformation of the philosophical conditions necessary for the pejoratively metaphysical version of immanence. By tracking the worst—the most paradoxical, the most aporetic, the most illiberal—conditions of immanence across the entire history of Western philosophy, Lovejoy uncovers *the general philosophical history* behind immanence, a history that the 20th century would like to have surpassed but one which remains a the silent background, the invisible colossus at the foot of which speculative thought in the 21st century operates.

According to Lovejoy, the conditions for immanence emerge with Plato, who distinguished "between what I shall call otherworldliness and this-worldliness" (24). Otherworldliness refers to the positing of the Good outside of the actual or the empirical world, beyond experience and anything to do with becoming—in an eternal realm of being.

Traditionally, the investigation of such an otherworldly realm of eternal being has been termed metaphysics. Lovejoy claims that, though the distinction between this-world and other-world was invented by Plato, Plato himself was a fence-sitting philosopher, who, at different times and in different works, endorsed an emphasis on either side of the divide rather than exclusively going after the other-worldly. Either way, the split that all theories of immanence address is Plato's handiwork.

Besides inventing the arche-duality for all Western philosophy, Plato made another, more direct contribution specifically to the metaphysical stock of immanence. The split between the world of becoming and the realm of eternity implies having to establish *the relation* between the two, especially because the Good, after which all actual creatures strive, is located in the non-actual part of the duality. Lovejoy claims that for Plato the relation between the actual and the eternal, or perfection, was controlled by the principle of *fullness*: the actual realization of all possibilities allowed for by perfection. If the Good remained somehow unrealized, incomplete, or withheld, then "the connection of the two worlds would have seemed unintelligible, the constitution of the cosmos, indeed, of the realm of essence itself, a haphazard and arbitrary thing" (52). For the arche-duality to work—for Wisdom to be possible, for the Good to be attainable—the realm of perfection must entirely, completely, and without any residue be deployed in the actual world. The actual world is always full with everything that it could have, and perfection is always entirely expressed without reserve.

Fullness is the major and primary component of metaphysical immanence, its controlling principle, but the complete working out of all the implications of fullness required further contributions from philosophers after Plato. Another significant component came from Aristotle, who introduced *continuity* as being logically implicit in fullness (Lovejoy 2001/1936, 55, 58). The idea of continuity states that, as every possibility allowed for by perfection must be realized, then every reasonable difference between distinct species of objects must also be realized. In short, all possible differences between distinct entities must also exist—there can be no empty gaps in the series of transitions between entities or their types. Lovejoy argues that it was Plato's idea of fullness merged with Aristotle's continuity that constituted the basic elements of the Great Chain of Being that entranced "many philosophers, most men of science, and, indeed, most educated men"

from "the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century" (59). Aristotle clarifies the epistemological implication of ontological fullness: everything that can exist, must exist, and it must be completely knowable, without lacunae.

A third component of metaphysical immanence is the *gradation* proposed by Plotinus, who not only systematized the works of Plato and Aristotle but made explicit the moral implication of the fullness principle. If all possibilities must be realized, and all possible differences must also exist and be knowable, then the world must also have all possible grades of perfection. It should be possible, therefore, to order all the distinct entities in the world in a progressive series based on excellence, from the most perfect to the most base. If Plato and Aristotle were more pre-occupied with the consequences of the arche-dualism for ontology and epistemology, Plotinus is the moral discoverer: "Those who suppose that the world might have been better fashioned do so because they fail to see that the best world must contain all possible evils— that is, all conceivable finite degrees of privation of good, which Plotinus assumes to be the only meaning that can be attached to the term 'evil'" (64). It is not an overstatement to say that with Plotinus, Plato's arche-dualism was given the critical undercut—that is, the reversal of the order of priorities that makes all dualities unstable, as I discussed in Chapter 3—and revealed one of its most significant aporias: the consequence of the absolute Good is the reality of all evils**.**

The arche-duality between this-world and other-world, along with the principle of control meant to bring these two sides into a relation based on fullness (ontology), continuity (epistemology), and gradation (ethics)—these components are not immanence as such but the major conditions that make up the paradigm within which various immanence theories operate. According to Lovejoy, metaphysical immanence as a more or less coherent theory truly emerges with the systematization and invention carried out by Spinoza and Leibniz, who are both said to make essentially the same discovery. Their shared invention is *the principle of necessity* that governs the relations between all these disparate components and sub-relations. The history of immanence presented by Lovejoy is the history of a search for a more and more fundamental principle that could account for the relation between the two sides of the arche-duality and all the subsequent implications extracted from said arche-duality. According to the most fundamental discovery of Spinoza and Leibniz, there must be at least one necessary entity for there to be sense (165), and it

matters very little whether this necessary entity is called the Good, God, or Substance. What is important is that by this one necessary entity, all other entities and relations are made necessary (173)—that is, so long as there is the split between actuality and eternity, and so long as the two are in relation, actuality and eternity coincide on the terms of eternity; this is immanence proper, or metaphysical immanence.

According to Lovejoy, all subsequent philosophy after Spinoza and Leibniz struggles with, for, or against this position, this idea of necessity that seems to annihilate as inadequate knowledge or unclear perception such seemingly innate notions as agency, contingency, and even the reality of creatures and actuality. Lovejoy sees Romanticism as a response to immanence—a response that attempts to salvage immanence against the scientific discoveries of the 18th and 19th centuries (288–315). On the one hand, the invention of the microscope seemed to make life ubiquitous, confirming the epistemology of continuity (237). On the other hand, evolution introduced gaps and jumps into the plenitude of immanence, clearly devaluing the ontology of fullness (316–317). At the same time, the discovery of other galaxies due to the solution to the stellar parallax seems to confirm the inexhaustible fullness of the universe while also making the universe finite: the universe appears to be both full and not (130). Plenitude, or metaphysical immanence, is therefore not demolished by scientific discoveries but made problematic, and Lovejoy sees Schelling, Hegel, and others as attempting to *temporalize the static plenitude of immanence*, to re-make the governing principle along the lines of becoming rather than being while preserving the fundamental arche-duality.

There is no doubt that Lovejoy's interpretation of the major philosophers he invokes, though exceptionally solid to this day, is dated in the sense that there are more radical and more updated readings of Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, and many others (for criticism of Lovejoy, which actually re-states that Lovejoy's work was fundamentally correct even if missing a few details, see Knuuttila 1980). However, Lovejoy's extraordinary contribution to scholarship in general and to immanence theory specifically consists of distinguishing the major components and the thread of immanence. His archaeological study discovers a lost event: immanence understood as the plenitude that arises from the convergence of actuality and eternity. To acknowledge this line of descent means to invest immanence with dazzling importance, even if negatively. No matter how
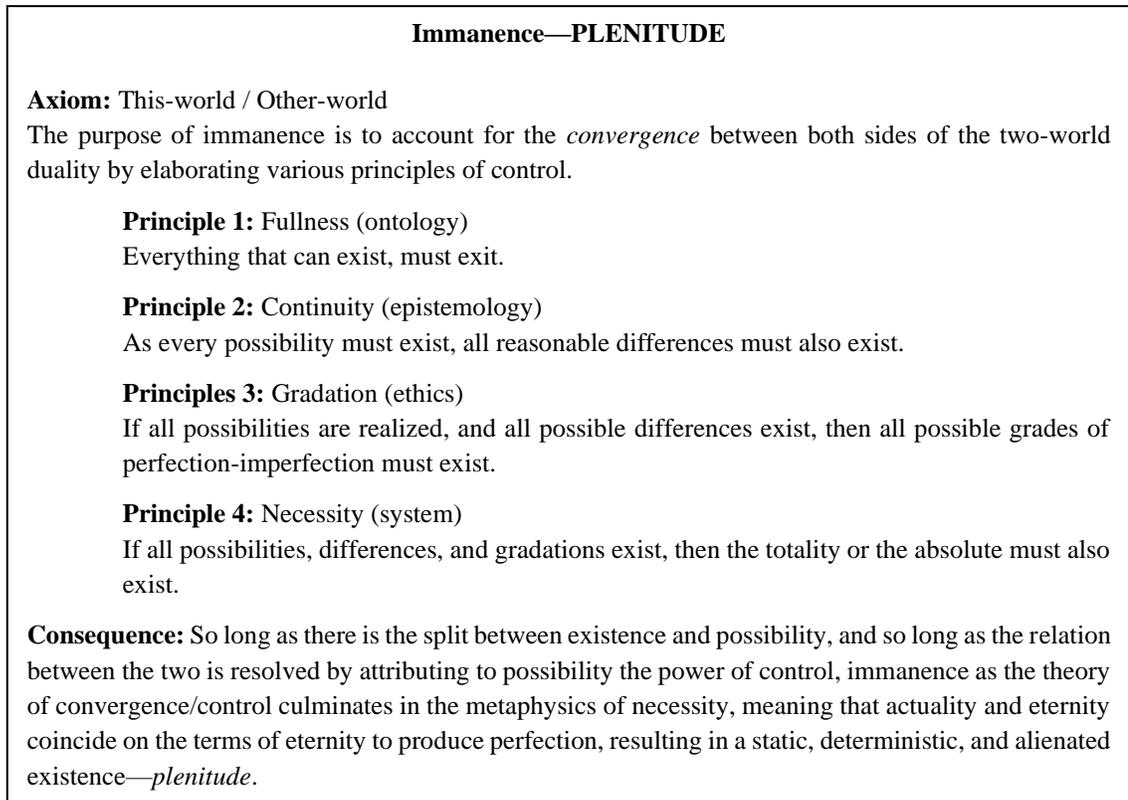
dogmatic, aporetic, and counterintuitive immanence may be, it appears as one of the most general ideas of Western philosophy—in fact, immanence and philosophy overlap completely. To work with immanence no longer means to be doing something marginal. Instead, resisting the dogma of immanence, defending its value, or striving to reform the idea of immanence, all these positions are imbued with extraordinary consequences.

Immanence: Contemporary Development

In the Overview section of this chapter, I hope to have established the prominence of the term and the concept of immanence in contemporary speculative scholarship, and in the History section, I wanted to set the ground for the discussion to come. Between the Overview and the History sections, the following issue has been gradually taking shape: on the one hand, immanence appears to be an intellectual phenomenon as old as Western history, but on the other hand, immanence is also something singularly contemporary and possesses nowadays its own specific urgency; finally, to make matters more complicated, between the idea of "old" immanence presented by Lovejoy and the "new" immanence that speculative scholars are involved with today there seem to be considerable similarities and points of overlap. To work out this entanglement, I would like to summarize and compare the two figures of immanence explored so far: immanence as plenitude and the emerging figure of immanence in contemporary scholarship.

Figure 1 should clarify a) why contemporary immanence scholars see the need to distinguish between good (contemporary) and bad (plenitude) immanence and also b) why scholars are still interested in immanence, seeing that immanence in its most general, abstract, and formal shell simply designates any attempt to theorize the convergence of the arche-duality, namely the two-world split (more on this in the discussion below). That said, speculative scholars working on immanence today are writing in the post-deconstruction setting that I have been elaborating, meaning that immanence theories today—in my opinion, this is abundantly evident in the strongly speculative research programs explored in Chapter 4—are centered on avoiding not one but two sets of problems that come from theorizing convergence by placing the principle of control on the side of possibility: a) the metaphysics of plenitude and b) the aporiosis of reflexive ordering. In other words, the tendency today is to start from the transcendental exteriority, or the domain of non-order,

rather than the transcendental a priori, from existence rather than possibility, and from the powers of the object rather than the subject when theorizing immanence.

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Immanence—PLENITUDE

Axiom: This-world / Other-world
The purpose of immanence is to account for the *convergence* between both sides of the two-world duality by elaborating various principles of control.

> **Principle 1:** Fullness (ontology)
> Everything that can exist, must exit.
>
> **Principle 2:** Continuity (epistemology)
> As every possibility must exist, all reasonable differences must also exist.
>
> **Principles 3:** Gradation (ethics)
> If all possibilities are realized, and all possible differences exist, then all possible grades of perfection-imperfection must exist.
>
> **Principle 4:** Necessity (system)
> If all possibilities, differences, and gradations exist, then the totality or the absolute must also exist.

Consequence: So long as there is the split between existence and possibility, and so long as the relation between the two is resolved by attributing to possibility the power of control, immanence as the theory of convergence/control culminates in the metaphysics of necessity, meaning that actuality and eternity coincide on the terms of eternity to produce perfection, resulting in a static, deterministic, and alienated existence—*plenitude*.

</div>

Figure 1. The figure of immanence as plenitude based on Lovejoy's (2001/1936) account.

Up to now, my discussion has turned up only relatively hazy features of the contemporary figure of immanence. Below, I will survey immanence theory by dividing said theory into three groups based on loose thematic resemblance: the political camp, the philosophical camp, and the speculative camp. The purpose of this provisional division is to extract a set of terms that would show the conceptual development of immanence.

The Political Camp

One very broad group of immanence scholars today could be loosely called "the political camp." Their main preoccupation, in spite of differences and disagreements, is with the kind of politics that the immanence theory engenders, and the scholars who belong to the political camp investigate the advantages and pitfalls of immanence as an ontological

presupposition for political action. Yirmiyahu Yovel is a leading figure in the political camp. He defines immanence as the

> principle [that] views this-worldly existence as the only actual being, and the unique source of ethical value and political authority. All being is this-worldly and there is nothing beyond it, neither a personal creator-God who imposes His divine will on man, nor supernatural powers or values of any kind. The laws of morality and politics, too, and even religion, stem from the this [sic] world by the natural power of reason; and recognizing this is the prelude and precondition for human emancipation. (1989b, ix)

This definition combines multiple elements identified previously: it presupposes the this-world and other-world split elaborated by Lovejoy as beginning with Plato and conditioning the entirety of Western thought (in the case of Yovel, the split is presupposed tacitly and negatively, as something to be overcome; as we have not yet managed to leave the split behind, it is still, in some way, active). It allows immanence to be both Spinozist and Kantian by combining the former's critique of transcendent moral thinking with the latter's attempts to ground moral values in pure reason (a rigorous reading of Kant, and Spinoza, would find this account reductive; however, most political immanence scholars only gloss their references to Kant). It attributes to immanence the Marranoesque striving for salvation in a hostile world (though the hostility of the current world is usually conceptualized in terms of the dangers posed by advanced capitalism). Most importantly, immanence is said to take sides by endorsing absolute focus on this-world over and against the other-world. In short, one could call this the *secular* version of immanence.

For Yovel, the great inheritors of the immanence tradition after Spinoza and Kant are Hegel and Marx. They both attempted to modify the static, eternalistic framework of immanence to account for historic change and development. Such modification entailed treating immanence as something to be completed—either by an absolute supra-worldly subject in the case of Hegel or by an absolute political subject in the case of Marx. Closely following Lovejoy's pattern of analysis, Yovel identifies a shift in the theories of immanence from an absolute immanence that seems to freeze the world in atemporality to complete immanence that posits a future moment when absolute immanence will arrive.

Finally, Yovel distinguishes between dogmatic immanence and critical immanence. Dogmatic immanence has two faults: it either relies on the metaphysics of plenitude, or it promises an end to history that culminates in a moral utopia. Yovel labels most philosophers he attributes to the immanence tradition as having been dogmatic in some way—Hegel, Heine, Hess, Feuerbach, Marx, and even Nietzsche and Freud are said to have endorsed a dogmatic view of immanence. Yovel wants to forbid all forms of "secular messianism" (185). Instead, he defends "critical immanence" (173), an immanence that respects the principle of finitude and the perpetual incompleteness of human existence (174), that relies on communicative rationality (178), and that bases all values on rational politics (181).

In general, Yovel criticizes previous theories of immanence for trying account for the other-world half of the split by incorporating it into the this-world part of the division. He sees only one thing to be done with the other-world half of the split—its complete eradication from thought as a philosophical error. Then, using the finitude-based framework of immanence, we could truly institute a rational politics and a moral state. All political evils spring from including the other-world, or transcendence, within the framework of immanence. If immanence in general is secular, Yovel argues for a *radically secular* immanence shorn of all vestiges of the other-worldly, all of which have to do with attempting to "solve" the condition of human finitude and the suffering it engenders.

Contemporary scholars working in the political camp of immanence theory tend to share Yovel's historicizing of immanence but disagree with the conclusion. They want a strong basis for resistance and for politics of emancipation. For example, Haynes (2012) has a pattern similar to Yovel's but with a different flourish at the end. She claims that "the turn to immanence" that characterizes modernity "focuses attention on *this* world, motivating social transformation in order to maximize human flourishing" (2). Haynes also presupposes the this-world–other-world split. Her basic definition of immanence is "that which remains within" (4) and of transcendence as "a reality beyond the world" (1). According to Haynes, historically immanence has been characterized negatively, as lacking something in relation to a beyond that was supposed to complete it. She shares with Yovel an apprehension of the secular theories of immanence that strove to perfect a lack-based this-worldly existence by appealing to transcendence or the end of history in utopia.

Writing later than Yovel, Haynes sees Deleuze as the major contributor to immanence, who did away with the lack-based framework of secular immanence. She claims that "all immanence is post-Kantian" (5) because it is only with Kant that the transcendental replaces transcendence as the ground. Kant made it possible to conceive immanence in relation only to itself and not in relation to an outside. Consequently, the problem of immanence is the problem of self-grounding. To this post-Kantian tradition of immanence she attributes figures like Foucault, Gianni Vattimo, Michel Henry, Deleuze, Irigaray, and Adorno, amongst others.

Although Kant is the father of post-plenitude, post-Spinozian immanence (at least according to Haynes), even Kantian thought has something of absolute immanence in it because the transcendental categories of the subject are fixed (6). Here, Hegel made progress over Kant by introducing the idea of immanence to be completed over time; after Hegel, it is possible to think about a dynamic immanence. By reformulating immanence as a completely open-ended process of becoming, Deleuze succeeds where Hegel falls back on a dogmatic position. With Deleuze, Haynes defines *pure immanence* as "the immediate self-differing of Life; it is thus not mediated by a moment *other* than it—there is no negativity constitutive of pure immanence" (8). The problem with pure immanence is that it is almost too pure, which brings back the danger of immanence collapsing into a Spinozian plenitude-based metaphysics. If becoming is absolute, on what grounds can one distinguish a position of oppression from a position of emancipation?

Consequently, to avoid pure immanence "lapsing into a totalized, logicized immanence" (7) that undercuts the basis for identifying actual-historical conditions of oppression (7–10), "immanence as an open whole leads back to transcendence" (7). Haynes claims that becoming-other is Deleuze's attempt to articulate immanent transcendence (10)—a means of changing the world without taking flight to the beyond. She wants to ground such immanent transcendence in "non-reductive materialism" that allows us to conceive of "an open future" and "the new" (8). One has to read Deleuze as a radical materialist and forgo any kind of logicization of being. Only the concepts of matter and emergence allow for an emancipatory politics under the conditions of pure immanence without it collapsing into the eternalistic metaphysics of absolute immanence or the anthropomorphic utopian projects of complete immanence.

In general, there is agreement among contemporary political immanence scholars that Deleuze offers a step forward, but there is no consensus as to what exactly that step is. Was Deleuze a this-worldly or other-worldly thinker? For New Materialists like DeLanda, there is not and cannot be any transcendence in Deleuze. However, as we saw with Haynes, political immanence scholars disagree with a purely materialist reading of Deleuze, or at the very least they want matter to contain a divine power of transformation. In fact, whereas Yovel argued for a radically secular immanence, the political immanence scholars today are interested in a *secular-theological* immanence.

For example, Daniel Coluccielo Barber (2014) works out a completely different picture of Deleuze than does Haynes, even though they agree on a significant number of overarching elements. Barber accepts the this-world–other-world split but puts his own spin on the two terms: On the one hand, immanence has been conflated with secularism as "nothing but affirmation of the thisworldly . . . a rigorously immanent affirmation of the world, however it may emerge" (213). On the other hand, transcendence has been classically defined as God's power to intervene in and change the world (4). The problem with secular immanence is that it leaves us prostrate against the injustices of the world (11), while transcendence displaces the power to change circumstances onto an other-worldly being (5). Both secular immanence and transcendence, each by focusing exclusively on one side of the foundational divide, result in politics of submission.

Instead, Barber defines politics as world-building and claims that the power to change the world rests with the imagination (2–4). He wants to arrive at a theopolitics that would combine world-building imagination with the power of God to enact change. He shares with Haynes an implicit criticism of Yovel's radically secular and finitude-based immanence, but unlike Haynes, who wants to make matter divine and sees Deleuze as almost being too committed to immanence, Barber finds in Deleuze a preoccupation with God, with God's power to intervene and change the world, and an attempt to return this power to immanence (10–11).

Barber traces the history of theopolitical immanence from Heidegger via Derrida to Deleuze (25–38). In Heidegger, he sees an initial attempt to relate thought and being without reference to the other-worldly. Derrida, supposedly, consolidates the self-differing nature of the world against any intervention from the beyond via the concept of différance,

but the différance itself remains unavailable to intervention. It is only with Deleuze that a differential immanence allows us to conceptualize a change-based politics because affirming difference and the world means, rather than accepting the given, affirming what remains unthought and engaging in counter-actualization.

Based on the scholarship analyzed so far, it seems that political immanence encompasses a tension between three tendencies: a messianic tendency towards plenitude that all scholars today reject; a secular tendency towards accepting the finitude of the world and the imperfection of its politics that most contemporary scholars oppose; and an emancipatory or resistance-based tendency strongly endorsed nowadays that wants to find in immanence an ontology that would allow us to conceptualize a power of interruption available to political action. In short, messianism—secularism—resistance: such would be the three competing tendencies within the political camp of immanence.

The contemporary resistance-based political immanence struggles against many enemies. It does not want to posit a historical utopia, and it does not want to be a bystander to the world's events. It also does not want an immanence that is too pure. As Shaviro wrote in the introduction to Frederic Neyrat's work (2017), "the battle against transcendence has been won" (x), but the world where everything is process and flux and becoming seems to be only technically different from the metaphysics of plenitude. The result is still the same: an unavailable world where "everything is caught up in the flows of capitalist monetary equivalence; there is no outside any longer, no separation between one thing and another; there is no sense of otherness whatsoever" (xi). Neyrat (2017) calls this situation *saturated immanence*: "The world of absolute flux corresponds to a certain ontological regime, that of saturated immanence, in which everything remains perpetually inside, without any hope of exit" (4). This is why political scholars of immanence, such as Neyrat, Barber, and Haynes, seek for some sort of a transcendence within immanence, a kind of theopolitics, a non-place, an object = X, or any other means of interrupting the state of affairs within immanence without bringing back a supra-worldly entity.

Within this battle, there is also a battle over Deleuze. Whereas New Materialism found in Deleuze a version of immanence predicated on a radical love of the given world, contemporary resistance-based political immanence scholars focus on those elements in Deleuze that have to do with the unthought, counter-actualization, and a flight from the

world as it is. A poetic iteration of such a "dark" Deleuze can be found in Andrew Culp's *Dark Deleuze* (2016). A much more theoretically sustained engagement with a "darker" version of Deleuze is provided by Peter Hallward in *Out of This World: Deleuze and Philosophy* (2006). Hallward argues against a materialist reading of Deleuze that privileges the actual and the empirical; instead, he emphasizes the notion of the virtual and counter-actualization. However, he argues that "the movement from out the world is not a movement into a reality beyond the world" (64). Like most scholars writing about transcendence within immanence via Deleuze, he is attempting to complicate the simple division between this-world and other-world. "The goal is to escape confinement within the creatural without yielding to the temptation of an abrupt transcendence" (58), Hallward claims. He finds that Deleuze provides few clear means for escaping such confinement, but that all such means are related to the power of the virtual and the power of thought, not to the power of the actual. Consequently, Hallward interprets Deleuze to be a subtractive, even anti-actualist thinker, which ultimately leads to an anti-politics that wants to escape the world rather than engaging with it.

A number of tendencies are visible in the political immanence camp: Immanence begins as an endorsement of the secular attitude premised on favoring this-world, actuality, and the empirical and prohibiting any reference to an outside. The outcome that such political immanence seeks is the development of values, norms, and morals that could inaugurate a different, more progressive organization of human life. However, a radically secular attitude leads either to messianic politics that promises to overcome the finitude associated with the secular world or to a politically weak stance that cannot substantiate the politics of resistance that wishes to imagine, and to ground, a radically emancipated world. Deleuzian philosophy is said to constitute the best means for thinking pure immanence that does not rely on transcendence and the beyond to supplement a lack-based actual existence, but pure immanence is found to require some sort of localized transcendence to avoid falling back into a new form of plenitude-based, or saturated, immanence. To be political, pure immanence cannot be exclusively materialist—it has to give this-world the divine power to interrupt and to change the state of affairs from within. Therefore, scholars look to Deleuze for politics of change, but when this line of enquiry is pursed with maximum

rigor, it finds in Deleuze results that are highly disconcerting for political immanence: a devaluation of the actual and this-worldly in favor of thought and the virtual.

The Philosophical Camp

Political immanence invariably requires tackling metaphysical philosophical questions, such as the nature of possibility and potentiality, or the difference between being and becoming, among many others. Here, we can distinguish a second group of scholars working in immanence theory, the "philosophical camp." No clear line divides the two camps, and I do not mean to imply that politically oriented scholars ignore philosophical questions, or vice versa. Rather, this distinction is a matter of emphasis and focus. For political immanence scholars, the point is to ultimately answer questions about the nature of normativity, agency, and resistance within the immanence framework—a framework of secularism, actuality, and empiricism. For scholars of philosophical immanence, the main focus is on metaphysical issues. For example, what is the relation between being and logic in immanence? Can immanence reinterpret the notion of chance to avoid plenitude or saturation? In the end, the distinction between the political and philosophical camps of immanence is not a hard and fast one but, hopefully, an analytically helpful categorization for sorting out the massive material of immanence theory.

Whereas I presented political immanence as a "development" (from radical secularism to theological materialism to subtractive politics), a similar strategy would not work for the philosophical camp. There is both too much similarity between scholars in this group as well as too many distinct details. Instead, I would like to present a more synthesized picture. To do this, I will rely on the following four works: *Implication of Immanence* by Leonard Lawlor (2006), *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy* by Christian Kerslake (2009), *Immanence—Deleuze and Philosophy* by Miguel de Beistegui (2012), and *Logic and Existence* by Jean Hyppolite (1953/1997).

As do their colleagues in the political camp, the philosophical immanence scholars rely on the this-world—other-world distinction: Lawlor (2006) states that "immanence is opposed to the transcendent, meaning that the thought of immanence is the thought of life, while the thought of the transcendent refers to the old metaphysics, especially the two-world structure of Platonism" (70). Beistegui (2012) claims that "immanence preserves the

world, and the possibility of its meaningfulness, from being assigned to an origin that is not inner worldly" (16). Kerslake (2009) defines immanence as "a way to realize the infinite in *this* world" (15). Hyppolite (1953/1997) states it the most succinctly: "*there is no second world*" (59).

However, for philosophical immanence scholars this is only a transitory and an inadequate definition, precisely because of all the pitfalls that radical secularism introduces. Lawlor (2006) is very skeptical of contemporary "anti-Platonism," understood as "the negation of the difference between the worlds," and calls it "the most dangerous form of metaphysics. It is the reduction of everything to a kind of 'actualism' . . . to a kind of 'naturalism'" (143). He claims that radically secular immanence inevitably leads to totalizing biopower, panopticism, and the preservation of life that culminates in saturated immanence. Immanence is a theory of self-relation without reference to an outside, but it must maintain a hiatus, a blindness within itself, in order to not collapse into absolutism; it must also maintain a difference within itself by not reducing thought into a grounding materialism (143–146). Beistegui (2012) similarly claims that "[immanence-based] reality is not reducible to actuality: what is actual may be rational, as Hegel claimed, but reality is also virtual" (192). When discussing a possible issue in Kantian philosophy, Kerslake (2009) formulates the following paradox:

> The logically possible has its index in reality. But then surely this destroys the notion of possibility, and leads our triangular structure to collapse into a monism of the real? (127)

There is apparent agreement between the two immanence camps regarding the problems associated with exclusively materialist, or actualist, immanence. Unlike the scholars of political immanence, those in the philosophical camp do not want to reintroduce immanent transcendence, nor do they seek for a theo-politics that would allow us to conceive of a divine power of interruption within the actual world. Instead, they are working through the leading paradox of immanence in order to come up with a philosophical solution for thinking surplus (an addition without there having been a lack; to be discussed more later in this section) within the immanence framework.

All immanence struggles with the aporia of self-relation and grounding: immanence cannot be immanent to anything other than itself—there is no beyond or other-world that

could "guarantee" the reality of immanence. Without an external ground, immanence is in danger of appearing arbitrary and unmoored, making scholars seek for a grounding that is internal to the this-world side of the divide. However, immanence also cannot have a ground within itself—that is, there cannot be an immanent ground within immanence, such as matter or thought or anything, because that would simply replicate the this-world—other-world split *within* immanence. Such self-grounded immanence would reintroduce a "bad" internal transcendence, making immanence *immanent to* its own ground rather than *to itself* as such, breaching the fundamental idea of what immanence is supposed to be, namely grounded in nothing other than itself as an open totality (Beistegui 2012, 16–17). An internally grounded immanence would reintroduce representation, along with the play of truth and falsity (the ontological undercut), the superiority of priority, and all the other issues that immanence theories had set out to do away with (Lawlor 2006, 1–10). The ultimate result would be worse than any philosophy of transcendence because at least God could interrupt the state of affairs, whereas a bad immanence reduced to an internal ground or founding process ends up producing a saturated existence that leaves no room for politics or values.

"Are the philosophical notions of grounding and immanence then ultimately paradoxical?" Kerslake (2009, 41) asks rhetorically. Some scholars seem to think so. Mullarkey (2007) claims that pure immanence without an outside is incapable of accounting for illusions, errors, and misinterpretations (1–9). Immanence ends up being a kind of prison of necessity that Spinoza was accused of proposing, although the problem for pure, modern immanence is not that grounded immanence leads to acosmism and the unreality of creatures but rather to an overdetermined reality. Not only is there plenitude, in the sense of all possibilities being actualized, but as everything participates equally in the same internal and common ground, all existents have equal claim to legitimacy—consequently, no normativity, and no knowledge or politics, is possible. The problematic nature of immanence is further elaborated by Alistair Welchman (2007) in his critical review of Mullarkey's work. Welchman claims that pure immanence is either impossible because it must include some form of transcendence, or pure immanence must lead to multiple paradoxes, such as Russell's paradox (can a set be a member of itself?), the liar dilemma, and infinite regression. Simply put, pure immanence is either overdetermined and

saturated due to an internal ground or arbitrary and pointless due to the absence of any ground at all.

The self-relation—grounding aporia of immanence could be reformulated as the plane/plan paradox. Both Kerslake and Beistegui, especially the latter, are attentive to the multiple meanings of the French word "plan" in Deleuze's formulation "plan d'immanence." According to Beistegui (2012), "a plane defines neither a surface nor a volume, but a direction, or a manifold of directions. That which orients and guides a thought does not lie only behind it. It also lies ahead of it" (3). On the one hand, immanence is "already there," so to speak—immanence is just the nature of reality, which is why we can think it to begin with. On the other hand, immanence is also incomplete, and this incompletion is not just a problem of knowledge. As thought and being coincide, the inability for thought to grasp immanence without logical failure indicates that immanence remains to be achieved as such. In other words, were immanence complete, we could not fail to grasp it. The completion of immanence, therefore, remains a plan to be put into effect, both in terms of knowledge and reality.

Being already there, immanence is a plane. Being something to be done, immanence is a plan, in the double sense of the word plan, as that of which it is a plan, and as a set of procedures to be put into action. Besides being a plane, immanence is also the goal and the action of a plan. Therefore, the doubling plane/plane could be further qualified as plane/plan$_{(action/horizon)}$. These two demands of immanence theory are logically at odds with each other, which risks discrediting immanence as a worthwhile philosophical pursuit. At this point, one could understandably wonder, *what is the purpose of a super-concept whose proper elaboration requires the cohabitation of multiple elements that are incompossible?* To avoid transcendence, immanence must be its own plane. To avoid plenitude, the plane of immanence must remain open and incomplete—it must have room for action and horizon, it must be a plan. To avoid the lack-based metaphysics and the anthropomorphic promise of utopia that comes from privileging the plan part of immanence, immanence must be a pure plane that grounds itself and is self-sufficient in its incompletion. But, to avoid the saturation that comes with privileging the plane part of immanence, immanence must remain an ungrounded plan. Consequently, we could further qualify the plane/plan doubling as ^{pure}plane/^{ungrounded}plan$_{(action/horizon)}$.

The Speculative Camp

According to my reading of the state of affairs in immanence theory, elaborating the "ungroundedness" of immanence in relation to all its other demands is the major undertaking currently pursued by immanence scholars. This ungroundedness comes under many names: it could be the encounter with nonsense, the abyss and the vertigo of immanence, the radical contingency of Being, or simply the popular prefix non- that is currently being attached to every major term in philosophy. To elaborate on what the ungroundedness of immanence entails, I will take up Hyppolite, and to exemplify contemporary efforts at dealing with the non- issue, I will analyze Meillassoux.

Hyppolite. It is not easy to know where to begin approaching Hyppolite's extraordinary work *Logic and Existence* (1953/1997). It is common to say that, among the great names of Hegel scholars, Kojève, for example, provides a "perverse" reading of Hegel that has little to do with "Hegel himself," whereas Hyppolite loyally expounds Hegel as the latter truly was. It may be so in other works, but *Logic and Existence*, in spite of making extensive references to Hegel, is a speculative reading of the Hegelian project. To begin with, Hyppolite uses "sense" as the overarching category of Hegel's thought—the hermeneutic key, if you will—in place of the previously accepted ones, such as the Absolute, Spirit, or Subject. The following quote summarizes Hyppolite's interpretive twist:

> Being is its own self-comprehension, its own sense, and the Logos is being positing itself as sense. It is, however, being which posits itself as sense, and this means that sense is not alien to being, is not outside of or beyond it. This is why sense comprehends non-sense, the anti-Logos . . . The dimension of sense is not only sense, it is also the absolute genesis of sense in general, and it is self-sufficient. Immanence is complete. (176)

Immanence is being saying its own sense (47), but the saying implies a process and a progression. This progression should not be understood as moving from "nonsense to sense" (13, 21) or from "a silent intuition to an expression" (21), and this process should not be viewed as the gradual transference of clarity from the ground of real being to a

grounded thought that arrives late. Rather, the progression of being saying its own sense moves from sense to sense, and the process involves "the complete fusion" (4) of "actuality and sense" as much as of "sense and being" (5). Here, Hyppolite is working through the plane-side of immanence. By moving from sense to sense, Being is related only to itself, without recourse to an externality or an internal point of transcendence. At the same time, the complete fusion of actuality, sense, and being implies what Deleuze called the principle of equality (1968/2005, 173, 176, 186), namely a common genetic structure between the different aspects of Being that makes it transparently knowable.

Nonetheless, something happens between sense and sense. Immanence, though complete, is not static. Sense begins as "a pre-supposition; only at the end will its being be what it is in truth" (69). In other words, "self-expression makes progress" (46–47). Seeing that self-expression is a synonym for the Absolute as much as for immanence, we could rephrase and say that absolute immanence makes progress in spite of being complete. Now, Hyppolite is working through the major challenge of the plan-side of immanence, which is to conceive of becoming under the conditions of the pure plane. Immanence is never lacking because it never begins from anything other than itself, which is sense, and immanence never involves transcendence because its end result is also itself, which is sense. It arrives at itself as its own result without ever having left for a beyond. Between sense and sense, however, something takes place. Hyppolite calls this gap between sense and sense "absolute genesis" and the "speculative life" (69). With absolute genesis and the speculative life lodged between sense and sense, immanence can avoid plenitude and saturation.

It is imperative to define clearly the nature of this speculative gap between sense and sense. The speculative life must involve something that allows for development without implying a lack, a ground, or arbitrariness. In fact, the speculative life could be said to involve not so much development as emergence, a constant adding on to the already complete. Hyppolite sees two options for such speculative life: language and eternal time.

Regarding language, the simplest intuition is that there is "a 'far side'" and "a 'beyond'" (8) of language. Something always remains unsaid. However, "all language is not authentic" (39), and Hyppolite is clear that one should not confuse language with poetry, with mathematical symbolism, or with grammatical formalism. Instead, he is after

the "language of the concept" (37), which is "the language of being" (63). Such language of being is "speculative logic" (63, 66) or the speculative life, which is "being's self-comprehension . . . the very life of the Absolute" (90). The defining feature of the speculative language of the concept is that it eliminates "the ontological secret" (89) or the ineffable, inaccessible origin of knowledge. In language, there is no fundamental inadequacy—all language is transparent and available. Nonetheless, there is perpetual surprise in language, in the sense that new meanings can always appear without there ever having been a shortage of meaning. At the same time, language is not reducible to the I that speaks, to the statement made, or to any other part of expression: there is always something impersonal that expresses itself through every speaker, every discourse, and every grammar. Being impersonal, without lack, and yet always surprising, for Hyppolite language is a perfect vehicle to conceptualize the complete incompletion of immanence.

Hyppolite's notion of speculative language as the gap between sense and sense where becoming resides under the conditions of immanence has clear ties with the subsequent tradition of speculative French theory of the 20th century. Besides French thought, one is also immediately reminded of the works of Agamben, who has made considerable efforts to clarify the notion of the unsaid and the unwritten in language and immanence (see 2000, 2006). In other words, the becoming of language under immanence has been thoroughly explored. For the contemporary strongly speculative research programs discussed earlier, it is also considered to be too anthropomorphic of a solution. Hyppolite (1953/1997) is overtly opposed to what he calls humanism, anthropology, and phenomenology, but there is still at least a hint of Dasein's privilege in his work. For example, he argues against the understanding that "strips a problem of its language" because "it is impossible to pose Plato's problems differently without changing them radically" (47). More than that, "the progress of thought is parallel to the progress of its expression" (47). One could restate the above by saying that the progress of being or the Absolute is parallel to the progress of speculative language. This does raise the problematic question about the status of language in a world without speakers and discourse, which is exactly the kind of world whose existence contemporary speculative theorists take modern science to have proven without doubt (Meillassoux 2009). The problem with equating becoming with speculative language, in fact, is not just that the human being is privileged

but that the philosophy of immanence is impoverished in its speculative reach due to the spectre of representation, and consequently correlationism, that is attached to language. To be interesting today and to compete with the knowledge that arises from modern instrument-based science, immanence has to reach more strongly and take the world without language more seriously.

The beginnings of a stronger reach than language are already there in Hyppolite. On the one hand, Hyppolite talks about space and time as that which particularizes beings (28, 69) and as that which accounts for the sensible world as nature (70, 100). Such space-time has nothing to do with the time of the absolute. On the other hand, Hyppolite also mentions "the concept as time" and passingly defines it as "the unity of sense and being" (28). However, the unity of sense and being is also the definition of language. It would seem, therefore, not incorrect to state that the unity of sense and being, which exists as the speculative gap between sense and sense, is equally language *and* time. One can consider the minimal line between sense and sense—that is, the minimal line within immanence— as language, which affords an excellent vantage point for considering the speculative life of Dasein, or one can conceive this minimal division within immanence as time, which would, hopefully, provide an equally worthwhile position to consider the speculative being of the Absolute without any reference to Dasein whatsoever.

Sadly, whereas the speculative language of the Absolute receives extensive treatment throughout Hyppolite's text, the concept as time does not. In the final paragraph of the book, Hyppolite complains that "the passage from the temporal to the eternal is Hegelianism's most obscure dialectical synthesis" (188). In a single paragraph he blazes through a myriad of definitions: "it [time] is the element where sense and being reflect one another," "time is the image of" absolute genesis, "time is the exstasis of difference," time is what shows "temporality as eternal," and such eternity is "the mediating thought which presupposes itself absolutely in time" (188). One has to scour the book for clarifying hints. In general, the absolute genesis that lies between sense and sense is simply "eternal self-engendering" (187), and eternity, as we saw in the myriad of definitions, has nothing to do with space-time. Instead, eternity is temporality considered speculatively, as temporality that is not itself a temporal fact. Towards the end of the book, Hyppolite increasingly refers

to eternal temporality as "passage," which seems to further indicate that eternal temporality plays the same role of gap between sense and sense as language did.

It would be tempting to assign language and eternal time to the different sides of the immanence divide: language would be the minimal difference between sense and sense on the plane-side of immanence, and eternal time could be said to be the minimal difference between sense and sense on the plan-side of immanence. With language, it is possible for immanence to account for error, illusion, and nonsense within immanence as occurrences that belong to the pure plane and share in the self-expression of sense. With time, perhaps immanence could address the issues associated with the ungrounded plan and account for independent or unconditioned action under the conditions of a plane that lacks for nothing and is transparent. It seems to be, however, all too simple to dichotomize so easily and to say, language for the pure plane, time for the ungrounded plan! Nonetheless, I find the dichotomy to be instructive for clarifying the issue that immanence theory has to address: in the minimal gap or passage between sense and sense, a gap or passage Hyppolite calls absolute genesis and to which the speculative life corresponds, how can one account for surplus?

The category of surplus is more useful than the categories of emergence, development, and genesis. Ever since it was theorized by Marx, surplus has come to mean an addition without there having been a lack. Unlike the categories that denote a process, such as emergence, surplus has the benefit of being a noun that refers to an object. Surplus is always something concrete, at least in the minimal sense of being a measurable addition, but the means by which one can arrive at surplus are not fixed. At the same time, one cannot generalize the category of surplus easily due to its concreteness. Nowadays, it is fashionable to see emergence everywhere. One identifies emergence, process, or genesis, and then one cannot be rid of surplus, which is everywhere and at all times. Surplus is simply what genesis does. Having identified the logical ground of genesis, there is no point to identify surplus, which is infinite. Such generalization of a grounding process repeats one of the fallacies of immanence, namely saturation. The theory of immanence would benefit significantly by reversing the passage from genesis to surplus and by first accounting for the particularity of surplus and, consequently, then having to account for the particular genesis of said particular surplus.

For Hyppolite, language and time account for the conditions that make surplus possible within immanence. While language may appear to safeguard a last vestige of privilege for Dasein, or the subject (or even Man), the absolutely non-personal nature of time could hold greater potential for an impersonal and non-human philosophy of immanence. Hyppolite only hints at such a notion of eternal time within immanence, but recent speculative theorists have made advances in this area. Below, I will take up Meillassoux's works to show how a notion of surplus-time can be conceptualized in relation to immanence.

Meillassoux. In "The Immanence of the World Beyond" (2010), Meillassoux continues the work he began with *After Finitude* (2009). He wants to recover a philosophy of the absolute without ending up with plenitude. To this end, in both works, Meillassoux famously distinguishes between the speculative and the metaphysical absolute. The metaphysical absolute "always posits a necessary entity, the existence of a necessary God; always becomes the ontological proof of God, then to necessary natural laws, and finally the necessity of everything as is" (2). Meillassoux completely agrees with the history of plenitude-based immanence elaborated by Lovejoy. Against the figure of immanence as plenitude, he conceptualizes the absolute as Surchaos, claiming that "contingency alone is absolutely necessary" (4). However, contingency is not total randomness—"a contingent being must fulfill a certain number of conditions" (4), conditions whose elaboration is the task of new philosophy.

In "Potentiality and Virtuality" (2011), Meillassoux describes this radical contingency as simply "virtuality," in opposition to the notions of possibility, potentiality, and probability: "I will call . . . *virtuality* the property of every set of cases of emergence within a becoming which is not dominated by any pre-constituted totality of possibles" (232). Virtuality is not related to probability, which involves, at its most radical, the occurrence of an unlikely but already-known or presaged event. Instead, Meillassoux wants to allow pure, unconditioned emergence:

> the ontological approach I speak of would consist in affirming that it is possible rationally to envisage that the constants could effectively change *for no reason whatsoever*, and thus with no necessity whatsoever; which, as I will insist, leads us to envisage a contingency so radical that it would incorporate all conceivable futures

of the present laws, *including that consisting in the absence of their modification*. (226)

Meillassoux is keen to ward off the notion that a world subject to radical contingency is a world that must be radically unstable at every instant. That the world can change unpredictably does not mean that it does or must at all times. Rather, it simply means that such unconditioned change can be logically conceived and must, therefore, be allowed as a real possibility:

> If we maintain that becoming is not only capable of bringing forth cases on the basis of a pre-given universe of cases, we must then understand that it follows that such cases irrupt, properly speaking, *from nothing*, since no structure contains them as eternal potentialities before their emergence: *we thus make irruption* ex nihilo *the very concept of a temporality delivered to its pure immanence.* (232)

Unlike Haynes and the materialists, Meillassoux does not confine the principle of radical uncertainty to matter, possibly because one would then have to show why matter has this privilege of bringing forth the new while itself not being subject to radical contingency and self-elimination. Instead, Meillassoux proposes a notion of virtuality that is coextensive with a reconceptualized notion of time.

Meillassoux does not consider time to be an aggregating function that counts moments and then increases or decreases the possibility of certain events based on the number of moments accumulated. Just as Hyppolite did, he wants to consider time speculatively as temporality that is not a temporal fact. Meillassoux proposes a time that does not "go" but is always present: time is the perpetual background of radical contingency, or the eternal condition of surplus. In Hyppolite's terms, time would be the minimal difference between sense and sense rather than a compilation of differences, it would be the eternally "present" passage rather a chain of past events.

What does this mean for immanence? Meillassoux agrees that the classical definition of immanence involves there being no outside and no otherness. He argues that a "genuine experience of immanence is therefore not available in our immediate world because death offers a future escape" (2010, 26). Meillassoux is attempting to synthesize all previous definitions of immanence. On the one hand, immanence has to be this-world focused. On the other hand, immanence has to carry the potential of the other-world

promise of salvation. Moreover, this happens in the background of the virtual and unlimited contingency, which is pure immanence, while leaving a certain plan of immanence to be achieved. For Meillassoux, the kind of immanence that remains to be achieved is that of eternal life without escape that is contingent on the emergence of God. Therefore, Meillassoux is addressing multiple elements of the plane/plan paradox of immanence by keeping immanence radically open via the absolute contingency of time and also considering the closure or completion of immanence via the eradication of death that the coming about of God would accomplish.

He claims that "God does not yet exist" (15), as evidenced by all the moral imperfections of existence. However, the principle of radical contingency makes it possible that God could come into existence at any moment. It is not logically impossible for a perfect being to exist, which means, therefore, that it could start existing at any moment— or not, seeing that contingency also means that a virtuality could just as well remain unrealized. At any rate, only the emergence of God could usher in true, radical immanence that would rectify all human suffering and ensure an endless, eternal life. Pure immanence is complete, but the experience of immanence, or the life of immanence, needs God.

In Meillassoux's philosophy, eternal time, reconceptualized as absolute contingency, does not flow. Eternal time is not passage in the sense of development over an extended construction zone, where one begins from the less and proceeds towards the more, or where one starts with a pre-envisaged possibility and then actualizes that possibility into reality. Instead, eternal time is radicalized chance that is not cumulative. Just as language was the minimal difference between sense and sense that allowed for new meanings to emerge without lack, so time is the minimal difference between sense and sense that allows for unprecedented events to come into effect. The genesis allowed by language and time within immanence does not entail an improvement—it entails surplus, an addition without necessity, without lack, and without need. According to Meillassoux, such surplus is truly rare: for example, he identifies the emergence of life as such a surplus event and argues that the emergence of God would be another surplus-event. For the most part, we live with sense proceeding to sense, and perhaps we participate in the small surpluses enabled by language, but the surplus of eternal time seems to follow an entirely different rhythm of frequency.

To summarize, in this section I said I would describe the development of contemporary immanence theory in order to bring out its specific details more clearly as well as to concretize its opposition to the plenitude-based figure of immanence. To this end, I proposed dividing the rather unwieldy mass of immanence theory into provisional groups, or camps, based on loose thematic similarities: the political camp, the philosophical camp, and the speculative camp. My hope is that the analysis of immanence theory via this provisional categorization has revealed a more substantial development within contemporary immanence theory that is not thematic but conceptual. More specifically, I have found that current immanence scholars have identified and attempted to address a number of fundamental paradoxes related to immanence and have tried to "puncture" the bubble of plenitude by introducing some form of surplus into the mechanism of immanence. In my conclusion below, I will discuss this development from plenitude to surplus in more detail and using the conceptual vocabulary extracted in this section.

Conclusion

Two tendencies appear very clearly when dealing with immanence theory today: a) immanence is rarely used without an adjective to qualify it, and b) the problem that immanence theory struggles with is introducing something akin to surplus against the plenitude-based figure of immanence. Among the many qualifying adjectives used to describe immanence, three stand out the most, each related to a different means of conceptualizing surplus. First, there is *absolute immanence*, attributed to Spinoza and associated with plenitude-based metaphysics. Second, there is *complete immanence*, attributed to Hegel and associated with a metaphysics that re-introduces the notion of surplus based on lack. With complete immanence, the surplus is historical, in the sense that one can extract surplus from history and expect surplus to appear as history develops. Third, there is *pure immanence*, attributed doubly to Kant and to Deleuze and associated with transcendental metaphysics and the question of grounding. For pure immanence, historical surplus is doubly dogmatic—it reintroduces Spinozian metaphysical necessity by transforming it into historical law and the plenitude to come, thus breaching the self-sufficiency of immanence by positing a lack at the heart of immanence and the lack's solution at the beyond of immanence. Instead, pure immanence introduces numerous

conditions for immanence and struggles to avoid plenitude, lack, and saturation equally. It seeks after surplus defined as the unconditioned addition and elaborates a metaphysics of the virtual. Overall, the trajectory from absolute to pure or even post-pure immanence can be summarized as the general movement from plenitude to surplus. Therefore, one means of schematizing the three paradigms of immanence could look like this:

Actuality + eternity = absolute immanence (no surplus)

Actuality + history = complete immanence (utopian surplus)

Actuality + virtuality = pure immanence (contingent surplus)

All immanence theorists begin with the this-world—other-world split in one way or another, and they emphasize the this-world side of the divide, but the most philosophically interesting results come from those theories that do not simply stop at the supposed superiority of finitude or materialism. Complex theories of immanence always involve some form of folding the beyond into the here and now. Consequently, another schematization of the three paradigms of immanence could look as follows:

Absolute immanence = other-world collapsed into this-world

Complete immanence = other-world deployed in this-world

Pure immanence = other-world emerging in this-world

Ever since the beginning of complete immanence theories, those scholars looking for a shortcut tend to argue for immanent transcendence and attempt to stage an encounter between the divine and the mundane on the grounds of the actual and political existence. Essentially, they seek for a world with an exception built in, often to satisfy the ideological tastes of the theorist. A more productive and more difficult approach involves attempting to conceptualize surplus and immanence without a tailor-made loophole that allows the revolution to triumph.

Immanence theory done well aims to be extremely rigorous and must satisfy multiple conditions. In shorthand form, I proposed expressing all the conditions to be dealt with as follows:

$$\text{immanence} = {}^{\textbf{pure}}\text{plane}/{}^{\textbf{ungrounded}}\text{plan}_{(\text{action/horizon})}$$

Immanence is self-referential, sufficient, and transparent. It is also ungrounded, incomplete, and involves surplus. The strictness of these conditions often results in an image of reality

where either nothing unexpected happens, or where unexpected things happen frequently to the point of becoming meaningless. Sometimes, the solutions seem worse than the problems themselves as immanence threatens to end up being saturated and arbitrary to avoid lack and plenitude. With all these conditions and aporias in mind, the leading question for immanence is surplus—that is, conceiving the unconditioned under the strictest of philosophical conditions. How can a self-sufficient reality that lacks for nothing be interrupted by the unexpected or the radically new? How can something unconditioned happen where everything is (absolute) necessity, (complete) history, or (pure) process? What is the minimum difference between sense and sense, or between order and order?

The question of surplus that adumbrates the complexity of contemporary immanence theory in opposition to plenitude, dual control, and universalism relates back to the problem of theory, or speculative criticism, that I considered at the start of my dissertation and summarized at the beginning of this chapter: being self-referential and without ground, how is theory possible? Seeing the structural similarity of the aporias that theory and immanence have to deal with, it is not too much to say that the possibility of theory can only make sense under the conditions of immanence, and, conversely, for the conditions of immanence to lead to something other than plenitude, immanence has to involve surplus—that is, for something that emerges without a ground, without a lack, and via its own possibility, like theory. Theory is surplus in effect, and immanence is the name for an order of knowledge that takes criticism to be more than fact-checking and verifying information.

As I see it, contemporary immanence theory, though hostile to deconstruction due to the latter's supposedly too-great-an-emphasis on language that maintains the privilege of the subject, labors in the wake of the limit established by Deleuze and Foucault, the limit of aporiosis that consists of delirium and aphasia and awaits all reflexive ordering projects. To go beyond this limit, the current strongly speculative research programs that condition various pseudo-disciplines attempt to once again think the absolute by means of counter-knowledge or post-knowledge that makes room for fictionality and places control on the side of the transcendental exteriority, or the domain of non-order, rather than on the side of possibility, the subject, and language (or, worse, transcendence). Whether the speculative counter-knowledge of today is succeeding or failing in its task is a matter of philosophical

taste—at any rate, I hope to have shown that the status of speculative criticism is closely tied to the theory of immanence and the problem of surplus over plenitude.

CONCLUSION

In the last chapter, in spite of pointing out the many logical difficulties that the episteme of immanence has to contend with, I have predominantly offered an account of immanence theory as something worth engaging with. Now, before offering concluding remarks, I would like to examine a critique of immanence, which is not as easy as one might think. While hostility to immanence is abundant, it rarely adds up to more than passing and dismissive remarks, with thorough and sustained criticism being hard to find. Below, I will take up what I consider to be one of the rare, that is thoughtful, critiques of immanence that describes immanence as a bad form of asceticism in response to the collapse of the University and the unbridled advance of capitalism.

In *Deconstruction and the Remainders of Phenomenology* (2002), Rajan distinguishes between deconstruction and poststructuralism (xi, xiv, xv, 1–2). The former is a broad philosophical project meant to reconsider the order of knowledge through the categories of language and literature (xi, xii). The latter "developed from deconstruction" (xi) but is an "Anglo-American" (xv–xvi) appropriation that "registers the trauma of technology and structure in its submission to a 'postmodern' world of depthless surfaces" (xii). However, poststructuralism "is not just an Anglo-American mistake" (xiv)—rather, while correctly identifying "a [certain] tendency in French thought," it accelerates that tendency to a new level of intensity and depreciates the meaning and scope of deconstruction in the process (8). Consequently, Rajan proposes not just to recover the difference between deconstruction and poststructuralism but to elucidate the "various versions and shades" (34) of poststructuralism itself, which is not an entirely homogenous position.

To this end, Rajan describes two different forms of poststructuralism, but, in my opinion, a case could be made that there is also a third, implicit category in Rajan's text. To begin with, upon its first introduction in the early '70s, the term poststructuralism "carried the taint of ultratextualism" (8) but afterwards became quickly imbued with a different set of meanings. On the one hand, there is the "affirmative variety" of poststructuralism (35) that is premised on presentism without lack or negativity (8, 33, 35), emancipatory antihumanism (34, 37), and a liberation of technology via a new kind of pragmatism based on assemblage thinking (35); such affirmationist poststructuralism also

eschews self-criticism (36) and hence "magically" (37) recovers critical agency. On the other hand, there is the self-effacing poststructuralism, or "apathetic criticism [that] is addressed to no one" (216), characterized by asceticism, rigor, and abstraction (39, 45, 215), that enacts "a destruction of bourgeois values" (39) without said destruction being recoverable by a new "pragmatic anthropology." Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and Baudrillard's later works are two examples (271) of such ascetic criticism that recovers a capacity to speak in the face of hyper-capitalism through the mourning and disavowal of deconstruction, but it is difficult to ignore the strong distaste that Rajan exhibits for Foucault's *Archaeology* and his subsequent genealogical phase, which, in the end, makes Baudrillard come out "on top" as it were due to the latter's "fatal theory" (277) that "gives his texts a hysterical, unpredictable, and reversible performativity" and offers "the hope that our system, even in its normally catastrophic course, might still contain the possibility of difference" (287). It is the triumph of Baudrillard over Foucault within the ascetic variety of poststructuralism that implies, in my opinion, a third type of poststructuralism, one that, as Rajan claimed in describing Baudrillard, still deals with negativity (265), even if only by a performed hysteria. To summarize, one can find three types of poststructuralism in Rajan's text: affirmative poststructuralism, ascetic poststructuralism, and fatal poststructuralism.

In the end, the affirmative and apathetic poststructuralisms are more like "faces of a single coin" (222) than truly distinct entities because they share in the same problem, which is the abandonment of the for-itself in favour of the in-itself. Poststructuralism seeks emancipation from "the contingency and vulnerability" (xiii) as well as "the anxiety" (210) of the for-itself by displacing all these undesirable features of experience and existence onto a "structure" (212) of "absolute contingency" (215) that is "self-sufficient" (214)— that is, the displacement of contingency, anxiety, and vulnerability onto an absolute structure makes these elements knowable and, therefore, tameable. Absolute contingency becomes a matter of rules and regularities, and the theorist, by participating in the absolute objectivity of the structure, recovers a supposedly non-subjective form of agency and certainty. Poststructuralism could be said to perform a clever gambit by absolutizing the elements of experience that are most hostile to the notion of the subject, converting them into supposedly non-human knowledge, and, via that non-human knowledge that is still

available to human theorists, recuperating an objective voice with which to speak. I suppose, in the simplest form, the charge against poststructuralism is disingenuity.

The disingenuous abandonment of experience (and recovery of agency) through the play of logic, principles, and abstractions results, according to Rajan, in a new absolute with three basic features: a) controlled randomness (211), b) a circularity that regulates itself and is the effect of its own effects (214), and c) a density and viscosity of Being (275)—in short, control, self-referentiality, and sense; that is, immanence. This immanence, or the new structure of the absolute, becomes "the basis for a [transcendental] science—a term [i.e. science] earlier repudiated by deconstruction" (215). For Rajan, the immanence and its science proposed by poststructuralism is little more than the internalization of capitalism's reification (xiii, 215, 216, 236, 267–268) by theorists who end up capitulating before an overwhelming enemy.

Is Rajan's scathing criticism of immanence correct—is immanence really just the theoretical face of the University castrated by advanced capitalism? It is certainly very difficult to disagree with the tendencies pointed out by Rajan: immanence *is* characterized by a proliferation of principles, an intensification of logical paradoxes, and a style of thinking that embraces abstraction; there *is* a messianic tendency within immanence theory that often leads to speciousness, vanguardism, and epistemic violence; and immanence scholars *do* defend something akin to a new transcendental science or a post-knowledge of the absolute.

At the same time, perhaps the entire purpose of this dissertation has been to show that the tendencies listed above, while completely accurate, are not an exhaustive description of immanence theory and what it has offer. The history of immanence as a term and concept is broader than the developments in the late 20th century: immanence as plenitude has existed as a valid philosophical position at least since Spinoza and Leibniz, and the 19th and 20th centuries have also seen a development of immanence theory meant to go beyond immanence as plenitude towards immanence as surplus. Moreover, the emergence of poststructuralism and the contemporary pseudo-disciplines that are clearly influenced by the different poststructuralisms are not only a reaction to advanced capitalism and the University in ruins but also a search for a response to the limits of deconstruction according to which reflexive order culminates in delirium and aphasia and must develop a

means of simultaneous simulation-dissimulation. Finally, scholars belonging to the project of deconstruction have themselves proposed a certain figure of immanence premised on the transcendental exteriority of non-order rather than the viscosity and saturation of Being-without-an-outside.

It is true that immanence does not tarry with the for-itself and avoids the labor of the negative. However, immanence does grapple with incompossibility, radical exteriority, and surplus. Some scholars lapse into a new kind of universalism, but the tendency towards messianism and totalization is not a new issue in scholarship and has plagued negativity-based speculation as well. All speculative criticism is dangerous—that is, liable to taking shortcuts—because it must make itself possible by itself alone while existing in a non-place and a non-time. The speculative criticism that adopts the episteme-to-come of immanence as its basis carries its own academic pitfalls, logical puzzles, and philosophical advantages. I hope to have shown that the pitfalls are not intolerable or insuperable, that the logical puzzles are worth considering, and that the concepts offered by immanence can culminate in more than just the worst practices of capitalism-inflected scholarship. That said, given the specific dangers of the immanence episteme (namely speciousness, vanguardism, and epistemic violence—in short, a new form of anti-intellectualism), a note of caution combining the warnings of Foucault and Brassier may be worth bearing in mind: in our impatience for the liberty promised by the speculative theory detached from criticism and self-reflection, we should be careful not to abandon too quickly the philosophical categories hard-won through the patient labor of the previous centuries.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Justas Patkauskas

Post-secondary   Vytautas Magnus University
Education and   Kaunas, Lithuania
Degrees: 2005–2009, B.A.

                            Vytautas Magnus University
                            Kaunas, Lithuania
                            2009–2011, M.A.

                            Western University
                            London, Ontario, Canada
                            2015–2020, Ph.D.

Related Work   Teaching Assistant
Experience   Western University
                            2016–2019

Publications:

Patkauskas, Justas, and Jeff Downer. 2020. *A Study of Mundane Being*. Edna Press.