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Marxism without Philosophy and Its Feminist Implications: The Problem of Subjectivity Centered Socialist Projects

(Transcript of a talk at the school authorized by Katerina Kolozova)

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Abstract: The non-philosophical conceptualisation of the self, and I am expanding the category to include the other forms of theoretical-methodological exit from philosophy’s sufficiency as its principle, thus also Marx, psychoanalysis, and linguistics, does not reduce the radical dyad of physicality/automaton to one of its constituents. It is determined by the radical dyad as its identity in the last instance and it is determined by the materiality or the real of the last instance. The real is that of the dyad, of its internal unilaterality and the interstice at the center of it. We have

called this reality of selfhood the non-human: the interstice is insurmountable; the physical and the automaton are one under the identity in the last instance but a unification does not take place. It is the physical, the animal and nature, it is materiality of “use value” and the real production that needs to be delivered from exploitation, not the “workers” only, especially because many of the global labor force are bereft of the status (of workers). And the need to do so is not only moral but also political in the sense of political economy: capitalism is based on a flawed phantasm that the universe of pure value is self-sufficient on a sustainable basis, based on an abstracted materiality as endlessly mutable resource. A political economy detached from the material is untenable.

Keywords: materialist feminism, François Laruelle, radical dyad, real abstractions, speculative realism

We will revise some of the themes discussed here in the previous days. Some topics and some authors were referred to not just in the presentations of the keynote speakers but also in the presentations and the discussions of the other participants. We will revisit Laruelle’s non-philosophy, we will revisit my attempt to marry Laruelle with the texts of Karl Marx and how this “marriage,” this fusion of the two methods can play out in feminism, but also in certain new philosophies or political philosophy or epistemology. It can serve as a paradigm of a new political philosophy that will shift the positions of the concepts of subjectivity and the object, revisit Marx’s as notion of objectivity, which, as I previously said, has nothing to do with the positivist notion of objectivity. It’s quite an interesting perspective actually. By doing so, we will see if this bringing closer of philosophy and science, of course, not the established scientific disciplines but more the scientific posture of thought or the scientific habitus, let’s say the metaphysical positioning of science, its treatment of the real (improvising with the terminology here and now), so in that sense, a creation of a science, that is Marxist, that is in line with Laruelle’s treatment of philosophy from a scientific point of view. So in this sense of the word, it would be science, and also by bringing it together with some of the sciences actually, some of the existing sciences.

In an attempt to establish a dialogue with the sciences, a dialogue that is established on a certain plane of a flat ontology—although I have a problem with the notion of ontology, but let's use it in this context to simplify the introduction—although it may be more complex to simplify them, maybe just reading the text may be simpler. I will argue for a dialogue between philosophy and science in a way that does not permit philosophy to assume a meta position, position of superiority—or simply “meta”—and comment within its own terms, with its own means what happens in science and how it might reflect back upon philosophy and through that on society, on the possibility to re-conceptualize society in the light of more recent development in sciences and in particular technology. All of this has been in some way touched upon in the previous talks by the others, not just through my own comments... I am revisiting these already open questions through my perspective. As I said, this will be a combination of Laruelle applied on Marx, which means an addition to Marx's own ambition to render his thoughts scientific. As you all might remember, Marx's ambition was to move as much as possible away from philosophy and establish a certain science of political economy, a science that establishes knowledge of the species being of humanity that explains society by way of moving further and further away from philosophy. That was mainly his essential disagreement with Hegel all along, if you remember from his texts. So, to this I am adding through a sort of a procedure of superposition or through Laruelian cloning as miming a position, including that of superposition, the method of non-philosophy, François Laruelle's non philosophy. I would treat Laruelle's role here as purely formal, purely methodological, one that provides the conceptual means to identify the tenets of philosophy that remain in Marx's own text. I have spotted a constant tendency in Marx to move away in philosophy. It helps to spot the tenets of philosophy's residuals, philosophical stance vis-à-vis Marx in the legacy of Marxism, not so much in Marx himself. That explains why I do away with much of the further legacy of Marxism, why I approach Marx's text directly through Laruelle or sometimes simply directly. I do not resort to mediation. Sometimes I make a recourse to epistemology that I reconsider a more truthful rendition of what Marx is about epistemologically. There is so often this misunderstanding between non-Marxists or non-standard Marxists and the other Marxists that take the world

literally and completely misunderstand its meaning, thinking that is something anti Marx. No! Non-Marxism is simply short for non-philosophical Marxism or philosophically non-standard Marxism that has incorporated Laruelle's approach to Marx's texts. The word non-Marxism is used in that sense. You can put it in the wider category of post-Marxisms, although I do consider it kind of a radical Marxism or one with many consonances with the orthodox Marxism (“orthodox” meaning prior to Lenin).

I will present the concept of the radical dyad of the non-human. The non-human is understood in Laruelle's non philosophical sense, so it is the Human without philosophical humanism. The word for that we are using here is non-human. So, the goal of the concept is to present the radical dyad of the non-human in an attempt to think radical humanity in terms of Marx and materialism that is the product of approaching of Karl Marx's writings on the real and the physical. These are his words, I would like to underscore that he resorts far more often in his texts to the words “real” and “physical” rather than “the material.” Perhaps because he had to problematize Feuerbach and the materialism of his era as too philosophical and he saw a problem there. So he seems to prefer these two words (physical, real) over the material. We are examining now this radical humanity, which goes beyond philosophical humanism and actually does away completely with the concept of the human in the philosophical sense and with its centrality to our organization of thought, philosophical or scientific. This metaphysical core around which we all kind of position ourselves, regardless of whether we are in science or in philosophy or in arts. The relation we assume toward the human and its possible centrality to our thought is kind of a metaphysical organizing principle. So, we are revisiting the human and thinking in terms of radical humanism in that sense. In a sense that has already done away with the centrality of the human as a remainder of a philosophy within Marx as pointed out by Marx himself. So, 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 *tēchnē*, the Greek τέχνη, which means skill, craft, but also the craft of speaking a natural language. In its original sense, it can refer to using a tool but also, nowadays, to developing and

using AI technology as well. All of this is generically put in *téchnē* or in a more contemporary variant “technology.” The theory of the non-human as a radical dyad of technology in the generic sense of the word, ranging from the “*téchnē*” of speaking a natural language to AI technology on the one hand and the organic understood as physicality on the other hand, does away with anthropocentrism. Moreover, it does away with anthropomorphology of thought by way of stepping away from subjectivity centered thought. Moreover, it does away with anthropomorphology of thought inalienable from any theorizing or philosophy that is centered on the notion of human subjectivity. Any philosophy that is centered on the notion of human subjectivity is inevitably anthropomorphic. So, subjectivity as the organizing principle of thought renders any kind of thought anthropomorphic. It could be a thought of science from within science, but not necessarily scientific, or it could be a philosophy. So it does away with anthropomorphology of thought inalienable from any theorizing or philosophy that is centered on the notion of subjectivity, which is human subjectivity or, to borrow Laruelle’s term, any *posture* of thought that is modelled according to the structure of subjectivity centered thinking. Even if the semantics may differ. The problem is the structure of the subjectivity—centered thinking.

Marx operates with the notion of the real, often times simultaneously with that of the physical. He uses them as if almost synonyms. I have approached the concept found in Marx by means of Laruelle’s suspension of the principle of philosophical sufficiency, that is, by way of exiting the vicious circle of philosophy legitimizing philosophy and in that process positing and creating the real as existent/non-existent, relevant/irrelevant as well as what is real and what is an illusion. All of this arranges the notion recreating the real like philosophy. It does not just decide what is real but kind of legislates the real. Laruelle sees a problem in the structure of philosophy itself. It cannot resist the anthropocentric impulse because within it there is a structural composition, a result of its intrinsic laws to not just decide or argue what the real is, not to just stipulate or postulate but simply legislate what is real. That is why we had that practically metaphysical confrontation yesterday... “What is real? Is gender real? Is sex real?” This is a product of an essentially philosophical thinking—traditional philosophical theorizing to legislate what the

real is. No, we, by moving away from philosophy and its problem of philosophical sufficiency, we are moving away from this tendency, while keeping some of the conceptual material, that philosophy provides for us. This is what Laruelle does with it, this is what Laruelle is essentially about. His notion and equation between the one and the real, that has often times been mystified and treated, sometimes almost theologically, has in fact a very practical function or very specific function that renders this kind of thinking scientific. I will move toward that part, which explains how come. I have elaborated that proposal in more detail in my latest book *Capitalism’s Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy and Patriarchy*, which, as I explained on the first day, is not about animals but rather about the treatment of physicality including animality in the history of Western philosophy, but also of other forms of physicality or physical reality, that do not have to be, you know, living creatures, do not have to represent lives. It is not vitalism. I told you, we can use the term “physical” also in the sense of objects, but not as commodities—only in the sense of use value. So, all of this is elaborated in that book and I won’t go further into proposing us a backdrop of this reading but I guess these interventions are necessarily in order to follow the argument. The book is an experiment that combines Laruelle with Marx, that is added with the feminist philosophy of Luce Irigaray and John Ó’ Maoilearca’s notion of 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. But in order to do so, it must abolish the very possibility of relationality between the two. Thus, one avoids the error of amphibology, as he calls it, of substituting truth for the real and the other way around. Arriving at a unity of the two, this is what philosophy does, 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 the other way around—this is what constitutes the principle of sufficient philosophy. The postphilosophical or non-philosophical thought must mime the scientific posture of thought, whereby the thought submits to the always already foreclosed real but the ontological foreclosure does not prevent the thought from seeking to clone the real. The real is not a substance, it is an operational category. It’s not a sub-

stance, it is an ontological modifier or rather an epistemic category. It is in this sense that it is also “the one.” So, in this sense is the one. I will explain how come. Why? If it’s nearly an epistemic category, it has to be the one! The unilaterally posited elements of the dyad, so physiology and *téchnē*, technology, language, etc., on the other side.

The unilaterally posited elements of the dyad lead to the latter mechanically producing sense. The point is the following: the dyad is radical because technology, which includes, as I said, language, and the realm which includes physicality, do not achieve unity or reconciliation, not even in the form of paradox. Language enables subjectivization, participation in discourse or the world, whatever, so on the one hand we have language and on the other hand we have the real, the physical, etc. What Laruelle would call “the radical dyad” is the dyad between the thought and the real. To him it is an epistemological thing. His point is that the real always evades, is always already foreclosed to thought, he uses the term “thought” to avoid subject or subjectivity. Thought seeks to explain the real and this relation is unilateral because the real is pre-lingual. The real does not possess language. The real does not enter into dialogue with thought. It’s simply this dumb numb real, indifferent real. So, he repositions the relation between thought and the real in this way and in thus he mimes the way science treats the real. So, what I have done with the radicalizing of the posthuman, which is originally a poststructuralist concept, posthumanist notion of the human, is to ground it into Marxist ontology and methodology. Adding to it Laruelle’s approach to Marx or to any philosophy, I have further radicalized the concept of hybridity or the cyborg, which is the grounding idea of posthumanism. So, if Donna Haraway and cyber feminism tell us that we are this hybrid of technology and organicity or the organic, as Haraway puts it, we are espousing the proposal and radicalizing it by ridding it from the principle of sufficient philosophy and grounding it in materialism. As for the “organic,” Haraway also calls it “the animal within us,” you know—the animal we are. She refers to it in the *Manifesto*, she very often refers to us (the humans) as a combination of animals and technology. If we accept this proposition of posthumanism, and I do accept it, and if we ground it in Marxism through Laruelle’s non-philosophical approach, we can

dismantle with this totality. So, this dyad of technology and the physical does not represent any sort of unity. It does not seek any kind of unity or seek ways to represent itself as any sort of unity. Now, why do I need Laruelle in this? Among the commentators of Haraway the overwhelming interpretation of the hybrid (the cyborg that is), has been that it is a paradoxical unity. I don’t think I see it in her own texts that the dyad constitutes a paradox. This is a paradoxical unity because there must be some kind of unity and this kind of unity represents the truth of what we are. So, the truth is that we are this hybrid. It must become the reality or the real of who we are and it is so because it’s the truth of who we are. It is the real and the truth and we are expected to act according to this ontological decree. We are this! Due to what Laruelle calls philosophical spontaneity, it becomes once again—a unity, this paradoxical unity. The commentarism continues without paying regard to Haraway’s constant explanations that this hybrid does not imply any superiority of the technical over the physical or the animal. There is no hierarchy there.

My use of Marx here and Laruelle helps ground her argument in Marxist materialism and then fortifies this grounding with Laruelle’s non-philosophy in order to evade this philosophically spontaneous establishing of unity, of the assumption of there being some unity. Even in a form of paradox or this nothingness out of which we draw a certain content or definition or whatever. No! We affirm the radicality and the impossibility to reconcile the two elements. So, in the dyad thought and the real similarly, not very much unlike in Lacan, are foreclosed to one and other. In that sense, the physical within ourselves, the material within ourselves, that is according to the orthodoxy of poststructuralism, is something that belongs to the realm of the real and we have nothing to say of the real, because this is what Lacan teaches us allegedly, as explained in *Bodies that Matter* by Judith Butler. The body becomes irrelevant, we do not say anything of it because it is pre-lingual, it does not participate in language, in the production of signs, in the signifying automaton that language, regardless of whether natural or artificial, is.

Language or sign production is meaning production, it’s nothing else but that. According to the structural orthodoxy, this is what makes sense, this is what speaks to us, this is where we can construe

meaning, whereas the real is foreclosed (according to the doctrine of Lacan, but also according to Laruelle). In my view, in an erroneous way, following the doctrine of Lacan, we can simply establish that the physical does not participate in language, in sign making. Therefore, it belongs to the realm of the real and we can simply do away with its relevance for our discussion. And now, as a corollary of such reasoning, we can say that everything is the product of sign, of sign-making. The real is left there, excluded, as it's supposed to be allegedly, because it cannot participate in language-making, in sign-making. It is not a part of the signifying automaton. Therefore, it's put aside and rendered irrelevant and in fact, inexistent. So this is the interesting conclusion: such reasoning is, again, the product of this reflex of philosophical spontaneity, as Laruelle would put it. Because it belongs to the real and we cannot produce truths of it because the real is outside of language, it does not exist. So, what exists is sign-making, meaning-making, and, therefore, discourse, discursive construction, etc.,—this is the only possible ontology, if one espouses the poststructuralist episteme, Why is it so? Because there we can produce truths. The real does not help us constitute truths and truth is obviously taken in the philosophical science of the word, as an amphibology of real and cognition. What is truthful or what is the truth or the ontological truth is also real and what is real is true. This is the beginning, the origin of all philosophy, since the beginning of Greek philosophy and it's still dragging on. It's called the principle of sufficient philosophy, in the vocabulary of non-standard and Laruelle inspired philosophy, and it is one of the reasons we cannot communicate with the scientists. When scientists seek to establish a certain project that is of societal, historical or philosophical relevance, they also follow this philosophical spontaneity. So they find themselves trapped within the same metaphysical error. Therefore, I argue its perhaps more useful or it makes more sense, or it's simply more productive to admit that we cannot avoid being moved in our reflection by metaphysics even in science, in innovation, so including technological invention. It is what moves us, we want to establish a certain relation to the exteriority. We want to know what the real is and what it is not, we want to control it, etc. We want to reshape it. By reshaping it, we want to understand what its limits are. All these questions are in fact, are moved by metaphysics, they are in a way philosophical but the scientific posture of thought

renders them non-philosophical. Beyond doubt, these questions are metaphysical. The approach to this question that legislates realizations, conclusions, cognitive products, truth as legislating reality... thus the philosophical reflex is the impulse we must evade in order to pursue scientific type of thought. I want to arrive to the question of subjectivity legislating principle of thought and why we need to do away with it and think of both categories—technology and the physical reality in terms that are beyond subjectivity.

If one seeks to circumvent the ultimately humanist dream of trans-humanism, one needs to epistemologically reposition oneself assuming what Marx would have called “the third party’s view.” So, this is the doing away with subjectivity-centered thought I was talking about. We must assume the third party’s view; the perspective of a third party is objective. In so far as it mimes the position of the surrounding objects including the human subject’s externalized actions, as objective reality, objectivities or objects, if you will. It is not a positivists stance regarding objectivity because the human species being, as Marx calls it, is entangled in the in sensuous and the physical, also Marx’s words, whereas social relations are real abstractions, as they are called by the Marxist epistemologist Alfred Sohn-Rethel. Therefore, an absolute autonomous self, detached from its own and the surrounding materiality, the world’s social relations and nature ascending to a mind of purist science governed by objective truths is impossible from a Marxist’s point of view. The third party’s view, as elaborated by Marx, engenders objectivity that requires that the thinking subject treats itself as an object as well. The soliloquy of the philosophical self, the cogito is abolished. This is not OOO either, because OOO actually produces a concept of object, whereby the object mimes the subject, which is quite the opposite to what I am saying here. So, 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 a form of agency, carrying out objectivity of thought. Instead, he suggests that the subject mimes the structure and the status of the exteriority of the object, rather 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, says Marx in his “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy” in general. Subjectivity of objective essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something objective, we would argue along with Marx. 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 in the last instance, he is nature in the act of positing. Therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of pure activity into 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 or, put differently—to be objective natural and essentials 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 from the same text (And of paraphrase of Marx.) Nature is the same abstraction as Anthropos. Nature is the same abstraction, philosophical abstraction or it can be a social abstraction or scientific... doesn’t matter, it is an abstraction and its philosophical sense needs to be unraveled by arriving at its material or concrete components, as Marx would put it. Only to yield the abstractions that define and explain it by way of being concept notions produced by a third party.

We will have to resort to our method of disassembling the conceptual unity of the abstractions we problematize, abstractions in so far as generalizations, not abstractions one creates when departing from the concrete, the way Marx and Saussure do. In order to arrive at the concrete or rather at a transcendental material constituting a *chôra*, an unorganized *topos* of concepts, undergirded by the real or the physical. By depleting nature of the enlightenment and modern philosophy from the binding conditions of the principle of the philosophical sufficiency from the classical binaries such as nature-culture or technology, body-mind, animal-human, all these binaries are characteristics pertaining to the philosophical concept of the human and nature, both, we might be able to arrive at the concrete as Marx would put it and at the determination in the last instance that are of the physical in so far as the real. As I said, not physical in the vital sense, physical could be a product of human labor as well, or material in that sense. (I use physical because it’s more truthful to Marx’s original text.) By way of employing Laruelle’s method of

unilateralization, that is fashioning a concept, product of thought that succumbs to the real and nearly clones it or mimes it, we may be able to arrive at the determination and the last instance of the notion of nature. Conceiving nature in the manner of Aristotelian miming, Laruelian cloning or Wittgenstein’s *Maßstab* because he also talks about kind of a cloning, scale applied to reality if you remember from his *Tractatus*, we arrive at a concept that is not far from the one natural scientists operate with. It is in the last instance, the organic that can be defined in compatible ways by the evolutionary biology, chemistry, neurosciences... to name a few. In this way, so through the application of Laruelle’s method and Marx’s materialism, through (non-)philosophy we arrive at the same understanding of the notion of nature. Let us underscore, I did not use the word “same” but “compatible” (with other sciences, so we have to reduce the definition of it to the organic). 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 and his book *Recursivity and Contingency*, but also in some critical theorists like Donna Haraway. Yuk Hui explains that a similar ontology underpins both nature and technology and in a way, working through German idealism, he arrives at the materialist conclusion about both realities. Hui demonstrates that production of signification, language creation, the transcendental, the plane where thought takes place and the physical or the material are two things underpinned by the same ontology that this in fact and in the last instance – material. He identifies the movement of recursion or recursivity in physicality, in the physical reality and, as ontological principle, Hui demonstrates, it is not very different from the signifying automaton in computing. Recursivity as an ontological principle is, as Hui demonstrates, an essentially mechanical procedure. Recursivity divulges a certain paradoxical form of teleology. It is a teleology, which does not have a telos outside that of maintaining itself and further perfecting itself. The principle of recursion in computing is a movement away, in expansion and then nonetheless constantly returns to integrate the error of contingency or accident into what makes sense, into a organically (in Schelling’s and Hui’s sense) functional whole. Let us reiterate, Hui concludes that the same process happens in nature. In spite of resorting to German idealism, the mechanistic elaboration of organicity renders Hui’s argument materialist.

And here we're arriving at yet another point, which is important with regard to the real or the one and the position of the notion of the binary in Laruelle. If we apply Laruelle's treatment of philosophy, stripped off that stance that makes it self-sufficient and in fact, succeeds to mime the outside reality even though foreclosed; if we agree with Marx that everything is of the last instance somehow materially determined, then this dyad (of the non-human) and the role of the one when we explain it and the real becomes more clear. The dyad of sign making, for example in structuralist linguistics, in computing, we have binaries or dyads but these binaries do not constitute a unity. They are not pairs that make sense. They do not amount to some meaning, they do not produce a dialectical unification or a synthesis of a third meaning. They are dyads in a radical way in the sense that they will always remain dyad's binaries without any reconciliation, without any recreation of a third sense, without any dialectics there. What's there within this dyad? So, to remind you—the dyad of the real and thought, the dyad of the physical and technology. If we look at them from a structuralist point of view, the point of view of structuralist linguistics, and let us point out that everything we have read in post-structuralism that derives from Foucault or Lacan or the others that are declared structuralists is epistemologically grounded primarily in structuralist linguistic. So, what happens there, in these binaries, these pairs that are not really pairs, in order to produce sense? *What happens there is pure mechanics*. One of the elements in the binary has to act as the real toward the other element, in order to produce sense. The relation or the relationality consists in the other element to be the border of the first one; to act actually as the real to the other, and the other way around. I need two phonemes next to one another in order for the first phoneme to be pronounced in a certain way and paired with the other one, to mechanically produce a certain sound. Moreover, the conditioning of how these things are paired is also physical because it depends on a certain physiology of phonetics. So sign-making—and thus sense-making—is a mechanical thing. If the radical dyad is, as just we elaborated, a situation where one element serves as *Hemmung* (in German) to the other element, in order to mechanically do the work of sign-making, of trace-making, of language-making, of producing a scripture, a sign that's language, both mechanical and organic, the one feeding into the other.

At the core of languages as well as in nature as calculable or computable process, we encounter mechanicity which operates on the principle—and perhaps engenders it—of organicity. This realization does not mean that thought and the real are the same, because they have the same material or ontological foundation. They remain a radical-dyad of thought and the real. The real remains radically closed to thought, but thought still seeks to relate to it, explain it, produce science or sign or sense of it, just as it happens in nature and computing, etc.

If we are to do away with humanism and radicalize the posthumanist argument, then we have to arrive at these completely distinct categories of physicality and technicity without presupposing that they constitute some organic unity or even if they do, the foundation of this organic unity is a mechanical and material process. I will conclude now. I am assuming it is implied how this is relevant for feminism, how this is relevant for gender relations or gender identities we discussed yesterday. It's relevant in the sense that it enables us to think about physiology and nature and materiality and technology in more complex ways than what's philosophical spontaneity. Distinct and formalized categories do not form unities in some philosophically spontaneous way, and we argue we should view them as radical dyads. Therefore, language is relevant but physiology, materiality and thus also biology is relevant too. There is no hierarchy between the two and as I've explained in the book on the animals, wherever there is hierarchy, exploitation is implied.