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### The Real and Nature: A Heretical Nature contra Philosophy's Nature

Philosophy is always at war with nature and nature respects no philosopher. But the nature, or "Nature" with the capital-N, that philosophy is at war with is a golem, or, in reality, a kind of negative-golem. For if the golem is an anthropomorphic being, created out of the mud and animated through quasi-religious magic, philosophy's golem is an anti-anthropomorphic being that is set loose tearing apart humanity bit by bit through the processes of decay and decomposition. This is the vision of nature we are presented by philosophers: either it is a transcendent quasi-divinity, which is beautifully teeming with life, or it is its corollary, a place where nothing is respected and only the order of death reigns. The nuances do matter, but in the end it is always the same: nature is something to be at war with. This with in "at war with" is ambiguous. It may mean that the philosopher, like a Deleuze, goes to war alongside of nature to struggle against the sad passions engendered by individual death. Or it may mean that one goes to war against nature, like a Badiou, in order to raise above any whole the grandeur of the Idea.

The creation of a subject, ultimately that is what philosophy's nature is, a subject to the rules of philosophy,

to the syntax of philosophy, that is then is then taken to be the grounding of those same rules and syntax. A non-anthropomorphic golem, a golem taken to have nothing to do with humanity except that humanity, like all bodies, will be devoured by it. Let us try a different strategy, one that refuses the philosophical construction of nature and instead looks to a nature that is radically immanent in-person. This notion comes, of course, from the non-philosophy of François Laruelle. The notion of thinking from radical immanence is an equivalent term to the Real. This Real, this radical immanence, is always unilaterally related to the process of creating a subject. While some have confused Laruelle's non-philosophy as an intense valorization of the de-humanizing powers of science, Laruelle's non-philosophy does not denigrate subjects, it only claims to understand them as not absolute. This de-absolutization of the subject is related to a scientific *posture*, but is not a scientism that grabs at empirical evidence and expands their significance. Instead it raises the subject into the grandeur that is the equality of all things before the Real. But this Real isn't a transcendent One, but the One that is radically immanent in what is lived. Not, to be clear, in what is within life, or what is living, but in the concrete actuality of the lived. This radical

immanence, then, is the lived reality of what it means to be prior to all subjective processes. And trying to think from that is much more difficult than to think only from the realm of the subject.

In this essay I give a brief argument for a theory of nature that is heretical.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of philosophy's amphibology of nature as creative plenitude or the kingdom of death. It is heretical because it makes the claim that we can understand this amphibology as a process of creating a subject and as such open to radical revision, to a radical fabulation or philo-fiction. The non-philosopher is not at war with nature and she is unconcerned with the pettiness of whether or not nature "respects" her. So it is heretical because it refuses the conditions of war which philosophy labours under and it refuses them on the basis of a *gnosis*, a knowledge of those conditions. One of those conditions of war is the division of labour that philosophy has set between philosophy and science.

Consider the way that perhaps the most brilliant philosopher of science there has been, Edmund Husserl, has radicalized that separation. Husserl is not often thought of as a philosopher of science, but in developing his phenomenology he takes pains to create a truly interesting relationship between science and philosophy. Rather than simply providing a theory of science, he radicalizes the method of his philosophy incorporating a certain scientific attitude within his critique of science. It should be clear that, within the realms of philosophy, Husserl was practicing a guerilla war against the sciences, by using the resources of science against it in the name of philosophy. Husserl rejected a certain philosophy of science that

he saw at work in European human society. This he called the positivistic reduction of science, where science merely provided facts. This limiting of the meaning of science to the "factual sciences," or rather simply to those aspects of the sciences that are concerned with uncovering facts, is what is of concern for Husserl. His engagement with science, then, "concerns not the scientific character of the sciences but rather what they, or what science in general, had meant and could mean for human existence." (Husserl 1970, 5) The crisis of the sciences, then, is actually a crisis of human existence.

Husserl's claim is that the life-world is "dressed up" in the notions of mathematics which are absolutized, and though this leads to discoveries Husserl considers important, these notions ultimately confuse "true being [for] what is actually a method." (ibid., 51) What science requires, because science is in crisis, according to Husserl, is a philosophy that remembers the life-world, which is its "meaning-fundament." (ibid., 50) That is to say that the natural sciences remain naïve without any kind of fundamental inquiry into the very life of things, a transcendental subjectivity. How he gets to that transcendental subjectivity, however, is what is ingenious in Husserl. Notice that he accuses science divorced from the life-world as being naïve. (ibid., 59) Yet, the solution to that naivety is to plunge into it intentionally, whereas before one simply acted in it. This may become clearer if one considers this in light of Plato's familiar cave myth. There we have the prisoners, chained to a wall since birth and made to watch shadows of people, animals, and the like, dance on the wall of the cave. This is their only frame of reference so that they take, completely naturally, these shadows as truth. When one of the prisoners escapes,

whether through accident or intention, and emerges into the “real world,” he begins to see things as they really are or, at least, as *more* real than they are in the cave. Husserl, though, sees no reason to leave the cave. In fact, we have every reason to question the notion that outside the cave is the “real world.” What is outside the cave is just the world beyond the cave, the cave itself is part of the real world, as are the materials in the cave that hold the prisoners to the wall and the materials for projecting the shadows upon the wall. No, what the usual telling of Plato’s myth serves to do is provide a cover for a more insidious cave.

Husserl’s radical step is to perform an epochē, what is also called the reduction or bracketing, on what appears: “What is required, then, is a *total* transformation of attitude, a *completely unique, universal epochē*.” (ibid., 148) Where we stand, then, in this transcendental epochē is above the world, above the validity of the pregivenness of the world. (ibid., 150) This transcendental stance is above the flux of the world, above the subjective-individual consciousness and intersubjectiveconsciousness, it is in some sense grounded in a kind of cosmic dirt taken as separate from the world. This “unnatural attitude,” transcendental to the world, bestows on the philosopher a position above worldly interest. (cf. ibid., 175) The epochē is but a deepening of the scientific approach to thinking. The description of the philosopher who has undergone this transcendental epochē is not far off from the description of the scientist unconcerned with the consequences of his actions for the rest of humanity: he simply wants to know. Think of the scientists involved in the Manhattan project, who did not know what the effect of the atomic bomb would be, but who went out to the

desert, put on their goggles and detonated it to find out. They did this knowing that one possible scenario would be the complete destruction of the atmosphere, meaning the complete annihilation of all life on earth. This allows us to trace philosophy’s self-constructed division of labour with regard to science. In that regard it is telling that Husserl’s discussion of transcendental subjectivity, a life that runs through things, has nothing to do with the way that science thinks life. Because for Husserl the notion of being “scientific” is the equivalent of taking the red pill, falling into a second matrix, but falling deeper into illusion for thinking you have escaped it: “Thus nowhere is the temptation so great to slide into logical aporetics and disputation, priding oneself on one’s scientific discipline, while the actual substratum of the work, the phenomena themselves, is forever lost from view.” (ibid., 120)

Laruelle offers a radically different understanding of the relationship between philosophy and science. Rocco Gangle deftly captures the power of Laruelle’s non-philosophy when he writes, “François Laruelle’s non-philosophy marks a bold attempt to think the One, or Real outside of any correlation with Being and without reference to transcendence. It is an arduous and painstaking theoretical enterprise that must skirt the twin dangers of positivism on the one hand and false transcendentalism on the other.” (Gangle 2010, vi) In other words, Laruelle must navigate both scientism, or the erstwhile philosophical projection of science, and philosophy that takes itself as the guardian of thought - philosophy that takes itself as that which provides thought for science. This leads Laruelle to practice various “unified theories” where philosophy is introduced to other practices of thought. The goal in these dual introductions is not

to overdetermine the unphilosophical material (science, religion, etc.) with philosophy, but to challenge philosophy through the introduction and to treat both as simple material for thought.

In this way Laruelle radicalizes Husserl's guerilla war on science, for science is both treated as material and is materially a *posture* that thought takes in defense of the radical immanence of the human. The second aspect is the immanent aspect of science, in so far as it thinks from the Real rather than attempting to circumscribe and affect the Real.<sup>2</sup> The first part, however, has special status in this essay as it deals with the particular ideas and concepts operative in particular sciences and their relationship to non-philosophy. The goal of non-philosophy's thinking of the Real is always to free thought from the boundaries placed on it by specular forms of thought by, perhaps counter-intuitively, locating the radical autonomy of the Real from thought. With this in mind alongside the understanding of the generic identity of science as posture, we can see that not every science provides particular and specific forms of thought for freeing a non-standard philosophy, a wild thought (which is artificial as it is natural). Laruelle himself asks the question, "But is every science able to be utilized for this ultra-critical liberation of philosophy?" and answers, with obvious reference to Badiou, "Not every science is liberating for conceptual thought, for example set-theoretical mathematics seems to be by nature rather authoritarian, closed, and reinforces the sufficiency of philosophy, which then dreams of fiction only at its margins, a little bit like Plato." (Laruelle 2010, 490) The reference here to fiction is, again, a reference to the freeing of thought as practice in a philo-fiction, but what is important, again, is

that Laruelle is able to recognize the need for an organon of selection with regard to scientific material that is, in the light of the Real, equivalent to all material.

In Laruelle's latest book, *Philosophie non-standard*, the material that Laruelle thinks with philosophy, like two waves that come together to form a genuinely new wave that is not a synthesis of the two waves but is produced by them, is quantum mechanics. According to Laruelle quantum mechanics provides a true liberation for conceptual thought because, while remaining in the scientific posture that has a privileged relationship to the Real, it also "Weakens and disempowers philosophical sufficiency in order to free its power of invention [*pouvoir d'invention*]." (ibid.) One of the reasons that Laruelle is critical of Badiou's use of set-theory is because it replaces the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy with a Principle of Sufficient Mathematics. Instead of freeing thought, Badiou casts a metaphilosophy where philosophy may not be able to produce truths, but it alone thinks them across the multiple terrains of knowledge. Or, while Badiou argues that we must not suture philosophy to any particular truth-procedure, he nevertheless sutures Being to mathematics as revealing the Real of Being and thereby sutures the Real yet again to Being. The generic science that non-standard philosophy aims to be requires scientific material that under-determines philosophy, again in the manner already discussed.

So does scientific ecology meet this test or is it already too philosophical? Does it have its own Principle of Sufficient Eco-logic? It would seem that political ecology does provide this authoritarian, closed, reinforcing of

a kind of philosophical sufficiency. Often times in popular discourse this is the role that political ecology takes in the minds of some self-styled ecological philosophers and theologians, similar to Latour's understanding of capital-S Science that is mistakenly taken to provide the objective end to deliberation. It is this element of political ecology that Žižek, despite his underlying ignorance of scientific ecology, has rightly challenged in a number of his popular contrarian pieces and I suspect that Laruelle too is distrustful of political ecology. That said, Laruelle has never, to my knowledge, written deeply about ecology in his published books and the few places he does mention ecology it is also ambiguous as to his true view.

Nevertheless, let us consider the only sustained discussion of ecology I know of in Laruelle's work, which comes to us not as one of his published pieces but as one of the occasional "Non-Philosophical Letters" that he has posted on the website for the Organization Non-Philosophique Internationale entitled "L'impossible foundation d'une écologie de l'océan." The letter, published on May 7<sup>th</sup> of 2008, performs a thought experiment taking the common metaphor of philosophy as a dangerous sea and the philosopher as he who navigates that sea or the fisherman who fishes from it (found in Leibniz, Kant, and Nietzsche most famously, but most recently in Deleuze's book on Foucault) as its starting point. There is of course an obvious problem with this metaphor for the non-philosopher since the philosopher takes himself to be above the dangerous ocean, suggesting that there is a kind of foundation for an ecology separated from that ocean itself. In contradistinction the non-philosopher takes herself to be the boat: "Her posture (if we can put it this way) is that of a boat, and so her being-in-the-water can no longer be

a being-in-the-world." (Laruelle 2008) This will bear on his final remarks on the impossibility of the philosophical foundation in a rigorously immanent ecology of the ocean, but there is a less obvious problem and one that connects directly to his idempotence of philosophy and quantum mechanics in *Philosophie non-standard*.

Philosophy, Laruelle says, thinks in the posture of an element. It privileges thinking then from the dirt (called earth usually) or sometimes as fire, and this is reflected in its "corpuscular" posture tied to old forms of physics. Non-standard philosophy thinks according to the undulatory character of the waves and so the sea (rather than simply water) becomes an interesting metaphor-element to think from, though it should be noted that soil has a certain "wave like" quality as well. Instead of being tied to a corpuscular earth, secure in our foundations, or burning ourselves up in a divine fire, the non-philosopher sets out with wild abandon on the sea. This wild abandon renounces any claim to foundation, to the idea that the philosopher owns some bit of the earth, but instead that they are in-the-water without property rights, without ideational security: "It is against 'foundation' and other similar notions as transcendent idols against which we oppose the immanence of energy or the energy of immanence." (ibid.)

This then is where Laruelle's seeming distrust of ecology stems from; does it as a science engage in the same kind of philosophical idol-making as those philosophers who tie themselves to a secure foundation? Laruelle ends the article by calling for a "human ecology," a remark that might seem to parallel Pope Benedict XVI's nefarious

call to focus on human ecology after which the environment will benefit. This, however, is not the meaning behind Laruelle's use of the phrase "human ecology." Rather it speaks to a more rigorously immanent understanding of ecology that is called forth, but not developed, by Laruelle. To understand this better consider the final remarks of the essay. Laruelle first begins with his survey of the "situation of ecology:" "Ecology's situation is as always theoretically divided between philosophies that metaphorize *physis*, theologize it as a transcendent entity of 'Nature' [*la nature*], and the physico-chemical sciences, free in themselves, which inevitably break it up. Between all of them there are the juridico-political ideologies of the 'ecologists.'" (ibid.)<sup>3</sup> While Laruelle does not demonstrate a particularly strong understanding of the specifics of scientific ecology, this does suggest that he nevertheless accurately understands how ecology functions in philosophy, theology, and as distributed amongst a number of other scientific disciplines.

Laruelle suggests that a more unified form of ecology could be brought about by way of non-philosophy's "last instance:" "A human ecology in-the-last-instance will be theoretically more rigorous. As the man of the Last Instance is never a foundation, he must renounce or give up every 'earthly' or 'land-owning' foundation of an ecology of the ocean and start thinking the sea not as such but from itself, *according to the sea which is also human in the way which the human is every Last Instance*" (ibid.)<sup>4</sup> The meaning of "human ecology" then refers to the particular immanence of man (as species-being) that non-philosophy has tried to think from its inception, rather than measuring the worth of things according to a transcendent notion of Man (what Laruelle would call

the-Man): "Man can finally see his fixed and moving image, his intimate openness as the greatest secret in the ocean. 'Free men always cherish the sea...'" (ibid.)<sup>18</sup>

The purpose of engaging with scientific ecology is not simply to accept its concepts and ideas as if the project was simply a kind of ecological positivism. Rather, the task is to think infect philosophical and theological thinking on nature with certain ecological concepts that will free philosophy to think nature free our thinking from the golem of nature, either as secular kingdom of death or as quasi-divinity. As Laruelle writes, "Nature is given an other-than-reductive meaning in this impossible ontological foundation and/or that physical powerlessness in this giving does not have definitive limitations but inhuman misunderstandings or disoriented interpretations." (ibid.) We can change the way we understand nature philosophically by thinking from the foundation-less posture of a philo-fiction derived from philosophy and science.

For the remainder of this essay I will sketch out just such a philo-fiction combining the ecological theory of niche with the philosophico-religious figure of Job. Biodiversity is a well-known ecological concept that has a lesser known, and lesser understood, corollary concept that ecologists refer to as the niche. If biodiversity is the recognition that there is a principle drive to diversification within the biosphere, niche theory is the attempt to give shape to the functioning of biodiversity. For biodiversity is a principle derived from the research into the proliferation (one might even say clamour) of species that are identified by the ecologist as those populations that can freely breed under "natural" conditions. Niche theory is able to locate

the ways that clamour comes into a stochastic harmony. This stochastic harmony is described by Paul S. Giller as population interaction with other populations (this grouping of populations is called the community) and the wider ecosystem (Giller 1984, 1, 9). Giller clarifies the strict definition of a community writing that a community is “a combination of plant, animal, and bacterial populations, interacting with one another within an environment, thus forming a distinctive living system with its own composition, structure, environmental relations, development and function.” (ibid., 1)

Niches are tied more closely to the community rather than the ecosystem as a whole, though again the confusion with regard to scale of ecosystems makes this a somewhat unclear point. Giller helps clarify the place of the niche when he writes, “The ecological niche is a reflection of the organism’s or species’ place in the community, incorporating not only tolerances to physical factors, but also interactions with other organisms.” (ibid., 7) In a non-technical sense, though none the less true, niche refers to what lines of sustenance are open to the organism or species. That is, a niche is that place, within a network or mesh of interactions (these are always approximate analogies for the mathematical model of the energy exchange), where an organism can find enough energy to continue to live while passing on its genetic information. Now the niche of one species may be wide enough to allow that species to spread across the ecosystem, and even, as in the case of human beings, to dominate the ecosystems they exist within. This idea of domination refers to the intensity of the effects that this species has on the particular ecosystem. So the human being has obviously had a high magnitude of effects on the ecosystems they inhabit and has even shaped them.

This limits the niches of other animals, while opening up other niches. If the human species were to disappear the ecosystems they had inhabited would no doubt change fundamentally, which is not necessarily true of species who have smaller niche widths. (cf. Wilson 2001, 217)

In practice most organisms and species are limited or “checked” by other organisms and species. This should not suggest a rather medieval notion of hierarchy based on an anthropocentric understanding of power, but in ecological theory hierarchy is always more complex and open to reconceptions of power more akin to the focus on potentiality that has been somewhat common in European political philosophy since the 1970’s. For bacteria, that black hole of biodiversity, may end up being a dominant species or at least one that checks the niche width of other organisms and species in a significant way. This may seem like a strange statement but it is because “in the real world” the environmental gradient (or space) where niches exist “is not measured in ordinary Euclidean dimensions but in fractal dimensions. Size depends on the span of the measuring stick or, more precisely, on the size of the foraging ambit of the organisms dwelling on the tree. In the fractal world, an entire ecosystem can exist in the plumage of a bird.” (ibid., 196-198)<sup>5</sup>

Yet, even with this  $n$ -dimensional space of the bird’s plumage or the single stick in the forest, there is always some check on the hypervolume. This check is referred to as the principle of competitive exclusion, which holds that if two or more species coexist there should be some ecological difference between them. (Giller 1984, 9) This is not an iron-clad law as Wilson reminds his readers.

For even though one dynasty of species cannot tolerate another dynasty of a closely similar kind and “when one group radiates into a part of the world, another group must retreat,” this is only a statistical tendency that clues the ecologist in to the likelihood of some ecological diversity at work where two seemingly similar species do coexist. (Wilson 2001, 111) There is something interesting at work here which tells us something about the weakness of a crude quantitative measure with regard to dealing with the ethical issues raised by ecology, for it may seem that a species should simply be considered endangered if it has a relatively small quantitative population. Yet, it is its niche wide that is really the matter of concern, such that a population can be large and even widespread, but if its niche is scarce the species resilience is weak and it is threatened. A change in the wider community structure could lead to disaster for the species. (ibid., 217)

The concept of niche is a good example where the philosopher goes wrong with his vision, where the attention he gives is determined by his philosophical faith, allowing him to cast derision on the unthinking scientist, and so he may see the niche as the old philosophical idea of balance. Or take the theologian, with his own faithful attention, who may see in the niche nothing but an ontology of violence. In truth, neither balance nor ontological violence is required by the concept of the niche when it is placed in an immanent posture and extended to thought itself. *The* concept of the niche has to be thought through the concept of the never-living *rather* than in the dialectic of life and death that both the philosopher and theologian persist in thinking through. What the niche concept does point to is a generic posture of all living organisms. Not that of violence, if by violence one means Greek *agon* or of the

violence committed against the hostage, but of immanent struggle in the World as separate from the notion of a “whole.” Each community is a stranger to the biosphere in so far as it can be identified as a community and if it plays its part in the functioning of the whole it does so without some kind of intentionality. The biosphere simply is the various community-identities functioning within the same *n*-dimensional space.

The niche is the production of the living against the requirement of death at work also in nature. Yet, this protest would be in vain if it simply hoped to overcome death by destroying death. Biologists have a name for the living form of this desire, they call it cancer. For cancer is simply a living cell refusing to expire, refusing the programmed death of apoptosis and thus destroying the wider system it is within. The niche is an expression of protest against the necessity of death in so far as it pays no attention to death *as such*. Death never determines the niche in the way it determines philosophical ethics or religious fantasies of overcoming death.

We can illustrate this argument by way of a creative recasting of the persona of Job; a persona that has been used both by philosophers and theologians. For if we think of the niche as a resistance to death, as a resistance to the terms set by Nature that philosophers hallucinate, then what the niche shows is that we can discuss nature as perverse against the terms set by Nature, just as Job perversely stood up against the terms set by God refusing to accept the parameters set by God that his friends hallucinated. I will use the construction of Job found in Antonio Negri's *The Labour of Job: The Biblical Text as a Parable of Human Labour* because of its ontological and ethical reading (the



two are the same thing for Negri and, he argues, for Job). In other words, being and ethics are not divided and separated in the story of Job. If this is true then neither is the human and non-human divided and separated, for both share some common ontological basis, the same basis that Negri reads into Job (while himself not going so far to the creatural generic as we are): the experience of immense, immeasurable pain. Here the biblical text is not a parable of human labour alone, but of generic creatural labour.

According to Negri's reading of Job, this figure is not pitiful as he stands in pain against a backdrop of tragedy, but is a figure of power as ability or potentiality against Power as constituted and oppressive. In his power Job calls the amoral omnipotence of the divine to account for itself. Such a demand is rhetorically complex, for the protest of Job must not make an appeal to God simply as judge, for "*God is both one of the parties and the judge. The trial is therefore a fraud.*" (Negri 2009, 27)<sup>6</sup> For when Job opens his mouth he will have already condemned himself before the one who judges:

Though I am innocent, I cannot answer him;  
I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.  
If I summoned him and he answered me,  
I do not believe he would listen to my voice.  
For he crushes me with a tempest,  
And multiplies my wounds without cause;  
He will not let me get my breath  
But fills me with bitterness.  
If it is a contest of strength, he is the strong one!  
If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?  
Though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me;  
Thought I am blameless, he would prove me perverse  
(Job 9.15-20 NRSV)

By making a defense Job would have to capitulate to the value of justice implicit in the omnipotency of the divine. He would capitulate to an image of value whereby it is just that God, as immeasurable Power, is both the judge and a party to the trial. But in refusing to demand such a trial, in demanding that the omnipotent reveal himself, there is a recognition of the impossibility of a real dialectics in the face of the immeasurable. This parallels precisely the same problem of orthodox theology which sees only death in the struggle of niches as well as in the naturalist who sees "the natural" as the immeasurable Power and source of value.

Negri thinks this relationship and its refusal in the light of the political and philosophical problem of measure:

*The immeasurable has become disproportion, imbalance, organic prevalence of God over man. The fact that God is presented as immeasurable demonstrates - once again - that all dialectics are impossible. The trial is not dialectical, it is not and cannot be. It is not dialectical because it cannot be "overcome;" or rather, it can be only by negating one of the terms - but this is not dialectics, it is destruction. (ibid., 28)*

Instead Job matches this immeasurable of Power with the immeasurable of his pain. Power in the sense of ability to act or potentiality is the daughter of pain. The creature, as witnessed to most obviously for human beings in the human creature, is able to turn the immeasurable of pain into a source of immeasurable charity and grace. Pain becomes a means of grace, but not a means that comes from the outside of the creature, but an immanent means to the suffering flesh. The immeasurable of charity shares in

the immeasurability of pain, for both are that which measures. They become the true measure as immeasurable, as that which can never be measured much like the never-living is beyond the measure of the dialectic of life and death (more on this below). Pain and grace/charity measure the World and reveal that the immeasurability of the world as a immeasurable shame; as a system organized by death and alienation as common (somewhat different from Negri's use of the concept of World and closer to Laruelle's gnostic understanding) the World is but a hallucination of value. Rather, the creation of the World is birthed from the pain and grace of the creatural earth and sea. The World is only absolute as a contingency of the creatures creating it. Again, consider the words of Negri when he writes:

But charity cannot be measured because it allows us to participate in the power of creation. In this way the problem of the reconstruction of value can be placed on a new footing. When power opposes Power, it has become divine. It is the *source of life*. It is the *superabundance of charity*. The world can be reconstructed on this basis, and only what is reconstructed in this way will have value; it will continue to not have a measure, because the power that creates has no measure. (ibid., 75)

Death orders the World because death becomes a common measure to all of life. (ibid., 81) But in pain this common measure is rendered as simply the object of desire. A desire to eliminate death and pain. To subsume the relative measurable cause of the immeasurable of suffering into a messianic future where the immeasurable of grace reigns. Such grace is the power of production produced by pain. In the story of Job there is a direct correlation between the mismatched dialectical relationship between God and the human being that produces suffering. Job

breaks this mismatched dialectic by seeing God. By his protest Job demands that God reveal himself and in so doing Job tears away the absolute transcendence of God. By seeing God, through the immeasurable of God revealed as a body open to vision, Job is able to share in the divine. The immeasurable character of pain and grace is no longer organized hierarchically, but through a simple vision, a knowledge that is salvific.

Negri at points comes close to affirming the dialectic of life and death, and we must mark out a non-philosophical difference. The immeasurable of man is indeed pain, but the creation of pain arises out of the relationship between the living, the dead and the never-living. Thus, whether it is the dialectic between life and death or a non-dialectical relationship between the two, there is a third term that stands apart from this relationship and determines it. This is neither God nor the Being of man where the singular meets the universal, but simply the earth as such (and by this I am of course expressing under a more poetic name the biosphere, which includes all the foundationless fluxes of earth, ocean, atmosphere, molten lava, etc.). The never-living aspect of potential action, the appeal to the earth as immeasurable source of creation, is what allows for Job to go beyond not just death, but the life that births it. For what is it that God appeals to in his justification of himself? In Chapters 38-41, where God makes his justification, he appeals to creation, including all the living things as well as some fantastic chimeric monsters. These monsters, the behemoth and the leviathan, are interpreted philosophically by Negri respectively as primordial force and the primordial chaos and violence that are the ground of production, without measure or law. (ibid., 52) In appealing to his strength, his Power, God shows

that Power to be contingent on being able to master this ground. Interestingly, in the biblical text, while God takes credit for the creation of both he never comes out and says that he can control them, but in a rather bombastic style depending on a series of rhetorical questions merely suggests this.

So what does this ancient biblical story have to do with the contemporary ecological concept of the niche? Negri's retelling of Job is not merely a parable in a weak sense, but it is an argument concerning the ontological constitution of power as resisting Power. The lived reality of what it means to be a human subject in pain. We can extend the persona of Job to creation generally simply by changing some of the terms. So, rather than Job innocently suffering in the face of a disproportionate and amoral Power, we have all creatures suffering before a disproportionate and amoral Power of Nature. The creation of a niche by a species witnesses to the contingency of such a Nature. It would not exist without perverse production on earth of new species. Every time a new species emerges and a niche is formed (remember immanence is at work here) the suffering of that species calls for Nature to account for itself. If this cry of violence from the earth and the response from Nature were to be given in language, what could Nature appeal to in its justification? For the violence at work in creation is not immeasurable. It may be overwhelming at times. It may even be evil. But, it is always relative and dependent upon the creation of niches for its existence and in this way the niche, the creature, is not alienated in its identity by that violence. By coming into the ecosystem, exchanging energy, it comes to resist and go beyond death, if only for a moment. The creativity of the niche is the immeasurable and as such is a certain

site of the perversity of nature. Just as Job was perverse in his acceptance of God's unlimited Power and yet still required that God answer for it, so the niche is perverse in the face of the unlimited Power of Nature.

What is common to creatural being is pain. One species causes pain to another in the working out of niche boundaries. But corollary to this pain the necessity for biodiversity that niches witness to. There is then a certain creatural sociality as universality at work in the pain of living amongst one another.<sup>7</sup> This pain is primary and emotions like fear or anger are but secondary effects that are contingent upon the organization of that pain in the creatural socius. Even violence is secondary to this pain, in so far as that violence can be turned into a peaceable force by way of creation. It isn't my intent to argue for an overturning of death in the ecosystem, but simply to disempower death, just as Job disempowers God. The niche shows that death, as well as life, is secondary to a more immanent creative power at work as nature against Nature. Niches witness to the exile of nature from hypostasized Nature. The refusal of the value of Nature as hallucination of the immeasurable in the name of a grace of nature that is witnessed to in the perverse creative power of new species producing ways of living indifferently to death.

This then is a philo-fiction created by way of a relativized analogy. Within a wider ecology (of) thought analogy can come to function as a kind of energy that is exchanged between and connects various creatures to one another in terms of fabulative likeness. That is, rather than a complete rejection of anthropomorphism, we can begin

to think of the relative analogies between human beings and other creatures as an effect of the Real. The complete rejection of anthropomorphism is a false dream of philosophers for ends up putting a barrier between human beings and other creatures as it sets up the old division between humans and Nature. Human beings are part of the biosphere, they are natural, and as such there are things in nature that have the form, *morphe*, of human beings. That form will have commonalities with other creatures, while of course having limits as well. But this thinking of a kind of relative analogy between creatures can be creative of not just anthropomorphism but also arbormorphism or elephamorphism, This relative form of analogy is productive of an inconsistent and open ethic. Such an ethic operates through the direction of attention to the suffering and exile common to all creatures. This ethic of attention needs no other reason than their existence to care for others. By way of a certain productive analogy of beings with the human we can begin to change our attention. But this attention is always guarded from being misdirected from suffering by way of a recognition of its ungrounded character as a fabulation. Thus, when we speak of the human or any creature we are free to do so in terms of a mass creatural subject that includes the human alongside of the tree and elephant, but we do not move from there to a conception of the Real as such.

#### Notes:

1. I have made a much more sustained argument in my doctoral thesis *Ecologies of Thought: Thinking Nature in Philosophy, Theology, and Ecology* (introduction and table of contents available in Smith 2011a).
2. See my forthcoming *A Stranger Thought: An Introduction to the Non-Philosophy of François Laruelle* for a longer discussion of the intricacies of non-philosophy (Smith 2011).
3. Laruelle often indicates he is talking about a false transcendent version of a concept by emphasizing the definite article. This works better in French than in English, as “the nature” is not idiomatic. Often, though, I am forced to translate it this way to retain Laruelle’s meaning. In this case, however, a capital N serves the same purpose.
4. For a historical discussion of the difficulties capitalism has encountered with the ocean as regards property rights see Radkau 2008, 86-93.
5. Cf. Giller 1984, 10 where he writes “Each environmental gradient can be thought of as a dimension in space. If there are  $n$  pertinent dimensions the niche can be described in terms of an  $n$ -dimensional space, or hypervolume.”
6. As is common with translations of Negri and Deleuze and Guattari, when power is spelled with a lowercase p it is translating the French *puissance* or the Italian *potenza* and when it is spelled with an uppercase P it translates the French *pouvoir* or the Italian *potere*.
7. Cf. Ibid, 50, 73 for a discussion of this idea as it is found in the Book of Job.

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