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Andrija Filipović

ORDINARY ANIMAL: MACCORMACK, LARUELLE AND THE RADICAL ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to extend Patricia MacCormack's abolitionist ahuman project through François Laruelle's non-philosophy. To this end, it takes the "animal remainder" produced by Laruelle's dualysis of the "rational animal" and rethinks it as radical immanence. Once doubly dualized, this animal remainder becomes the ordinary animal, in contrast to the exceptional animality produced within environmental humanities through the ontologic of predication.

The article pursues three aims. First, it critically examines Laruelle's account of the animal, which is still an underexplored aspect of his non-philosophical project. Second, it exposes the presuppositions within environmental humanities that sustain the ontico-ontological positioning of the animal as exceptional. Finally, it advances the notion of radical environmental humanities as a critical, philo-fictional practice informed by non-philosophy. The non-philosophical ordinary animal demands a restructuring of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting through gnosis, iconoclasm, and augury, as part of its perpetual struggle against the production of beasts of ontological burden.

KEYWORDS

abolitionism, ahuman, animal, environmental humanities, non-philosophy

Introduction

In her introduction to *The Animal Catalyst* (2014), Patricia MacCormack asserts that the animal does not replace the human. For her, "animal" means "nothing more than organic life, which is shared between myriad organisms, their expressions and affects, and nothing less than an absolute refusal of the word in all its incarnations (too often incantations): 'human'" (2014: 1). She names this "absolute abolitionist refusal of the human" (2014: 2) – the ahuman. The ahuman is "premised on an absolute abolitionist stance on all interaction with – conceptually and actually – any nonhuman" (2014: 2). In *The Ahuman Manifesto* (2020), MacCormack radicalizes this stance by calling for the death of the human. "The death of the anthropocene," she writes, "opens up thousands of



voices, trajectories, relations and necessary activisms,” where death is understood as “advocating for the deceleration of human life through cessation of reproduction, thus death of humans... and the absolute end of perception that apprehends all living organisms and relations through anthropocentric-signifying systems” (2020: 1–2). The ahuman is thus first and foremost abolitionist: all relations with nonhuman animals are fetishistic, assimilative, and co-optive, and must come to an absolute end. This entails “catalysing becoming-other from the majoritarian or all human privilege and renouncing the benefits of the anthropocene” (2020: 15). It further requires “new ethical relations between entities, the cessation of reproduction toward the end of the human as a parasitic detrimental species, and thinking differently about death by advocating for suicide, euthanasia, antinatalism and a good life/care of the living over biotechnologies’ drive for immortality” (2020: 16). For MacCormack, human exceptionalism will finally be dismantled only through human extinction.

This article aims to advance MacCormack’s abolitionist project by removing any remaining conceptual claims to the ahuman. After the human exceptionalism of classical philosophy (outlined briefly in the next section), a range of more recent theories have sought to reconceptualize the animal and, more broadly, the nonhuman. According to Ursula K. Heise, the environmental humanities “envision ecological crises fundamentally as questions of socioeconomic inequality, cultural difference, and divergent histories, values, and ethical frameworks” (2017: 2). More pertinent to the argument here, Heise cautions against questioning “humans’ exceptionality in their relation with other species,” including “flattening of ontologies” that makes it difficult to “single out humans as uniquely responsible for environmental destruction and restoration” (2017: 5). She also highlights the relegation – through colonialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia – of “all those who cannot or do not conform to these standards to the subhuman or animal sphere outside the human species” (2017: 5). Despite such warnings, environmental humanities have largely embraced new materialist and posthumanist notions of nonhuman agency. In the effort to dismantle human dominance, agency has not only been attributed to nonhuman animals, but extended to plants, local environments, more-than-human entities, complex (in)organic assemblages, and even matter at the quantum level.¹ Given the dominance of “agency” in contemporary theory, it

1 See Marder 2013; Povinelli 2016; Bennett 2010; Barad 2007. In a critical turn, while Swarbrick and Tremblay (2024) write about the influence of new materialism on the concept of relation, they also emphasize the influence of these theoretical strands on the notion of “agency” and other key terms as they are understood in these theories. Indeed, Barad calls their approach “agential realism.” In Swarbrick and Tremblay’s words: “The rubrics of new materialism, speculative realism, and object-oriented ontology may have seen their popularity wane over the past ten or fifteen years, yet their legacy within the environmental humanities is undeniable. One aim of these theoretical formations has been to displace the human as the arbiter of being and meaning. To do so, they have traded ‘correlationism’ whereby the world is apprehended through the correlation between the distinct processes of being and thinking, for a ‘world of

is all the more urgent to subject it to critique. My argument is that the same structure underlies the logic of anthropogenesis, zoogenesis, and even geogenesis. I therefore focus on those theories that reclaim animal agency, in order to expose and undo the last vestiges of philosophical authoritarianism.

To this end, I begin with François Laruelle. In addressing the nonhuman, Laruelle first separates (“dualizes”) the philosophical figure of the “rational animal” into “the ordinary man” and the animal. He argues that from this point on it becomes almost impossible to speak of the animal at all, since non-philosophical knowledge concerns only the radical immanence of the ordinary man.² In this article, however, I use the term “ordinary animal” in order to expose the ontology that enables the attribution of agency to the animal and thus forces it into the violent structure through the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. By insisting on the radical immanence of the ordinary animal, I foreclose the possibility of “the animal” becoming material for affirmation or negation through the concept of agency. Once transformed philo-fictionally into radical immanence, the animal can no longer be made into an object of reflection within environmental humanities or any other form of knowledge, nor can it be drawn into an ontological state of exception grounded in the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. Like the radical immanence of the ordinary man, the radical immanence of the ordinary animal is mediated by nothing but itself. The ordinary animal is therefore radically free. The aim of this article, then, is to trace a path from exceptional animality to the ordinary animal, from environmental humanities to radical environmental humanities, and to create philo-fictional means for such a shift through the concepts of gnosis, iconoclasm, and augury. Its ultimate aim is to abolish both “humanity” and “animality,” freeing the multiple from the philosophical yoke that reduces it to a beast of ontological burden.

panexperiential meshes’ in which phenomena largely exceed and escape human cognition... While there is now far less scholarship produced under the umbrella of these once-new materialisms, the idiom of entanglement or enmeshment – whereby we are and should be one with a world of interconnection and interdependence that includes human and nonhuman life, the living and the nonliving – has been naturalized, so to speak, as ecology itself” (2024: 10–11).

2 See *A Biography of Ordinary Man* (Laruelle 2018). To readers accustomed to contemporary theory, the term “ordinary man” may sound dated. Yet in Laruelle’s non-philosophy, “man” has nothing to do with the figure of the white, cis-heterosexual, European, middle-class male. As radical immanence, the “ordinary man” refuses any attribution that would bind it to a particular sociopolitical or epistemo-ontological image of the human. It points instead to Laruelle’s commitment to liberating “us” from violently imposed notions of “humanity.” In this respect, his project resonates with critiques of the category of the human, of “humanity,” and of related exclusionary material-semiotic practices articulated by Sylvia Wynter and Afropessimism (see Wynter 2003; Jackson 2020; for an explicit non-philosophy of Blackness, see Kaplan 2020). And since the concept of “animality” is necessarily bound up with that of “humanity,” this article aligns with projects aimed at abolishing the supremacy of “humanity” (see also Springer et al. 2021).

Exceptional animality

The first type of production of exceptional animality occurs through the negation of nonhuman agency alongside the simultaneous affirmation of human agency. The list of relevant philosophers and theories is too extensive to cover fully here, but it is worth noting that many of the most influential philosophers have also been the most vocal proponents of this form of differentiation. A variety of social practices – such as animal husbandry, industrial agriculture and slaughter, and the keeping of pets – have reinforced the same logic. To illustrate the process of negating an attribute ascribed to a substance, I briefly consider two influential philosophers. Ina Goy (2020) demonstrates that in Kant’s account animals are divided into two groups: nonhuman animals and the *animal rationale*, or human beings, who are animals endowed with reason and thus set apart from the rest of the living world. In this framework, only the non-rational aspects of human beings are considered animal. Both humans and nonhuman animals are governed by mechanical and physical-teleological laws, but only the *animal rationale* is subject to the third, moral-teleological law. Since only human beings possess reason and the capacity to act freely in accordance with it, nonhuman animals are relegated to the mechanical and physical realm and are thereby deprived of agency. Human exceptionalism is thus established and reinforced through the negation of the same attribute in animals (see also Baumeister 2022).

For Martin Heidegger, human exceptionalism emerges in a somewhat different manner. According to Hans Ruin (2022), Heidegger’s stance on the human–animal relationship is more ambiguous, but only insofar as certain attributes are preemptively negated and rendered inaccessible to non-Dasein. For Heidegger, only Dasein has a world, and this is ontologically grounded: Dasein alone can question the meaning of its own existence. Other beings simply *are* and therefore lack a world. “World” is one of the existentials through which Dasein articulates its way of being, its existence. Here, ontological differentiation is clearly at work: first between beings and Being, then among beings themselves (Dasein versus others), with carefully applied terminology enabling this distinction. Agency, in this framework, functions as a product of ontological differentiation: the world, in the existential sense, is a lived world constituted through Dasein’s activity. Dasein actively relates to its own existence, and it is this active engagement that generates the question of ontological meaning (see also Calarco 2008).

As Ursula K. Heise (2017) observes, humans are uniquely responsible for both the destruction and restoration of the environment. Environmental humanities, accordingly, focus closely on environmental degradation and on exploitative human relationalities with nonhuman animals and the more-than-human, often placing human culture at the center of analysis. Yet, as many scholars note, this exclusive focus on the human tends to obscure the ways in which nonhuman animals and the more-than-human are not only assigned secondary value but are violently exploited, particularly under capitalism.

The conditions of such exploitation are so severe that scholars have sought to identify the ways nonhuman animals and the more-than-human act under these pressures. By examining spaces where human activity most intensively affects other animals and environments, one can also recover the forms of agency that nonhuman animals exercise. Consequently, agency has become a central concept within the epistemo-ontological framework of environmental humanities. The affirmation of nonhuman animal agency varies across the field, depending on the imagined degree of freedom. Nonhuman animals may be treated as commodities, entirely deprived of freedom; as “pets,” granted limited autonomy through forcible domestication; or as “feral” or “wild,” defined relationally in opposition to domesticated animals. Critical attention has especially focused on pets and other animals forced into commodity forms, with attempts to grant them a dignified life, which is often framed as achievable only through the ascription of agency.³

However, animals considered wild, both metaphorically and literally, have served a distinct theoretical role. According to Tom Tyler (2012), animals used as examples in philosophical discourse “are often retained as mere ciphers, place-fillers who sustain an argument but remain faceless and interchangeable. Alternatively, they can be found subsumed under an amorphous Animal, an abstract, generalized chimera that lays waste to rigorous thinking” (2012: 4). These are all “careless modes of taming the animal” (2012: 4). Instead of turning the animal into a means of human “narcissistic identification” or a tool in a quest for knowledge, Tyler emphasizes recovering the animal’s individuality or, rather, singularity. Animals beyond the reach of the human hand and mind are *ferae*, a term which “indicate(s) modes of thinking that become possible when ‘we’ cease to consider ourselves, preeminently or exclusively, as human” (2012: 265). He concludes that “manumission releases from the hand both those animals who would be wild and those humans, bound by a belief in human exceptionalism, who find themselves laboring under the burden of a handy humanism” (2012: 265). Tyler’s concept of *ferae* serves both to deflate human exceptionalism and to shift ontological weight toward the animal. Animals attain this status only when they assert their agency in contrast to domesticated animals, whose bodies and actions are forcibly constrained. In this framework, it is the animal that holds the upper epistemo-ontological hand.

According to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, an exception is defined as the act of excepting or excluding, and as one who is excepted, a case to which a rule does not apply. To except, then, is to demarcate a certain space, to draw boundaries that grant what is within it a status it did not previously hold. This status may appear, from the outside, as one to which rules do not apply. The state of exception is thus an interplay of inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, and the assignment of ontico-ontological weight. What is deemed exceptional

3 The literature is vast. For an orientation see Hribal 2013; Nance 2013; Boyde 2014; Swanson, Lien and Ween 2018; Colling 2020; Dugnoille and Vander Meer 2023.

gains this weight through its relation to what Laruelle calls the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. The ontico-ontological status itself constitutes a state of exception. The Principle of Sufficient Philosophy operates via what Laruelle terms the “2/3 structure.” As he explains in *Philosophies of Difference* (2010b), the structure functions in two ways. First, it establishes a difference between two terms. Second, this difference is elevated to an overarching principle or structure. It becomes Difference. The resulting Difference is an ontico-ontological distinction, for instance between attribute and substance, or between beings and Being. If the difference is not elevated, however, the differential term can be taken as one, and the principle may be found in attributes, substance, Being, or the Other. Historically, substantialist philosophies – those privileging Being, substance, or essence – have dominated, while philosophies emphasizing attributes, intensities, or movement toward the Other beyond metaphysics are more recent. For Laruelle, however, all are ultimately caught within the operations of the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy.

Difference, as a structure underlying the environmental humanities, produces ontico-ontological exceptionality. It renders an attribute (agency) a function of ontico-ontological differentiation between substances, humanity, and animality. Difference directs the production of exceptionality as ontico-ontological burden. Were it not for the burden produced by the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, there would be no attribute predicated to animality or humanity to affirm or negate. There would be no humanity or animality at all, since there would be no attributes, substances, or ontological and ontic levels. The Principle of Sufficient Philosophy thus conditions the possibility of an ontico-ontological difference that manifests as the distinction between attributes and substances. It enables differentiation between ontic and ontological levels of reality. This state of exception includes and excludes substances by defining them as either possessing or lacking agency, as either animality or humanity. It makes little difference whether the attribution of agency serves anthropogenesis or zoogenesis. The process assigns greater ontico-ontological weight to a substance and, in a sense, precedes species differentiation, since the Principle guides the very production of ontico-ontological difference. The state of ontico-ontological exception, produced by Difference, allows humanity to appear exceptional through the affirmation of agency, or animals to appear exceptional either by negating agency (less than human) or affirming it (equal to or exceeding human). In all cases, the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, as Difference and as its inherent violence, remains intact. Individuals become beasts of ontico-ontological burden precisely through this differentiation on the basis of agency in the production of humanity and animality.

Returning to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, one synonym for “exceptional” is “extraordinary.” Perhaps it is through this term that the work of Difference becomes most visible across individual theories. Whether considering violently domesticated or wild animals, in each case something extra is added to the animal. This “extra” is animality as an ontico-ontological supplement, which both unifies the animal and enables philosophical

reflection, its authority, dominance, and violence. What was once radically multiple, without a common denominator (the One), is differentiated, made ontico-ontological, and rendered legible for philosophical reason. In this process, a radically multiple animal (the One) is forced into animality through differentiation and attribution. The ordinary, in effect, is forced into becoming the extraordinary.

Ordinary animal

In addition to Laruelle's own *The Last Humanity: The New Ecological Science* (2021), the most systematic non-philosophical approach to the non-human as the animal appears in John Ó Maoilearca's *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (2015).⁴ For Ó Maoilearca, "the question of the human *and* animal, then, is equally live for non-philosophy and sets up the possibility of the animal as *nonstandard* (the 'animal-in-person')" (Ó Maoilearca 2015: 184, italics in original). His non-philosophical treatment of the animal amounts to, in his own words, "equating the animal with Laruelle's use of the postural" (2015: 241). What this means is that one begins with the One "as an undivided, uncut, real identity *in-the-last-instance*. Hence, in wagering on such an axiom or hypothesis, we also add the name 'Animal' to the Real to test what happens to thought" (2015: 241, italics in original). Adding "the name Animal" to the One leads to "the engendering of each dyad or event via a new, mutated posture (in the Real/One). It is universal, cosmological, ongoing mutation" (2015: 241). Rather than assuming extensions of the same – such as attributing intelligence or other qualities formerly reserved for the human to animals – Ó Maoilearca argues that "it is both the human *and* intelligence that actually change (mutate), and *from that, new* virtual 'poles' (positions of inside and outside) are subsequently created, also producing new members" (2015: 240, italics in original).

Furthermore, refracted through Indigenous perspectivist cosmology, the posturality of the animal reveals that to be seen as a human person is not a fixed essence but a perspective – "a generic human posture" rather than a substance (2015: 231). Indigenous thought does not reduce Man to an essence, Ó Maoilearca claims, but instead "enlarges or undefines it" as nonrepresentationally universal, since "a perspective is not a representation." This also transforms how animals are conceived: they are "ex-humans, not humans ex-animals," which inverts the idea of animality as a domain opposed to humanity (2015: 231). Within Ó Maoilearca's non-philosophical framework, *anthropos* is "expanded, morphed, in and through the nonhuman," so that a radical anthropomorphism reshapes both subject (*anthropos*) and project (animal) (2015: 209). He describes this expansion as a "charitable act" that precedes representation (2015: 209). Such a nonrepresentational expansion points toward "a radicalized democracy," where all are "equally One" (2015: 212). This equality precedes

4 See also Stark 2024; Pingree 2023; Cull Ó Maoilearca 2020; Ioan 2019.

philosophy itself, since even to say “equally different” (Deleuze), “equally Being” (Heidegger), or “equally multiple” (Badiou) still remains too philosophical for Laruelle. In non-philosophy, individuals are all One, “first a performative posture before it becomes an ontological thesis” (2015: 212).

The project undertaken in this article, while affirming Ó Maoilearca’s claim that “all” are “equally One,” diverges on a crucial point. As Ó Maoilearca notes, “it is not that the shift, or postural mutation, from ‘substantive to perspective’ removes *all* chauvinism, all exceptionalism: it is only a vector, an orientation toward the Real, and not the pure equality of the Real itself (otherwise there would be no need for *continual* mutation)” (2015: 233, italics in original). This article, however, drawing on MacCormack’s theoretical-activist abolitionism, contends that chauvinism – and with it practices such as speciesism – *can* be abolished. What is required is the deflation of ontico-ontological exceptionality: both the affirmation of agency and the simultaneous substantialization of anthropogenesis and zoogenesis. To deflate such exceptionality is to return to animals-without-animality, to the ordinary animal. The state of exception can only be undone through radicalization but a specifically non-philosophical radicalization that collapses the distinction between the ontological and the ontic. In the following sections, rather than centering the “ordinary man” as in Laruelle, I will philo-fictionally introduce the “ordinary animal.”⁵ Placing the “ordinary animal” at the origin of the non-philosophical enterprise reframes radical environmental humanities around the terms of gnosis, iconoclasm, and augury. In doing so, it unsettles the philosophically grounded environmental humanities that reproduce ontico-ontological exceptionality. The ordinary animal thus becomes a non-philosophical means of stripping philosophy of its authority within environmental humanities. And, following MacCormack’s abolitionist thought, of stripping away “the human” itself.

5 The non-representational and non-epistemological mode of discourse on unilaterality is philo-fiction. Laruelle uses this term to describe the outcome of the non-philosophical reduction of philosophy into “materials” that can be used creatively. The first two steps in this process are unilateralization and dualysis. Philo-fiction treats philosophy as a malleable material: the resulting work may look like a new philosophy or theory, but it is fundamentally a fiction. It is a creative product, using formerly philosophical concepts as means – analogous to using literary style in fiction or color in painting – rather than as claims about reality. Philo-fiction makes no claims about the existence or non-existence to which philosophical concepts refer (avoiding the ontological fallacy), nor about what is knowable or unknowable (avoiding the epistemological fallacy). It uses philosophy sculpturally, giving form to something that represents “nothing.” For the development of the concept, see Laruelle 2010a, especially chapter 16; for Laruelle’s application of the concept, see Laruelle 2015a and Laruelle 2012a; and for examples of others performing philo-fiction, see Wallis 2019, chapters 6 and 7. Laruelle has written poetry with (non-)philosophical material, as well as “treatises” (see, e.g., Laruelle 2012c).

Gnosis

At the beginning of his early work *Le principe de minorité* (1981), Laruelle poses a series of questions that illuminate what he later calls the One:

Can we define parts before the Whole, and independently of the Whole? Differences before their repetition and independently of the Idea, Logos, Being? Minorities before the State and independently of the State? Can we think events before their historical setting, subjects before objects and devoid of objectivity? A time without temporality? Singularities or multiplicities before any universal and independently of the universal? (1981: 5, translation mine)

To pursue this program, Laruelle develops a specific lexicon of non-philosophical terminology, designed to mark a break with these philosophical concepts, grounded in the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy and introducing the violence of ontology. Non-philosophical terms mark the distinction between philosophical knowledge, produced by a subject that constitutes the World, and the non-philosophical approach, which problematizes that position through *gnosis* (instead of representation), *clones* (instead of subjects), and *Universe* (instead of the World). These three terms – *gnosis*, *clones*, *Universe* – signal how non-philosophical knowledge is produced in parallel to the One, which remains inaccessible. For Laruelle, the primary challenge is to develop adequate terminology and a logic capable of expressing radical immanence both as it is experienced and as it conditions all other forms of knowledge. The task is to express radical immanence with, as, and through radical immanence. *Gnosis*, or vision-in-One, represents the way the One is given as a simple given. As Laruelle writes, “vision-in-One is the experience that the One is the absolutely sufficient element of thought and that there is no need to seek ‘Being’, ‘ontology’, or even the ‘forgetting of Being’ so as to think in a positive, radical and coherent way” (2013b: 34).

The One is one of the “first names” of non-philosophy, from which everything else proceeds: “Immanence of the Real, undoubtedly, but moreover as effectively ‘radical’, blended without a single morsel of transcendence (of the World, language, movement, topology, set theory, etc.) – of philosophy... It is as such an *autonomy through radicality* in relation to every form of transcendence” (Laruelle 2013c: 18, italics in original). Perhaps most succinct formulation of the “axioms” on the One is given in *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*:

- 1) The One is radical immanence, identity-without-transcendence, not associated with transcendence or a division.
- 2) The One is in-One or vision-in-One and not in-Being or in-Difference.
- 3) The One is the Real insofar as it is foreclosed to all symbolization (through, knowledge, etc.).
- 4) The One is given-without-giveness and separated-without-separation – of giveness.
- 5) The One is that which determines or gives-in-the-last-instance world-thought as given (object of a giveness) (2013b: 166).

The One, then, is a simple given, indivisible. It is radical immanence, closed to any assertion about it, and it introduces the logic of the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. Laruelle describes the One in various ways, twisting existing philosophical language to convey radical immanence, since the One, as undivided, refuses attribution and the logic of predication. It is described as “necessarily the already-given,” “auto-impression” (instead of auto-affection), “eternal embrace with neither past nor future, neither origin nor destination, and which has nothing, no manifold, to embrace,” “a non-thetic Identity... simultaneously non-decisional (of) self and non-positional (of) self: with neither will for essence nor topology for existence,” and “nothing-but-singular Identity” (Laruelle 2013a: 35-39). The One is the Real, the Absolute, radical immanence itself – unmediated, so that nothing can be attributed to it except expressions pointing to its immanence to itself. As Laruelle writes, “The One thus described is unthinkable from the speculative point of view alone; it challenges the speculative imagination itself as power of synthesis of contraries, as transcendental power of philosophical imagery. It reclaims a thought without image, for, in a sense, it is always absent, at least invisible within the horizon of the World or philosophy” (2013a: 50).

With the One, Laruelle sets out to map and critique different notions of multiplicity. The first is discrete or arithmetic multiplicity, the second – and the main target of his critique – is continuous multiplicity, which corresponds to the contemporary concept of difference. The third type is dispersive or unary multiplicity, which Laruelle also calls Minorities and describes as the “absolute concept or essence of multiplicity” (1981: 6). It is by following the logic of dispersive multiplicity that Laruelle seeks to move beyond what he terms “Greco-Occidental Representation” toward “a thought of the Absolute, but Absolute as such, the thought of the One, *but the One without unity*, beyond the Idea, Logos, Being itself. That the individuals are ultimate constituents of the reality, before the Being, before the World, History or the State, that there are, to put it in classical terms, absolutely dispersed monads devoid of monadology, reason or the universal” (1981: 6, italics in original, translation mine).

The radical simplicity of the One allows no external relation. It cannot be described as a relation between substance and attribute, for doing so would introduce the outside and the ontico-ontological logic of Difference – or, equivalently, the onto-logics of Being – both subsumed under the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy from a non-philosophical perspective. Thus, Laruelle introduces a different kind of relationality: a unilateral relation. He writes that “unilateralization is thus a radical form of transcendental reduction” (2013c: 133). In this sense, the unilateralization of the One signifies a single directionality that always points to the radical immanence in which thought occurs. Since all thought occurs within radical immanence, the production of transcendence – any concept aiming to express something beyond it – ultimately depends on the same radical immanence. Radical immanence relates only to itself. If this seems circular, it only appears so from a philosophical mindset. For Laruelle, “unilateral duality is identical in-One to identity without dividing it, without alienating it, but without closing itself up into a synthesis” (2013c: 134).

Iconoclasm

Radical immanence, or the One, relates only to itself. It unilateralizes. Unilateralization leads to unilateral duality, comprising the One and the (non-)One. The (non-)One denotes force-(of)-thought, clone, and Universe, which are non-philosophical formulations that grasp the outside running parallel to the One (which, as noted, is absolutely foreclosed). In contrast, the World is the sum of all knowledges unified by philosophy. Philosophy produces mixtures: there is always something and what is attributed to that something. Regional knowledges – science, art, politics, and so on – are produced as mixtures in the World, always given reason by philosophy. It is always (regional) knowledge + philosophy, and therein lies the violence of philosophy, for it imposes itself on what it takes to be its object. These philosophical mixtures also generate the exceptionality of humanity and animality – anthropogenesis and zoogenesis – by attributing predicates to a supposed substance, or more precisely, by imposing the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, which conditions the possibility of differences between concepts. Non-philosophy seeks to liberate regional knowledges from the unity imposed by philosophy, aiming for truly multiple knowledges without a common denominator, or, in this case, to collapse the difference between attribute or predicate (agency) and substance (humanity/animality). As Laruelle writes: “We propose to break the alliance of man and the authoritarian predicates (Desire, Language, Sex, Power, the State, History, etc.) that lead to sciences that are not those of man, to break the alliance of man and philosopher, master of predicates” (2018: 8). This breaking of the alliance is radical – even in the colloquial sense – because it removes everything that has been attributed throughout the history of all disciplines, insofar as they are conditioned by the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy: “The human in man is not reducible to the sum of his predicates: the living, the speaking, the acting, the historical, the sexuated, the economic, the juridical, etc. – the philosophizing, however these predicates are calculated. This is possible man, not real man” (Laruelle 2018: 8).

The breaking of the alliance between man (or animal) and imposed attributes occurs through unilateral duality, that is, through unilateralization and dualysis. Unilateralization is the movement of radical immanence, showing that it determines precisely because it is real, insofar as it is foreclosed. Since radical immanence is radically foreclosed and singular, nothing can be attributed to it; there is no space in which to introduce a duality. Consequently, radical immanence (of man) is inherently unattributable. The process by which radical immanence is separated from forced attribution is called dualysis. Dualysis reveals the constitutive duality of any mixture under examination: foreclosed unilateral radical immanence on the one hand, and attributes/knowledge/philosophy/the World on the other. In Laruellean gnosticism, there is the One and the World. The One is also called the ordinary man, which helps clarify how the exceptionality discussed earlier is produced. Exceptionality emerges through attribution: beings are differentiated by the predication of an attribute, such

as agency. Attribution functions as differentiation, granting one being a more exceptional status than another. It is thus included in an ontico-ontological structure that elevates its weight by virtue of being pronounced as possessing an ontology, enabling it to be comprehended and described, even minimally. From a non-philosophical perspective, however, all this belongs to the World. It is the World that forcibly attributes and differentiates through philosophy. Those who are subjected to these processes, who are attributed and differentiated, become the victims of the World and philosophy, as Laruelle emphasizes in *General Theory of Victims* (2015b).

Laruelle aims to question “eco-logical difference as it is part of the anthropo-logic cut that defines man as a ‘rational animal’ facing the natural environment, man as a synthesis of the animal subject and the attribute ‘rational’, or some other attribute” (2021: 92). Moreover, he observes that “the classical subject-attribute, animal-rational structure can well be replaced by that of the Dasein-world structure, by that of ontologico-ontic difference, or with other structures, it is always a variation on the same structure of difference” (2021: 92). Through such structures, the ordinary man becomes a victim of attribution – first as a rational animal, another instance of producing the ontico-ontological state of exception, and second through the concept of agency. In both cases, the ordinary man is subjected to the structure of Difference and the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy.

According to Laruelle, rendering philosophical violence ineffective requires identifying a non-philosophical “threshold of humanity” or “generic man,” one “derived from the animal, the plant, and specifically humans in the narrowest sense... MAP (Man, Animal, Plant) are no longer species separated according to biological distribution, but point to another theory, that of states of the lived” (2021: 98). The term “lived” allows Laruelle to avoid the philosophical trap of the concept of life, which imposes unifying, hierarchizing, and differentiating effects. Hence, he uses “lived-without-life,” marking the “lowest” common point of Man, Animal, and Plant, which he also calls the “quantum.” These terms – quantum, lived-without-life, generic man – all indicate radical immanence. Radical immanence, with its unilaterality and dualysis, changes the terms of the debate. As Laruelle writes, “philosophy itself has no rigorous human quantum, it is replaced by the soul, mind, body, transcendence, etc. In this context we need one which breaks with the metaphysical continuity and absolute discontinuity of the subject coped from the modern multiple” (2021: 103). What is needed is a perspective beyond both animalized man and humanized animal, beyond anthropogenesis and zoogenesis, interpreted as “simple matrix variables or properties of a non-separable entity = X, which is the true subject of the matter” (2021: 105). This non-separable entity, X, is radical immanence, which does not suffer from attribution or species difference.

Laruelle begins with the idea that “if the animal is within man and outside of man, it is necessary to find another cut between man = X and animality than philosophical difference” (2021: 121). This X of radical immanence undermines all philosophical determinations of both man and animal and requires a logic

beyond the simple interiority/exteriority produced by authoritarian philosophical unity. It is what Laruelle calls the practice of the *generic*, thinking as always already radically immanent. In this way, he asserts that “the animal is able to be measured neither with purely physical nature nor to the human being, so as deficient or sub-rational, we exclude these two correlative possibilities, they being philosophical interpretations” (2021: 122). To “measure” the animal in terms of either physical nature or the human being, to describe it as deficient or sub-rational, would be to fall back on ontico-ontological exceptionality. Once the onto-logics of predication is refused, however, the animal can be approached as part of radical immanence, without being subordinated to human-centered or ontologically exceptional frameworks:

the animal is no longer the model in the positive and scientific sense of man or his copy, nor inversely is man the paradigm of the animal. The meaning of model and copy must change. Generic man subtracts the animal from the use made of it by the despotic or sufficient individual, who reduces the animal to the state of a consumable object and abuses its sensible nature as a suffering animal (2021: 123).

This is the animal of Laruelle’s non-philosophy. As such, it is always already part of the Man-Animal-Plant system of radical immanence and always already related to the generic or ordinary man. Laruelle’s focus on man remains central, even though he is scrupulously critical of all forms of philosophical (anti)humanism. Nevertheless, it is still humanity – however redefined or restructured – that primarily interests him and that he seeks to liberate from the World, while others are considered in relation to Man in ways that elicit critical analysis. This is most evident in his ethics, which begins with Man, who then cares for the Animal and seeks to do the least harm to the Plant: what Laruelle calls “the before-first defense of Man and the first defense of the animal” (2021: 145). However, there is no reason not to extend Laruelle’s insight further. Since the animal is no longer merely a model or copy of man, nor is man the paradigm of the animal, one can ask whether the animal can be unilateral in the same sense as the radical immanence of the ordinary man. Both would then be equally real, foreclosed, a given-without-giveness, though what “both” means beyond the onto-logics of animality and humanity remains an open question.

The ordinary animal can be understood as iconoclastic, since it can no longer be represented as a model, copy, or paradigm within epistemologies structured by the ontico-ontological logic of the World. As a radical immanence (of) itself, the ordinary animal becomes one of the names of the One, alongside the ordinary man. Dualized from the man as a rational animal – pushed into a “space” beyond man – the ordinary animal no longer follows as secondary. Since it is no longer an attribute of the ordinary man, it is transformed into the unilateral ordinary animal. This first dualization separates man and animal, extracting the animal from its function as an attribute ascribed to man. In this way, the animal emerges independently from predication. In a philo-fictional move made here to remove the authoritarian rule of philosophy in the environmental

humanities and to radicalize it fully, the ordinary animal becomes animal = X, where X is the radical immanence from which unilaterality proceeds. The ordinary animal is thus both unilateral and foreclosed to all symbolization. Following MacCormack's abolitionism, the ordinary animal is dualized not only from man but also from any further restructurings that might occur even within Laruelle's MAP system. Laruelle realigns man, animal, and plant according to non-philosophical criteria, independent of philosophy or other knowledges as given in the World. To reach the truly radical immanent X, the animal (and the plant) must be dualized a second time. This tortuous process reveals how deeply "animality" is implicated in the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, compared to "humanity," which requires only a single dualization. In short, animals and other more-than-human existents endure far greater violence within the World.

Augury

The doubly dualized, unilateral ordinary animal poses a thorny challenge for thinking. Claiming the ordinary animal as unilateral immediately risks relating it to the thinking subject, thereby rendering it relational and drawing it back into the ontico-ontological structures of the World. This tension explains why Laruelle notes the difficulty of speaking about the dualized remainder of the "rational animal." Yet, as the ordinary animal is doubly dualized, it is also doubly positioned. On one hand, the ordinary animal unilateralizes the World: it represents the absence of relation to thought as structured by philosophy. Whatever exists in this state is beyond the reach of categories of thought, indescribable and ineffable. No light of *logos*, of speech-thought, can reach that which is unilateral. It is (in) perpetual darkness. Perpetual darkness is an apt metaphor for the "space" created once the exceptionalizing epistemological and ontological burdens of anthropogenesis and zoogenesis are lifted from the ordinary animal. What remains after the collapse of the epistemo-ontological scaffolding of anthropogenesis and zoogenesis is utterly dark. But it is only dark for philosophy and its authoritarian categorical predicative system. As Patricia MacCormack notes, "it is important and pleasurable to be heard or seen in the right way," but "when we are silent and we exist in the dark, we do not have to consider ourselves absent" (2025: xi).

From a non-philosophical perspective – the second positionality after double dualysis – this darkness, turned inward and away from the World, teems with liberated multiples without a common denominator. Darkness is also iconoclastic: in the absence of epistemo-ontological categories, it abolishes "images" and any possibility of representation as a mirror of objects or the world. How could one mirror "something" in total darkness, and what would such an activity mean? "Around the philosopher everything becomes World and light; Around man everything becomes Universe and opacity... Black is neither the object nor in the World, it is what man sees in man, and that in which man sees man," writes Laruelle (2012b: 403). He adds: "It is the structures of this ordinary man that we will describe here. Individual structures, invisible to the

light of Reason or Intelligence” (2018: 9). The unilateralization of the ordinary animal is thus radically non-epistemological and non-ontological, beyond the subject-object divide, beyond substance-attribute difference, and beyond ontico-ontological Difference altogether.

However, there are non-representational chance encounters in the dark. *What* is encountered is a wrong kind of question because it leads down the ontological path. Answering a what-question requires pronouncing an attribute, a substance, a species, thereby reproducing the ontico-ontological structure of the World. In the darkness beyond the light of philosophical reason, no such “things” exist. There are only encounters that do proceed not from the ordinary man but from the ordinary animal. There is a form that aligns with this kind of unilateralization, a way of gleaning chance encounters with whatever happens to occur, without actively willing those encounters into existence and relationality. This form is divination.

There have been many kinds of divination practices, many of which today, but in this context, practices involving animals are particularly significant. Broadly, there are two modes of animal divination, roughly corresponding to the relational and unilateral described in this article. The relational mode is *haruspicy*, historically involving the divination of the future or auspicious times by interpreting the entrails of sacrificed animals.⁶ Haruspicy directly engages with animals by extracting parts of their killed bodies to generate knowledge, and in this respect, it resembles much contemporary science in its treatment of living beings. *Augury*, by contrast, is based on interpreting the behavior of live animals, often birds but also other species. The key difference is that animals behave according to their own will or some non-(human)-determined motive force. Augury does not involve manipulating or extracting from animals; humans are merely observers of spontaneous behavior and movement, present only when animals happen to appear. In this way, animal bodies are no longer objects of extraction, as in haruspicy, and thus no longer subjected to the exploitative and violent ontologies of knowledge production.

Read non-philosophically, augury opens up a space for chance encounters that is conducive to non-representational and non-extractive philo-fiction.⁷ Non-philosophical augury makes no claims about animals, least of all about the nature of their nature. The nature of their nature is radically immanent and therefore foreclosed to any thought that would introduce Difference. Those encountered are multiple without a common denominator, and once the burden

6 Literature is again vast, but for the classification that I am following in this article see Struck 2014.

7 Jeremy R. Smith and Jacob Vangeest come close to the terminology and aim of this article by using the term aleatory gnosis to provide a framework for a non-philosophical conception of invention and intervention – in(ter)vention. For them, gnosis is a “(other-)worldly weapon (against) the world,” characterized as “aleatory and indeterminate” and capable of “ruptur[ing] both cosmos and nomos as they exist in the fabric of the World” (Smith and Vangeest 2022: 103, 109). In this article, augury is used to name the aleatory and interminable dimension of gnosis.

of ontology is lifted, there is no longer either anthropogenesis or zoogenesis, for these ontological terms collapse with the dissolution of philosophical authority. Darkness itself spreads to the deepest reaches of the real, where animals-without-animality unilateralize the World. As Anthony Paul Smith notes, the transcendent conception of nature is undermined by radical immanence, producing a particular kind of space for freedom: “This space is not opened up ‘in nature,’ for freedom is natural, but is rather opened up in the sense that the transcendent aspect of nature is ultimately made relative to a lived immanence common to all creatures” (2013: 9). Given the radical immanence, “every creature is said to be natural... For the perversity of nature is present as subject in the ongoing and diverse creation of niches by species... for as creatures constantly proliferate and spring forth into the biosphere they reject the predictability of naturalism’s sékommca or ‘that’s how it is’” (Smith 2013: 9-10) Radical freedom of “creatures,” for Smith, “speaks to the destruction of every ‘law of nature’” (2013: 10), which directly resonates with MacCormack’s claim that “our identities queer when we all exist as singularities in the silent darkness, because we know that we monsters can hear in this silence and see in this darkness” (2025: xii).

There “is” only a multiple without a common denominator, insofar as that which “is” beyond the ontico-ontological divide is always already related to the World and suffers from the violent unification imposed by authoritarian philosophy. Encounters and movements of radical multiples take place in darkness, and they unfold on the basis of unilaterality. Each multiple unilaterally unilateralizes the World. No ontological burden is imposed on the encounter by defining its terms or assigning any interpretation. There is no ontological or epistemological model for engaging with an encounter through augury. Non-philosophical philo-fictional augury is purely performative. It allows for unilateralization, because it opens a space for encounters that are neither intentional nor willed into existence by any subject. Its non-ground is pure unilateral chance. Since augury is unilateral and non-representational, it is also non-extractive: no knowledge or matter is extracted from the radical multiples. The radical multiples simply happen upon one another, receptive to each other’s movements and the opportunities for philo-fictioning in the dark.

I am not so subtly alluding to cruising and, more importantly, to *darkrooms*. Sarah Ensor writes of cruising not only as “predicated on futureless encounters,” but also “as an unexpected model for an ecological ethic more deeply attuned to our impersonal intimacies with the human, nonhuman, and elemental strangers that constitute our environment and ourselves” (2025: 35–36). The darkroom as a (non-)epistemo-ontological model, however, emphasizes darkness as a key feature, unlike cruising, which can occur in spaces with varying degrees of visibility. Darkrooms are characteristically pitch *dark* and disrupt the very condition of cruising – visibility. In this sense, the darkroom as a (non-)epistemo-ontological model disrupts the ontico-ontological Difference discussed in this article. Cruising and darkrooms thus offer two different models – philosophical and non-philosophical – for approaching the theoretical formation known as queer ecology and, relatedly, conceptualizations

of more-than-human death and extinction in that formation.⁸ Augury, then, is the way unilateral ordinary animals encounter one another in the dark. It is too dark for recognition among radical multiples, yet within that darkness, threads of philo-fictions unspool for precisely that non-reason.

Conclusion

In addition to environmental humanities in its affirmative form, which attends closely to human-animal relationality, radical environmental humanities can be understood in at least three ways. The first is a form that is not non-philosophical. Perhaps the clearest example is found in the work of Patricia MacCormack, who pushes the boundaries of what counts as acceptable in thinking human-animal relations. In a move that many find intolerable, MacCormack's theoretical-activist abolitionism grants precedence to the animal to such an extent that humanity itself must cease to exist for the animal and other ahuman life to flourish. Here, radicality means a militant commitment not only to animal rights, but to the independent existence of the animal and the more-than-human – up to the point of the absolute exclusion, even cessation, of the human.

Two further meanings of radical environmental humanities emerge from the discussion of non-philosophy in this text. The first is the radical immanence of the ordinary man; the second, the radical immanence of the ordinary animal. These two “poles” have framed the article's argument. I have shown that a particular radicality – one that resists the dominance of philosophy in the environmental humanities – emerges when Laruelle's notion of the ordinary man is philo-fictionally dualized into the ordinary animal. Radical immanence thus refers not only to the ordinary man but also to the ordinary animal, which entails several theoretical consequences. Chief among them is that ontological claims producing exceptionality by attributing “agency” to the substance “animality” must be deflated. This in turn points toward a different relation: the unilaterality of what is now understood as the ordinary animal. Radical environmental humanities, in this sense, require restructured ways of thinking, feeling, and acting toward the ordinary animal in its ongoing struggle against the production of beasts of ontological burden.

This struggle is waged through the gnosis of radical immanence, iconoclastic unilaterality, and non-representational, non-extractive augury – methodological tools of radical environmental humanities. Moreover, when these are brought into encounter with MacCormack's theoretical-activist abolitionism, one can also speak of environmental humanities-without-the-human, environmental ~~humanities~~, or simply *environmentalities*. Gnosis, iconoclasm, and augury – alongside the darkroom – are not only methods for liberating animals and the more-than-human from philosophical authority and violence, but also means of a philo-fictional cessation of the human.

⁸ For an encounter between non-philosophy and queer ecological theory through the “non-animal” see Filipović 2024.

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Andrija Filipović

Obična životinja: Makormak, Larijel i radikalna ekološka humanistika

Apstrakt

Ovaj članak je pokušaj da se proširi abolicionistički ahumani projekt Patriše Makormak kroz nefilozofiju Franose Larijela. U tu svrhu se preuzima „životinjski ostatak“ Larujelove dualize „racionalne životinje“ i tretira se kao radikalna imanencija. Ovaj dvostruko dualizovani životinjski ostatak postaje obična životinja naspram (iz)vanredne životinje proizvedene u ekološkoj humanistici kroz ontologiku predikacije. Članak otuda ima tri cilja. Prvo, cilj je kritički razmotriti Larijelovo razumevanje životinje, što je i dalje nedovoljno istraženi aspekt njegove nefilozofije. Drugo, članak razotkriva pretpostavke koje leže u osnovi ekološke humanistike a koje utemeljuju ontičko-ontološki status životinje kao (iz)vanredne. I na kraju, članak zagovara radikalnu ekološku humanistiku kao kritičku filo-fiktivnu praksu osmišljenu putem nefilozofije. Nefilozofska obična životinja zahteva restrukturisanje načina mišljenja, osećanja i delanja ka gnozi, ikonoklazmu i proricanju kao osnovama za neprestanu borbu protiv proizvodnje marve koja tegli ontološki teret.

Ključne reči: abolicionizam, ahumano, ekološka humanistika, nefilozofija, životinja