

# The Artifact of Non-Humanity: A Materialist Account of the Signifying Automaton and Its Physical Support in a Fantasized Unity

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**ABSTRACT:** The scope of the paper is to present the concept of the radical dyad of the “non-human,” in an attempt to think radical humanity in terms of Marxian materialism, which is the product of approaching Marx’s writings on “the real” and “the physical” by way of François Laruelle’s non-philosophical method. Unlike posthumanism, inspired by critical theory and the method of poststructuralism, the theory of the non-human, as a radical dyad of technology in the generic sense of the word (ranging from the techné of speaking a natural language to AI technology) and the organic understood as physicality, does away with anthropocentrism. Moreover, it does away with any anthropomorphology of thought, that is, it does away with any theorizing or philosophy that is centered on the notion of (human) subjectivity or, to borrow a Laruelian term, any “posture of thought” that is molded according to the structure of subjectivity centered thinking,

**KEY WORDS:** non-philosophy, Marxism, materialism, technology, structuralism, mechatnicity, Laruelian unilateralization

## 1. THE RADICAL DYAD OF AUTOMATION AND PHYSICALITY: A NON-PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION

**T**he scope of this paper is to present the concept of the radical dyad of the “non-human,” an attempt to think radical humanity in terms of Marxian materialism, which is the product of approaching Karl Marx’s writings on “the real” and “the physical” by way of François Laruelle’s

non-philosophical method. We are resorting here to the terms “the physical” and “the real” as the designations that appear in Marx’s texts far more often than “the material,” most probably due to his critique of the materialisms of his time as yet another form of idealism conditioned by their inability to move away from philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Yet again, they do not serve to designate biology or living matter only but also the natural environment, the use value of manufactured objects, and so on, in short, everything physical in the sense of the material. Unlike posthumanism, inspired by critical theory and the method of poststructuralism, the theory of the non-human as a radical dyad of technology in the generic sense of the word (ranging from the *techné* of speaking a natural language to AI technology) and the organic understood as physicality does away with anthropocentrism.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it does away with anthropomorphology of thought, that is, a doing away of any theorizing or philosophy that is centered on the notion of (human) subjectivity or, to borrow a Laruelian term, any “posture of thought” that is molded according to the structure of subjectivity centered thinking (even if the semantics may differ).

Marx also operates with the notion of the real, oftentimes simultaneously with that of the physical. I have approached the concept found in Marx by means of Laruelle’s suspension of the “principle of philosophical sufficiency” (2013: 12, 77, 99ff) that is, by way of exiting the vicious circle of philosophy legitimizing philosophy and in that process positing and recreating the real (as existent, non-existent, relevant, irrelevant, as well as what is real and what an illusion). I have elaborated this proposal at more detail elsewhere (2019), aided by Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralist linguistics, Luce Irigaray’s feminism rid of subjectivity centered discussion and inspired by Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism as well as by John Ó Maoilearca’s reworking of Laruelle’s human-in-human as the non-human.

Laruelle, not unlike Marx, argues that the thought that seeks to transcend the circularity of philosophy needs to submit to the real (2013: 24–31), but in order to do so it must abolish the very possibility of relationality between the two, i.e., between the real and thought. Thus one avoids the error of “amphibology,” of substituting truth for the real and the other way around, arriving at a unity of the two whereby what is real must also be true and vice-versa. The post-philosophical or non-philosophical thought must mime the scientific posture of thought whereby the thought submits to the always already foreclosed real, but this ontological foreclosure does not prevent the thought from seeking to “clone the real” (Laruelle 2013: 51, 179). The real is not a substance, it is an ontological modifier or rather an epistemic category. It is in this sense that it is also “the one.” The unilaterally posited elements of the dyad lead to the latter “mechanically” producing sense, following the model of Saussure’s language (both as *langue* and *langage*). Drawing on Yuk Hui’s distinction between mechanicity and organicity (2019: 22–30), let us

note that under our Laruelle-Marx inspired lens, the two categories are not mutually exclusive in the present elaboration of the radical dyad that is the non-human.

Mechanicity is used here in the sense of *techné*, a craft of device making, of art and artificiality as in artifice-creation. I do not make recourse to it in a sense encumbered with an ontology or metaphysics of mechanistic causality, neither in the Cartesian sense and nor as a notion opposed to and in a mutually excluding relation with the notion of organicity. It refers to the materiality of the practice of signification conceived in the Saussurean sense: a phoneme gains meaning through its distinction (“relation” to) another phoneme, whereas the one serves merely to proffer that material distinction to the other. The choice of a phoneme, according to Saussure, is completely arbitrary. The other phoneme in the binary serves as a negation and as Schelling’s *Hemmung* (hinderance) referred to here as to an analogy rather than a fully adequate definition of the matter in question.

It is also similar to a certain degree to the formative limit discussed in *Grenzsituationen* philosophy, but also to the way the real is treated in some of the more recent strands of philosophy that could be associated with what is vaguely referred to as “speculative realism,” the Ljubljana school of psychoanalysis and feminism drawing on Kant. Namely, Drucilla Cornell (1992), Alenka Zupančič (2000), and myself (2014) have discussed the creative function of the limit as the conditioning real, to name a few authors from contemporary feminist philosophy that dovetail with the argument developed here. The status of finitude in Quentin Meillassoux’s work (2008) and the grounding nihil in Ray Brassier’s philosophy (2007) play a similar role as the conditioning limit and contingency that sets forth the generation of signification or grounds the plane of the transcendental.

Certain material characteristics are required in the Saussurean account of phonetics in order for the process of signification to commence and be maintained. They are contingent upon the phonetic system, e.g., a number of consonants to be divided by a vowel, the function of the “r” as a vowel depending on the phonetic environment, etc. The “relation” of the two phonemes is a non-relation since relationality, philosophically conceived, seems to imply intentionality. The sounds are senseless random audial creations that begin to make sense only after the preconditions of material rules of sound grouping are met and on the basis of a material distinction from another sound or group of sounds. In spite of the fact that Saussure’s minimal structure is a binary, the binarity in question is neither dualism nor duality in any philosophical sense.

It is similar to François Laruelle’s radical dyad, a concept of duality that comes down to unilaterality—the two elements are positioned to one another as the indifferent numb and senseless real is to “thought.” If we accept the thesis that the human is a radical hybrid of physicality on the one hand and language or signification enabling subjectivation on the other hand, the physical insofar as devoid of language plays the role of the real at the heart of said dyad. This found-

ing estrangement is never sublated or transcendent through some philosophical unification but rather affirmed and, thus, the dyad is radicalized.

Thought seeks to relate (to) the real, relay it, inevitably transposing it onto the level of the transcendental, whereby the real remains foreclosed, indifferent. Laruelle's preferred concept here is "thought" instead of "the thinking subject," as it refers to the material reality or the practice of thought that would be unnecessarily antropomorphised by the introduction of the notion of subject. In other words, the intentionality to signify (of one of the phonemes or morphemes) is hampered by the other/opposing phoneme or morpheme and thereby made possible by the very limit or the real of the other sign, be it phoneme or a written trace. The unilateral relation within a binary conceived in structuralist terms and developed along the lines of Laruelle's method of "dualysis," a procedure of unilateralization pertaining to the radical dyad, can be compared but not reduced to Schelling's notion of *Hemmung*, as discussed in Yuk Hui's *Recursivity and Contingency* (2019), that leads the automation of signification (or information) to re-turn, revisit and overcome the hampering, in order to proceed with the circular process of signification (Hui 2019, 24).

Operating with Saussure's notion of sign, I argue, therefore, that the dyad is radical or bereft of the possibility for a "meaningful unification of the two," i.e., it is to be understood in the vein of Laruelle's elaboration of the "radical dyad." This inelegant, coarse reality, physicality-that-doesn't-make-sense precedes and preconditions any artifice of *making sense—any automation of signification*. Thinking in terms of the radical dyad is determined in the last instance by the real's foreclosure, and by way of rendering this realization a transcendental determinant or determination in the last instance of a second order—the only one with which thought can operate—and by thought's vectoriality toward the real, albeit while unilaterally positioned within the dyad.

The radical dyad is radical insofar as it remains a dyad, precluding any sublation, synthesis or unification. Each of its elements, however, operate unilaterally via one another, remaining one faced by a foreclosure and, therefore, acting as the real toward one another. The one of the elements is not the Other to the other element, because the Other proffers meaning and the Subject and the other unify in a truth that surpasses the split, even if this unity is declared to be a paradox. Meaning and making sense can happen only within the automation of making sense. In order to establish the automaton, the material preconditions of the radical dyad ought to be established. It is therefore an artifice, a mechanical design and such is the dyad between the automation (of making sense) or language and the physicality of the body, practice and material experiences of the non-human. The latter refers to the human stripped of its philosophical edification, and, thereby, underdetermined in Laruelian sense (2015: 24, 62; 2012: 30), defined in its last and least humanity.

An operation of this sort exposes the radical dyad humanity is: the artifice of the signifying automaton (thought, and the projection of subjectivity), on the one hand, and the numb and coarse reality of human physicality or animality, on the other hand. As already noted, I have elaborated this thesis at length in my monograph of 2019, where I also establish a homology between this understanding of the notion of the non-human (inspired by Laruelle and corroborated by Marx and Saussure) and Donna Haraway's cyborg.

According to such a postulation of (non-)humanity, and in line with Marx's realism (or materialism) and its orthodox legacy, the non-human remains an artifice, a product of *techné* inside of which a unity enabled by a certain organicity remains impossible. The automation of signification and the automaton of *physis* (nature) inevitably establish a certain instance of organicity respectively, and I am making this argument in line with Yuk Hui's interpretation of organicity as the product of contingency integrating recursivity. The edifice the human is, however, is a philosophical and an idealist creation, in the sense of the equation between philosophy and idealism established by Marx (1969: 421),<sup>3</sup> and later on appropriated and refashioned by Laruelle in particular in *Introduction to non-Marxism* (2014). The radical materialist (or non-Marxist in Laruelle's sense) determination of the dyad affirms the materiality or the "physicality and reality" (in the sense of Marx's original writings) of the dyad itself, of a (binary) unit that is never unified, and of the sense of a "split" or estrangement at the heart of the non-human. To affirm and embrace the materiality, physicality—expressed as "experience" that is somatic—of that founding estrangement entails the affirmation of the "real abstraction" alienation is, both socially and on the level of subject formation.

I argue that a Marx-inspired materialism necessitates the affirmation of the reality of that originary estrangement of the non-human. I also argue that philosophy has always been in an obsessive search to cover up the traces of the embarrassing coarse reality of the radical dyad the non-human is. The embarrassment at issue engenders the philosophical reflex toward elevation into a unity that surpasses the dyad, toward transformation of the human into an idea, and thereof toward doing away with it all together and its embarrassing remnants of animality or physicality uninhabited by thought. I argue that this obsession of philosophy underpins its entire history and culminates in the worldview of modernity and, by consequence, in the capitalist reason itself. Philosophy in its post-enlightenment form and the political-economy of capitalism are two sides of the same coin the world (as we know it) is. In other words, we must address the metaphysics of capitalism if we want to address its political economy, which, in turn, is the prerequisite of tackling the problem of climate crisis that includes the threat to the survival of the life on the planet, folding in (non-) humanity, the animals, and other forms of life.

## 2. DOING AWAY WITH “HUMAN” AND “NATURE” AS PHILOSOPHEMES IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT RADICAL HUMANITY, ANIMALITY, THE PHYSICAL, AND A MATERIALIST ACCOUNT OF INTELLIGENCE AND SIGNIFICATION

If one seeks to circumvent the ultimately humanist dream of trans-humanism, one needs to epistemologically reposition assuming what Marx would call the “third party’s view” (Marx, 1959).<sup>4</sup> The paragraphs that follow will attempt to elaborate the perspective of the third person Marx argues for. The perspective of a “third party”, is objective insofar as it mimes the position of the surrounding objects including the human subject’s externalized actions as objective realities, objectivities or objects if you will. It is not a positivist stance regarding objectivity because the human “species-being” (Marx 1959: s.p.)<sup>5</sup> is entangled in the “sensuous and the physical”, argues Marx (1959: s.p.),<sup>6</sup> whereas social relations are “real abstractions,” to quote the Marxist epistemologist Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1978: 13–35). Therefore, an absolutely autonomous self, detached from its own and the surrounding materiality (the world, social relations and nature) ascending to a mind of pure science governed by “objective truths,” from a Marxist point of view (or Marx’s point of view) is impossible.

The phantasm of positivism is such that it is automatically precluded, rendered impossible from the viewpoint of any Marxian epistemology. Marx’s “third party’s view” based objectivity requires that the thinking subject treats itself as an object as well, to assume an imagined third party’s posture of thought. And the Marxist subject of scientific thought assumes a materialist view of its object, including oneself as an object of study. Therefore, the presumed third party is material, physical, imperfect, its “view” is not that of a god’s perspective, be it the scientific human god of positivism or god in the theological sense. The third party’s perspective is situated beyond the subject/object binary. By way of postulating subjectivity as an object among objects, Marx does not erase subjectivity, does not discard it as the agency carrying out the activity or thought. Instead, he suggests that the subject mimes the structure and the status of exteriority of the object than the other way around. It is precisely the subject-centered thought that defines philosophy and precludes it from becoming a truly materialist science. That is why Hegel’s dialectics structurally fails, according to Marx’s *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General*:

Whenever real, corporeal human beings, humans with their feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, posits their real, objective essential powers as alien objects by their externalisation, it is not the act of positing which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of objective essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something objective. An objective being acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being. He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects—because

at bottom he is nature. In the act of positing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of “pure activity” into a creating of the object; on the contrary, his objective product only confirms his objective activity, his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being. (Marx 1959: 114)

Or put differently: 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 1968: s.p.)<sup>7</sup> It is for the same structural reasons that Marx rejects Feurebach’s materialism: its subjectivity centered thought betrays both idealism and philosophy and is, therefore, far from furnishing the exit from philosophy Marx’s scientific project seeks to achieve. Consider the following quote from *German Ideology*:

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never quitted the realm of philosophy. Far from examining its general philosophical premises, the whole body of its inquiries has actually sprung from the soil of a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel. Not only in their answers but in their very questions there was a mystification. (Marx 1968: s.p.)

“Nature” is the same abstraction as “anthropos” that needs to be unraveled by arriving at its material or “concrete components” (Marx 1973: 41), only to yield the abstractions that define and explain it by way of being concepts, notions, produced as if by a third party. We will have to resort to Laruelle’s method of disassembling a conceptual unity—the “abstractions” that Marx problematizes—or a notion that is the product of the principle of philosophical sufficiency, such as “nature,” in order to arrive at the concrete or rather—at the “transcendental material,” constituting a *chôra* (a disorganized *topos*)—undergirded by the real (Laruelle, Marx) or the physical (Marx). By depleting Nature of the enlightenment and modern philosophy from the binding conditions of the *principle of philosophical sufficiency*, as per Laruelle, and, as a consequence, from its classical binaries such as nature/culture-or-technology, body/mind, animal/human, we might be able to arrive at the “concrete” and the determinations in the last instance that are of the physical insofar as the real.

By way of employing Laruelle’s method of unilateralisation, i.e., fashioning a concept (product of thought) that succumbs to the real and merely “clones” it or mimes it, we may be able to arrive at a determination in the last instance of the notion of “nature.” Conceiving nature in the manner of Aristotelian miming, Laruellian cloning or Wittgenstein’s Maßstab producing, translated as “scale applied to reality” (Wittgenstein 1922: 2.1512), we arrive at a concept that is not far from the one that natural sciences operate with—it is, in the last instance, *the organic* that can be defined in compatible ways by evolutionary biology, chemistry, neurosciences to name a few. In rare examples, we find nature underpinned by or reducible to the organic such as in Schelling and other philosophers as interpreted

by Yuk Hui in his *Recursivity and Contingency* but also in some critical theorists and contemporaries like Donna Haraway.

The determination of the last instance is a “clone” of the real, in line with the vocabulary and the method elaborated by Laruelle in his *Introduction to Non-Marxism* (as explained and referenced above), and that real should not be an abstraction in the philosophical sense, an all-unifying generalization endowed with a telos in the sense of *causa finalis*. It is for that reason that we refer to nature as the organic because it clones the most radical (i.e., of the last instance) concept, embedded in philosophical *chôra* unilaterally related to the real of *physis*—the external reality that sustains itself in life and systemic co-organization independently from human intervention.

The organic is enabled by recursion that integrates contingency and, as a consequence, retroactively assigns “meaning” or purpose and function to the accident—the Aristotelian *tuché*—integrating it in its auto-regulating system. This reading of how the organic operates is proffered by Yuk Hui in his *Recursivity and Contingency* (2019), revealing the fact that, “ontologically” speaking, nature (*physis*) or the organic and technology insofar as automaton rather than *mēkhanē* both rely on the principle of recursivity and its folding in of contingency. I have put inverted commas around ontological, because, by subscribing to Laruelle’s project of non-standard philosophy (also called non-philosophy), I am also subscribing to the thesis that the notion of τὸ ὄν (τὸ ὄν) or the Being is the cornerstone of the problem of the *principle of philosophical sufficiency*: it is the amphibology of thought and the real par excellence, the grounding principle of any philosophical truth that is supposed to be not only transcendental but also immanent, and therefore, it has to be not only an act of cognition but also an act of a creation of reality, the kind of thought that renders the real more real than the mere real bereft of meaning, signification, purpose.

Science describes and explains the world around and within us. Philosophy, however, produces *truth*—a form of reality superior to the numb, meaningless real that is a simple “out-there.” Truth is the amphibology of thought and the real and its concept of origin is precisely “the Being” or τὸ ὄν (τὸ ὄν). Considering Hui operates with concepts that originate in science, applies them on “philosophical material” by way of describing very concrete processes in order to infer an abstraction that can be considered a quasi-ontological principle—but not necessarily ontological and not necessarily the only explicatory principle—I would be inclined to use the term “ontological” only tentatively or non-philosophically. The movement from the concrete to the abstract can be ascribed to Marx—his analysis of the capital—as well as to Saussure and his structuralist linguistics, which, in turn, enables the identification of the determination of the last instance (Laruelle 2013: 25, 26, 25, 30) or a radical concept (Kolozova 2009).



If Hui, following Shelling, is correct, then we can conclude that, in terms of a physicalist or materialist analysis, the organic in the sense of nature and artificial automation are underpinned by the same organizational or structural principle. Not to fall prey to the philosophical temptation to identify an immanent link between technology and the organic, between “nature” and “culture,” let us reaffirm the thesis presented at the beginning: the dyad remains radical because of the real’s foreclosure, and, therefore, thought performs unilaterality always already and unavoidably. If so, a certain *techné* of signifying that is materially carried out and is mechanical prior to becoming organic—producing sounds in a natural language, producing tools that extend the bodily possibilities, crafting “real abstractions” (Sohn-Rethel) that are the social relations—is required.

Nature itself, prior to building the organic processes of recursivity Hui discusses, undergoes rather mechanical material processes in order to arrive at the structure that can be explained chemically as a formation of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and sulfur (CHNOPS). Tedious materiality and mechanical nature of these processes are something always already intersected by the principle of recursion that re-integrates contingency, chance and error into a system that renders it functional, assigns its “purpose.” This thesis echoes Marx’s interpretation of the role of *clinamen* or chance in Epicurus materialist account of atomism. Consider the following quote from his doctoral thesis:

Once again Epicurus stands directly opposed to Democritus. Chance, for him, is a reality which has only the value of possibility. Abstract possibility, however, is the direct antipode of real possibility. The latter is restricted within sharp boundaries, as is the intellect; the former is unbounded, as is the imagination. Real possibility seeks to explain the necessity and reality of its object; abstract possibility is not interested in the object which is explained, but in the subject which does the explaining. The object need only be possible, conceivable. That which is abstractly possible, which can be conceived, constitutes no obstacle to the thinking subject, no limit, no stumbling-block. (Marx 1975: 44)

Contingency is the opposite of purpose, necessity, law, regularity or simply of “making sense.” Recursivity as a principle appears precisely in order to create sense out of the nonsense of irregularity. It deals with the object and its positionality within the objective realm, the organic resorts to recursion and creation of purpose out of the senseless in order to sustain itself in life. Similarly, the artificial signifying chain rests on the principle of recursivity for the purposes of sustaining the automaton of signification. As Yuk Hui points out, the purpose is circular and there is no *telos* other than that of the organism sustaining itself, my paraphrase, or in his own words:

The natural end is something that cannot be observed objectively. We can see such and such a tree or such and such an animal, but we cannot grasp nature as a whole through mechanical rules. Reason can only understand the natural end through reflective judgment, meaning that it recursively arrives at a self-organizing being. Teleological thinking is in this sense circular:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow A'$  (Hui 2019: 41)

The coarse action that is at first mechanical provides the foundation and the occasion for recursion. Let us note that in his doctorate as well as in his later writings Marx points to subjectivity's role of being the organizing principle of thought as the main source of idealism, philosophical circularity or what Laruelle calls "the principle of philosophical sufficiency." If recursion functions as sublation of some sort, it is still very different from any idealism or idealist *telos* and a synthesis created along the lines of any teleology. The material error necessitates a material action that is possible only due to an abstracted "form" or principle of structuring.

Once again, let us compare it to Saussure's discussion of the concrete and the ideal phoneme, in order to recognize the materialist principle underlying the "real abstraction" of language:

For the first time we have broken away from abstraction. Now for the first time we have found the concrete, irreducible units that occupy a place and correspond to a bent in the spoken chain: p was nothing except an abstract unit linking the common characters of p> and p<, the only units that actually exist. In the same way, the still higher abstraction of "labiality" links together P, M and B. We may speak of P as if it were a zoological species; there are male and female representatives of the species, but there is no ideal specimen. Before, we had been singling out and classifying the abstractions; but we had to go beyond the abstract to reach the concrete. Phonology made a great mistake in considering abstractions real units without examining more carefully the definition of the unit. (Saussure 1959: 53)

Just as Marx demonstrates in *Capital* that value as abstraction is determined in the last instance by matter or "physicality" (estranged through wage labor), so does Saussure prove that the ideal (and scientific) concept of a phoneme is an abstracted notion determined and made possible by the "aberrations" of the imperfect, "concrete" and physical realities of phonemes. The signifying automata of value-exchange or of natural languages are materially determined.

The transcendental, if understood as product of language or the human signifying automaton, is therefore fashioned thanks to material operations. That, however, does not imply that a new level of reality has not been created, one that ought to be viewed as radically severed from or unilateral vis-à-vis the real (insofar as pre-signified). Let us recall Laruelle's critique of the principle of philosophical sufficiency: in order to escape the vicious cycle of philosophy's self-mirroring,

one assumes a posture of thought that avows the real's radical indifference to the signifying process as it is in no way involved in it, due to the radical foreclosure of the real.

Philosophically put, the immanent is always pre-conceptual and it can participate in the signifying process as its enabling material support, thus establishing a unilateral continuity with the transcendental. Yet again, it remains radically uninvolved in the signifying process, in sharp discontinuity with the transcendental. This radical estrangement at the heart of the continuity is what determines the human insofar as the grounds of its subjectivisation or individuation are concerned. It can be signified, mediated by the transcendental but it cannot be transposed or transformed into the signifying chain and its effects, a unification of the two culminating into a transcendental synthesis is impossible. It is yet another instance of the real that remains radically foreclosed insofar as it is that thing which always already precedes signification (the material the transcendental is made of). The "cyborg" (in Donna Haraway's sense) humanity remains a radical dyad whereas the recursion of the signifying automaton concerns its own continuous perfection insofar as a unilateral instance.

Nature, when viewed through originally non-philosophical categories such as "physicality" outside the determining limits of philosophy as in Marx, or recursivity as in the case of Yuk Hui's reading of German idealism and, finally, Laruelle's disentanglement of the notion from any spontaneous philosophical humanism thanks to the operations of unilaterization and superposition in *En dernière humanité* (2015), is not opposed to "culture" or "technology." Such opposition is impertinent and the binary is false. In the epistemic approach I have presented here, the only binary we can operate with is that of the radical dyad of the physical (including the organic) and the signifying automaton.

### 3. CONCLUSION ABOUT THE FALSE OPPOSITION AND THE EMERGENCY OF PRESERVING NATURE

To present "nature" (or physicality) as something opposed to technology, ontologically inferior to mind, "reason" or "the Spirit," is to act in a "philosophically spontaneous way," as Laruelle would put it (2013: 29, 31, 70, 85, 126). To adhere to the pretension to excarnate "reason" or "intelligence" from the physical or nature in a way that undervalues materiality is to naively put animality, the physical or the material on the side of the non-intelligent and to overstate intelligence as a self-sufficient form of reality in no need of material basis. It betrays a symptom of the "principle of sufficient philosophy" in a way that is always already non-materialist or perhaps anti-materialist. To operate with notions such as "Reason" as well as "Nature," is to remain entrapped in philosophical givens that are, to paraphrase Marx, abstractions insofar as generalities or *Allgemeinheiten* (1973:

41, 95, 106). Such abstractions are in fact, argues Marx, generalisations in the sense of philosophical unities or *ensemblismes* as termed and problematised by Laruelle (2018: 43, 51) that have not been determined by their concrete and material elements (Marx 1973: 41, 95).

In order to arrive at an abstraction that is underpinned by its concrete, physical or material determinants, one needs to subject the elements of such generalisation to an examination that produces abstractions of the constituting particularities and retroactively or recursively constitute a materially grounded abstraction (Marx, 1973: 41). For example, “capital” is but a generalisation unless recursively reconstituted as an abstraction derived from the abstractions of concrete determinants such as “wage labour,” “money,” “value,” etc. (Marx 1973: 41). This circular move from the abstract to the concrete in order to arrive back at the abstract that is determined in the last instance by the concrete establishes a perfect homology with Saussure’s method, as I attempted to present it above. “Reason” and “nature,” as philosophical givens, are of no use to the sciences and in particular those that comprise the field of cognitive science (with the exception of philosophy that is part of it), unless reduced to notions susceptible to the scrutiny of cognitive psychology (Clore 2011: 325–38), evolutionary biology or computability and, thus, intelligence as “utility” (Russell 2019: 16–17, 20–27). Consider the following remark by psychologist Gerald L. Clore:

“Rationality” is not a concept in current use in psychology. Psychologists find the term ambiguous in its meaning and value-laden. In common usage, being “rational” is assumed to be good, whereas being “irrational” or “emotional” is assumed to be bad and to lead to error. Psychological science, however, is primarily interested in understanding rather than in passing judgment on kinds of thought processes. (Clore 2011: 325)

The discussions in terms of such classical philosophical oppositions remain an anachronistic academic decorum to the pertinent techno-scientific debates. This oftentimes unintentional atavism is unavoidable due to the fact that the epistemes of said philosophical disputes are subjectivity-centered, in the sense problematized by Marx, as I presented at the beginning of this paper. Subjectivity as the organizing principle of thought is the cornerstone of all philosophical reasons, which both Marx and Laruelle find impeding to any true materialism or realism, proposing the solution of the (non-positivist) objectivism of “the third party view” and breaking with “the principle of philosophical sufficiency” respectively. The classical philosophical opposition between the categories at issue is in its essence anthropocentric.

Let us take a detour from the epistemic backdrop I adhere to in my argumentation, and resort once again to Yuk Hui’s philosophical argument that not only bridges the divide between philosophy and science but also manages to extrapolate

an onto-epistemological foundation from science and technology and juxtapose it to philosophy.

Nature is recursive; in it one can find reciprocity between parts and the whole. However, recursivity is not only a natural phenomenon; it is also a technical thinking, or what Douglas Hofstadter calls a “strange loop.” With recursivity, algorithms are able to domesticate different forms of contingency in order to render them useful. The relation between technics and contingency must be analyzed materially and historically; these relations reflect dominant scientific epistemologies (Hui 2019: 236)

Hui’s discussion begins with philosophy, gradually knitting his argument with insights from technology and natural sciences in order to arrive at the conclusion that not only is the opposition between nature and technology untenable (Hui 2019: 269), but also that the “search for the separation between thinking and organic life” is in fact a “negative organology, or an extreme humanism” untenable (Hui 2019: 269). Consider the following passage:

What we are witnessing today, since the advent of cybernetics, is the development of an inorganic organicity stretching through every smart device and multiple levels of systemic organization. They cease to be the merely organized inorganic but rather are becoming the organizing inorganic, which functions recursively to produce its own structures and patterns. Recursivity is a thinking that enters into all orders of magnitude—for example, synthetic biology. Recursive algorithms are employed to conceptualize the reproduction of DNA-RNA-protein. Or as a researcher in synthetic biology has put it, after having referred to Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*: “Synthetic biologists aim to enhance and transgress nature by using nature’s self-organization principles, in short: transgressing nature by harnessing nature! They conceptualize nature as a kind of technology or, more specifically: as a universal engineer.” (Hui 2019: 236)

Materialism transforms all subject of examination into a postulated object, including subjectivity itself. Let us recall the operations of the “third party perspective” promulgated by Marx as I elaborated at the beginning of the present article. They enable us to treat “humanity”—or non-humanity, i.e., its non-philosophical rendering—as an object among objects, and its materialist treatment enables a thought that does not dispense with humanity simply because it has been axiologically “surpassed.” There is no linear telos, and the organic telos works recursively, as argued by Yuk Hui. Therefore, automated technology can only recursively revert to the physical in order to maintain the circular telos of humanity seen in the non-humanist sense, as postulated in the present article. The more technological the more recursion to the physical contingency transformed into a “necessity” or simply put in use as per a materialist conception of the process.

Only romantic humanism can yield a techno-nihilism as it is but a glance from a *Grenzsituation* humanist position of thought. The fact that the “infinite” technological expansion is seen as something presupposing the transcendence of humanity can be a product of humanist subjectivity centered ontology. A materialist non-anthropocentric view is not immersed into musings as to whether humanity would or would not be surpassed as nature is being surpassed and “perfected” by automated reason. Material underpinnings of reason—which is always already automated, beginning with natural languages—intimate a false opposition, as argued above, as well as a false hierarchy and an erroneous judgment about the obsolescence of “nature” (or physicality and the organic). Phantasms of desired extinction, the suicidal drive of contemporary post-continental philosophy, betray a romanticism of 19th century philosophical existentialism. These traps are unavoidable unless subjectivity centered reason as the organizing principle of philosophy is abandoned. Moreover, the principle of philosophical sufficiency that produces the amphibology of thought and the real needs to be abandoned if we are to arrive at a scientific practice of philosophy. These concluding passages are not intended as refutation of any particular philosopher or philosophy but are instead meant as a dialogue with a range of ideas that can be found in different strands of posthumanism, transhumanism, theories of singularity, rationalisms of different and contemporary sorts as well as scattered notions that could be identified in scientific, artistic, and political conversations of our time.

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## NOTES

1. This problem is discussed in his *Theses on Feuerbach, The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General, German Ideology* and elsewhere. Cf. Marx 1969: 421 and *passim*.
2. Such “theory” is hardly one of a legacy—or, to my best knowledge, of any adherents—but rather a project I have developed more thoroughly elsewhere, building not only on Laruelle and Marx but also on Ferdinand de Saussure, Luce Irigaray, Donna Haraway, John Ó Maoilearca to mention the most prominent influences. It is a non-philosophical (in Laruelian sense) experiment with philosophical material, complemented with linguistics and “material” from cognitive sciences; cf. Kolozova 2019).
3. Marx 1969: 421: “The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as a sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active

- side was developed abstractly by idealism—which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.”
4. Marx 1959, s.p., chapter titled “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General”: “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.”
  5. Marx 1959, chapters “Theses on Feuerbach” and “Private Property and Communism,” and *passim* in his entire opus.
  6. Marx 1969, s.p.
  7. Karl Marx 1968, s.p., Part I: “Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook.”

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