

François Laruelle

A BIOGRAPHY OF
ORDINARY MAN

On Authorities and Minorities



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Translated by Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet

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First published in French as *Une biographie de l'homme ordinaire. Des Autorités et des Minorités* © Flammarion, Paris, 1985

This English edition © Polity Press, 2018

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
101 Station Landing
Suite 300
Medford, MA 02155, USA

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ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-0995-9 (hardback)
ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-0996-6 (paperback)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Laruelle, Francois, author.

Title: A biography of ordinary man : on authorities and minorities / Francois Laruelle.

Other titles: Biographie de l'homme ordinaire. English

Description: Malden, MA : Polity, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017026398 (print) | LCCN 2017032929 (ebook) | ISBN 9781509509980 (Mobi) | ISBN 9781509509997 (Epub) | ISBN 9781509509959 (hardback) | ISBN 9781509509966 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Human beings. | Philosophy. | Pragmatism.

Classification: LCC BD450 (ebook) | LCC BD450 .L33413 2017 (print) | DDC 128--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017026398>

Typeset in 10.5 on 12 pt Sabon by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire
Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Clays Ltd, St Ives PLC

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TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

At present, there are a number of sophisticated theoretical introductions to the works of François Laruelle available in English, so here we will limit ourselves to questions of translation.¹

In the French original, three of the text's key terms are brought into even closer dialogue by their parallel, rhyming forms: *mystique*, *pragmatique*, *topique*. Unfortunately, the structure of English means we have not been able to preserve these echoes consistently. When *mystique* is an adjective we have rendered it as "mystical," when it is the noun *le mystique* as "the mystical," and when it is the noun *la mystique* as "mysticism." When *pragmatique* is an adjective, it is "pragmatic," when it is the noun *le pragmatique*, "the pragmatic," and when the noun *la pragmatique*, "pragmatics." When *topique* is an adjective, we have rendered it as "topical," when the noun *le topique*, "the topic" and when the noun *la topique*, "topics." What is thereby obscured in English is the parallelism between *la pragmatique* (pragmatics) and *la topique* (topics), on the one hand, and *la mystique* (mysticism), on the other. Although others have translated *la mystique* as "mystics" (in the works of Michel de Certeau, for example), "mysticism" remains closer to the meaning that *la mystique* normally carries in French. For example, *la mystique rhénane*, the thirteenth and fourteenth-century mystical movement that includes Meister Eckhart, Henry Suso, and Johannes Tauler, among others, is usually referred to in English as "German Mysticism." The one time in the text that Laruelle uses the term *mysticisme* it is polemical, along the

¹ See especially Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016); John O'Maolíearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015); Alexander R. Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2014).

lines of the term “obscurantism”; we have made this different usage clear in the text.

In another case, the differences between French and English grammar and the precision of Laruelle's terms have forced us to stretch English conventions. Laruelle uses three different French terms – *individu*, *individuel(le)*, and *individual(le)* – for which the English “individual” is the appropriate translation. However, because each of the three terms does different theoretical work, we have found it necessary to distinguish between them in our translation, in one case using a neologism that echoes Laruelle's French and evokes what we take to be his debt to Heideggerian terminology. Our terms are as follows: First, we translate the standard French noun for “individual,” *individu*, as “individual.” Second, we translate the standard French adjective for “individual,” *individuel(le)*, as “individuel,” preserving the –el of the French. Third, Laruelle coins the peculiar adjective *individual(le)*, a term we suspect is modeled after Heidegger's distinction between *existenziell* and *existenzial*. Like the noun *individu*, we translate this form as “individual.” Context will make clear which is the noun and which the adjective. Of primary importance for the reader is the fact that the awkward English “individuel” is in fact a translation of the common French adjective *individuel(le)*, whereas the deceptively familiar adjective “individual” translates the neologism *individual(le)*. This counter-intuitive distribution of familiar and unfamiliar is necessitated, at least in part, by the stress Laruelle puts on the “a” in individuality when he writes it as *individua-lity*. Moreover, by translating Laruelle's term *individual(le)* as “individual,” we avoid what Laruelle himself is trying to avoid, namely, leaving the *duel*, or “duel” – the contest between two adversaries so central to philosophy – in the individual.

Laruelle's particular use in French – and thus our distinctive translations in English – of a group of terms related to thought and reflection also deserve explanation. While *irréfléchi* has a standard meaning of “thoughtless” or “unconsidered,” we have rendered it as “unreflective” so as to capture the critique of the specular found throughout the text, and also to retain some of the strangeness of Laruelle's usage. Whenever “unthought” appears it translates *impensé(e)*, while *réfléchi* usually becomes “reflected” or “reflective” rather than its more common definitions.

A number of terms that are likely to stand out to the reader are indebted to Heideggerian thought and the way it has been translated from German into both French and English. Indeed, translating this book has made us realize that the responsible translator of

contemporary French philosophy really ought to have read at least Heidegger and Kant in French translation. We outline some of the most important Heideggerianisms here so that the reader understands their philosophical baggage.

- Although the standard meaning of the French *éloignement* is “remoteness,” when Laruelle uses the hyphenated term *é-loignement* he is referencing a Heideggerian terminology that has its own highly particular meaning and translation history: *é-loignement* is the standard French translation of Heidegger’s *Ent-fernung* (§23 of *Being and Time*) which we have, following Joan Stambaugh’s English translation of the same text, rendered as “de-distancing.” For the same reasons, we translate *é-loigné* as “de-distanced.”
- Laruelle draws a distinction between things *comme tel* and *tel quel*. The former is the standard French translation of Heidegger’s *als solche*, which is usually given in English as “as such.” (For example, Chapter V of Division I of *Being and Time*, “Das In-Sein als solches,” is translated into English by Stambaugh as “Being-in As Such,” and by Emmanuel Martineau into French as “L’Être-À Comme Tel”.) We have respected this, rendering *comme tel* as “as such,” in contrast to *tel quel* and its variants, which we translate as “as it is” (“as they are,” “as he is,” etc.). A similar term, which appears less frequently in the text, *en tant que tel*, we translate as “as is.”
- We have rendered *originaire* as originary, but it should be noted that in Martineau’s translation of Heidegger, *originaire* often translates *ursprünglich*, which is usually given in English translations of Heidegger as “primordial.”
- The French *sens* can be translated into English as both “sense” and “meaning.” Thus, for example, the phrase *logique du sens* is most commonly known to English audiences as the title of Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense*, while *le sens de l’être* is the standard translation of Heidegger’s *Sinn von Sein*, which in English is usually rendered as “meaning of being.” (Both of these are obliquely referenced in the exposition of Theorem 113 below.) Unfortunately, in English there is no way to capture in one word the divergent denotations “sense” and “meaning,” so we have rendered *sens* as “sense” when it is used in colloquial expressions (“in the sense that,” etc.), but when *sens* is used technically (as in Chapter IV) we translate it as “meaning.”

As is clear from the mention of Deleuze in the final bullet point, Laruellian terms are also frequently related to the terminology of

French thinkers. While “Other” is almost always a rendering of the French *Autre*, the several times *Autrui* (“other person” or “other people”) appears in the French original it is either in implicit or explicit reference to Levinas’s ethical thought. When necessary, we have drawn attention to the distinction between *Autre* and *Autrui*. And for the verb *survoler*, which has the standard meanings of “to fly over” and “to skim through,” we have followed the precedent of other translators (for example Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell’s in their translation of Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?*) and rendered it as “survey” throughout. The other meanings of the term should, however, be kept in mind. More generally, we have translated the prefix *sur-*, which appears throughout the text, sometimes as “sur-” and sometimes as “over-,” depending on readability.

A few final translation decisions should be noted: We have rendered *scission* throughout as scission for consistency, but readers should keep in mind the more common meanings “division,” “separation,” “split.” We have rendered *occidental(e)* as “western,” but compounds such as *gréco-occidental* have retained their original inflection and have become “Greco-occidental.” Additionally, we have rendered the French *mixte* in two different ways: in the adjectival form as “mixed” and in the substantive form (*le mixte*) as “mixture” rather than as “the mixed,” for readability. Finally, readers will encounter both “apriori” and “a priori” in the text. Both forms appear in the French original, and while their usage is not consistent throughout, it is clear that *apriori* functions predominantly as a noun and *a priori* as an adjective or adverb. In our translation, we have altered spellings when needed to regularize the pattern.

After this lengthy explanation of complex terminology, we offer one very simple word to those who helped us with this translation: thanks. Daniel Hoffmann, Anthony Paul Smith, Andrea Gadberry, Sanders Creasy, Dario Rudy, Kelsey Lepperd, and Ben Tran all generously shared their time and expertise with us as we translated. Their help was invaluable.

FOREWORD

This book attempts a systematic foundation for a discipline that has, needless to say, already been signaled and hinted at in the history of thought: a rigorous science of man, but one different – this is its interest and its risk – from both Philosophy and the “Sciences of Man,” which derive from it. It is also a sort of manual or compendium of arguments for this discipline, whose principal domains and essential modes of description it will strive to cover, at times too briefly. It can be read in two ways: either following only the series of its “theorems,” or following also the explications or the commentaries that accompany each of them. Either way, its reading should be “linear” and follow the order of the parts as well as the order of the theorems in each part. We could not avoid certain preemptions intended to give a view of the whole and demonstrate, as it is said nowadays, the “stakes” of the project, but they do not undermine the necessary order of experiences, described here as those of the life of every man.

From this point of view, this essay, unlike *The Minority Principle* by the same author, finally unfolds in the rigorous order required by the transcendental science of individuals as such. *The Minority Principle* is a transitional book, a mixed attempt in the spirit of traditional philosophy to break with that philosophy, and in particular with the author’s earlier books. That book was a “breakthrough” that still proceeded pedagogically and philosophically, that is to say, by means of transcendence, starting from philosophical problematics (Kant, Husserl, Nietzsche, Contemporary Thinkers) towards a thought of the One or of individuals. The current attempt, by contrast, abandons this process and begins with the One or Minorities and draws its conclusions from them. It systematically describes the essence of the domain that still remained something of a promised land or a distant

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reality in the previous work. Finally, it attempts to reconcile a certain theoretical rigor, which is absent, for reasons that will be explained, from even the most rationalist forms of philosophy with a certain love of human truth that is no less absent from philosophy. The wager is obviously that the two absences share a reason. This reconciliation is a thought that will appear difficult to those who separate theory and affect into two different worlds.

The flaws inherent in this sort of enterprise are, regrettably, well known, and it is pointless to pretend to lament them. Naivety and naive statements, empty agendas, aggressive declarations, successive refusals designed to cordon off a territory, the deliberate omission of all citations, or putatively idle discussions, etc., not to mention what contemporary thinkers suspect to be the unconscious of a work, a suspicion that is treated here as merely a cunning joy that has nothing to do with the seriousness of the project: there is “much to critique” in this, but hopefully it does not mask the *reality* of the enterprise. By contrast, perhaps offense will be taken at the anti-philosophical vivacity of this wager, behind which will be imagined to be some disappointed passion or institutional disgrace. It will be said that this in fact is the human, the all-too-human, side of the researcher. Perhaps a certain Cartesian deception will also be memorable enough that the intimacy of the drama will be respected rather than overcome by either the weapons of philosophy or those of the institution.

INTRODUCTION

A RIGOROUS SCIENCE OF MAN

1. From the Sciences of Man to the Science of People

It is reasonable to revolt against philosophers. But why? Is revolt its own reason, one more reason? But is it not philosophers who, dispensing reason, and particularly reasons for revolt, dispense with revolt? Is it not time to finally stop revolting and to base existence in a strong but tolerant indifference to philosophy? “Ordinary man,” the finite individual whom we also call *Minorities*, is located in this indifference, which he draws from himself rather than from philosophy. We present here five “theses,” really five “theorems” – human theorems:

1. Man really exists and he is really distinct from the World: this thesis contradicts almost all of philosophy;
2. Man is a mystical living being [*un vivant mystique*] condemned to action, a contemplative being doomed to practice, though he does not know why this is the case;
3. As a practical living being, man is condemned a second time, and for the same reasons, to philosophy;
4. This double condemnation organizes his destiny, and this destiny is called “World,” “History,” “Language,” “Sexuality,” “Power,” which we refer to as *Authorities* in general;
5. A rigorous science of ordinary man, that is, of man, is possible: a biography of the individual as Minorities and as Authorities; a theoretically justified description of the life he leads between these two poles, which are sufficient to define him.

Such a description is the objective of this treatise. The description may be facilitated but not replaced by the sketch, by way of an introduction, of the most general program of a *rigorous science of man* intended to replace philosophy and its avatars, the “Sciences of Man.” A *transcendental science*, which is to say a non-empirical science, but also not a “philosophical” one. . .

In the form in which they exist and triumph, the Sciences of Man are not sciences and have nothing to do with man – for the same reason. In question here is not their conflict with philosophy or the fact that they lack precise empirical procedures – two debates we will not enter. Instead, we attack the globally non-scientific character of these second-hand sciences, which do not form *a* science, and the complementary fact that they do not relate to any real object. This is not the same old fight: defending philosophy against the human sciences. Should the father be defended against his children or should he be left to die? Instead, we defend man against this authoritarian family in league against him, and attempt to constitute him (and this is not at all contradictory) as an object of a rigorous science.

Man has never been the object of the Sciences of Man. He does not recognize himself in this authoritarian and all-consuming activity, and for their part, the Sciences of Man are concerned with something other than man. The Sciences of Man combine the plural and the singular in a strange way: we have to understand, on the one hand, that man, in himself and inexhaustible, exists, man whom multiple sciences, powerless and unreal, attempt to circumscribe; on the other hand, that man does not really exist, that only sciences or methods exist, that play of universal predicates whose accumulation is expected to coincide with the essence of man. But this essence hides and flees like infinity. This indeterminate being, vanishing under the growing weight of universal determinations, which are used to exhaust him in the frustrated hope of “fixing” him, is what we are asked to consider as “man.” But man is definitively absent from the gathering of the Sciences of Man because he is first of all absent from the gathering of philosophy. In both scenarios, one of the terms, science or man, must be unreal so that the other is real.

Perhaps the arrangement should be inverted: if science is to cease to be a techno-political fantasy and become a real science, it must be unique and specific; and it is man who must be irreducible in his multiplicity if he is no longer to be this anthropological fetish, this spineless phantom that is nothing but a shadow of the Sciences of Man, that is, of the sun and Reason mutually obstructing each other.

A double poverty of the Sciences of Man: as concerns “science,”

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they admit either to an indeterminate plurality or else to the mineral unity of a nebula. Either way, they reveal that they are nothing but an artifact, the foam that the wave of other sciences left on the *terra incognita* of man.

Even combined, they still do not form a science, with an object and autonomous and theoretically justified methods. For now, these are merely imaginary phenomena deriving from the intersection of other disciplines – a theoretical *ersatz* or a “science” of synthesis. We do not recognize them according to their own existence, because it is a simple, blurred institutional network, nourished by its own plasticity, surviving only from compromise. Having not yet found their foundation or essence, they settle for being the caricature of contemporary philosophical powerlessness and nihilism: playing with the most diverse theoretical processes by targeting a fantastical and mythical figure of man, with no necessity other than the context.

Every science that comes into being strains to capture all of reality, and is animated by the old mytho-philosophical ambition of identifying the Whole with the real, Totality with the absolute. Like the others, the most recent – ethnology, linguistics, biology, and the science of history (in the Marxist sense) – do not emerge without attempting to moor man, considered as a remainder, to their continent or their raft. A series of deferred actions or anthropological artifacts results from this, and each time man is declared fully accounted for. But all these universals, even gathered together by the State in the nebula of the Social Sciences, do not in the least form a beginning for a specific science of man distinct from the science of the *historical* man, of the *speaking* man, of the *social* man, of the *psychic* man, etc. These are fake sciences of man, just like there are fake chemical or life sciences, but they have succeeded in establishing themselves and prospering because of flagrant opportunism. They lack both specific theoretical foundations – distinct from those that apply to the sciences of the living being, the historical being, the speaking being, the sexuated being, etc. – and a sufficiently determined experience of their object.

A genealogy of the Sciences of Man would show that they stem from the same archaic, metaphysical presuppositions as *rational psychology*, from which the *cogito* has not been eradicated: ontological presuppositions in general (simplicity, atomicity, substantiality, causality, etc., which are simply pluralized), combined with others that are necessary for their mathematization. Smatterings of ancient philosophy, of politics, of “rational” psychology and sociology are externally re-united by the process and security of a cheap mathematization. This generalized intersection creates the techno-political

wealth, that is to say, the real vacuity of this bric-a-brac, equally devoid of theoretical rigor and humanity, and for the same reasons. Because the essence of the science of man remains unthought, its rigorous phenomenal content having been forgotten, it is reconstructed from practical and theoretical elements, which are effective elsewhere but here are taken without necessity, under the sole arbitrary authority of the psychologist, the political scientist, the sociologist, the historian, etc. There is still no necessary connection between the sciences of man and their object, no theoretical foundation to assure this connection and render it necessary.

How to set up a rigorous science of man, established in the rigor specific to theory as such, that is, in the experience of the full and phenomenally positive sense of *Theoria*? A science that would no longer borrow its means of investigation, demonstration, and validation from existing sciences? It must be based in the specific essence of its object, in the truth of its object: the discovery of the science of man and the discovery of the real essence of man are the same thing.

As concerns “man,” the concept these sciences have of him is doubly indeterminate. Initially, “man” is a concept indeterminate in its origin and in the Greco-unitary philosophical presuppositions that serve as its foundation. His essence – whether despite or because of the *cogito* and *rational psychology*, but since long before them – has not been clarified as a matter of principle. One cannot take the anthropological forms of philosophy for a science or a rigorous theory of man, because anthropology is only a phantasmatic projection of Greco-Christian ontological prejudices onto real man. Man has never been the real object of philosophy, which dreams and thinks of something else, of Being for example, and as a result hallucinates the individual. As a matter of principle to which we will return, Greco-ontological thought, with the related, bastard sciences that make up its entourage like so many shameful cadavers, was never able to radically determine any object whatsoever or test what the finite individual is. It is not only the *cogito*, the foundational text of its psychology and anthropology, that it leaves indeterminate in its meaning and truth, but also – and more profoundly – *the non-anthropological essence of man*. Precisely because it can be an anthropology, philosophy such as it is does not know man. Philosophy knows the inhuman, the sub-human, the all-too-human, the over-human, but philosophy does not know the human. It only knows man by encircling him in prefixes or quotation marks, in precautions or relations (with itself, with others, with the World): never as a “term.” This is because it conflates ordinary man with any given man, with the universal individual whose

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guiding pattern and excellent essence is the philosopher, the human par excellence in speech, in knowledge, in acting. Philosophy identifies man with generalities or attributes, with a knowledge, an activity, a race, a desire, an existence, a writing, a society, a language, a sex, and it is once again the philosopher who comes to the fore under the guise of these generalities, the philosopher who requisitions man for his own goals and his own values, which are very specific and need the cover of the universal. The essence of the individual has remained unthought by philosophy, which merely *posits* it and puts forward a possible presumed-man, while denying the conditions of his real experience through the multiplicity of authoritarian universals that it uses to filter him. Man remains indeterminate a second time, because the Sciences of Man, unable to reach the height of traditional philosophy, only bring out its originary *theoretical carelessness* and that with which in reality it is interconnected: its lack of humanity.

The *cogito* as well all the other unitary figures of the subject and of man remain unclarified in their essence because they are all, without exception, based in *anthropo-logical parallelism*, in the more or less distorted but never invalidated mixture or parallelity of man and logos, in this ruined cradle of the Sciences of Man that is anthropo-logical philosophical difference.

Beginning with man and drawing conclusions from him about the State, about Power, about Language – about the World? Anthropo-logical difference prohibits beginning with man and his solitude. Anthropo-logical difference begins from a mixture or a universal: man as language, as desire, as society, as power, as sex, etc. It cannot be satisfied with ordinary man: it does not even see him. Thus, 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 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; it separates or thinks it separates what man is capable of. Without a doubt, it is a hallucination that affects unitary thought – that is, the essential part of the Greco-occidental tradition – more than the essence of man. But it explains why philosophy has not known man and has given rise only to a mere anthropology. In place of man, of his real and absolutely singular essence, it employs anthropo-logical, even andrological, images, quasi-transcendental androids (the Cogito, ens creatum, Spirit, the I think, the Worker, the Unconscious, etc.). These are fictional beings responsible for populating the desert

of anthropological screens, shadows projected on the steep walls of Ideas, inhabitants of ideal caves.

In this way, anthropo-logical difference is the positing and the forgetting of the real or “finite” essence of man. It is identical to its own history, an auto-destruction or auto-inhibition of the mixture of man *and* logos. It is more profound than the “humanism” attacked by contemporary philosophy, restricting and drawing closer to the target so as to be all the more certain of reaching it. It reigns even in unitary deconstructions of humanism. From now on, it is at issue as difference, and not as it speaks of man. Anthro-po-logy as parallelism or as difference (the slight distinction no longer matters here) is *the* Greco-unitary myth that must be excluded by a theoretically justified science of man, but on the following three conditions: that this exclusion be not the cause but rather the effect of this science of man and of its positive essence; that this essence not take the vacant place of unitary anthropology, but on the contrary that it be the instance capable of radically determining it; finally, that the rigorously described phenomenal content of man be at once and *in an original identity – to whose non circular essence we will return* – the principal “object” and the unique “subject” of this science.

The human insufficiency of the Sciences of Man is a theoretical insufficiency. We have spoken, against common sense, about the theoretical carelessness of philosophy. The deficit in *theoria* is not actually specific to these weak and inconsistent sciences. It comes first of all from Greek ontological prejudices, which prohibited the simultaneous unfolding of the essence of theory and the essence of man, and which produced a mere counter-mythology or a counter-sophistry, “philosophy,” instead of a phenomenally rigorous and positive science of man. Furthermore, in its prudence, it established an “anthropology,” which became, under the assumed name of “Sciences of Man,” a zone for cutting-edge activities.

Is it still a question of a final philosophical gesture? Or does this radicality no longer belong to the order of philosophy? It is at least necessary here to make a tabula rasa of the unitary prejudices of the Sciences of Man in order to be able to establish the rigorous science that philosophy will have failed to be.

2. Man as Finite or Ordinary Individual

It is no more a question of reviving the interminable combat between philosophy and the Sciences of Man than it is of making man “exit”

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from the enclosure they form together through their very conflict. It is rather a question of showing that man never entered this enclosure, that this conflict is none of his business, save through a unitary hallucination whose mechanism will have to be analyzed; that he is determined and completed straightaway and absolutely precedes the phantasms of anthropo-logical parallelism. If philosophy is an anthropo- or an andro- eidetic, we must systematically contrast what we call "ordinary man," who draws an inalienable essence from himself (which above all does not mean that he is a *causa sui*), to the philosophical android or anthropoid, that is to say, to *homo ex machina*, a part of the philosophical machine, a part of Being, of Desire, of the State, of Language, etc. *Man, through his real essence, is not visible within the horizon of these presuppositions, which are those of the Sciences of Man as well.* Anthropology simulates him, magically gives rise to him – it is not yet the science of man; anthropo-logical difference is not man – it is his transcendent avatar in the World. If the essence of man is not a *difference*, something like an *undecidable decision*, it is the radical subject of an ordeal that, far from alienating him, is finite, or holds him in himself and prevents him from ever leaving himself. Ordinary man is inalienable, and this distinguishes him from his projections on the anthropo-logical screen, which are inconsistent, un-real, and doomed to history.

Man is the real object of a science as soon as he is recognized in his specificity, irreducible to the objects of other sciences, and in his reality rather than in the mere possibility of his "figures." This is a single twofold requirement, which can be nuanced later, though it does not suffer from this in its principles and its foundations are undivided. Each science has its own way of sending the old unitary ideal of totality into retreat, and the rigorous science of individuals has its own: it requires, in an ultimately radical way, that the Whole and its modes, the universal or authoritarian predicates, not be "all," that man be straightaway outside-whole or that he introduce into the World, or rather outside of the World, a duality of which the World, the Whole, and their attributes are only one of the sides. For the science of man to become a reality, man must stop being unitarily enclosed in totalities or unities, and the real relations among the sciences must cease to be confused with Greco-philosophical forms of unity, which are utterly mythological. To see the reality rather than the mere possibility of man, it is necessary to abandon the unitary or Greco-occidental paradigm, which pervades almost all of philosophy up to its contemporary deconstructions, along with all of its prejudices. Man is not and has never been an object visible in

the Greco-unitary horizon, even in the anthropological territory of this horizon. It is useless to renew or deconstruct metaphysics. What is necessary is to change the paradigm of thinking; to move from a philosophical paradigm (from Being to Difference, from the Same to the Other) to a paradigm we call *minoritarian* or *individual*, which is based on *a transcendental but finite experience of the One as distinct from Being, the World, and their attributes*. The distinction of the *individuel* and the *individual* is the foundation of a non-empirical (non-worldly, non-historical, non-linguistic, non-sexual, etc.) but transcendental science of individuals or of ordinary man.¹ Whereas the *individuel* is always also universal, the *individual* [*l'individual*] is the *individu* [*l'individu*] without remainder or excess, the nothing-but-individual who a priori precedes all forms of universality. The individual problematic is thus based in a thought of the One rather than a thought of Being. Being, but also Difference and the games of the Same and the Other, are always unitary and, in addition to their own difficulties, are incapable of doing man justice. Instead of rendering him visible, they are satisfied with the substitute of an anthropology or – which is not all that different – of a unitary critique of anthropology.

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. The hypothesis and even the paradigm must be changed: break the mixtures, base philosophy on man rather than the inverse; attempt a history of the human existent that would no longer owe anything to unitary prejudices; a biography of the solitary man, bachelor of the World, of Faith, of Technics, of Language, and even of Philosophy.

But this man, it will be objected, does he exist? Does he exist in any form that is not residual and epiphenomenal? *Is there a proper and primitive essence of man, one that would not be an attribute of something else?* 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. Real man is subject, nothing-but-subject. But the subject here also is not a special predicate; it is a subject that has never been a predicate and that no longer needs predicates in general, that is straightaway inherent (to) itself or a sufficiently determined essence. The essence of man remains in the One, that is, in the inherence that is non-positional (of) itself, in a nothing-but-subject or an absolute-as-subject, that

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is, a *finitude*. As a matter of principle, which will be explained later, we identify the absolute with finitude rather than with an infinite totality. Individuals are “real” prior to totality; they are not modes of a substance and they are not even understandable starting from infinite and universal attributes (Language, Life, History, Sexuality, Economy, etc.). It is useless to wonder if these predicates are included analytically or synthetically in the subject “man,” or if “man” is the difference of himself and language (anthropo-linguistic/logical difference), of himself and sexuality, etc. As we understand it, man is “ordinary” in a positive sense: he is not a residual and shifting figure of philosophy or of the Greek episteme, but rather is determined before these and absolutely precedes the philosophical calculation of predicates inasmuch as they are taken one by one.

Ordinary man is devoid of qualities or attributes through a completely positive sufficiency. He lacks nothing, not even philosophy. But being devoid of predicates does not mean that he is devoid of essence: to the contrary, this is man as he takes his essence from himself, or more precisely, immediately from his essence, without it having been an attribute beforehand. He does not take his essence from History, from Biology, from the State, from Philosophy. There is no pejorative or minorative note in this “ordinary” or this “minoritarian.” I am a sufficient Solitude, too far below “solipsism” to have to extricate myself from it. I am not a Cogito, a relation to a Site or to an Other. I am out-(of)-the-question: no question of man, no ontic or ontological primacy of the question of man. I do not find my essence in my existence or in my questions; I experience my subjective essence before these questions. I am the beginning of my life and my thought. And if in this way I exclude the question and the *mise en abyme* from my essence, that is because my essence (and essence in general) is defined by characteristics that are absolutely original, primitive, internal, and without equivalents in the World: through the One or the unreflective. There is a question (of) Being, but the One is out-(of)-the-question.

It is the structures of this ordinary man that we will describe here. Individual structures, invisible to the light of Reason or Intelligence. They are not ideal essences, but finite, inalienable, and thus indisputable, lived experiences. Individual structures of the essence of man are describable outside of all anthropological prejudice, that is, outside of all Greek philosophical rationality. Only these individual or finite determinations grant man something other than a mere possibility: a specific and determined reality. They render possible a science of his relations to the World, to History, to Language, relations that are not

at all those hallucinated by the Social Sciences. This is the meaning of this “biography of ordinary man”: a rigorous description of the most general experiences that govern the relation of individuals as such to History, to the State, to Economy, to Language, etc.

The text of this science is thus no longer the *cogito* and its *membra disjecta*, which the Human Sciences divide among themselves. It is the irreducible individual kernel that must be extracted from the *cogito* in which it is still enclosed and concealed. But we no longer conceive of this extraction as a philosophical operation because it is actually an immediate given, which we here merely “render perceptible” [“*sensibiliser*”]. The foundation of a science of man entails first of all creating a non-philosophical affect: rendering perceptible the immediate givens, the non-hallucinatory reality, the *finite transcendental experience* in man; it requires taking this step, without which unitary anthropology will continue to enthrall us with its tricks. Though the immediate givens of man undoubtedly do not make up the entirety of his relations to his predicates and their unity, the World or Philosophy, they nevertheless are the rock that allows the scientific description of his relations. The immediate givens of man are first, but they do not of course exhaust this science of people and of their relations. The phenomenal givens of this science and its only text is the One: but precisely because it is the One, it is not unique. The One is not – above all is not – Unity or the Unitary Ideal that still reigns in the *cogito* and leaves its essence indeterminate. The complete text of the science of man is double or dual – *dual* rather than *duel*, just as it is individual rather than *individuel*: the One and the World, minorities and Authorities, individuals and History, the State, Language, etc.

This is not strictly speaking a *Humanity Principle* whose statue we would try to erect beside or beyond the Power Principle, the Language Principle, the Pleasure Principle . . . Under the name of ordinary man, we refrain from flattering the slaves of the Cave or, for example, providing a defense of the sheep against the eagles. Instead, we describe a real essence of man *before* the animal difference of eagles and sheep, which the philosophers want us to believe belongs to man and to his becoming. And ordinary man is likewise not the antidote to “superior man,” that is, to the overman; he is neither the hero of the future nor the latest archaeological find. Rather, it is against this heroic and agonistic conception of man passed down to us by the Greeks, which casts a new light under the names of difference, *différance*, and *differend*, that we attempt to make visible man without a face and without qualities. This is a treatise of the Solitudes.

3. From Philosophy to Theory: The Science of Ordinary Man

The science of real people is therefore no longer a philosophy or a mixture of anthropological prejudices and mathematization. It draws its essential characteristics from its object: it is itself “individual” and “minoritarian.” It differs from a philosophy in several ways: it is a thought that is (1) rigorously naive rather than reflexive; (2) real or absolute rather than hypothetical; (3) in essence theoretical rather than practical or technical; (4) descriptive rather than constructive; (5) human rather than anthropological.

(1) It is not philosophy that must become a rigorous science: it cannot, its circular essence prevents it. By contrast, it is necessary to invent a rigorous non-empirical science, a theory that would precede philosophy and be its science. Becoming scientific is the essential predicate and telos of philosophy, but the science in question remains a mere philosophical predicate, an indeterminate project or a Greco-unitary fantasy. *It is necessary to think science straightaway from its own phenomenal requirements and to cease moving in the aporetic circle of philosophy, to which belongs, like an unresolved dream, the obligatory goal of a scientific exit from that circle.* Such an exit renews the aporia and gives it a higher form: yet a science does not generally become rigorous except by being deprived, for reasons of positive sufficiency, of the aporetic essence constitutive of unitary philosophizing. The essence of the science of the (empirical or individu-a-l) real is its non-circularity, its non-reflexivity, its naiveté. This principle of the sciences, which we will not specifically discuss here, but which is itself based in the One, is the *Principle of Real Immanence or Identity*, a principle unknown to philosophy, but which holds for the empirical and transcendental sciences.

On this common basis, the characteristics of the science of man are obviously not at all the same as those of the empirical sciences, in which philosophy sees – perhaps wrongly, for that matter – an inferior naiveté, a powerlessness, and a defect. Concerning man, the Principle of Real Identity must receive a transcendental specification. The science of individuals therefore possesses a transcendental – and no longer empirical – naiveté, which, without being “superior” to philosophy (nothing is superior to that which is the very spirit of superiority), is not accountable to it and determines it without reciprocity: the science of individuals suppresses the circle and no longer passes through a circular process of determination. This is because