

Katerina Kolozova et al.

## Q&A session following the lecture:

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

**Patricia Reed:** Maybe I can ask a question if no one has one ...I'm still digesting so forgive me... I wanted to focus on this third party view that you mentioned, that I think is very interesting because it strikes me that ...it also breaks away the dyad between the fight between the view from nowhere and the embodied view. It also does away with that, which is super interesting, and in a way, that was my own awkward and very unarticulate way to deal with Wynter, with her "outer view." There are two things that I wanted to ask. One, this is maybe an extension and maybe you don't want to answer it, because it doesn't really relate to the thematic of the summer school, but is the role of mathematics within this configuration that you're laying out between the real is the true and the true is the real, sort of, you know, as a kind of epistemological methodology, how does mathematics fit into that? But the question that is more related to this third party view is the question of apperception. So, if I understood it correctly, in this third party view it's almost like, you're not separating yourself but you understand yourself implicated within and treat yourself as an object amongst other objects, which I think is really important, like to just say in a more vulgar way, with our difficulty of dealing with ourselves as implicated in systems, how to see ourselves in that picture and what that does to modes of agency. That's what I was wondering because that strikes me as an apperceptual issue. That one might be reading it wrong because one would have to be able to have a concept of self-understanding in order to see oneself as an object amongst many objects, or...

**Katerina Kolozova:** No, I was just hesitating because that could be one of the perspectives to look at it. One could apply, you know, the Lacanian method, the mirror stage, so you're supposed to go through this form of subjectivization in order to be able to project, you know, this image of yourself. So, it does have something to do with it, but ok, let me start from the beginning. Yeah, you're quite

right. Actually, Wynter is quoted in my book quite a lot but it's not due to her influence on how I operate with the concept of the "third view party's perspective," how it is posited. When you look at the epistemology I am proposing here influenced by the third party perspective as elaborated by Marx, which is, let us underscore, neither this *sub specie aeternitatis* position, God's position, or all-knowing position nor this relativism which is typical of poststructuralism but not only of poststructuralism, nor technically speaking Kantian. As to the limits of what we can perceive, interpret, etc., it is not neither-and that is, in fact, why we can liken this position with Kant's critique. So, certainly, there is an element, you are correct, that is approachable to Kant's epistemology. Still, I would keep things simple and just say that my stance is simply derived from Marx's epistemology of the alienation. The alienation is, you know, inevitable, it's always already there. So, this primary alienation that is always already externalized in the forms of social relations—it's externalized and materialized in the forms of social relations—is something that Marx never denies. He actually affirms it. That's what I find most interesting in your project of xenofeminism, that you depart from there. I kind of expected more Marx in the xenofeminist project, in your elaborations as a collective or individuals but did not witness much of it. Even though it departs, so it seems to me, from this understanding of Marx, which is completely correct and I loved it when I read it in the *Manifesto*. My publication of the book *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism* and your *Manifesto* actually coincide when it comes to the dates of their publications, but also with their completely similar thesis about the primary alienation and its affirmation as the founding principle of subjectivization. What Marx opposes in fact is the denial or obfuscation of this primary alienation through the error of fetishization or reification. We must admit that these abstractions are indeed abstractions and in order to relate to them as real or to relate them to the material or the physical, we—the "we" of the capitalist reason—need to mask them as material. They are abstractions and we must admit that. Nonetheless, we have to affirm as well that these abstractions yield material results. I mean, social relations, what comes out of them, is really something very material, very tangible even when it's in the form of the abstract like the relations themselves, and sometimes as something literally, physical, something you can materially touch.

Our subjectivization, this is my interpretation but I think it's kind of just a mirroring of something that is already there in Marx's text and I am not over-interpreting: there is no other form of subjectivization available to us than that of the initial alienation leading us to transforming ourselves into kind of objects, you know, for the others. You know, you cannot even try to evade that. You are an object to the other in the social relations in which you are always already embedded. In line with Marx, I would say this position seeks to both affirm the materiality of social relations in line with his project of moving away from philosophy and it also discloses Marx's problem with subjectivity-centered thinking. So, you know, of course there is the influence of Hegel there and of course Marx is a dialectician (but more in the original, Greek sense of the word), but by moving away from this organizing principle of thought that is subjectivity and proposing something like what we just discussed, places him far from or fundamentally very different from Hegel. I think that we should simply respect Marx's request to consider and acknowledge that what he keeps from Hegel is the dialectical method, not ontology. Let's not forget that Marx educational background is in Greek philosophy and I think he uses the term dialectics closer to the Greek understanding of the word and, therefore, dialectics is relevant but not quite in the Hegelian sense—I mean, but this is a footnote. What makes him so different from Hegel is this treatment of subjectivity. So I think I covered everything, haha...

**Branislava Petrov:** I was just curious, what would you say about this idea? There is a British Marxist professor, called Sean Sayers... he has an idea of subject as historical emergence in Marx. Unlike the Hegelian idea of subject as some entity at the outset of history, for Marx, there's no such thing as outset. There's no plan, pre-plan, but rather subject as emergence, historical emergence... That subject is an emergence and then it develops at some point, there is a qualitative change, qualitative difference, and then it starts to develop through history, but there's no plan at the outset.

**KK:** I think I agree, because the proposition is that there is this pre-conceived or Hegelian subjectivity somewhere out there, not in the material world, you know, pre-dating the material reality and then shaping it, but it's quite the opposite. It's the product of material or historical processes. This sounds like a materialist, Marxian account, and I would agree.

**BP:** But then, is it philosophy or is it not philosophy?

**KK:** We are all subjects. The problem with philosophy and the response of non-philosophy and Marx's proposal to exit philosophy is how we treat this reality of subjectivity. We don't deny that it exists, that there are subjectivities, that we are all subjectivities. It's just a proposition to look at, when we discuss, scientifically, how subjectivities relate to one another. When we look at our own subjectivity, if we are materialists, we should posit ourselves as the objects of discussion, and not just as the objects of discussion but also presuppose that subjectivity was born from these objective relations. There is no subjectivity outside of these inter-subjective relations that are the social relations.

**Andrija Koštal:** I would like to ask something, if no one else has a question. I am interested in this non-philosophical treating of the dyad, which is one of the essential points of your work, right? So the point is...you said there is no unification, right? And there is no, in this kind of unilateral determination from the real in the last instance, there is no kind of melting of the one of the binary, no unity and no kind of melting of the binary... so just this treating of the binary, can you repeat that part?

**KK:** Ok, I guess you are familiar with Laruelle's notion of the dyad?

**AK:** Yeah, I was reading him, so I should be.

**KK:** Well, structuralist linguistics helped me interpret the dyad in a more productive way. What Laruelle gives us is certain epistemological tools, but we are supposed to do something with them. When we apply those tools in interpreting the human as the non-human, we arrive at the problem of language. We arrive at the problem of the real as the physical. So, other sciences or knowledges, not just sciences, also knowledge as concepts that derive from philosophy, have to be brought into this discussion in order to give a Laruelian account of what the human is insofar as the non-human or the radical dyad it is. And because Laruelle's categories are rather sterile I resorted to Saussure's interpretation of language and to how sciences relate one to another in the production of signification, in order to demonstrate that something so mechanical as the relation between

the elements in the binary and then the binary with other binaries (oh, I forgot to respond on Patricia's question for mathematics, but never mind... I'll make a footnote to that!). So, the way they are posited one to another is quite mechanical, as we explained, but it nonetheless produces something very organic. Something that feels so organic and in fact constitutes an automaton, which is the language in the French sense of *language*—all languages, in the generic sense. So, every language, all languages are produced, if we look at them, and I do look at them, through this Saussurean glance, created in this very material way, as coarse materiality. Yet again, they produce something that not just feels but institutes itself as something super-organic, as organic, which is, for an example, the automaton of language, of sign-making. So, there is nothing more automatic and organic at the same time and yet, mechanical at its origin. So, we can apply the same reasoning on this radical dyad, the human, which we will call the non-human, in order to demonstrate that, in spite of this unsurmountable grounding alienation between the sign-making and the physical and the quasi-mechanical relation to one another as if miming the binary in Saussure; in spite of this mechanicity between the two elements of the radical dyad, they still produce something that feels like an organic unity and that's done through the treatment of something that we will call an incident, contingency by way of recursion. Here I find Yuk Hui very useful. He explains how come the purely mechanical ends up feeling like presenting itself, manifesting itself as organic.