

Say Her Name: Remembering Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy in Thinking About Algorithmic Finitude and Digital Sufficiency with Foucault and Laruelle

Chantelle Gray

Abstract:

In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault first articulates what he calls the *empirico-transcendental doublet*, a circular logic according to which the subject, unlike other objects, can at once be an empirical object in experience *and* the transcendental conditions that make experience of the empirical possible. This doublet structure is tied, moreover, to what Foucault calls the *analytic of finitude*, a circinate pattern vacillating between a psychology of represented needs and an anthropology of the finitude of human life. Foucault's argument is that it is this paradoxical structure which forms the historical *a priori* of knowledge in the modern episteme and, we may surmise, undergirds the *enclosing logics* of disciplinary societies. In time, Foucault's contemporary, Gilles Deleuze, will describe the emergence of novel ambient and modulatory conditions that provoke a partial remaking of the boundaries of the subject into the *dividual*, or data-individual. This transformation, while unparalleled in some ways, relies on many extractive and surveilling methods and technologies developed in the previous episteme. Similarly, the somatechnical facialisation capabilities of digital technologies – described variously as digital epidermalisation, digital phrenology, and recursive redlining – are, I hold, prefigured by *plantation logics*. But while these are important historical contextualisations, the new algorithmic architectures we are embedded in have occasioned a veritable structural reorganisation of the *circularity* of the empirico-transcendental doublet. This new *recursive* epistemological arrangement – or *algorithmic-transcendental doublet* – causes dividuals to continually be assimilated into computerised temporalities that elicit financialised closed-loop epistemologies and grant the digital illegitimate authority over the radical immanence of life *as lived*.

Somatechnics 14.1 (2024): 86–103

DOI: 10.3366/soma.2024.0424

© Edinburgh University Press

www.euppublishing.com/soma

In addressing the interrelated theses presented here, I invoke François Laruelle's project on non-standard philosophy to propose an alternative posture – one which refuses the *violence of sufficiency*: a knowledge that doubles the world via a transcendental synthesis by which the structure of possibility is precipitated *always* as a doublet.

Keywords: algorithmic finitude; algorithmic-transcendental doublet; digital sufficiency; extraction; plantation logics; surveillance.

From the Analytic of Finitude to Algorithmic Finitude

In *The Order of Things* ([1966]2005), Michel Foucault argues that any knowledge a given culture has at a specific time is always primed by a single *episteme* which 'defines the conditions of possibility of *all* knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice' (183, emphasis added). With *archaeology* as his methodology, he sets out, then, not to understand and interpret the great movements of history or the *œuvres* of famous persons, nor even the spheres of the unconscious or some enigmatic and veiled characteristic at the limits of perception or language, but instead to *describe* certain discursive regularities and the 'norms of adjustment' (389) they engender. His objectives thus delineated, Foucault distinguishes three epistemes: the Renaissance, Classical thought, and the modern age. Briefly, what he argues is that knowledge, during the Renaissance, was articulated by way of *similitude*, for example via analogy, resemblance, opposition, etc. (19–24). During the Classical episteme, knowledge became expressed in main as the *representable* and *represented*; that is, *tables (tableau) of taxonomies*, or, as he puts it elsewhere in the text, 'nomenclature and taxonomy' (132). In the other words, the domain of representations is understood by and large in terms of their rules of composition and the ways in which these are logically connected to each other by way of their position (identity, differences, etc.) within genera.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant will change this dramatically by asking not only what representations are and how they are connected to each other, but what *makes them possible* in the first place. 'From this,' writes Foucault, 'there springs an almost infinite series of consequences' ([1966]2005: 264), of which the most significant is possibly the dual empirical-transcendental structure of the subject, or what he calls the *empirico-transcendental doublet* (347). According to this circular logic the subject, unlike other objects in the world, is both an *empirical (observable) object* in experience and the *transcendental conditions* that make that experience possible. The subject is thus at once the already given and that by which the given is given – that is, its own

givenness – hence the paradox. The empirico-transcendental doublet is tied, moreover, to what Foucault calls the *analytic of finitude* which replaces the analytic of representation of the Classical episteme and inaugurates a new epistemological arrangement vacillating between ‘a *psychology of needs represented* and an *anthropology of natural finitude*’ (280, emphasis added). This paradoxical structure forms the historical *a priori* of knowledge in the modern episteme and, we may surmise, undergirds the *enclosing logics* of disciplinary societies to which, Foucault will argue, ‘our thought today still belongs’ (264).

Gilles Deleuze, a contemporary of Foucault, also takes issue with this circinate pattern which he describes, in *Difference and Repetition*, as Kant’s illegitimate tracing of the transcendental from the empirical or psychological ([1968]1994: 168–170). For Deleuze, this point is made in reference to what he calls the ‘dogmatic image of thought’: a circular holding pattern that conditions the field of possibility in which thinking can unfold. In time, close to the end of his life, Deleuze will take up another Foucaultian theme. As is well known, Deleuze argues, in the ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’ (1992), that the enclosing logics of disciplinary societies have begun to be partly replaced by and operate alongside novel ambient and *modulatory logics* (4) causing the boundaries of the subject to vacillate between *individual* and *dividual* (5): a ‘hyper-individuated yet networked’ data-person (Halpern 2014: 138). Although sometimes imagined as disembodied *virtual avatars*, our data-selves are deeply embedded in corporeal-technological transformations – a veritable redistribution of the sensible into a smart reality. This rearrangement has resulted in an epistemological and subjective ‘flattening of complexity’ alongside the technological conversion of soma into a ‘clean signal’ aimed at *optimisation* and *prediction* (Crawford 2021: 213). These two drivers also function at the heart of *algorithmic governance* which forms part of and exceeds traditional state structures (Rouvroy 2020).

Alongside more established practices of governing there is a growing focus on amassing large – even unmanageable – amounts of data for classification via pattern recognition to produce ‘results that are perceived to be somehow objective’, engendering ‘a statistical ouroboros’ or ‘self-reinforcing discrimination machine that amplifies social inequalities under the guise of technical neutrality’ (Crawford 2021: 131). One of these ostensibly ‘objective’ but discriminatory tactics, which Dan McQuillan calls *recursive redlining*, systematically and systemically denies certain people access to social services (2022a: 83). In more somatechnical terms, Simone Browne provides another example, this time in reference to the ways in which bodies emerge with, through and in opposition to biometric technologies. Drawing on Frantz Fanon’s

concept of *epidermalisation*, she calls the *effects* of these new faciality technologies ‘digital epidermalization’ (Browne 2015: 26), while Cathy O’Neil calls the related phenomenon of social scoring ‘digital phrenology’ (2016). These examples, which McQuillan refers to as ‘soft eugenic’ practices, surface a ‘deeper social calculus’ (2022a: 83, 84) that articulates new forms of *power* and *knowledge* driven by the financialisation of *life* but which are grounded in reductive categorisations that flatten complexity and ‘remove significant context’ to ‘make the world more computable’, so further entrenching the ‘uneven allocations of advantage and suffering’ that already exist (Crawford 2021: 148).

Although many of these digital transformations are novel and unparalleled, they also frequently draw on the extractive and surveilling methods and technologies developed in the previous episteme, some of which can be traced back to plantations. My aim, in this paper, is to trace some of the intersecting *logics* that undergird our algorithmic ecologies. The first, which I have outlined in this section, is the *circularity* of the empirico-transcendental doublet, a logic that gives way to the *recursivity* of what I describe as the *algorithmic-transcendental doublet* in a later section. My argument is that these rather abstract formulations are grounded in the very somatechnical realities of extraction and surveillance that bolster current digital and futuristic virtual worlds, while being prefigured by *plantation logics*. I will also advance the idea that the algorithmic-transcendental doublet, like the empirico-transcendental doublet, produces knowledge that doubles the world via a transcendental synthesis by which the structure of possibility is precipitated *always* as a doublet – circular, recursive, and identified with an ‘over-algorithm’. One of the outcomes of this is that individuals are continually assimilated into computerised temporalities that, because of their doublet structure, elicit closed-loop epistemologies and grant the digital illegitimate authority over the radical immanence of life *as lived*. In addressing the interrelated theses presented here, I invoke François Laruelle’s project on non-standard philosophy to propose an alternative posture – one which refuses this *violence of sufficiency*. Here I must admit a second objective: to demonstrate the importance of Foucault ‘between’ Kant and Laruelle and, concomitantly, to show the measures taken by both Foucault and Laruelle to ‘defetishise’ thought.

Say Her Name: Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy, or, Plantation Logics for the Prefiguration of Digital Sufficiency

Undergirded by an *extractive logic* with a penchant for propagating ‘patterns of carelessness’ (McQuillan 2022a: 10), the algorithmic

ecologies we find ourselves in extend practices of data extraction ever deeper into all areas of human and nonhuman life. Besides gathering data based on our internet activities, tech companies now draw ‘on a range of approaches to gain new ground’, including biometric data such as gestures, facial expressions, and voice samples. It may even be said that a new dictum has emerged: ‘*you shall know them by their metadata*’ (Crawford 2021: 185). Or, equally then: you shall *be known* by your metadata.

In *Future Histories*, Lizzie O’Shea traces surveillance capitalism’s practices of extraction – not only of data, but also of affect and vulnerability – to the gambling machine industry which is ‘built on active and sophisticated attempts by technology designers to create a dynamic of addiction between person and device’ (2019: 32), but always for the purposes of capital. To cultivate consumer loyalty, technologists designed the floor with perfectly timed triggers that would lead gamblers to ‘become lost’ in what is colloquially called ‘the zone’ (32). The ‘high’ experienced by gamblers at this time is driven by dopamine which, like nicotine, cocaine or heroin, activates the brain’s reward system – very much like prompts and scrolling on cell phones do. But dopamine acts positively only when the right amount of it is released into the body. When the balance is upset, a dopamine deficiency may lead to depression and feelings of hopelessness, just as a dopamine surplus could prompt agitated or even aggressive behaviour, interrupted sleeping patterns, and weakened impulse control, the latter of which is sometimes correlated to addictive behaviours. What the gambling industry portended, in other words, is the same kind of dopamine and adrenaline seeking behaviours that have been associated with digital compulsion loops.

Dopamine alone is not enough to drive these kinds of behaviours though. Just as ‘technologists in the gambling industry’ needed ‘large amounts of personal data about users’ (O’Shea 2019: 32) to find each gambler’s ‘pain point’ for fiscal exploitation, so too the contemporary extraction of data ensures that corporations can use machine learning systems to find each person’s centre of vulnerability. Once found, a gambler can be prompted in various ways to become lost in the zone, just as cell phone users can be lured by algorithmic mnemonics into scrolling loops. The point, of course, is to keep gamblers *coming back* – so there has to be an addictive element, whether it takes the form of a poker table or a ‘like’ button. *Surveillance, extraction, vulnerability, and addiction*: a double doublet, and an indubitable structural reorganisation of the *circularity* of the empirico-transcendental doublet into the *recursivity* of the *algorithmic-transcendental doublet*. But this serpentine coil has, I

want to suggest, an even longer history that can be traced back to the plantation.

Although focusing on other aspects of the current algorithmic economy, similar arguments have been put forth by scholars like Simone Browne (2015) and Meredith Whittaker (2023), the latter of whom argues in her article on plantations and industrial control that contemporary AI-driven industrial labour processes draw heavily on ‘technologies developed on plantations,’ organised as they were around centralised surveillance systems and mechanisms, as well as stringently regimented divisions of labour and life, and ‘strictly controlled work place’ (Holt 1992: 38, quoted in Whittaker 2023). Moreover, as Nicholas Mirzoeff writes in *The Right to Look*, ‘the surveillance of the overseer, operating as the surrogate of the sovereign,’ was oftentimes ‘reinforced by *violent punishment*’ to ensure the flow of production (2011: 2, emphasis added). It is especially for this reason that Whittaker cautions that we take care to remember that while the ‘relationship between industrial and plantation worker control is foundational,’ there is ‘no easy equivalence between the terror-enforced racialized labour regimes of plantation slavery’ and digitality (2023).

With this in mind, I would like to take readers back, for a moment, to the South of the United States, where white plantation owners ‘dictated the living and working conditions’ of ‘roughly four million’ Black people, ‘most of whom were enslaved’ (Savitt 2005: 14). As an enclosed space, the plantation provided a physical locality where race and slavery could be normalised. Achille Mbembe argues, in fact, that race has always been a ‘coded way of dividing and organizing a multiplicity’ into a fixed hierarchy and then assigning these differentiated groups ‘to more or less impermeable spaces according to a *logic of enclosure*’ (2017: 35), such that ‘*the dis-enclosure of the world*’ becomes impossible without the ‘*radical difference*’ on which the ‘universalism of the name “Black” depends’ (160). Certainly, this did not take place only in the US – the question of the ‘Aboriginal brain’ in Australia (Jones 2011; Turnbull 2012) and institutionalised apartheid in South Africa being prime examples. But it does make clear the longstanding relationship ‘between blackness and geography,’ as Katherine McKittrick argues (2011: 947). Alongside race, gender was marked categorically in terms of productivity and reproductive capability which led to the ‘institutionalization of certain narratives about being, having, and owning that reflect plantation logic, and links them – and their entrenchment’ to current modes of subjectivation and subjectification under surveillance capitalism (Hinrichsen 2015: 176). In describing the plantation’s ‘uneven colonial-racial economy that, while differently articulated across time

and place, legalized black servitude' and sanctioned 'black placelessness and constraint' (McKittrick 2011: 948), my aim is not to reify certain historically locked identities but, instead, to mobilise the figure of the plantation as a heterotopia with the aim of exposing the often circular *logics of extraction and surveillance* that prefigure the guiding recursive principles of contemporary machine learning methods, especially as they relate to vulnerability and addiction.

The history – the *her-story* – should be better known, yet it remains obscured behind the great narratives of the past. At any rate, we 'know only know three names: Anarcha, Betsey and Lucy' (Kuppers et al. 2008: n. p.). We know fairly little that is personal about them: 'whether they were cured, where they went, when they died' (n. p.). But we do know that they were the subjects on which the 'father' of gynaecology, James Marrion Sims, experimented 'to weave a medical specialization' based on the *extraction* of 'the raw materials of disability' that led to the invention of the duck bill speculum (Dudley 2012). Specifically, what Sims was trying to understand was the condition known as vesicovaginal fistula. This condition sees an atypical fistulous tract or passageway extending through the vagina to the bladder (*vēsīca*), rectum or intestines, which then causes unintentional discharges into the vaginal vault, resulting in incontinence. The most common causes for this in enslaved women were prolonged labours, aggravated by long work hours they had to maintain under strict *surveillance* as the load of pregnant slaves was typically *not* reduced (Dudley 2012). In his biography, Sims writes 'that he operated on Anarcha more than 30 times' without using any anaesthesia, though he did give her opium during her recovery (quoted in Kuppers et al. 2008: n. p.). It is unclear from the accounts whether Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy became addicted to the opioids but, given what we know of these drugs, we can assume so. We might pause here, also, to remind ourselves that it 'takes less than 30 minutes to travel from the site' of Sims's slave clinic 'in Montgomery, on Perry Street, to Tuskegee, the site of the Syphilis Study where poor black men were left untreated and uninformed in a government-sponsored health experiment' (n. p.).

In too many instances, such as these, surveillance and extraction methods constitute a violent somatechnics – a co-imbricated and co-emerging corporeal-technology installed 'during slavery to monitor and track blackness' (Browne 2015: 23) for 'data' that would then be used retroactively to justify indentured labour and provide grounds for so-called 'black diseases' (Savitt 2005: 16). These practices also anticipate the facialised structures of many contemporary surveillance architectures and their attendant logics of extraction that exploit

especially the correlates between vulnerability, addiction, and race. However, as Browne reminds us, while the enclosing spaces of plantations are easily assimilated into ‘Foucault’s schemas’ of power and discipline, especially as they relate to panopticism and the norms of adjustment these engender, they do not address the roles of ‘trauma, vulnerability, and violence in the making and marking of blackness as property’ (2015: 42). And while it is also true, as Whittaker says, that no easy comparison can be drawn between contemporary digital infrastructures and the violently enforced racialised slave conditions of the plantation (2023), there are stark reminders of these terror-imposed regimes in the *plantation logics* at the heart of several present-day surveillance technologies implicated in racialisation, vulnerability, and addiction, predictive policing being a definitive example. *Say their names*: Daunte Wright, Andre Hill, Manuel Ellis, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Aura Rosser, Stephon Clark ...

As one of the most pervasive social processes in contemporary societies, surveillance is a definitive marker of power relationships, whether it takes the form of employers ‘overdosing on our data’ (O’Neil 2016), the effectuation of borders via biometric and identification architectures, or neo-colonial forms of policing and pacification (Monahan and Wood 2018: xix) that reinforce classificatory and differential ‘treatment along lines of class, race, gender, sexuality, age’, disability, vulnerability, addiction, and so on (xx). This is aided by our enhanced ‘visibility to others’ (Staples 2018: 16) which becomes transformed into a surveilling tactic that converts somatic knowledge into technological data points. Unsurprisingly, rather than merely being used to monitor and keep track of so-called ‘deviant’ subjectivities, surveillance technologies begin to *produce* irregular behaviour which, in a vicious circular motion, serves to justify the use of the technologies in the first place. They are, as Pierre Bourdieu said, ‘*structured structures* predisposed to function as *structuring structures*’ ([1980]1990: 53), though in the current social context this structuring is *recursive*: the past ‘constantly evaluated’ so that the future can be anticipated, ‘which in turn determines the present’ (Hui 2019: 243). As with the plantation, these kinds of contemporary surveillance-extraction nodes animate conditions of disposability, especially when socially applied AI systems accept ‘structural conditions as a given’ and project ‘the attribute of being suboptimal onto its subjects’, thus making expendability ‘something innate to the individual’ (McQuillan 2022b). ‘This is life reduced to *data behaviourism*; statistical profiling and prediction that modulates both thought and action, feeding on travel logs, browser cookies and social media profiles in order to effectuate constant incorporeal

transformations at the level not of the word but the digital bit' (Eloff 2021: 182). And it is precisely these incorporeal transformations that constitute the structuring violence of what I call the *algorithmic-transcendental doublet*, though the problem is not only that machine learning systems occupy a doublet structure according to which data-selves are assimilated into the temporality of machines, but that this ambient algorithmic state has become the pervasive transcendental condition for the emergence of the self. Thus, while both 'AI' and humans are *given* empirical objects, the *givenness by which the individual is given* is algorithmic, the result of which is 'a knowledge that doubles the World' (Laruelle 2011: 11) because it expresses a correlation between the world and its image.

The Analytic of Philosophical Decision and the Violence of Digital Sufficiency, or: The Doubling of the World

In his project on non-philosophy, or non-standard philosophy as he calls it more appropriately in his later work, François Laruelle makes an argument against what he calls 'standard philosophy' – or what might be thought of as a kind of philosophical-centrism – for assuming that everything is *philosophisable* (see Laruelle ([1989]2013: 22 and Laruelle [2000]2015: 8), not unlike everything in algorithmic ecologies is assumed to be *datafiable*. Laruelle calls this the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, and my argument is that the algorithmic equivalent is what might be called *digital sufficiency*. By taking this stance, standard philosophy gives to itself an image of thought according to which it posits its own givenness, or *auto-position*. So, in the same way that the algorithmic has been transformed into a pervasive *transcendental condition*, so too Laruelle argues that Philosophy-with-a-capital-P has assumed this state of *auto-givenness* for itself. Once this position is taken as given, philosophy posits itself as the only legitimate *form* of thought, while at the same time acting as a 'device for controlling what counts as thought' in the first place (Ó Maoilearca 2015: 1; see also Laruelle [1989]2013: 22 and Laruelle [2000]2015: 8). A different way of saying this is that the Principle of Sufficient Reason *in advance* overdetermines whatever philosophy aims to philosophise, just as markers of race overdetermine who is surveilled, or who became enslaved during the colonial era. To be clear, I am not establishing any equivalence between the different forms of violence at stake here; what I am pointing out is the *underlying logics* of being excessively or unjustifiably determined antecedently. That being said, there is a question of violence at the heart of philosophy for Laruelle: whether philosophy is 'capable of thinking the ordinariness of

its violence?’ (Gangle 2012: 60). Jacques Rancière articulates this as the problem of philosophers and their ‘poor’, by which he means the violence effected when philosophers use grassroots and other similar movements unethically for their ‘intellectual creations’ (2003: 75). Capitalism enacts something akin to this when it extracts surplus value from its ‘poor’ by sacrificing their physical needs ‘to the holocaust of speculation (economic but also philosophical)’ (Kolozova 2017: 95), though the digital, to my mind, is the operator *par excellence* of this kind of violence, which it effects by dematerialising life into reductive data-nodes that render the world more computable and, as such, more profitable.

For Laruelle, Sufficiency is not philosophy’s only crime; it is only the inaugurate position, swiftly followed by the *Philosophical Decision* – an act by which the Real is split. This is what Laruelle calls standard philosophy’s *episte-mological* function: its *sufficient epistemology* or *epistemic violence*, which is effectuated when philosophy adds ‘a second principle’ to the Real, also referred to as ‘the One’ or ‘ordinary reality’. This takes place either in a 1/2 mix or as a 2/3 mixing of ‘a unity-of-contraries’ ([1996]2013: 25). These are well known manoeuvres in philosophy, for example when the Real is divided into two coordinates such as Thought and Being, or immanence and transcendence, and then *synthesised* under the aegis of either one of the terms or a third term. For Laruelle, Deleuze’s Difference is an instance of a 1/2 mix: a synthesis of *multiplicities* as immanent to the *univocity* of Difference; whereas Spinoza’s monism is an instance of a 2/3 mix: a synthesis of the dyad *mode* and *attribute* as immanent to a third element which, as is well known, is univocal *substance*.

Importantly, the Real does not here refer to the Lacanian Real, but to ‘ordinary’ reality, or radical immanent reality, which is to say reality *as lived*. The point for Laruelle is that standard philosophy fails to concede that the Real precedes it – that the Real, in fact, is ‘an absolute untranslatable’ ([1996]2013: 14). This implies an *a priori* ‘being-foreclosed of the Real’ to thought, which in turn implies that the Real is not philosophisable because philosophy has no traction on it (73) – just as the algorithmic has no purchase on ordinary life; the only thing it has any claim to is data. A different way of saying this is that philosophy is *not sufficient* for thinking the Real. Thought can thus only move *from* the ‘criterion’ of foreclosure (32). So, while the Real *determines* thought, thought *does not* in turn condition the Real – there is no formation of a doublet. Even so, this, according to Laruelle, is precisely what standard philosophy does: it tries to stake a claim to the Real but, in so doing, reduces the Real to the limits of philosophical thought, so supposing itself to be co-constitutive of the Real. So, rather than reaching the Real

in its Identity, philosophy only ever reaches Being – ‘a combination of reality and of appearances or simulacra’ ([1992]2016: 84). To summarise, the Principle of Sufficient Reason forms a doublet with the Philosophical Decision, such that standard philosophy begins to function according to a double transcendence that moves between Philosophy’s Sufficiency (first transcendence) and the Philosophisable-by-Decision (second transcendence), always in a circular fashion. This *doublet* is what Laruelle calls the *invariant structure* of standard philosophy, but while operating according to a circular causality or double structure it is, also, *doubling* because a transcendental synthesis takes place by which the immanent ‘imprint’ or ‘cut’ of the Real is refused by way of ‘various forms of *transcendental synthesis*’, which Ray Brassier argues is invoked by *correlationism* (2007: 134, emphasis added).

In his book, *After Finitude* ([2006]2008), Quentin Meillassoux defines correlationism as an idea instantiated by Kant’s philosophy that ‘we only ever have access to the *correlation* between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other’ (5; emphasis added). Put differently, there can be no *knowable* reality independent of ‘our *relation* to reality; no phenomena without some transcendental operator’ that grounds the conditions of possibility for phenomena to ‘manifest themselves’ (Brassier 2007: 51). Thus, for phenomena to become known as representations, a *transcendental synthesis* is required. Anchored in pure apperception, the synthesis ‘yields the transcendental form of the object as its necessary correlate and guarantor of objectivity’ (51). Meillassoux’s point is that this kind of thought results either in idealism or naïve realism. Drawing on Meillassoux, Brassier argues in his discussion on Laruelle that, instead of understanding ‘standard philosophy’ as philosophy *tout court*, as is done in non-standard philosophy, it should be taken rather to mean a certain kind of philosophising, of which correlationism is paradigmatic. In adopting this redirection of focus from the entirety of philosophy to correlationism, the non-philosophical project unburdens itself from the excessive claims it has to make both about philosophy and its own delimitations. Understood this way, the Philosophical Decision becomes synonymous with the sufficiency imposed by a *transcendental synthesis* and the *structure of possibility* it precipitates.

If we think here of philosophies of difference, Laruelle’s argument is that because they refuse *transcendence* in their accounts of *immanence*, these kinds of philosophies are forced to divide immanence into empirical and transcendental parts. Accordingly, the empirical *conditioned* is presumed *a priori given* by the transcendental *a priori conditions of possibility*, or *givenness*. The consequence of this is that immanence has

to function ‘both as the empirical corollary of transcendence and as the transcendental guarantor for the unity of a *priori* condition and empirically conditioned – a unity which yields what philosophers call “experience”’ (Brassier 2007: 123). The Philosophical Decision by which the Real is split is thus precisely that which produces doublets or forms of correlationism – a circular movement that goes, first, ‘from empirical to metaphysical to transcendental’, and then back from ‘transcendental to metaphysical to empirical’ (128). Put more formally, it constitutes a *transcendental deduction*. By assuming a *non-decisional posture* in place of an *auto-decisional position*, non-philosophy does not have to resort either to naïve realism or to inevitable idealism, of which the empirico-transcendental doublet would be an example, because radical immanence does not assume a ‘transcendent ontological form,’ which means that it cannot result in a transcendental synthesis (Laruelle [2000]2015: 46). Instead of effecting a binding function, the unilateral duality or undividedness of the Real – which is taken as already-given, or *without givenness* – is the precondition for ‘the last instance’ that is *adequate*, but not ‘*sufficient to or constitutive of*, the Real (Brassier 2007: 130). Thus, in contradistinction to standard philosophy – which should be taken from here onwards to mean certain kinds of philosophical practice rather than all of philosophy – non-standard philosophy proceeds by *subordinating itself to its immanent cause*, the Real, which is *in-One* rather than *in-Thought* or *in-Being*, both of which illegitimately condition the One *in advance*, despite the One being radically unconditioned. Accordingly, non-philosophy aims to think *from* radical immanence or the Real rather than *for* or *to* it because it recognises a non-commutativity of Being and the Real. This being the case, it is more accurate to see non-philosophy as a *posture* than as a *position* (Laruelle [1992]2016: 12). Its two main methods are *dualysis* – instead of analysis, synthesis or dialectics – and *cloning* by which it produces philosophical fictionings or *philo-fiction*. Cloning is precisely what non-standard philosophical thought *is*. That is, because non-philosophy concedes that it has no traction on the Real, it is assumed that thought can only ever extract a *clone* from the vision-in-One or Real. Cloning is thus one of the ways in which non-standard philosophy attempts to rehabilitate standard philosophy because by cloning the ‘raw materials’ of philosophy, it neutralises its propensity to decide on the Real. As Laruelle puts it, cloning ‘is the surest destruction of the image of thought, of the procedures of projection and reflection at the heart of representation’, processes from which philosophy has never been able to free itself (Laruelle 2012a: 242).

Without detracting from the non-standard philosophical project, I want to pause here to draw attention to undertones of Foucault in

Laruelle. The first pertains to non-philosophy's effort to rehabilitate and depotentialise the overreach of certain practices of philosophy which, while absolutely worthwhile, is rather overstated as Foucault, long before, also set out to work by way of an 'empirical modesty' ([1969]1989: 121) aimed at eradicating the 'transcendental narcissism' (203) prevalent in the history of thought. The second is the circinate edifice of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Philosophical Decision which resonates strongly with Foucault's description of the invariant structure of the empirico-transcendental doublet. Laruelle himself refers explicitly to the empirico-transcendental doublet numerous times in his own work. Sometimes, this is done with reference to the Kantian doublet described by Foucault, even though Laruelle does not reference Foucault directly and credits Kant for the 'elucidation of the *a priori* within the philosophical frame of the empirico-transcendental double' (e.g., [1996]2013: 263 and [1998]2013: 66, 70). This is, of course, partially true, but Laruelle's refusal to engage the very important work done by Foucault on the historical *a priori* and the empirico-transcendental doublet – the latter coined by Foucault and not Kant! – is rather curious. At other times, the empirico-transcendental doublet is used by Laruelle to point to circuitous philosophical processes, such as when philosophy positions itself as the given form of thought and, concomitantly, as the arbiter of what counts as legitimate forms of thought (e.g., ([1989]2013: 80 and [1996]2013: 9, 194, 200). At other times still, Laruelle uses the doublet to describe the splitting action of the Philosophical Decision (e.g., [1989]2013: 61 and [1996]2013: 232, 277). Here again Foucault is echoed as Laruelle, rather surreptitiously, replaces the *analytic of finitude* with what he explicitly calls *the analytic of Philosophical Decision* ([1996]2013: 231) although, as far as I can tell, this is done only once – as a heading. No doubt, scholars may explain this away by arguing that non-philosophy does not partake in critique, analysis or any other kind of 'standard philosophical' practice, but this does not preclude non-standard philosophy from effecting its own *decision*, in this case to dismiss the collective nature of knowledge production and, in so doing, deprive itself of the generous gesture implicit in acknowledging those whose work came before. Instead, because Foucault remains the 'great unspoken' in Laruelle's work (except for a few throwaway remarks), Laruelle places himself in a position to vastly overstate the originality of non-standard philosophy.

This notwithstanding, Laruelle *does* make an important contribution as I hope to have shown but, as I also hope to have shown, Foucault is an important interlocutor 'between' Kant and Laruelle – and what both bring to philosophy is an attempt to 'defetishise' thought. Whereas

Foucault does this by way of archaeology, Laruelle renders philosophy *ordinary* or *generic* by challenging philosophy's 'photographic' model of the World: a standardised view of 'reality' that is both instantiated and maintained by philosophising endeavours. What Laruelle argues, in other words, is that both standard philosophy and 'standard photography' have enacted decisional splits centring on tropes of 'truth, light, reason, illumination, and the Real' (Fardy 2018: 3). In this manner, these standard versions have enabled 'a certain forgetting of the frame they impose on the Real', even though 'their respective decisions' are in some ways doomed to 'fail' because 'the immanent totality of the Real' always escapes the frameworks imposed on it by philosophy just as the 'visual always exceeds the boundaries' inflicted on it by the framings of photography (3).

It is particularly this parallel drawn by Laruelle between standard philosophy and standard photography that I hold is useful for thinking digital sufficiency because, like standard philosophy and photography, virtual reality or 'standard digitality' *frames* the Real by *imposing* a totalising view on it (Gray 2023: 69). This kind of algorithmic framing is evident, for example, in so-called 'filter bubbles' – algorithmically produced bias that occurs when algorithms selectively present certain websites or information to a person based on their past search and click behaviours. This narrowing of information traps people in a closed-loop environment that skews knowledge and limits reality testing. Often, though not always, these algorithms are driven by Bayesian statistics which, unlike frequentist statistics, does not start by assuming the truth of a null hypothesis, such as that a coin in a coin-flip is fair, but instead understands probability 'as a measure of subjective belief' (Joque 2022: 148). This means that Bayesian statistics lends itself to updating beliefs about the world as more data – which amounts to evidence in this case – is gathered *in real time*. But here we find the caveat: Bayesian approaches use prior distributions – or knowledge, beliefs and conjectures – 'to quantify what is known about the parameters' (Godwin 2021: n. p.). This means that a *prior* could be a person's conviction that the world is ruled by a cabal of Satan-worshipping paedophilic politicians and celebrities. Based on the person's older search and click behaviours, new search results will be algorithmically slanted towards websites that confirm this belief. In a sense, then, Bayesian statistics provides the 'mathematical framework in which evidence can be transformed into belief' (Joque 2022: 161). This quasi-religious transformation that data-evidence can bring about in the beliefs of an individual or group of individuals despite, or because of, weak priors – and ignorance of weak priors (as conspiracy theories so clearly demonstrate) – is what

I call *digital sufficiency*. It becomes clear that, as with standard philosophy and photography, there is also in standard digitality an imperative to *reflect, illuminate, and make comprehensible* the obscure non-comprehensibility of the Real, which is to deny the being-foreclosed of the Real to both thought and the algorithmic. Moreover, because the digital thus assumes its own sufficiency, it overexposes and overrepresents the Real, *treating virtual reality as the conditions of ordinary reality*. In preconditioning life in this manner an algorithmic-transcendental doublet is produced, which not only overdetermines thought by ensnaring it in the circular bind of a closed-loop epistemology, but also effectuates a *doubling* of the world and its image in a transcendental synthesis, rendering digitality godlike: a *divine seer*.

As with non-philosophy and non-photography, a non-standard digital posture would ‘begin by acknowledging’ its insufficiencies, accepting that its ‘frames are partial and insufficient to decide the Real’ (Fardy 2018: 4). The initial duality of the philosophical, photographic or algorithmic vision is thus dualised or radicalised by declining a *scission* – or *decision* – which it does by submitting its vision to the immanence of the Real, so causing it to become a (non-)philosophical, (non-)photographic or (non-) algorithmic vision immanent to the vision-force of the One. Such a refusal of an auto-position diminishes the power of the philosophical, photographic or digital because instead of transcending itself, that aspect of the object that remains radically immanent to itself, the ‘real kernel’, is accepted as *being-in-immanence, being-in-photo* or *being-in-digital*, such that *no metaphysical exceedance* occurs. In this way, these domains are made non-standard, which is to say they are fictionalised as *philo-fiction, photo-fiction* or *virtual-fiction*, so returning ‘ontology to mythology and to the imagination’ (Laruelle [2002] 2010: 39). Dualysis, as we see here, implies a ‘transformation’ of the identity of an object as ‘Identity-(of)-Duality’ (Laruelle [1996] 2013: 7), though this is a ‘sterile’ or *idempotent* ‘transformation’ because there is no event or Philosophical Decision that splits the Real. As such, there is no ‘photographic’ resemblance, and no identification with an ‘over-philosophy’, ‘over-photography’ or ‘over-algorithm’ (see Laruelle 2012b: 14). Because an idempotent operation ‘produces the same result no matter how many times the original application is reapplied’ (Laruelle 2014: 28), no *doublet* is produced, just as there is no *doubling* of the world via a transcendental synthesis. Instead, *fictions* are produced by way of *cloning*. ‘Just as the clones of biotechnology parallel their progenitors, so the clones of non-philosophy parallel the Real’; that is, the clones of non-philosophy ‘take the form of mutations’ rather than syntheses (Fardy 2018: 9).

Non-standard philosophical cloning is thus a method or action that uses the ‘raw materials’ of philosophy in order to mutate it and cancel ‘its ability to decide upon the Real’ (10). These clones – these philo-fictions, photo-fictions and virtual-fictions – diminish the overreach of their standard forms, rendering them *generic* or *indifferent*, weak forces or ‘radical weakness’ on account of their ‘non-acting’ (Laruelle [2012] 2015: 79). Expressly, there is no metaphysics here – no givenness – only an *already-finite* that is given-without-givenness. The opacity and non-translatability of the Real thus become the ‘conditions’ – or more accurately, the ‘non-conditions’ – for thought, photography or digitality so that they are non-thetic, non-reflective and both non-representable and non-representative of their objects. In so doing, a profound act of anti-violence is performed because the violence of representation is here replaced by a non-violent *heretical cloning*, such that the Real – or ordinary reality, or the human-in-human – is no longer a philosophical, photographic, algorithmic or any other doublet or doubling, but an ‘uncreated-in-person’ delivered from the violations of the Principle of Sufficiency. Instead of the cruelty of *you shall know them by their metadata*, or even *know thyself*, this is a gnostic posture that ‘*does not know*’ and ‘*is not knowledge (of) self*’ but *unlearned knowing* deprived of all ecstasy’ and violence (Laruelle [2002]2010: 41).

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre ([1980]1990), *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Brassier, Ray (2007), *Nihil Unbound*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Browne, Simone (2015), *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Crawford, Kate (2021), *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles ([1968]1994), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton, London: Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1992), ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control,’ *October*, vol. 59, pp. 3–7. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/778828>.
- Dudley, Rachel (2012), ‘Toward an Understanding of the “Medical Plantation” as a Cultural Location of Disability,’ *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4, <https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/3248/3184>.
- Eloff, Aragorn (2021), ‘2006: The Topology of Morals (Who Does the Algorithm Think We Are?),’ *Deleuze and Guattari Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 178–196.
- Fardy, Jonathan (2018), *Laruelle and Non-Photography*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Foucault, Michel ([1966]2005), *The Order of Things*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel ([1969]1989), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, London: Routledge.

- Gangle, Rocco (2012), 'Laruelle and Ordinary Life,' in John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (eds), *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 60–79.
- Godwin, James A. (2021), 'Bayesian Statistics,' *Medium*, 25 February, <https://towardsdatascience.com/bayesian-statistics-11f225174d5a>.
- Gray, Chantelle (2023), 'On Generic Schizoanalysis: Reading Anti-Oedipus Alongside Laruelle's Non-Standard Philosophy,' *La Deleuziana*, 50 Years of Anti-Oedipus II: Schizoanalysis as a Multidisciplinary Practice and Theory, http://www.ladeleuziana.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/06_Gray_On-generic-schizoanalysis_revised.pdf.
- Halpern, Orit (2014), *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason Since 1945*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hinrichsen, Lisa (2015), "'A Curious Study:' The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man, Pedagogy, and the Post-Plantation Imagination,' *African American Review*, vol. 48, no. 1–2, pp. 175–189. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24589735>.
- Hui, Yuk (2019), *Recursivity and Contingency*, London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, Ross (2011), 'Eugenics in Australia: The Secret of Melbourne's Elite,' *The Conversation*, 20 September, <https://theconversation.com/eugenics-in-australia-the-secret-of-melbournes-elite-3350>.
- Joque, Justin (2022), *Revolutionary Mathematics: Artificial Intelligence, Statistics, and the Logic of Capitalism*, London: Verso.
- Kolozova, Katerina (2017), 'The Inhuman and the Automaton: Exploitation and the Exploited in the Era of Late Capitalism', in Rocco Gangle and Julius Greve (eds), *Superpositions: Laruelle and the Humanities*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 91–102.
- Kuppers, Petra, Anita Gonzalez, Carrie Sandahl, Tiye Giraud and Aimee Meredith Cox (2008), 'The Anarcha Project,' *The Olimpas Performances Research Projects*, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~petra/anarcha.htm>.
- Laruelle, François ([1989]2013), *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins, Minneapolis: Univocal.
- Laruelle, François ([1992]2016), *Theory of Identities*, trans. by Alyosha Edlebi, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Laruelle, François ([1996]2013), *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith, London: Bloomsbury.
- Laruelle, François ([1998]2013), *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins, Minneapolis: Univocal.
- Laruelle, François ([2000]2015), *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith, Minneapolis: Univocal.
- Laruelle, François ([2002]2010), *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith, London: Continuum.
- Laruelle, François (2011), *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. by Robin Mackay, New York: Urbanomic.
- Laruelle, François (2012a). 'What is Non-Philosophy?', in Robin Mackay (ed), *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, New York: Urbanomic, pp. 185–244.
- Laruelle, François (2012b), *Photo-Fiction, A Non-Standard Aesthetics*, trans. by Drew S. Burk, Minneapolis: Univocal.
- Laruelle, François ([2012]2015), *General Theory of Victims*, trans. by Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet, Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Laruelle, François (2014), 'A Science of [en] Christ,' *Angelaki*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 25–33, 10.1080/0969725X.2014.950851.

Say Her Name

- Mbembe, Achille (2017), *Critique of Black Reason*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- McKittrick, Katherine (2011), 'On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,' *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 12, no. 8, pp. 947–963.
- McQuillan, Dan (2022a), *Resisting AI: An Anti-Fascist Approach to Artificial Intelligence*, Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- McQuillan, Dan (2022b), 'Deep Learning and Human Disposability,' *Logi(c)s*, 22 August, <https://logicmag.io/home/deep-learning-and-human-disposability/>.
- Meillassoux, Quentin ([2006]2008), *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier, London: Continuum.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas (2011), *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Monahan, Torin and David Murakami Wood (2018), 'Introduction,' in Torin Monahan and David Murakami Wood (eds), *Surveillance Studies: A Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. xix–xxxiv.
- Ó Maoilearca, John (2015), *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy*, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- O'Neil, Cathy (2016), *Weapons of Math Destruction* [e-book], New York: Crown.
- O'Shea, Lizzie (2019), *Future Histories: What Ada Lovelace, Tom Paine, and the Paris Commune Can Teach Us About Digital Technology*, London: Verso.
- Rancière, J. (2003), *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. by John Drury, Corinne Oster and Andrew Parker, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rouvroy, Antoinette (2020), 'Algorithmic Governmentality and the Death of Politics,' *Green European Journal*, 27 March, <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/algorithmic-governmentality-and-the-death-of-politics/>.
- Savitt, Todd L. (2005), 'Black Health on the Plantation: Owners, the Enslaved, and Physicians,' *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 14–16.
- Staples, William (2018), 'Everyday Surveillance: Vigilance and Visibility in Postmodern Life,' in Torin Monahan and David Murakami Wood (eds.), *Surveillance Studies: A Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 14–17.
- Turnbull, Paul (2012), 'The "Aboriginal" Australian Brain in the Scientific Imagination, c. 1820–1880,' *Somatechnics*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 171–197.
- Whittaker, Meredith (2023), 'Origin Stories: Plantations, Computers, and Industrial Control,' *Logi(c)s*, <https://logicmag.io/supa-dupa-skies/origin-stories-plantations-computers-and-industrial-control/>.