Chapter 6

The Practice and Principles of Non-Philosophy

In order to fully understand the practice of non-philosophy we need to examine the different forms it has taken through its development. These are called waves by Laruelle and by looking at the form each has taken with regard to the status of the fundamental axioms of non-philosophy we will begin to understand how non-philosophy is practiced alongside of principles rather than a law-bound method. I will then turn to a discussion of how Laruelle provides a model or philo-fiction, what standard philosophy may call both a metaphysics and a metaphilosophy, for understanding how philosophy and science may come together in a unified theory. While this may seem at first glance unrelated to the project undertaken in this work, a unified theory of philosophical theology and ecology, it is actually important as the work undertaken here benefits from the experience and mature formulation of the relationship between philosophy and science. Non-Philosophy provides the philo-fiction that allows us to treat these discursive fields as simple material, as an occasion for thought that is autonomous but foreclosed from the Real and this realization is liberating for thought as it breaks the transcendental hallucinations of standard philosophical practice, whether that practice goes under the name of scientism or vitalism.

The Axiomatic Practice of Non-Philosophy

The question of the relationship between science and philosophy was central in Laruelle’s shifting from a typical philosophical practice (what he
calls placing one’s thought under the “principle of sufficient philosophy”) to the founding of the non-philosophical project. This attempt to think science and philosophy together is not hidden in his work and is given a central place in his own history of non-philosophy outlined in his important *Principles of Non-Philosophy*. Here he explains the periodization he has given his own work and that is to be found in nearly every book of his; on the page typically reserved for “Books by the Same Author” you will find a division of his twenty-one books into a categories labeled “Philosophy I” to “Philosophy V.” Recently he claimed that he had “finally understood the principle of this endless classification, they are not movements or stages, perhaps they are phases, but most certainly they are waves, nothing other than waves, it is always the same form with slightly different water each time.” Laruelle’s self-assessment of his work refers to how the general structure of non-philosophy has remained more or less constant throughout the 25 years since the practice of non-philosophy proper began. Laruelle calls this structure philo-fiction in order to differentiate this theory from the standard philosophical name of metaphysics, which is its closest equivalent in philosophical practice since both discuss, in very different ways, the structure or relationship of thought and being.

The general shape of these different waves, which will be discussed in more detail here, can be succinctly summed up in a paragraph. The general aim of non-philosophy is to think a transcendental realism that fosters a certain equality among objects and discursive materials. Non-Philosophy posits a Real that is foreclosed to philosophical thought, meaning that philosophy does not have any effect on the Real, the Real is radically autonomous from thought, but thought, as ultimately Real in-the-last-instance, also contains a certain relative autonomy and so any particular expression of thought can be taken as a simple material for an occasional theory. Occasional in this sense refers to the lack of self-sufficiency in those theories, a positive lack that protects against philosophical illusions of co-relation with the Real. Laruelle’s early work, which includes the books listed under the heading of Philosophy I, was undertaken in large part as a standard philosopher writing works on the history of philosophy, political philosophy, and deconstruction. Philosophy II marks his break with what he calls the “principle of sufficient philosophy” after he comes to recognize an invariant structure to philosophy that limits thought by taking philosophy as, in some sense, unlimited. In this period Laruelle aims to break this sufficiency by way of a confrontation between philosophy and science, and during this period there is a simple reversal and overturning of the dominant hierarchy between philosophy and science as identified by Laruelle. In the period under the heading of Philosophy III Laruelle moves beyond just a mere reversal of this hierarchy, making