



BRILL

# Against Embodiment: Subjectivity Viewed from a Materialist Perspective

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## Abstract

Just as in philosophy, truth—pure, immaterial “meaning” or simply value—takes a life of its own, even when purported to be materialist. The equation, M-C-M, can be transposed in P (Phallus) and C (femininity as commodity) amounting to P-C-P, and the argument is made by resorting to Marx and Irigaray via Laruelle.

## Keywords

Marxism – feminism – commodity – gender – femininity – real abstraction

## 1 Introduction: Marx and Irigaray, via Laruelle

In this paper I am revisiting a lecture delivered in 2017, a transcription of which has already been published. This paper represents its more scholarly developed version, with an element of rigor that was probably lacking in the ‘compte rendu’ of the talk.<sup>1</sup> I will argue that Luce Irigaray’s appropriation of Marx’s theory of value production, the ontology and dialectics of value

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1 The published transcript was based on a lecture delivered in the summer of 2017 within the framework of the School for Politics and Critique 2017, a project supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung-Southeast Europe.

form, is not a mere metaphor, but an extrication of the same structural laws. Structurally, or more specifically, as structures of value production, capitalism and patriarchy are homologues. This link is established in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Irigaray, 1985a, 157, 170–175), and women and femininity as a commodity form is a notion postulated through the use of Marx's value theory (1959, s.p.)<sup>2</sup> and Claud Levi-Strauss's anthropology (Prechel, 1980, 55–56). Laruelle is the non-philosophical bridge that enables this comparative exercise in a Marxian approach to the questions of value in the forms of monetary value and the fetish of femininity respectively. Non-philosophy is explained by Laruelle as operating with “philosophical material” while remaining outside the self-enclosure and self-sufficiency of a particular system—philosophy is a “pool of material,” *chora*, that should be approached in a manner that mimes the scientific posture of thought.<sup>3</sup>

Irigaray's argument is developed along very similar lines, even if without resort to Marx, in her seminal work *Speculum of the Other Woman* through her dissection of the history of Western rational thought, beginning with Plato and always returning to Plato as the underpinning of that entire history, predicated on the very ontology of subject/object present in the entire subject-centered history of thought (Irigaray, 1985b, 307). Again, departing from Plato, *Timaeus* in particular but also the myth of the *hystera* (the famous parable of the cave), predicated on the dialectic of the subject (mind) and object (mindlessness, be it physical or otherwise). The latter is my summarization of the status of the object (almost literally taken in its etymological sense as *ob-iectus*) in Irigaray's *Speculum* (Irigaray, 1985b, 13–16, 66–67). The equation of the physical and the object (passivity without agency) is made already by Plato, whereas both are reduced to femininity. The contempt for the body, the physical, for the object bereft of agency, for passivity and, thus, for the female is a spontaneous, immediately established equation, without examination if the equation string truly holds (Plato, 50a–c, 51a–b).<sup>4</sup> Irigaray breaks down this logic to the subject/

2 All of the quotes from Marx are retrieved from the Marxist Internet Archive, where the editions cited here are published without pagination. Therefore, we cite these quotations by URL and access date, using the abbreviation “s.p.” (*sine pagina*) to indicate that the page number is absent from the edition used here.

3 François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, Trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press—Univocal Publishing, 2013), 12–21 and throughout, and François Laruelle, *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, Trans. Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press—Univocal Publishing, 2014), 48ff.

4 We adhere to the classicist norm of citation where lateral pagination of manuscripts is universally accepted in every edition, regardless of the language and the year of publication. This philological-philosophical rule is broken in more popular renditions of the texts, but for a scholarly investigation it is key to stick to the marginal pagination that enables the necessary precision.

object dialectic, whereby the object is always already the product of the subject precisely because it is stripped of any agency. Considering the amalgamation of object, physical, female, absence of agency, defined by its opposition to subjectivity, reason, and agency, is one and the same thing. Irigaray contends that Reason is always already masculine, male.

The realization that Reason is always already male, or masculine, does not mean that “emotional as female” is to be emancipated and romanticized, but that Reason (or Rationality) as the Western history of ideas understands it has a set of attributes, including its gendering as male. This is not merely my takeaway from Irigaray’s reading of the genealogy of the concept that defined the Western history of philosophy and sciences and what is presumed to be reason even in the common sense of the word. This is a reconstruction of the origin of an idea, and ideas are always historical. There are no eternal truths. This is a postulate I depart from here, as I believe Irigaray does as well. Irigaray argues for “hysterical” discourse, for a language that speaks from the hystera (1985b, 243–253, 330–339), all that is obscured and rendered speechless and illegible, i.e., the physical or the material, the object and the woman. I would argue that this does not automatically mean an invitation for women to speak in terms of and from the point of view of the “emotional.” To a Lacanian, it is almost self-evident that the “emotional” is made up of the phantasmatic, jouissance, the imaginary, and that also the symbolic plays a role in structuring the “emotional”—processes centered and moved by the “objet petit a” (Lacan, 1977, 67–99). That is why I do not think Irigaray’s ‘hysteric’ is not or should not be reduced to the ‘emotional.’ In the passages that follow I will focus on the problem of subjectivity-centered thought, its problematization in terms of Marx’s original critique on the matter, and its dovetailing with Irigaray’s thought.

Subject/ivity is perhaps the central topic of poststructuralism. As Foucault puts it, his understanding of structuralism is that it deals with the subject, while declaring himself to be a structuralist (Kolozova, 2021, 99–108). Poststructuralism subscribes almost fully to the Foucauldian legacy (Kolozova, 2014, 30–67; Kolozova, 2021, 104–108). Identity formation as an aspect of subjection and subjectivization is the central theme of poststructuralist gender theory and feminist philosophy: culture and gender are the ‘material’ of identity formation, while class and other categories of the grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984, 15, 37–38) are rendered irrelevant (precisely due to them being too robust to be subjectivized or rendered as an identity). Even though Irigaray is identified with the poststructuralist legacy, her problematization of the subject/object hierarchy, her materialism, and her attack on somatophobia

that defines the history of Western philosophical thought is something that sets her apart from the rest of the luminaries of poststructuralism.

Indeed, in poststructuralism we deal with post-Marxism, the subjectivized, individualist, bourgeois and moralist rendering of the socialist idea. Take Alasdair MacIntyre, one of the great fathers of post-Marxism, who claims that “Marxism had failed morally” (Blackledge, 2005, 697). MacIntyre’s critical project seems to rely on all but Marxism—Aristotle and Nietzsche primarily—whereas the emphasis of his critique is on morality rather than politics. This tendency goes hand in hand with that of the culturalization of politics (Mouffe, 2005) as well as with the legacy of the Frankfurt School. The epistemic foundation of subject(ivity)-centered philosophy combined with cultural theory and post-Marxism is the “stuff” that the poststructuralist—or the so-called constructivist—turn in feminist (and gender) theory is made of. Irigaray is a Marxist, not a post-Marxist—yet another reason to see her as someone who poignantly stands out apart from the rest of poststructuralism.

I propose to examine the possibility of conceiving of identity and subjectivization in terms that are closer to the epistemic stance adopted by both Marx and Irigaray, speaking from the position of object, be it Irigaray’s hysteric discourse, be it Marx’s objectivity, i.e., speaking from a ‘third party’s position.’ Marx: “To be objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing” (Marx, 1959, s.p.).<sup>5</sup> In order to fashion such possibilities, we will have to consider a radically different postulation of the question of the subject that will be in line with the feminist legacy, but which will primarily rely on a certain form of realism.

Here I will use realism similarly to the way I use materialism, not because I think they are one and the same thing, but because of its function in the argument. Namely, Marx uses realism in the way we use materialism (Kolozova, 2015, 13–18), and it is not because material equals real but because realism requires a foundationalist theory that is scientific. Modern sciences are grounded in the exploration of what the ancient philosophers would call *physis*, and there is a reason for this which Marx discloses in his doctoral dissertation (Marx, 1975). Furthermore, I operate primarily from the epistemic position furnished by François Laruelle’s non-philosophy (or non-standard philosophy) (Laruelle, 2013) and non-Marxism (Laruelle, 2014), the latter being a method of reading and working with Marx by ridding his work of any tenets of philosophy. We are not making an Althusserian argument here but a

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5 The abbreviation “s.p.” abbreviation is explained above (see footnote 2).

Laruellian one. As it is difficult to sum up Laruelle's entire work, which comes down to establishing non-philosophy or non-standard philosophy, for the sake of the argument, we will just say that Laruelle proposes that we operate with the philosophical (conceptual) material with a posture of thought similar to that of the scientific study of different forms of reality (Laruelle, 2013, 22). In other words, the real is admitted being foreclosed; one does not even seek to explain the real in and of itself. It is merely a function in the argument, whereas the argument is not about it at all—that is how one can extract transcendental “material” from different philosophies (Laruelle 2013, 23), in particular those closest to accomplishing the idea of being sciences, namely psychoanalysis and Marxism, and further radicalize the notions at stake by developing a theory that may be at odds with any tradition of either Marxism or psychoanalysis (Laruelle, 2014, 68).

Both Laruelle and Marx resort to the term ‘realism’ as a concept that covers questions of modality, while also ensuring a materialist stance even if the material is transcendental (Laruelle, 2013, 62) or an abstraction that is nonetheless ultimately rooted or conditioned in the physical, a Marxian epistemology put forward by the newly rediscovered Alfred Sohn-Rethel (Sohn-Rethel, 1978). However, even without Sohn-Rethel's elaboration, we find in Marx's own works arguments as to how the abstractions, such as the economic base, are a guarantee of a realist epistemology while also being grounded in physical reality (Marx, 1973, 43). However, I will occasionally use “materialism” as well by pointing to the fact that it is not philosophical materialism, but rather a concept rooted in Marx's radical critique of philosophical materialism, which we encounter in his critique of Feuerbach.

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.

MARX, 1968, S.P.

I will propose a different consideration of the subject relying on realism and align realism with Marx and a “non-philosophical”—as in François Laruelle's non-philosophy—reading of Marx. I will propose that, depending on the analysis, if we exit philosophical analysis and position ourselves on a certain plane of Marxist and post-philosophical science, both possibilities are

permitted—to think the subject in terms of singularity and oneness and in terms of multiplicity and transformability. Let us note that both Marx and Laruelle call their projects a science (of the human), while assuming that this science is premised on an exit from philosophy. Laruelle affirms this position of “exit,” intentional externality—as in his method of stepping out of philosophy’s self-sufficiency—and therefore calls his work with and through philosophy a non-philosophy (instead of a post-philosophy, which would have been too much indebted and circumvented by philosophy as the purveyor of reality). This short digression to explain the notion of non-philosophy seems indispensable for the further legibility of the argument—however, any deeper and lengthier fleshing out of the notion will sidetrack our discourse and would indeed require a separate paper. The opening chapters of *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy* (Laruelle, 2013) give a satisfactory introduction, as well as my monograph from 2014, *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy*, which serves as non-philosophy applied to matters of poststructuralist feminist philosophy.

## 2 The Centrality of the Notion of Subjectivity and the Problem it Poses for a Truly Socialist Theory and Feminism

I will propose that the possibility of an analysis of the subject in terms of multiplicity, transformability, and particularism should not be excluded from our approach to the question, by way of allowing it as something taking place on a different level of discussion. A properly Marxian approach will be to permit another plane of analysis that does not exclude the previous one but unilaterally positions itself toward the previous, which permits discourse in terms of unity, oneness rather than unity, or rather unilateral unity. And all of that is necessary to conceive of new forms of universalism. All this tedious work must be done to propose some new possibility of universalist discourse by way of countering all the possible criticisms we can anticipate. When I first started grappling with this issue, I positioned myself as a poststructuralist feminist with a somewhat heretical stance, deciding to face its *aporiae* and propose a solution. That was what I attempted in *Cut of the Real* (Kolozova, 2014). Today, I would say that I am treading the path of a radical critique of subjectivity-centered thought relying mainly on Marx’s critique of the notion of (human) subjectivity in Hegel and Feuerbach, as well as some structuralism (Saussurean), while still endorsing some of the core points of the constructivist argument (Kolozova, 2019, 2015, 2016).

In what follows we will consider Marx’s counterproposal to look at things *objectively*, but not in the positivist sense of objectivity. It is not an approach akin

to object-oriented ontology (OOO) either, because OOO seems to be merging the subject and the object, or there the object is treated from a subjective position (Behar, 2016, 27–38). I will explain this idea in Marx and that will lead us to the proposal I will present here, which is a conceptualization of a self rather than a subject, which integrates the category of matter and the real (rather than physicality and the bodily, which are of course included, as that is the Marxist concern, but the argument does not come down to them). I am proposing a further formalization of a materialist and post- or non-philosophical discourse, inspired by Marx, Laruelle, and Irigaray, by way of using the category of the real. The real also includes matter in the non-philosophical sense but is not reducible to it, and neither are the two synonyms.

The hybridity of selfhood I am proposing here is indebted primarily to feminist philosophy, to Donna Haraway, to Luce Irigaray, to Irigaray's treatment of the signifying *automaton*. This will lead us to the composition of selfhood. It is a selfhood which operates with further formalized and absolutized categories of the automaton and the real rather than with, as Laruelle will call them, philosophically spontaneous categories of the body and technology. The real is a category that can be embodied by the physical body, by organic or synthetic physicality. It could be technological, whereas the automaton is literally the automaton of signification, like language, the exchange of value in market economy, the exchange of women in patriarchy.

I start with a quote from Lacan which helps my exposition of the automaton: “the *world of the symbolic is the world of the machine*” (Lacan, 2017, 51). Here the symbolic is equated, as in many places in Lacan (inspired by Aristotle's use of the notion in *Physics*), with the automaton. The signifying chain is the automaton. Lacan operates with the concept of the *automaton*, and *tuché* —it is the instance of the real, the automaton is the signification, and their detailed elaboration can be found in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1977, 51–59). My point is that it is not much different than the way it is understood by de Saussure or Turing. We will arrive at that further in the paper.

First, let us compare the dominant automata of signification in contemporary capitalism. Here is the quote by Irigaray that makes obvious that the patriarchal exchange of women or of femininity is not very different than M-C-M. She says:

In still other words: all the systems of exchange that organize patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are recognized, valued, and rewarded in these societies are men's business. The production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men (when a man buys a girl, he “pays” the father or the brother, not the mother ...), and they always pass from one man to another, from one



group of men to another. The work force is thus always assumed to be masculine and “products” are objects to be used, objects of transaction among men alone. Which means that the possibility of our social life, of our culture, depends upon a ho(m)mo-sexual monopoly? The law that orders our society is the exclusive valorization of men’s needs/desires, of exchanges among men. What the anthropologist calls the passage from nature to culture thus amounts to the institution of the reign of hom(m) o-sexuality. Not in an “immediate” practice, but in its “social” mediation. From this point on, patriarchal societies might be interpreted as societies functioning in the mode of “semblance.”

IRIGARAY, 1985A, 171

The point here is that what is being sold—women as signs, as currency—is the fetish of femininity. And that is why there is this structural hierarchy in heterosexuality which is practically insurmountable. It requires a complete structural reversal, and it is the transformation of women from commodity fetish and surplus value into use value. And transcending the logic of value itself, and arriving at the relevance of materiality as such. So in a way she gives perhaps the most compete proposal after Marx as to how to realize the Marxist proposal, how we go about transcending the problem of surplus value, which is a problem of value, and the relation value has to the mere, inferior matter, to materiality as resource. Interestingly this huge political problem is a metaphysical one, and we cannot go about and solve it without taking some position *vis-à-vis* certain metaphysical dilemmas. What I am proposing in my book on Marx and Laruelle is that we come to terms with certain metaphysical questions, and I propose to revise the contemporary Marxist and post-Marxist proposals to exit and surpass metaphysics. Marx proposes to exit philosophy, and with it its metaphysics as well. I suggest we keep metaphysics because we cannot deal without it. Instead we should radicalize it—it is the grain of what takes place in science as well. It is not counter-scientific at all. We come to see that only if we radicalize it in a non-philosophical manner, i.e., through Laruelle’s method.

Here is another quote, by Turing—a comparison of a certain type of human labor with computing. The cognitive tasks of computing according to him are comparable to this, to what you see in this quote—he does not call these activities knowledge or intelligence, he is very precise as to what the computing machine does:

The class of problems capable of solution by the machine [the ACE] can be defined fairly specifically. They are [a subset of] those problems which



can be solved by human clerical labor, working to fixed rules, and without understanding.

TURING, 1986, 38–39

Before we continue with the thread of the central argument, let us note briefly, that in this citation Turing clearly differentiates computing from understanding. Let us move further in our elaboration of the feminist and socialist applicability of the notion of the (signifying) automaton, by closely reading two quotes from Marx and Irigaray demonstrating how structurally similar the automata of patriarchy and capital are. It appears that the formula is the same. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the analogy is to patriarchy can be found toward the end of the quote from Marx presented below. Marx anticipates that surplus value and use value will merge simply into value, without a distinction between use and surplus value, and the formula will neither be C-M-C nor M-C-M. It will result into M-M' and finally just M-M. He speaks of this acceleration of capital and circulation of capital in vol. 3 of *Capital*, analyzing the laws of the auto-acceleration of capital. Capital accelerates itself almost to singularity, obliterating any form of materiality, including physical or non-physical commodities and even use value. It becomes a spectral automaton of value feeding (into) value. So, here is what Marx says:

In simple circulation, C-M-C, the value of commodities attained at the most a form independent of their use-values, i.e., the form of money; but that same value now in the circulation M-C-M, or the circulation of capital, suddenly presents itself as an independent substance, endowed with a motion of its own, passing through a life-process of its own, in which money and commodities are mere forms which it assumes and casts off in turn. Nay, more: instead of simply representing the relations of commodities, it enters now, so to say, into private relations with itself. It differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value; as the father differentiates himself from himself *qua* the son, yet both are one and of one age: for only by the surplus-value of £10 does the £100 originally advanced become capital, and so soon as this takes place, so soon as the son, and by the son, the father, is begotten, so soon does their difference vanish, and they again become one.

MARX, 1955, S.P.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, edited by Frederick Engels, Ch. 4, from the online version of the *Marxist Internet Archive* (1995; 1999), [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/cho4.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/cho4.htm), accessed on 1 May 2023. For the abbreviation “s.p.” see footnote 2 above.

The form of money, money as materiality, is an instance of the real. M-C-M is already transformed, and it turns out that circulation takes place not for the purposes of use, as use value is almost of no relevance anymore; according to this reversal of the formula, it turns out that the entire circulation takes place in money-engenders-money logic. Surplus value leads to more surplus value, the exchange of surplus with surplus becomes accelerated to the extent that no commodity or 'use' value expressed in capital is any longer required. Use value becomes irrelevant, the two are merged into pure value, M-M' is quite simply M-M. Value involves philosophical axiology, and it lends in sense to make sense of a process where value circulates in order to produce value, pure value without a grain of materiality (that which is not transposed onto the plane of 'value', which is not marked to mean and signify). Value has taken on a 'life of its own' (in a rather cynical way), just as in philosophy, truth—pure, immaterial 'meaning', or simply value—takes on a life of its own, even when purporting to be materialist (Marx, 1968).

Even though money and commodities are just forms of this signification, they still participate in the valorization process, in value production—this is what capital comes down to, exchange of value through the means of the market. That is why bitcoin is not a revolution, it is yet another form of M-M, yet another instance of the same 'value engenders value' tautology. As Marx notices, there is a temporal reversal at stake—the father is begotten by the son (Marx, 1978, Ch. 4). Also, note that women are missing. They are the currency in the production of "hom(mo)-sexuality" as Irigaray would put it, or of the self-engendering of patriarchy and the fetishization of masculinity (Irigaray, 1985a).

The equation M-C-M can be transposed into the terms P (Phallus) and C (femininity as commodity), amounting to P-C-P. In the same way that the commodity is not the object, which is the use value, but the abstraction that can be exchanged, so too in a similar fashion women as use value or in their reality are not what is being exchanged in patriarchy—it is femininity, it is the fetish. Femininity takes place inside commodity—it is the fetish. The formula is Phallus—Femininity—Phallus (Koložova, 2019, 113–115). This formula comes down to what Irigaray calls hom(m)o-sexuality, whereby the phallus produces itself and enters into relations with itself via women, via femininity, because the position of women can be taken by gay men and trans women as well. She does not say this, but it is clear that structurally the argument allows that. So, Irigaray writes: "From this point on, patriarchal societies might be interpreted as societies functioning in the mode of 'semblance'" (Irigaray, 1985a, 171).

And the ultimate semblance is women—femininity as the commodity in these transactions.

The value of symbolic and imaginary productions is superimposed upon, and even substituted for, the value of relations of material, natural, and corporal (re)production. In this new matrix of History, in which man begets man as his own likeness, wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men. The use of and traffic in women subtend and uphold the reign of masculine hom(m)o-sexuality, even while they maintain that hom(m)o-sexuality in speculations, mirror games, identifications, and more or less rivalrous appropriations, which defer its real practice.

IRIGARAY, 1985A, 171–72

Speculations—this is the key concept and trope that links Irigaray’s concept of “speculum” (Irigaray, 1985b) and “mirror games” to Marx and the critique of commodity fetishism. This speculation, this product of mirroring, this image commodity is, it being a pure form, value—that is the common denominator. Value is the general form and equivalent of exchange, taking on a reality of its own. In a similar way we can see the position of women, especially in sexuality, or rather femininity in the economy of sexuality, assuming a similar role in the value exchange of patriarchy and hom(m)o-sexuality.

*Woman, object of exchange, differs from woman as use value, in that one doesn’t know how to take (hold of) her, since “the value of commodities is the very opposite of the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition.”*

IRIGARAY, 1985A, 175–176; INCLUDING A PARAPHRASE OF MARX, MY REMARK

All those male philosophers who keep wondering what the woman wants, desires, etc., never arrive at an answer, but Irigaray provides the reason why: it is a spectral woman they talk about, fetishist empty form, surplus value of femininity. This is what the ‘value’ of femininity represents, what femininity as a representation, signifier and signified—value—is, and this is what remains impenetrable, not the use value. It is a specter, therefore impenetrable, evasive, unreal.

### 3 The Grain of Materiality behind Spectrality

Starting from a poststructuralist position and taking its legacy into Marxian and non-philosophical consideration, not rejecting what is worthy there,

treating it non-philosophically, let us try to provide a degree of realism that will take us beyond the paralysis of poststructuralism we are currently witnessing. Between the ‘immaterial self’ or subjectivity and the body there is certainly a material, cognitive, and affective continuity. The philosophical dualism underpinning the two is false, because it is one grounded in non-materialist epistemology, and the axiom of our discussion is materialist or realist in Marx’s original terminology. There is a material(ist) continuity between the two instances, as Lisa Blackman explains in her *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (Blackman, 2012). I concur with the thesis about the physical continuity between the body and cognition as it is a fundamentally materialist one, and the method based on Karl Marx and François Laruelle I employ here is non-philosophically (as in Laruelle’s non-philosophy or non-standard philosophy) materialist. However, for the purposes of an analysis of subjectivity from a non-humanist perspective—my non-philosophical Laruellian flexion of the post-humanist—I propose here that we will need to absolutize the categories of subjectivity or the signifying automaton. When discussing the participation of the material in the composition of the self, that compound of the signifying automaton that the subject is, and the real or material embeddedness, we will speak of the *non-human* self, or the human-in-human, as Laruelle calls it (1995). Then we will tackle the body and the self in their conceptual distinctness. These categorical abstractions of clear mutual demarcation are needed for a greater level of formalization of the discussion that we seek to undertake here.

Let us resort to a brief history of the concept, which Nina Power presented in *Parrhesia* (Power, 2007, 55–72), which is one of the rare historiographical accounts of the history of the concept. Subjectivity is the product of the linguistic turn in philosophy. It is preceded by Kant, but it comes down to the same. The preceding history of philosophy spoke of the ‘self’ (it referred to an ‘I’ too), and so did the subsequent history of philosophy, except for (post)structuralism and its derivations such as constructivism, deconstruction, culturalism, and theories of identity. Considering that the body has never participated in the structuralist subject (the structuralist term *par excellence*) except via its construction as signification, the formulation ‘subjectivity without physicality’ sounds like a tautology. It is always already without physicality, not much different than the automata in capitalism and patriarchy, it is only now subjectivized. Yet again, there seems to be an irresistible philosophical spontaneity to presuppose a role for the body in it: for poststructuralism, it is the barred instance constitutive of the subject, which does not enter its composition. The (post)structuralist subject is made possible by the constitutive absence of the real either in the form of the Other or as

the physical body (because the body inhabits the position of the real—recall Butler's *Bodies That Matter* [1993], it is the body as such, beyond signification, which is the instance of the real, and the instance of the real we do not think, and we do not think it because it escapes our full control, the subject's full control; matter, materiality escapes it as well, and, therefore, matter is declared irrelevant). These are the usual incorporations of the real—the other and the body. Both forms of absence are compensated by the Imaginary's recreation of the real, via representation (of the body) that plays the role of the Other or the body. Representation or signification substitutes the always already absent real. As a result, it creates the auto-referential reality of the subject or the (post) structuralist self, the self-mirroring reality or speculation—in both Marx's and Irigaray's senses of the expression—as the only possible reality. Such is the self that is nowadays called the subject, the product of the linguistic turn in the Western history of ideas.

Speculation does not mediate the real, it substitutes it, comes instead—here is the metaphysical problem, the logic of the formulas I was referring to previously—and declares it nonexistent because it is inaccessible to thought. Similarly, the bodies in Judith Butler's line of thinking matter as long as they are signified or imagined; without it they do not exist. It is senseless, therefore it is not. In poststructuralism, the real is existent only insofar as it is nonexistent—according to Butler's epistemology—only via its absence. Thus, its presence—the question of whether there is such a thing as “the real”—is relationally determined (by the relation of the sign, of signification by the subject, and so it is subjectively conditioned; as Marx would say, we are looking at things either as an object, from the position of a third person, or as a subject). The problem of inaccessibility of the real as such, in its fullness of presence and ‘truth’, is solved in poststructuralism by its cancellation instead of an account of its mediation (= thought).

Unlike scientific thought, which subjects itself to the vicissitudes of the real to accurately describe its effects, philosophy strives to discipline it and transform its imperfections and meaninglessness into a truth (of it). I am referring to scientific thinking following Marx when he identifies certain flaws of “philosophical sufficiency” in philosophy, i.e., the principle of self-sufficiency, as Laruelle does, and he sees this as a problem which precludes the realism he proposes, which must result in scientific thinking. Laruelle makes a similar proposal. The core of the problem in the poststructuralist proposal is a certain inhibition of thought that comes precisely from the presence and the role of philosophy in it. ‘Truth’ is a higher and essentially philosophical form of reality originally called *to ōn*, or ‘the Being’. As a philosophical category, it compensates for the lack of perfection of the real and, in particular, for the

lack of perfection of the physical (or the material). Poststructuralism knows this, and in a subterfuge gesture circumvents the classical philosophical naivety by declaring the attempt at mediation (of the real) impossible, blinded by metaphysics, proposing instead cancellation of the relevance of the real. François Laruelle calls this gesture a “fuite en avance” (an escape in advance) into fiction, whereby the old metaphysical equation ‘real = fiction’ is reversed, but the equation nonetheless remains (Laruelle, 1989, 231). The non-Euclidian twist in the approach to this question, Laruelle proposes, consists in thought’s positioning radically unilaterally; or nonrelationally, with respect to the real. This procedure of unilateral difference, which is Deleuzian, also called dualysis in Laruelle, is the key thing in the method. The impossible riddle of the real’s inaccessibility to thought is not to be solved—the real as such remains radically barred for the thinking subject. There is foreclosure, but still that does not prevent us from thinking the effects of the real. The proposal is very similar to that of Meillassoux’s critique of correlationism. Nonetheless, the real as an exteriority *vis-à-vis* language and subjectivity *affects* the thinking subject in the form of trauma (or the arche-fossil—you can find other instantiations, and there are many, if you work with Marx especially—trauma, money)—inflicted upon the hybrid we will call the non-human, i.e., the material reality of body, machine, and the automaton of transcendence (i.e., subjectivity).

So the post-human I am proposing here is not very different from that of Donna Haraway, but the categories are radicalized and absolutized and by doing so we arrive at a greater level of formality of the argument, getting rid of the philosophical spontaneity which imports certain theological-mythological automatic presumptions, and the morphology of the human. Even the cyborg as such imports spontaneously without pausing to check this philosophical spontaneity; it smuggles in the morphology of the human, which is limiting the argument of post-humanism. This is of benefit to us as Marxist feminists. But in order for this benefit to be greater and closer to Marx, I am proposing that the non-human and this hybridity should be considered as composed of the material reality of the body and of the machine as also something on the side of materiality. Of course, there is also a part of it which belongs to the level of the automaton and signification. This is why it is important to absolutize the categories of physicality and automation (instead of referring to the mytheme of the cyborg)—for greater precision. So we will operate with the categories of the material reality of the body-machine and the automaton of transcendence inhabiting that materiality, disregarding the question of whether the origin is organic or synthetic.

According to Lacan, the real intervenes only as a symptom or trauma manifested as an interruption in the signifying chain, an intervention of

meaninglessness in the unstoppable chain of production of signification—it is the *tuché* disturbing the *automaton* of the signifying chain.

The automaton—or the subject, that instance completely separated of physicality, but in the context of this philosophical foundation I thus presented—is quite simply language in the psychoanalytic and linguistic sense, and in the sense of the capitalist exchange system of values (or market), as in the patriarchal system of the exchange of women. It is no more and no less language in computing too. So the category of the automaton is instantiated on all these levels—so we should not get super excited about technological development if we think in these categories and if we are invited to reconsider their positioning in their historical development, thereby putting the argument in historical terms. It is more like a language than an intelligence; even in Turing, it is a language—an automaton of signification. So the question is: Does cognition take place only in the form of signification? But that is a different question. The automaton of signification is unstoppable unless intervened upon by the real defined by its exteriority *vis-à-vis* the signifying chain. Subject(-ivity), or the instance of transcendence, is placed on the side of language or the automaton regardless of whether it is seen individually or collectively, centered or decentered. So you see, it does not matter—if you look at the categories in this way, if you look at it as a category, whether individually or collectively, it does not make any difference, this will be a false dualism—and it does not matter whether it is centered or decentered. The politics of input or of assigning value provides the modes of subjectivation of the automaton. So it is a certain temporal instance and an occurrence of instantiation of automation, it does not make any difference to the category as such. In the Capitalocene, all ruling forms of automaton are predicated by that of capital.

As you may have noticed, the automaton of signification in contemporary philosophy—and it is not very different in poststructuralist feminist philosophy—has the same structure as the automaton of capital. In a way, philosophy and capital are equated here in the argument. In the explication of the automaton in computing, Turing compared the computer to a form of labor, a clerk's labor of computing, a worker's estranged tedious labor (Turing, 1950, 433–460). Similarly, in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985b), in the constitution of Western rationality and the fetish of Reason in Western philosophy, Luce Irigaray identifies a similar subject-object dialectics in which the object is spectrality, and the self-sufficient universe of spectral signifier (or value) production, auto-engenderment. Patriarchy and Western philosophical reason are inextricable metaphysical orders of the same—the subject's postulation of the object reduced to senseless materiality.



The automaton is in all these instances a different substantiation of the signifying chain, the auto-production of transcendence, which is also the pleasure principle (the real or the trauma is by definition outside of it). It is the unstoppable production of spectral existence of signs—just like contemporary sexuality, and in particular heterosexuality—which is only now and then reminded of the outside or the real by the intervention of *tuché* in the form of a trauma preceding language, yet affecting it with anxiety (the real as symptom, according to Lacan). The machinic or the physical real, the support or the ‘hardware’ for this hybrid new self—what we decided above to term ‘the non-human’, or that which escapes automation—is the *tuché* to the automaton of subjectivation, and it lives at its heart while being its outsideness. Regardless of whether it is organically or technologically physical, materiality enters the constitution of the self or, for that matter, the plane of technologically founded reality (Fuller, 2007, 11). This ‘self’ is, I argue, following Laruelle and Haraway, non-human or inhuman, and exceeds the narrow limits of subjectivity proper.

Laruelle adheres to the Lacanian basic structure involving the real and the acts of signification only to subject it to a non-Euclidian adjustment of perspective. The real and the signifying automaton constitute a dyad which is not a philosophical dualism; rather, this is the radical dyad Laruelle talks about, as I will briefly explain. The real and the signifying automaton constitute a dyad which nonetheless is not a duality dialectically reconciled through unification. The dyad at issue—insofar as it is radical—is not about the paradoxical acknowledgment of the ‘tragic truth’ of the unsurpassable split, because a reference to a split as the determination in the last instance implies that there should have been an original unity. The celebrated paradox of the constitutive split—which we find in postmodernism and poststructuralism, but I intentionally use postmodernism here—is again about unity, a unity found in embracing the impossibility and arriving at its ‘truth’, i.e., as a ‘meaning’ (a signified) added to or injected into reality, creating the philosophical amphibology of real and thought that result in the concept of Being or truth (Laruelle, 2013, 10–13).

The hybridity of the real, substantiated as both the physical body and the physicality or materiality of the machinic support, and the signifying automaton, substantiated as subjectivity or the self, constitutes a radical dyad. The dyad is radical thanks to the non-relation of the two elements or to their “unilateral relation” (Laruelle, 1989, 93–95). That which escapes signification or transforming the material into a meaning, keeps its materiality as such, and this is being affirmed, and this is why this is not a philosophical dualism that results in some kind of truth that consoles us about reality. Duality as such is radicalized by way of affirming its materiality and status of the real—that which

escapes the automaton—and is neither reduced nor reducible to a unification or unity insofar as philosophical truth. Such duality that relies on the unilateral non-relation of the two components will be called the radical dyad. Dialectical or any other form of conceptual unity, reconciliation of the two through successful or failed unification, is about a transformation of the senseless real into a truth, i.e., into a unity between the real and the truth of it whereby the latter subsumes the former. Such is the founding philosophical gesture. This is why the reproach of Laruelle for generalizing philosophy is false. He is talking about one constitutive component which is really there; this is the founding gesture, and its founding paradigm—the Being—I just presented. And that is the amphibological substitution of the real and the truth. The two are neither a pair nor ‘one divided into two’, but discrete instances of the one in interaction producing a minimal structure, similarly to the digital ‘metaphysics’ of the one and its limit, rather than of the ‘split one’ (of the pair), as Galloway saw it. The digital structure is not that of the one split into two and a pair, but rather a one and its limit and its ‘non’.

The socialist feminist project of the cyborg proposed by Donna Haraway, resonating with other materialist feminist philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti and Shulamith Firestone, implies a dyad of the non-philosophical kind, i.e., one that does not presuppose any unification of the two elements that relies yet again on the material continuity of the radical hybrid. What was initially called “the cyborg” gradually and via the instance of “bestiality” (Haraway, 1985, 65–108) evolved into “the inhuman” (Haraway, 2016, s.p.).

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