

The Multitude Will Never Be Philosophers

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Abstract: This short piece reflects on an early text by François Laruelle called “Le philosophe sans qualités,” the fourth issue of the self-published journal *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?* It considers the opening remarks reflecting on *The Republic* and the statement “the multitude will never be philosophers” as a framework in a positive light: insofar as people and democracy are key factors of non-philosophy, people do not need to become philosophers in order to change the world. Instead, it is a matter of accepting that ordinary people, in the sense deployed by Laruelle and the author, determine a democratic order of thought intimately woven with their existence, what the author calls the en-demic. In this way, people are the touchstone of philosophy and themselves.

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1 There are two ways of formulating the statement, “The multitude will never be philosophers.” The first, the philosophical, all-too-philosophical statement, finds its source in *The Republic*, Book VI, with Socrates’ condemnation of the rabble who are ill-equipped for the truth of the beautiful in-itself and who are easily susceptible to being led astray by sophistry.¹ Though this multitude will be protected by guardians and philosopher-kings, they serve as producers and artisans for the Kallipolis, the City of Beauty. As the story goes, one truly becomes a philosopher when they ascend from imprisonment within the Cave and aspire towards the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. On escape, they are blinded by the Sun, and then descend back into the Cave, finally liberating those who are in a pitiful state of ignorance. *Paideia* is this glorious pathway to the ideality embodied by the philosopher. The multitude finds itself both victim and party to the production and reproduction of these rare yet ideal subjects due to the State-imposed noble lie of its blood racism, a noble lie that these philosophers, too, are victim and party of.² It is a catch-22. The iron-blood multitude in this dominant Greco-unitary paradigm will never be the gold-blooded philosophers. They must simultaneously become so by escaping the Cave—but still be iron-blooded.

And they must beget philosophers in order to continue the fortification of the City of Beauty. The sought for City of Beauty institutes auto-sufficient eugenics. In both instances, it is a paradox that this paradigm cannot circumvent to this day, a racial paradox that prejudices in advance with the categories of peoples it has conceptualized. Moreover, while the Judaic face-to-face response to the Greco-unitary problematic partially addresses a solution by somewhat empathetically “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes,” this response remains bound to the problematic by mitigating universality with particularity as that which is Beyond: above all, it is a loosening rather than an abolition to the paradox. Nevertheless, the multitude, *hoi polloi*, are indebted to the City of Beauty to bear and sacrifice the artisanal child to this machine to keep the City’s fuel and its dimmed lights of a fallen sun running.

The second, non-philosophical, nothing-but-non-philosophical statement, finds its source in François Laruelle’s fourth issue of *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?*, dedicated to the theme of the philosopher without qualities. Laruelle provides terms for this paradox of the Greco-unitary paradigm—one which serves as an invariant condition that extends from its most ancient bases to the contemporary forms of

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI, 493e-494a.

² Plato, *The Republic*, Book III, 414e-415c.

- **Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy**

“popular philosophy”—demo-logical difference. Demo-logical difference is considered the “common matrix capable of begetting both, ruling the relations of the people *and* philosophy, *insofar as these are precisely relations*, or, because there is, between the *demos* and *ontologos*, both distinction and unity.”³ Pedagogy in its various forms—whether it be educational, economic, political, etc.—mediates this distinction and unity of the people and philosophy. This extends well beyond philosophy into political practices such as Leninist vanguardism. Whatever City may be in its construction, whether an intellectual construction or one in its physical manifestation, it will always aspire towards a City of Beauty unless it is able to provide a theory and critique of demo-logical difference. That is, any city that does not provide a critique of the sought for City of Beauty hidden amongst its categories destined to continue the racist noble lie internal to its functioning. The multitude is destined for philosophy as its Other. To breed, train, and beget once more in order to rise through into the ranks of the auxiliaries and become the excellent philosopher-guardians, albeit still functioning within the noble lie. How is it not only possible, but radically true, to state that the multitude will never be philosophers in a non-

philosophical fashion? And what is this multitude, what are these peoples? Are they still the iron-blooded producers protected by the golden-blooded philosopher guardians? What becomes of philosophy and its City when the people are no longer the Other of philosophy? From the ruins of the City of Beauty and demo-logical difference will be constructed a Uni-City.

2. This problematic grounds the programmatic vision of introducing democracy into thought. If it lives up to the name, then democracy is the rule of people. However, if demo-logical difference is nothing but another name for anthropo-logical difference, the very invariant present in *A Biography of Ordinary Man* and elsewhere in *Théorie des Étrangers*, then it is one that

begins from a mixture or a universal: [people] as language, as desire, as society, as power, as sex, etc. It cannot be satisfied with ordinary man ... man will already be doubled, both exceeded and devalued by these philosophical puppets: the gregarious, the common, the everyday, the exoteric, the healthy understanding, or the communal consciousness; and by their symmetrical or

³ François Laruelle, “Le philosophe sans qualités,” *Pourquoi pas la philosophie?* No. 4 (October 1984), 7. Any and all translations are the author’s own, except if otherwise noted.

complementary elements: the overman, the philosopher, the authentic man, the reflexive subject, Spirit, etc. More generally, anthropo-logical difference is the scission of the indivisible essence of man ... In place of man, of his real and absolutely singular essence, it employs anthropological, even andrological, images, quasi-transcendental androids (the Cogito, *ens creatum*, Spirit, the I think, the Worker, the Unconscious, etc.).⁴

Said otherwise: demo-logical difference, therefore, mixes people with a universal, seeing people as productive androids. This includes the very image of multitudes as the artisanal rabble in the Greco-philosophical worldview and even the pleb Other of contemporary popular philosophies. In both cases, the people are the included/excluded (or a synthesis of the two) Other. Critiques that do not start from ordinary people outside (of) this all-encompassing horizon nevertheless fail at overcoming demo-logical difference and exacerbates the vicious circle between people and philosophy. Ordinary people are people who are not the everyday, the vulgar, the common, but people who take their inalienable from themselves. It is

from their unreflected experience that an irreversible, non-reciprocal order ensues, one that acts upon the World without return. The meaning of order and the meaning of the ordinary are one and the same.⁵ As such, no democracy would be possible, no democracy would be even real, if the essence of people is *homines ex machina*, parts and cogs generated from out of the State machine.⁶ For there to be an introduction of democracy into thought, it would be a matter of inverting the normative stance that sees people inseparable from the City, as their subject in the form of the Citizen. What would it mean to take ordinary people as the real cause—inalienable, undividable, and not the subject to/of—that determines the City, Politics, Philosophy in-the-last-instance alone? To determine is not to do or make: these multitudes, these people, they are no longer the *homo faber*, man the maker of and for... , they are not the Other. *We are index sui et philosophiae*, we are the touchstone of ourselves and philosophy. The ordinary people that we are, we are the People-(of)-the-One: the lived real critique, the science of Greco-unitary philosophy and its onto-theo-politics, as the radical immanence of the nothing-but-One that precedes the City. If there still remains an authority, then it is the last-instance, for the polysemy of the last-

⁴ François Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man: On Authorities and Minorities*, trans. Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 5.

⁵ Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 122-24.

⁶ François Laruelle, "Homo ex machina," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 170, No. 3 (July-September 1980): 325-42.

- **Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy**

instance is itself the only and last-authority that is not *causa sui* or self-cause but *causa ordinata*, that is, an individual cause unable to be shared or reciprocated with what it acts upon, rules over, and emplaces in an irreversible order. This is what we mean by democracy.

3. The proposed stance is not an unabashed populism against a philosophical elite. There is a radical humanity within the very heart of the philosopher and philosophy itself. Nothing of what is radically lived in humanity is foreign to philosophy. Although it is philosophy itself personified by the philosopher, the one who identifies themselves with what Kant calls their queen, that occupies the intermediary position between elitism and populism. This intermediary relation is what treats the people as an Other that must be governed, liberated, and/or the synthesis of these operations. As Didier Moulinier highlights, philosophy “desires man to be identified with it under the traits of the Philosopher or through the voice of the emancipated People, for it needs this ‘first’ identification to move towards a more important ‘secondary’ identification where it is realized as it is, that is, as its own Subject.”⁷ If we claim that the People-(of)-the-One are the cause that determines the City in-the-last-instance, what

would be the subject? The subject may be the Stranger, the determined or generic intellectual, the philosopher without qualities or the human philosopher. Such a subject would be an organon gripped by the masses, a protector who brushes away the invariants as if with the back of the hand—invariants that strive to blend the undecidable with the continuous.⁸ This includes the very invariant of demo-logical difference and the propagation of the noble lie. If generic humanity involves the sedentary and the nomad, the autochthonous and the displaced, the dwellers and the navigators, the earthbound and the extra-terrestrial, the popular masses and the migratory flows,⁹ then a non-humanist theory or the vision-in-man adequately represents as a non-thetic reflection (of) the real of People-(of)-the-One. Said otherwise, it is a unilateral reflection that is determined by people alone in-the-last-instance without a reciprocal or dialectical relationship ensuing. The non-humanist subject is cloned from the occasional materials provided by meta-human statements from humanism devoid of its auto-sufficiency. This subject embodies the non-anthropo(-)logical personage of Man void of the racism and xenophobia inherent and implicit within philosophy itself. Philosophy is inhabited by an anti-humanity

⁷ Didier Moulinier, *De la Philosophie: Critique du Principe de Philosophie Suffisante* (Paris: Les Contemporains Favoris, 2022), 57.

⁸ Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 119-22.

⁹ François Laruelle, *Philosophie non-standard: Générique, quantique, philo-fiction* (Paris: Kimé, 2010), 34.

that is the superior form of racism.¹⁰ Such a uni-lateral frontality is the forced hand of the People-(of)-the-One for those who are still auto-sufficient philosophers, including the populists who identify themselves with this “pure people,” the Other of philosophy. The forced hand is both a welcoming gesture to the humanity within the heart of the philosopher and the gesture that lifts the veil, brushing it away to see the very person that philosophy has masked. Far from a spontaneous populism, this is a theoretical non-Rousseauism, the model of whom only saw masks and never people, the one who saw the general will as the collective force that frees people from their self-interest. Laruelle clones Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s general will into the forced hand, no longer forcing the self-sufficient individuals to be free, but forcing them to be heretics separated-(from)-the-World-without-the-act-of-separation.¹¹

4. Non-Philosophy is the non-alienated concept of “popular philosophy,” becoming what we may consider a “human philosophy” that is constrained by a radically irreversible order that

ensues from ordinary people. This form of philosophy is no longer identified with the world of philosophy which is nothing but the World-form, but it is identified with humanity which is nothing-but-One. The Ordinary is “the real possibility of all orders,”¹² and such a stance organizes the City in a new light. The People-(of)-the-One are not exchangeable with the City, becoming instead the source for a “positive democracy that utilizes secondarized Authorities.”¹³ The people do not need to be democratized.¹⁴ If they needed to be, then they—*we* must have not been people to begin with, a doubt that stems from demo-logical difference and its Evil Genius personified by the man *par excellence*, the philosopher. Indeed, the City is nothing but an occasion for a new non-political conception of democracy. The People-(of)-the-One are the cause that determines the City and the State in-the-last-instance alone. For Laruelle, the Stranger is this subject who displaces and emplaces the State by way of a uni-lateralization from the cause. Why do we consider this conception of democracy as non-political and not the grounding of a democratic non-politics? This is because democratization

¹⁰ François Laruelle, *Théorie des étrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie, non-psychanalyse* (Paris: Kimé, 1995), 127; Laruelle, *Philosophie non-standard*, 176.

¹¹ François Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012), 75-76. The forced hand is in connection to *force (de) pensée*, usually translated into English as force (of) thought.

¹² Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, 123.

¹³ Laruelle, *Théorie des étrangers*, 159.

¹⁴ A claim that is supported by John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 186.

- **Oraxiom: A Journal of Non-Philosophy**

is secondary to what is prior-to-the-first in this order that ensues from the People-(of)-the-One. Democracy is no longer resulted from out of the long operation of philosophy, as if people needed to become what they are and included in some whole that nevertheless subsumes them. Rather, when people as the being-human (of) man exist in the encounter or the dual between the One and the World, instead of a bridge between ordinary people and the State, democracy informs Strangers to instantiate a utopia, a void, *a no-man's land*, for there is no human involved or handed over to the City to become other than what they are. Furthermore, there is no debt needed to be repaid by the City, no reconciliation to be had for the mute compulsion the City propagated upon the People-(of)-the-One. The City, framed in affinity with non-philosophy's uni-lateralization, a Universe-City¹⁵ or, simpler, Uni-City.¹⁶ The Uni-City is a city that does not aspire towards

sustaining the noble lie and the broader capitalist relations overdetermining existence in both its economic and philosophical forms. The Uni-City is outside (of) the horizon of ontocosmo-anthropo-theo-politico-logical relations,¹⁷ and is therefore irreducible to demological difference. It is then, and only then, that one may be able to say that the City is itself endemic¹⁸: People are not made for the City, but the City is determined by the People in-the-last-instance alone *for* the City. This is the real content of the non-philosophical statement “the multitude will never be philosophers,” and the real scientific, non-political framework of the old concept *multitudo transcendentalis*, where each-and-every-One (*tout-un-chacun*) determine this order inalienably.

¹⁵ François Laruelle, *Éthique de l'Étranger: Du crime contre l'humanité* (Paris: Kimé), 373-74.

¹⁶ “Uni-City” is a portmanteau that plays into the framework of Laruelle's varying *uni*-s (uni-lateralization, uni-identity, uni-lation, etc.) ensuing irreversibly from the One, as well as the term “unicity,” that is, united or uniqueness in kind.

¹⁷ In *Éthique de l'Étranger*, 294, Laruelle refers to “onto-anthropo-theo-logy” as the most complete definition of metaphysics. In the broader context in connection to the cosmopolitical, we include these other dimensions to expand on Laruelle's own.

¹⁸ The en-demic is a portmanteau of the author's design and is knowingly drawn from a false etymology. It signifies that which is immanent (to) people and follows from the varying paradigmatic frameworks proposed by Laruelle such as vision-in-One or vision-in-man (in French: *vision-en-Un*, *vision-en-homme*), the in-person (*en-personne*), and the in-the-last-humanity (*en-dernière-humanité*). The -demic, as well, draws from the *demos* which we now see is not the multitude in the classical sense (i.e., *hoi polloi*). Though the words “demotic” or “endemic” colloquially express the en-demic, both however maintain prejudicial bases for conflating the ordinary with the everyday or common. Therefore, en-demic in its full expression is the uni-lateral order that is immanent (to) people forced upon the World insofar as people are the People-(of)-the-One.