

The Minority Principle

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Foreword: The Immediate Givens of Multiplicities

This essay poses problems of a special type and strives to give them a theoretical solution [*solution de principe*] of which the philosophical impact must touch on the fundamental questions of more traditional thought and perhaps partially appeals to them. They have the following general form: can one define parts before the Whole and independently of the Whole? differences before their repetition and independently of the Idea, of Logos, of Being? minorities before the State and independently of the State? becoming before Being and independently of Being? can one think events before their place in history, subjects before objects and lacking objectivity? a time without temporality? singularities or multiplicities before any universal and independently of a universal? etc. One does not respond to each of these questions in particular, one strives to elaborate a matrix which applies [*vaut*] to questions of this type and a matrix of responses that philosophy can hope to give to them. It is then a matter of establishing a theory of *the essence of multiplicities*, in the strict sense of these terms, and, in this way [*par là*], of taking up again on new bases the very old problems of truth, being, the absolute and the relative, transcendence, the method of philosophical thinking, etc.

Despite the variety of domains where they are usually formulated, all these problems are of the same type. We thought it possible give them an identical solution the form of which is sketched, touched up [*reprise*] and deepened in each of the five sections.

The first section introduces the transcendental problematic within which [*à l'intérieur de laquelle*] these problems will henceforth be posed and their solution prepared. It distinguishes it as much as possible from classical and idealist transcendental philosophy and strives to make understood anew the imperishable demand [*exigence*] of the *veritas transcendentalis*.

The second shows the grand phases of the technology of thought which endeavors to think in view of the *veritas transcendentalis*. It sets out the practical rules which hold [*valent*] equally [*à la fois*] for the classical use of the transcendental method, for its destruction, and for its new usage elaborated under the title of “dispersion” or “dispersivity.”

The third broadens the field of analysis and critiques, under the name of “Difference” or “Continuous Multiplicities,” the contemporary, Greco-contemporary, concept of multiplicities. The goal of this essay is to distinguish between two or three types of multiplicities: *discrete* or arithmetic, of which we say nothing here; *continuous*, identical to the modern concept of Difference; and finally *dispersive*, *Unary Multiplicities* or *Minorities*, which are the absolute

concept or the essence of multiplicities. The third section is thus the description and the “destruction” of the modern and contemporary problematic which, after Hegel, with Nietzsche, Heidegger and those who follow them, that is to say most of our contemporaries, substituted for the “negative” dialectic the positive dialectic of Difference and, rediscovering [*retrouvant*] the most original tradition, inscribed the essence of multiplicities in the old chain [*chaîne*] of the unity of contraries and made of Difference or the multiple a new form of ontico-ontological mixture.

The fourth elaborates, this time systematically, the dispersive, unary or minoritarian concept of multiplicities, their essence conforming to the *veritas transcendentalis*, that is to say their absolute essence. It attempts to give to the problem of the absolute, non-relative autonomy of parts, differences, minorities, beings [*étant*], events, singularities, etc.—a general and positive response, according to a certain *Minority Principle* which is forced [*contraint*] to seek the possibility of multiplicities *beyond* Being, the Idea, the State, History, etc.

The fifth section returns to all these themes in order to broaden their scope and their philosophical implications. The title of “Technique and Mysticism” gives the general sense of this essay, its paradox, its wager perhaps. In the notion of essence of Multiplicities is reconciled, to speak in a way that is superficial [*extérieure*] and a bit imprudent, a thought of the multiple and of becoming, of the dispersion and the dissemination which carry the contemporary hopes for an overflow [*débord*] of Greco-occidental Representation, and a thought of the absolute, but of the Absolute as such, a thought of the One, *but of the One without unity*, beyond the Idea, Logos, Being itself [*l’Être même*]. Individuals are the ultimate constituents of reality, before Being, before the World, History and the State—that there are, to speak in classical terms, monads absolutely dispersed and deprived [*dépourvus*] of a monadology, a reason or a universal, this thesis only has sense if there exist *immediate givens of multiplicities* beyond the possible [*éventuelles*] techniques of their production. To render this thesis, if not credible, then at least plausible and arguable [*discutable*], it was necessary to accept as inevitable the irruption, in the general thematic, of the Absolute, and leap with as little fear and trembling as is possible in these circumstances, over the “not beyond” of Being, the Idea, the State, [to reach a] beyond filled by [*au-delà rempli par*] the Principle of Minority. It then became necessary to sacrifice the tutelary geniuses Nietzsche, Bergson, Heidegger, too tutelary perhaps not to abandon us at the moment when we would have wished to go beyond their horizon in their company. Inevitable also to renounce all at once, without soliciting and working it any further in order to make it produce what it cannot by all evidence give and as one had struggled there in vain during the first researches,¹ the contemporary problem of Difference, that is to say of

¹ TN: In French, this clause is: ‘sans la solliciter et la travaille davantage pour lui faire rendre ce qu’elle ne peut de toute évidence donner et comme l’on s’y était acharné en vain dans de premières recherches.’

continuous and relative multiplicities that it still inscribes in the hypostasis of Being, or of minorities that it still implants in the body of the State—hypostases that it only causes to stretch without daring to break them.

An attempt of which the means, goals and results are only apparently theoretical, not enveloping solely various emotions.² It is itself an emotion right through [*de part en part*], it is always born of an encounter, an encounter between a disappointment [*déception*] and a still unknown demand [*exigence*] that the emotion envelops like a certitude higher than itself, which it retains [*garde*] and causes to linger. But is it only a matter of an encounter, was it not necessary that the Absolute be itself already manifested [*se soit déjà manifesté*] in its own mode these “immediate givens” for which contemporary philosophy bluntly proves [*s’avère brutalement*] so deceptive, so violent, voluntarist and activist, so [*comme*] incapable of keeping its promise? Will it keep its promise of breaking Representation in elaborating a concept of becoming, of difference, of multiplicities beyond presence? Or rather will it be contented one more time, one time which is the very custom, the Greco-contemporary tradition, of subordinating these multiplicities to the so little non-present essence of presence and of simply adjusting [*d’aménager*] the old violence of reason? To keep this promise, this hope, perhaps it was necessary to agree to let oneself be persuaded by the Absolute, to let oneself be seized and transfixed, not to resist the powerlessness [*l’impouvoir*] of this emotion. To agree to recognize that this part of contemporary thought was betrayed in the search for multiplicities by its excess of will and by the theoretical means of which it had disposed or which had disposed of it. To consent finally to the One as that which retains multiplicities beyond Being itself, as minorities beyond the State.

Translated by Edward Kazarian³

² TN: The French here is: ‘Un tentative don’t les moyens, les buts et les résultats ne sont apparemment que théoriques, n’enveloppe pas seulement des émotions diverses.’

³ Original: François Laruelle. *Le principe de minorité*. Paris: Editions Aubier Montaigne, 1981, pp. 5-7. This text has been translated and posted under fair use principles. It may not be published without permission. Finally, the translator appreciates the careful reading and helpful suggestions made by Tyler Harper, many of which have been incorporate here, with regard to an earlier draft of this translation. All errors and infelicities remain, of course, my own.