

Introduction: Is the Poststructuralist Feminist Episteme in Crisis?

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Departing from the premise that the poststructuralist paradigm still reigns supreme in feminist and gender theory, that is, despite the niche efforts made in the past two decades to challenge it linked to the so called “speculative” turn or the materialisms (and realisms) emerging from the feminist field itself (such as the Utrecht School, inspired by Rosi Braidotti), we set the call for papers for the issue before you in terms that would invite authors ready to challenge the dominant epistemic framework. We invited papers that engage with materialism(s), realism(s), sciences and projects engaged in rethinking the post-human beyond the poststructuralist (and, we dare say, postmodern/ist) norm. The invitation included as its special focus the only strand of gender theory that has defined itself as an open feminist provocation to the epistemic mainstream—xenofeminism. We admit the fact that there are individual authors who may pose a direct challenge, but that they have also been paradoxically coopted by poststructuralist interpretations, such as Luce Irigaray or Isabelle Stengers. Our initial premise was that all these trends, notwithstanding the fact they represent serious provocations to the poststructuralist paradigm, do not seriously threaten it, but instead further saturate it: for example, xenofeminism remains grounded in a subjectivity and identity centered model of thought and in the poststructuralist regurgitation of nominalist metaphysics. “Vibrant materialism” (Jane Bennett) is also subjectivity centered, Irigaray is turned on her head, Marxism from her expunged and canonized as poststructuralist, Karen Barad’s opposition to using humanities to offer commentary on sciences rather does the opposite, something that seems to have remained ignored or misunderstood by feminist theorists.¹

The structural straightjacketing of thought into the *form* of Subjectivity—which is always modeled after the Human even if it is called Hegel’s Spirit or “the Posthuman”—or which speaks from and of a certain position of an “I,” precludes other models of centering thought or, what’s more, a truly decentered thought. Is it possible to mime the posture of scientific thought which could or could not accept accountability for its own subjectiveness and which attempts to center itself around the object of study (without inadvertently imitating subjectivity, without perverting the object into a subject as OOO does)? Is it possible, asks this special issue of *Technophany*, to implement the “correlationist” (Meillssoux) or “non-thetic” (François Laruelle) critique in feminist and gender theory? Some have tried before,² but the effect of those attempts come down to rather niche impacts influencing

1 Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, “Interview with Karen Barad,” in Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (eds.), *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Open Humanities Press, 2012). available at <http://tinyurl.com/5d4pn2hx>, accessed on 11 February 2024.

2 Eileen Joy and Katerina Kolozova (eds.), *After the “Speculative Turn”: Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism* (Brooklyn NY: Punctum Books, 2016). The volume contains contributions discussing speculative realism, OOO, Marxism, and all of the other stands mentioned above, including xenofeminism and a realist radicalization of Lacan via Freud.

perhaps changes in idiolects, styles, mannerisms and perhaps some topical shift while still falling back into the poststructuralist epistemic norm. Objectivism or object centered thought as conceptualized by Marx who, in opposition to Auguste Comte, advocates miming a third-party perspective without the arrogance of attempting a *sub specie aeternitatis* position, is one of the possibilities that even feminist Marxism has never truly explored.³

This ambition, set by the call for submissions to “Technē and Feminism,” is more audaciously accepted by the new generation of authors, such as the group of young scholars who discovered and put on the map of feminist scholarship a Laruelian philosopher Sophie Lesueur and her paper from 2005 in the issue before you. The ambition to challenge the subjectivity centered episteme is perhaps most bravely attempted in the experimental paper by Luara Karlson-Carp and Geoffrey Hondroudakis “Scale and Sexuation: Towards a Multi-Scalar (Techno)Feminism.” In a somewhat different manner yet with a similar ambition in mind, “Somatophilic Rationality for Reproductive Justice” by Rodante van der Waal, Inge van Nistelrooij, Deborah Fox and Elizabeth Newnham is inspired by the second wave Marxist feminism in its conceptualizing reproductive justice in terms of a feminist critique of the very constitution of the institutions and institutionalist medicine (attempt similar to the Foucauldian ambition but fulfilled through the route of systemic rather than individuality centered critique). “Quantum Feminicity: Modes of Countermanding Time” by Felicity Colman uses quantum theory epistemic precepts or implications to reinvent historicity and temporality from a feminist standpoint that in and of itself represents a bold and inspiring provocation to the poststructuralist dogma. “Emilie du Châtelet—On Knowledge and Matter: A Precursor to Posthuman Feminism’s Approach to Science Making” by Tal Bar resuscitates the feminist tradition of archiving and safeguarding women’s contributions to the history of ideas which every tradition and canon seems to almost spontaneously forget about, while proposing an intriguing thesis: du Châtelet is the pre-enlightenment precursor of posthumanism, through an experimental episteme and intuition embedded in her philosophical-mathematical work. Thomas Telios in “Karen Barad and the Unresolved Challenge of Collectivity: A Case for New Materialisms,” seeks to unravel the potential for a collectivist political episteme something which, nonetheless, still falls prey to the poststructuralist siren song of coming up with some form of subjectivity, and thus fails to heed to Barad’s invitation to see agency as an enactment rather than (human) self. The paper nonetheless contributes in an important way to the challenging of the subject/individual centered dogma of poststructuralism amounting to culturalized selfhoods called identities. Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, a feminist scholar who has contributed in important ways to the institutional mainstreaming of François Laruelle’s non-philosophy, in this issue of *Technophany*, without resort to Laruelle and the Laruellean notion of the “non-human, offers a radical decoupling of posthumanism and poststructuralism, making a case for a feminist anthropocentrism.

3 Karl Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General,” in Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm>, accessed on 11 February 2024; note this is an online version without pagination.

Such a decoupling of posthumanism and poststructuralism would allow us to keep with both at their best; we dare to imagine. Let's again stress and collect our points of argumentation in yet another make-up. This issue of *Technophany* understands itself literally as a report on some novel manifestations of techno-kindred natures. We think that Donna Haraway's call for *making-kin* would gain strength and proportionality from learning to calibrate with a non-individual centric notion of *mimesis* that might help to decentralize models of thought. How can making-kin succeed in undermining the structural straightjacketing of normative subject-centric tendencies by activating not merely the *form* of humanism, but also any animated and material organicity of form as *soma*, as lived varieties of embodiments, consonant as well as dissonant with one another? How could such a notion of materialist mimesis involve both abstraction and empathic "tunings," and hence employ form as formality to model thought while alienating the very notions of form from that of identity, and that of identity from those of form—and this by way of a third-party stance, a mimed *object* stance?

Our interest was to think of the *materialism* at large as quick and active, as intellectual and practical. Space and its formality need to be fathomed and sounded too—mimetically, spiritually and emphatically—it cannot only be constructed formalistically. The philosophical constellation of notions of intelligence and time, which Henri Bergson and others were keen in liberating from the dominance of form and space, need not fight the latter but include them in their very "zodiac signs"! A key operational term for such a chiastically performative practice of *alienating-mimesis* would be a notion of *scale* dissociated not from space but from any metrics in particular of spatial dimensionality: for such a notion of scale, space is as tempered as time is spacious. Both in their entangled interplay act as host and accommodation to unseen and unimagined varieties of *made* and *kindred* embodiments of universal articulations. The *making* of such kinship articulations among things is political and public. It devotes itself not just to one's own life but also to a public service of modelling thought in its universality—hence an *ethical* manner of modelling that acts from a self-confident position of relative strength, and hence is committed to its own moderateness and situatedness at the same time as to its irreducible communality and sociality.

Perhaps—this at least is what we dream of—such a feminist non-anthropocentric viewpoint (in the sense of non-philosophy) could clear the air a bit and let some sunlight in, such as to significantly dust out and unsettle the poststructuralist comfort zones of sedimented normativities. Roshni Babu, in her contribution to this issue titled "Coyote Figurations, Techné and Feminism" muses on how the privilege of a "partial perspective" could play a role in expanding the epistemic horizon of feminist thought by joining forces with the elements of the fantastic, in an espousal of plasticity and being (as propagated by Catherine Malabou), and on how the tasks of emancipation could be coupled with a liberating kind of energetisation as well. Her text points out the problematics of opening up interiority–exteriority boundaries, which is also the key interest of Coco Kanters's contribution, "The Physiology of Money." Kanters exposes the dominant metaphors of money in terms of fluidity and corporeality and considers how one might perhaps think of the novel designs of money in the computational and crypto-fabric manner towards forms of political institutionalization, rather than mere corporate economics. Her proposal is to think of money in the evanescent and animating, fertilising terms of air or light that would

render the monetary “body” less self-contained and instead more porous and open. In “Feminism and Finitude,” Alessandra Mularoni strikes a similar chord when suggesting that a historical materialist approach to a posthuman theory of death (inspired by Rosi Braidotti) would need to think about the vital–fatal entanglements in the body’s recuperative capacities, in order to cultivate a certain tendency to build upon explicit or latent eugenic principles that are, perhaps inevitably, at work in the discursive emphasis on anti-naturalisms. What would a notion of nature be conceivable as, if it were to inherently and irreducibly welcome a certain technicality itself as being at work in it? The article “Irigaray’s Two and Plato’s Indefinite Dyad” appears like a zooming-in on this aspect as well. Danielle A. Layne revisits the Platonic legacy of protological principles, those of the One and the indeterminate Dyad. Her approach is through the optics not only of a certain Neo-Platonist tradition, with its emphasis on the spherical constitution of concepts that involve circulation, re-currence, and circuitry at large, but also through the literally *inter-ventive* proposal of Luce Irigaray’s “dative mode of love,” in her text *I Love to You* (and elsewhere), according to which a giving birth to the self not only involves but also depends upon giving birth to “the others.” Could the legacy of such proto-logicism ground perhaps a transformation of the political order of things? she asks. Another article in this issue, “Going Sibylline” by Jordi Vivaldi, pushes strongly into the direction of revisiting the abstract domains of circularity. His proposal is to evoke the legacy of sphere-thinking in terms of acoustics, and its physics that are, ultimately, not only that of noise but also that of harmonics. Going Sibylline not only involves a certain affirmation of prophetic voices, but also the inevitable dressing-up or figuring-out of the “appearance” of these voices by “wrapping ‘true things with uncertainty.’” “Constitutive for such “cryptic prophetism” comes to be the exposition and socialisation of vulnerabilities rather than the sharing of convictions—and hence Vivaldi asks for a socialism that depends upon “tempering in a sonic key.” How could the stance of a historical materialism realise itself, perhaps, through *syntonization*, through the inevitable and ethically grounding calibration of attunement processes that work through modelling thought universally, in a manner that involves, as Vivaldi puts it, “both gymnastic training” of thought and its “cosmetic fashioning”? How to involve registers of aesthetics into the modelling of thought and being is the main question also of the contribution mentioned last here, “Ontopolitics of Equality and Xenoaesthetics of Abstraction” by Gonzalo Vaillo. While it must be said that Vaillo’s text is somewhat at odds with our own commitment to feminist interests in accommodating more difference, in that the text argues for a totalisation of the scope of “ontopolitics” around a formalist notion of equality, Vaillo’s concern with “ontopolitics” is pertinent insofar as it demonstrates how the real conspiracy of forces between metaphysical, political, and aesthetical speculation at work in contemporary manifestations of technē could be rationalised (that is, in the non-vibrant, non-intellectual sense of “de-limited.”) In tune with OOO movements, Vaillo proposes such a notion of rationalisation as a process of *reasonable purification of aesthetics* itself. The xenofeminist promise of a kinship between strangeness and abstraction is deployed here for the purpose of constraining and crystallising the filth and messiness that non-somatophobic abstraction inevitably gets dirty with. How could such “objectivity” trigger ethics and politics, rather than more consumerist and self-centred comfort stances, would be our question? To irrigate and invite discussions like these is the very ambition and hope of our co-edited guest issue. We hope many find as much inspiration in the collected contributions as we do.