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Nature Deserves to Be Side by Side with the Angels: Nature and Messianism by way of Non-Islam

Anthony Paul Smith

“Every messianism, whatever the theoretical elaboration that constructs it, is first an empiricism.” -
Christian Jambet

Angels and Nature, A Double Risk

There is a double risk running throughout this essay, for I will be wagering on two fictions to unveil something that remains real for the human, and to the creatural that is their shared immanent identity. These two fictions are angels and nature and it is by way of discussing a contemporary angelology and naturphilosophie that we will disclose a messianicity that runs through the immanent creature, separated from any God or any Master, and that resists death by living as if it were angelic, as if it were a Christ.

This essay is part of a larger on-going project concerned with developing the practice of non-theology and builds off arguments made in three other essays. The first of those essays “Too Poor for Measure: Working with Negri on Poverty and Fabulation”, co-written with Daniel Colucciello Barber, lays out a general ontological theory of poverty as the fabulation of the immeasurable (which itself is a disruptive or inconsistent ontological formulation of Being when compared to the standard Greek philosophical conception). The second, “The Judgement of God and the Immeasurable: Political Theology and Organizations of Power”, surveys the various forms that political theology takes in contemporary discourse and sketches out a political non-theology which would act as a practice with the ability or power to select from these antagonistic positions by short-circuiting the underlying friend/enemy distinction upon which they are based. The short-circuit is found in moving beyond apophaticism to apoptosis, or a proliferation of forms of thought that have the power to pass away rather than attempting to become the immeasurable itself. In a third article, “What Can Be Done with Religion?: Non-Philosophy and the Future of Philosophy of Religion”, these ideas were placed more rigorously within a non-philosophical practice and so the immeasurable comes to be another name for the One or the Real from which non-philosophy thinks (rather than thinking of the Real, as standard philosophy does). Non-theology then becomes the name for a non-philosophical unified theory of religion and philosophy, where religion is made

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relative to the Real and then treated as simple material that may, through the axioms of non-philosophy, be used in the construction of theories that work for the Human.

The ultimate focus in this essay is to add to that project by dealing with the second term in Spinoza's classic equation of equivalency, *Deus sive natura*, as we have already dealt with the first in "The Judgement of God and the Immeasurable". As I will show in this essay this equivalency is also a choice, for Spinoza conveys in this axiom his choosing the whole of nature to practice his form of secular theology. Ultimately our own non-theological conception of nature will be more radically immanent and developed from the One-Real as a clone or name of the Real rather than as the substance of Being. As Spinoza is the Christ of the philosophers and his messianic act is located in his thinking immanence fully for the first time, I will also connect nature to messianism. However, I won't do so by the usual materials Continental philosophy employs when it engages with religion, for, if we were to be honest, we would have to all admit that when one speaks of theology in Continental philosophy they almost always do so with a silent "Christian" before it, and this silent Christian almost always contains a silent "European" or "Western" before it. I hasten to add that honesty about this fact does not denote acceptance, but rather in this paper I will move away from this Christian-centric focus and engage with a conception of nature found in messianic Islam. This conception, found in the work of the 10th-Century Ismaili philosopher Abû Ya'qûb al-Sijistânî, unites messianism and nature under the radical autonomy of the Oneness of God that is the religious mirror of the secular conception of the Real found in non-philosophy.¹

We can locate in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which while real is also an abstraction, a pure homology between a theological understanding of nature and a secular one: in either case, where nature is either always the apparent as analogue with what is revealed of the transcendent God (Aquinas) or nature is what simply is (contemporary naturalism), nature is the site of human submission to transcendence. In the first case it is submission to God as the power within or underlying nature and in the second submission to nature as the determining power of the human. Against this has been set the Gnostic refusal of nature, an absolute revolt against the whole of nature in the flesh, as it pursues the salvation of the exiled God that is beyond the dialectic of power in all its forms. This is what Christian Jambet and Guy Lardreau mean when they refer to the rebel becoming angelic. It is a rejection, in sum, of any mediation of the identity of the rebel through

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sexuality and the individual body.² The rebel is the person who is most truly human for Jambet and Lardreau and so the identity of the rebel unveils the identity of Man (as species-being). In the same way, by conceiving of a nature that is angelic, we will reject any mediation of nature through its reduction to matter or to the idea of matter. This leads to a non-philosophical thesis: nature is not reducible to matter and matter is not reducible to the idea of matter or the natural, rather the real identity of both is to be found in their unilateral relationship to the Real.

Both standard conceptions of nature, the latter idealist or theological and the former materialist, are derived from what François Laruelle calls a philosophical decision. It doesn't seem necessary to describe at length Laruelle's theory of the philosophical decision, as the theory has been the focus of much of the Anglophone reception of Laruelle's work, but in short Laruelle describes it as

“a cut - repeated or relaunched - with regard to an empirical singular, or more generally, some given and, at the same time, an identification with a idealizing law of this given, itself then supposed as real, a transcendence towards the veritable real. It is a relation and it modulates itself each time as a function of the real assumed as given and reduced, and the real assumed as attained and affirmed.”³

Laruelle holds that this Real (which he doesn't capitalize in this early work) assumed as attained and affirmed is not in a reciprocal relation to philosophy, but a unilateral one. When philosophy then takes itself to have attained the Real within the philosophical decision, always a splitting of some given, then it actually takes its own operation as the Real, though to varying degrees depending on the particularities of the philosophy. It takes what is actually foreclosed, or, in religious language, “inexpressible”, and confuses its ground (either matter or the idea of matter) with its object (in this case the object is nature).

¹ The title of this essay comes from al-Sijistānī's text entitled *Kashf al-mahjūb* [Unveiling the Hidden], which was translated into French by Henry Corbin as *Le dévoilement des choses cachées* (In English the French would translate as “The Unveiling of Hidden Things”).

² Cf. Benjamin Noys, “The End of the Monarchy of Sex: Sexuality and Contemporary Nihilism” in *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(5), 2008: pp. 104-122.

³ François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy*, trans. Rocco Gangle (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 198.

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From the position of non-philosophy materialism is the stronger philosophy, but still remains idealist at its unacknowledged core. Non-philosophy attempts to radicalize materialism by rejecting it in the name of matter. Laruelle's critique of the "philosophies of difference", by which he means Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze, is ultimately a criticism of their attempt to ground an "immanent materialism". He sums up his criticism this way:

"In the last instance, it continues to subordinate matter to the ultimate possible form of the *logos* (the *logos* or Idea of matter as such), rather than subordinating the *logos* of matter to matter, thereby engaging a genuinely dispersive becoming-real of ideality instead of a continuous becoming-ideal of the real. Thus, in order to remain faithful to its original inspiration and secure a definitive victory over idealism, materialism should first consent to partially eliminate itself as category and statement - to subordinate its materialist statements to a process of utterance that would be material, relative, or hyletic in itself, then stop conceiving of this utterance as an ideal and relative process. *The decline of materialism in the name of matter, and of matter as hyle in the name of the real.*"⁴

To really be an immanent materialism, materialism as a kind of "logos of matter" must fade away as such; thought and matter must be in some sense identical without thereby rendering any discussion of their differences superfluous. Laruelle brings this about by rendering both matter and thought, and their attendant sciences of idealism and materialism, identically relative to something that in turn has no relation to them - the Real-One.⁵ This is the fundamental posture of non-philosophy towards regional knowledges, to take various philosophies and their objects (philosophy of X) as equivalent before the Real and thus as material that may be thought in a really immanent way, but more importantly this early attempt to make non-philosophy a practice of thought after the decline of materialism in the name of matter, it rendered non-philosophy thoroughly material without being a specular materialism. This is because each thought was taken as material to be used in lived immanence, rather than an Idea to be lived up to.

Angeology, A Theo-Fiction

⁴ François Laruelle, "The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter", trans. Ray Brassier in *Pli* 12 (2001), p. 37.

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Recently the genre of fiction has become important for Laruelle as he continues to develop the practice of non-philosophy, no more so than in his most recent and massive work *Philosophie non-standard. Générique, Quantique, Philo-fiction*. Fiction is freed here from its philosophically forced relation to the imagination and treated instead as an aspect of gnosis, of the practice of science. The name philo-fiction refers to the practice of “making the best use” of the “material” derived from the superposition or unified theory of science and philosophy. In Laruelle’s typical proliferation of names, we find him also calling this Generic Science. For Laruelle, then, philo-fiction (or science-fiction) is the hermeneutics of Generic Science, the aspect of non-philosophy that is able to tell the story of the mutation of standard philosophy without falling into the specular narcissism of philosophy and to practice scientific thought without slipping into a sterile pure positivism, which would lead to no new scientific knowledge.⁶

Ultimately it is from this aspect of non-philosophy that messianism as religious material is treated.⁷ In this way Laruelle opens up a space for a theo-fiction that would, as he says of “mystic-fiction”, “universalize more radically the representations, images and existing concepts that it identifies-without-unifying-them or that it “recalls” in/for the Logos” and ultimately it “works out a system of rules for the transformation of mystical [or theological] statements, it identifies them in-the-last-Humanity as Word [*Verbe*] of the Messiah.”⁸ Such is the way angelology is approached in non-theology.

When looking through the history of monotheistic theology one cannot help but be struck by the attention given by some of the greatest theological minds to angelology. From Aquinas and Bonaventure to Ibn Sina and Ibn Khaldûn, angels remain vital to their theological systems. While the specific angelology of each thinker varies importantly Henry Corbin’s comparative study of angelology locates one invariant aspect: angelology is necessary in order to avoid idolatry.⁹ To speak of God, without merely falling into the silence of absolute negative theology, one can speak, without

⁵ Laruelle writes, “idealism and materialism are reciprocally relative, and both relative to or identical with the real - whilst the real is not relative to them or distinguishes itself absolutely from them (ibid).”

⁶ Cf. François Laruelle, *Philosophie non-standard. Générique, Quantique, Philo-fiction* (Paris: Kimé, 2010) pp. 488-493.

⁷ Laruelle, p. 493. I do not quote directly this passage as the meaning of it is dependent on understanding some difficult technical language that, to properly, would take us too far afield. In short, though, Laruelle locates an important connection between messianism and science. For a summary in English of this idea see François Laruelle, “A Science in (*en*) Christ” trans. Aaron Riches in *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, eds. Peter M. Candler, Jr. and Conor Cunningham (London: SCM Press, 2010), pp. 316-331.

⁸ François Laruelle, *Mystique non-philosophique à l’usage des contemporains* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), pp. 262, 261. [Unless noted all translations are my own.]

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allegory, through the names and experiences of the Angels. Every theophany is an angelophany and vice versa.¹⁰ Corbin claims that “It is impossible to secularize or socialize the Angel from theophanic visions”¹¹, and we will assume he is right. Can then angelology, while remaining connected to theophanic visions, be secularized in its totality and if so, as we will argue, what will it then do?

Angelology can be secularized radically by way of treating it as a theo-fiction. Without repeating arguments made in “What Can Be Done with Religion?”, the religious material is made secular by making all religious material equivalent before the Real. In this way non-theology adds two axioms to the axioms already operative in non-philosophy: 1) the Real is foreclosed to authority and tradition and 2) what is true(without-truth) in theology is what is most generic and thus what is most secular.¹² We can then denude Corbin’s statement by locating the real identity of the *Deus absconditus*, mediated and relatively unveiled by the theophanic event of the Angel’s appearance, in the Gnostic dream of a radically other World. What is revealed in the desire to see the Divine is the desire for the complete and utter overturning of the failure of creation, the desire for the Divine is a desire for salvation, for liberty, and hoping for the Angel to come is nothing other than the mediation of salvation from what is purely other; it is the cry against violence and the proclamation that another world is possible.

Thus theo-fiction follows the same general rule that Guy Lardreau locates as shared by philosophical fictions and science fiction: “why not?”¹³ Non-theological angelology is then a part of the wider non-philosophical thought experiment. Angels, why not? Provided they are transformed in the midst of theo-fiction into concepts that are in-the-last-instance immanent to Man. Because, more than a need to experience God, human beings everywhere desire to be free, they struggle with this World for the sake of the World: “In the beginning was the struggle, and the struggle was *with* the World and the World did not know it...”¹⁴ It is because angels have been at the heart of some

⁹ Henry Corbin, *La Paradoxe du Monothéisme* (Paris: L’Herne, 2003), p. 106.

¹⁰ Corbin, p. 105. Corollary to this angelophany we find in Shi’ite Islam, a certain necessity of Imamology (Corbin, p. 114). In that discussion Corbin appears to back away from equating the two so directly, speaking of the Imam’s spiritual capacity separate from their fleshly capacity, while still making the Angel that being who animates Prophets, those who speak for the unsayable in the political-cultural realm. This separation of the spiritual and the fleshly will remain important in the work of Christian Jambet (his student) and Guy Lardreau when they speak of the angel.

¹¹ Corbin, p. 114.

¹² These are developed in more detail in a forthcoming article entitled “Peace to the Theologians!: Messianity, Gnostic Refusal and the Mutation of Orthodoxy”.

¹³ Guy Lardreau, *Fictions philosophiques et science-fiction. Récréation philosophique* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1988), p. 30.

¹⁴ François Laruelle, *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 4

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real theo-political debates and were important to groups seeking to overturn the very structures of this World that angelology may still be important today. For instance, at the theoretical level, angelology was the site of the struggle between the Spiritual Franciscans (who claimed that the time of the institutional Church and all other institutions of power had come to the end) and the Worldly power of the Papacy and its supporting structures. For the Spiritual Franciscans St. Francis, with his disregard for material wealth, for organized work, and the sexual body, an Angel of the Apocalypse.

Our angelology will, however, not here be developed in conversation with these medieval sources but rather derived from some already secularized angelologies, and so we will not follow the triadic formula of Christian angelology well known in Pseudo-Dionysius. This angelology follows the Gnostic development of Christian Jambet and Guy Lardreau's Maoist Angeology in *L'Ange* and their subsequent self-criticism in *Le Monde* that is again submitted to criticism and détournement in their individual works, most notably Lardreau's *La véracité* and Jambet's *La grande résurrection d'Alamût*. For their Angel is the name for the rebel who is in absolute revolt, the rebel who seeks to overturn the Master in all forms of mastery. In Jambet's later work he locates the messianic act of the Ismaili community of the Alamut mountain fortress in their overturning of the Law in the name of a liberty found in living the higher life of contemplating the divine: "The abolition of the law means we replace it as series of distinct obligations by a single one, which is that of the sabbath."¹⁵ In other words, one lives the life of one divine rather than the life of survival.

So our angelology will be dualistic, there will be but two orders of angels. The first will be the Angel as the name of the rebel, the name of the masses in revolt seeking to overturn the Master. This Angel is polynomous, it manifests itself whenever the masses revolt in the plenitude of situations engendered by the World.¹⁶ But this "polyangelism", or proliferation of different theories of angelic purity that necessarily lay at the heart of their angelology, may also give rise to the barbaric Angel of which we will say more below.¹⁷ In each case this Angel is a negative name for a positive act; the creation of another world (the other of the other, in their terms) or living the resurrected life.¹⁸ Then there will be another Angel, a passive transcendent angel; one that serves this World and

¹⁵ Christian Jambet, *La grande résurrection d'Alamût. Les formes de la liberté dans le shî'isme ismaélien* (Lagresse: Verdier, 1990), p. 362.

¹⁶ Christian Jambet and Guy Lardreau, *L'Ange. Pour une cynétique du semblant, Ontologie de la révolution 1* (Paris: Grasset, 1976), p. 36.

¹⁷ Christian Jambet and Guy Lardreau, *Le Monde. Réponse à la question: Qu'est-ce que les droits de l'homme?* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), p. 188.

¹⁸ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 177.

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guards the entrance to the other. This angel serves the twin rulers of this World, because why not also talk about gods. These gods are called Moloch and Mammon. The second is the demiurge of this World, the one that reduces all things to a price and all bodies to elements of economic exchange. The first, Moloch, is below him but far more cruel. For he demands the greatest sacrifice from the masses, he is the god of servile austerity, an austerity of inequality and the disjunctive synthesis, chaining the masses to the masters while keeping them in misery through a separation of value.

Overturing this World, and its two gods, in order to live the divine life rather than the life of survival is the not only the dream of the ancient gnostics, but of every rebel that wants to participate in cultural revolution, or the revolution that dares to act decisively to overturn this World. The messianic act inaugurates a utopia here and now or immanentizes the eschaton (to positively reclaim a slur directed at every revolutionary act by the neo-conservative philosopher Eric Voegelin). But this messianic act, which is human in-the-last-instance, is haunted by another Angel: Benjamin's Angel of History. The threat that all human attempts to bring about a true revolution, a revolution that is one, is destined to be but one piece in the one single catastrophe that piles up before the Angel. That all human attempts at liberty are destined to become black masses, that the attempt to overturn the World, ends in the continued reign of a single Master lurking behind many manifestations. Just as the Angel's eyes are staring, mouth agape, horror-stricken at the one single catastrophe that is human history and that it powerlessly is forced to watch, so are my eyes captured by the appearance of this Angel. This possession of my gaze, the posture of submission to the transcendent which it forces me to take, is the same as Benjamin's towards this Angel. All that Benjamin can see of this catastrophe, even of the wind blowing with such violence from the paradisaal origin, all of it is seen as an image reflected darkly off the eyes of this impotent and sad Angel.

I am haunted by this Angel because everyone living today is haunted by it. This Angel is there every time a human community makes the attempt to live otherwise, to destroy this World and create something truly new, to create a future different from the apotheosis of catastrophe that is rushing headlong towards us, not in the name of progress, but in the name of growth, often confused for progress, which is required for the status quo merely to subsist. Every time a human being attempts to be divine this Angel is there to hold back our hand and cry out to us, "Messiah, Messiah!" And we foolishly respond as hostages saying, "Here am I." And this Angel says, "Do not

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do anything, for now I know that you do not fear this god, raise up your eyes and see that Mammon has provided the ram for you.” And we take hold of what this Angel lying says is the ram, blinded by the horror in its eyes and so unable to see that what we need to sacrifice, what lies before us on the altar for us to kill, is this Angel’s other god, it is Moloch, the God of too much sacrifice itself, and that the ram this Angel claims has been provided for us, easy money, is our only child, the most costly sacrifice.

At least, though, we did not participate in progress, we didn’t pile anything more onto the pile that is one single catastrophe, we did not do anything. Though the pile grows, we are innocent.

What we are told is a temptation is actually a wager. Let’s wager that this Angel’s eyes lie, that what its eyes reflect is not a single catastrophe, but instead that there are two, always two, and that we can know the difference. There is the catastrophe that piles up continuously before this Angel and there is the catastrophe of those who bravely attempt but fail to end this single catastrophe. From this perspective this Angel belongs to the first catastrophe, for in its innocence, in its transcendence, it does nothing.

Then there is the Angel manifested on the earth as the masses (“the masses don’t need the Angel, for they are the Angel”), developed by Jambet and Lardreau in wild and intemperate fashion in *L’Ange*.¹⁹ There they proceed by way of a gnostic wager, that the World can be divided into two discourses: that of the Rebel and that of the Master.²⁰ This is not the friend-enemy distinction so close to the heart of 20th Century political theology, but is a more radical separation, one developed from Gnosis rather than from the Statist form of life engendered by Christian orthodoxy, and so it is from the perspective of below rather than from that of the State, Society, or Empire (it matters little what the content of the organization is called; from the perspective of the Rebel it is all of the Master). This radical separation is an overturning of the measure of the friend-enemy distinction. It isn’t a cutting away of some other or some group, but a self-interrogation in the tradition of the most severe asceticism. It is a search for the enemy, or more accurately, the adversarial Master within. But what are the specifics of this angelology? Is there any rigor to it?

The Angel is a pure negative name. Lardreau, who of the two is clearly more obsessed with the negative as philosophical method, writes in the introduction:

¹⁹ Jambet and Lardreau, *L’Ange*, p. 79.

²⁰ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 22.

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“It is necessary that the Angel come. And so that he comes, being invisible, he must have been visible in his works, he must have been announced in history, he must have been there, not two objects of desire, that is where the Fathers were lost, but two desires. Or rather, a desire, that is to say a sexual desire, and a desire that has nothing to do with sex, not even the desire for God: rebellion. On the one hand pleasure, jouissance, and on the other not even beatitude. Something still unnamed, that we have called desire under the pressure of language, which we must force into delivering a name to us. But the Angel is anonymous, or polynymous. We only call it that by way of negative metaphors. That’s how pseudo-Dionysius wants to speak about that which is God. Negative theology. Speaking about the world before the break from which it will be born, we can say nothing except from the negative. I do not see how else to hold on to the hope of revolution.”²¹

L’Ange is partly a polemic against the “revolutionaries of desire” (they discuss very briefly Lyotard and Deleuze & Guattari) in ways that prefigure the now popular criticisms of Slavoj Žižek and Malcolm Bull. Namely, the revolution of desire is fully compatible with capitalism, it doesn’t overthrow the Master but replaces him with a new form of the Master.²² I’m not interested in either responding to this critique or in defending it; in fact, it often seems to me that *L’Ange* suffers from a certain inchoate rage directed at thinkers with whom they share a minimal difference. What is interesting to me is how this antagonism towards Lyotard and Deleuze & Guattari manifests as an anti-naturalism in Jambet and Lardreau.

For Jambet and Lardreau naturalism and anti-naturalism is the difference between two different forms of revolution. This dualistic theory of revolution is explored in the central chapter of *L’Ange*, written by Lardreau, entitled “Lin Piao comme volonté et représentation” [Lin Piao as Will and Representation]. There they posit yet another gnostic separation, this time between ideological revolution and the absolute revolt of cultural revolution.²³ This dualism isn’t completely foreign to more familiar and popular forms of contemporary Marxism, like that found in Antonio Negri who traces revolutions in terms of the difference between constituted power and constitutive power. Like Negri in this respect Lardreau and Jambet are concerned to uncover how it is that pure revolt

²¹ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 36.

²² Cf. Jambet and Lardreau, pp. 213-224.

²³ Cf. Jambet and Lardreau, p. 92.

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against the Master behind every master, which is cultural revolution, becomes ideological revolution, a form of revolution that merely makes possible a new master as it is tied directly to historical processes like a new dominant mode of production.²⁴ In this chapter Lardreau undertakes an empirical case study of this dualistic struggle between the different forms of revolution by locating a form of cultural revolution in the early irruption of Christian ascetic monasticism and its accommodation within the Church. This early monastic movement is a form of cultural revolution just as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of Mao's China is one.²⁵ This was a form of life that, even if it was called Christian, had nothing to do with the worldly Church of institutional Christianity that helped to found the "institution" of Europe. Instead, as a form of cultural revolution, it "presented itself as an anti-culture, a calculated inversion, systematic, of all the values of this world."²⁶ In fact Lardreau locates three essential themes of cultural revolution as an extreme path of 'struggle alone': "the radical rejection of work, the hatred of the body, and the refusal of sexual difference - certainly not as a production of *one* indifferent sex or of *n* sexes [...] but as the abolition of sex itself."²⁷

Thus cultural revolution is "totally *contra-nature*".²⁸ This has two different but connected meanings. Firstly, it may mean the rejection of the idea that what *is* simply is. This is the form of nature that we located already at work in both the Christian theological tradition and contemporary naturalism. It is nature as the *sékomma*; nature as the "it's like that".²⁹ The second meaning has to do with death. The hatred of the fleshly body and the desire (for, whatever Jambet and Lardreau say, this is a desire even if it is, like Job, cried forth as a protest) for the subtle or spiritual body can give birth to the messianic act (what we may name as the coming of Christos Angelos or the Future Christ) or to the barbaric Angel.³⁰ Lardreau is more direct about this in his own work of negative philosophy entitled *La vérité*, where he argues for a Kantian sublime within politics defined as "a politics that makes a finality sensible to us completely independent from nature".³¹ Lardreau again invokes the Angel in his development of the concept of the political sublime, this time as the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 84.

²⁶ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 87.

²⁷ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 100.

²⁸ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 109.

²⁹ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 20.

³⁰ Cf. Jambet and Lardreau, *Le Monde*, p. 187.

³¹ Guy Lardreau, *La vérité. Essai d'une philosophie négative* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1993), p. 237.

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“political name for the desire for death”.³² Within a negative philosophy this desire for death is limited, it is a desire for the self-referential play of the correlative images of the self and the other. In the terms laid out in our “The Judgement of God and the Immeasurable” it is the desire for the death of play of friend and enemy. For Lardreau, within a negative philosophy, this desire is checked by way of a negative presentation of the Real.³³ Death is always a form of transcendence as limit for philosophers and Lardreau is no different.³⁴ The barbarous Angel, for Lardreau, comes when there is a positive presentation of the Real, a presentation that threatens to topple the sublime over.³⁵

Jambet and Lardreau come to fear this barbaric Angel in the interval between *L’Ange* and *Le Monde*. In *L’Ange*, writing in July of 1975, they declare “Our philosophy is then that of the Cambodians.”³⁶ Over the next few years, as Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge engaged in their own cultural revolution, aiming systematically for an absolute break with the traditional values of old Cambodia, the world witnessed the forced evacuations of the cities (in a way not unlike the desert fathers flight into the desert that Lardreau connects to the Christian cultural revolution) and the murder of educators and intellectuals. From that perspective the words of Lardreau concerning intellectuals found in *L’Ange* were regrettable (to say the least): “They [intellectuals], if they want to be the heralds of cultural revolution, must burn themselves, as in so far as cultural revolution is against everything that they are then cultural revolution can be lit up by their embers.”³⁷ So this was how the theory of cultural revolution began with the Angel and ended (for a time) in a compromised position with the World, in abject horror at “the transformation of an entire country into a work and extermination camp, a land that is without reserve living in terror. But what’s this? That metamorphosis does not break in the name of an imperial desire, of a despotic possession, but in the name of a will to absolute purity, of universal emancipation. Immediately when the capital was occupied, the *Angkar* [the self-given name of the Khmer Rouge] proclaimed the desire to abolish exploitation, inequality and selfishness. And in order to realize a life devoted to goodness, kindness

³² Lardreau, p. 241.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lardreau, p. 243. Cf. Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Prince of Piety* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 148-155.

³⁵ Lardreau, p. 241.

³⁶ Jambet and Lardreau, *L’Ange*, p. 233.

³⁷ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 131.

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[*bonté*] and transparency, they have generalized violence, secrets, and darkness.”³⁸ Here we see why the Angel of History gets a hearing, why it always threatens us with inaction.

Christ as Generic Subject

But the same Jambet who is horrified at the barbaric regime, the barbaric Angel, that dominated Pol Pot’s Cambodia, also writes these words “Despair is the greatest sin.”³⁹

So, how are we to stop our angelology ending in either despair or allegiance to the Angel of History? Is there a way to save cultural revolution from a form of nihilism found in the accelerationism of absolute deterritorialisation without at the same time falling back into the simple capture of the power of cultural revolution by mastery? After all, the terror against intellectuals and the World that Lardreau advocates above, though understandable because there is a war, ends in “so many vicious circles and tendencies” that “mistake the whole of the phenomenon” for “the heretical struggle is not born from terror or the specular-whole, which it practically undoes, it is born from the being-separate of man that is in-Man.”⁴⁰ In addition to the hatred that lies at the heart of Lardreau’s negative philosophy, there is also salvation by way of gnosis. Gnosis knows that “the divine creation - the World - is a failure”, but also that “the necessity for salvation is universal.”⁴¹ If the choice is really between the authority of the World or an arbitrary but absolute will of the people captured or manifested in State power become barbaric then there is no real choice. In each instance the human, or Man-in-Man in Laruelle’s terminology, is turned into a subject, its real identity, as the inconsistent immanence of the One, is obscured within an idea of humanity given from an authority. And in each case we never stop rebelling, man nevertheless rebels, Man is in-struggle. Laruelle puts it this way, “*There is revolt rather than only evil*; nearly everywhere and always people do not cease to kill but they also rebel against the most violent powers as the most gentle.”⁴²

We have come here to the discussion of struggle-as-primary in Laruelle’s *Future Christ*. It is from this empirical fact, that Man is everywhere in revolt, that our unified theory of nature and messianism develops.

Laruelle differentiates three forms of human struggle: the philosophical as *agon* or war, the gnostic as an absolute rebellion against the master, and the immanent struggle with the World as

³⁸ Jambet and Lardreau, *Le Monde*, pp. 188-189.

³⁹ Jambet and Lardreau, p. 181.

⁴⁰ Laruelle, *Future Christ*, p. 17.

⁴¹ Laruelle, p. 39, 40.

⁴² Laruelle, p. 6.

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theorem of the Future Christ summed up in this mutation of the prologue to the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the struggle, and the struggle was *with* the World and the World did not know it...”⁴³ In *Future Christ* Laruelle thinks from the perspective of the murdered Gnostics of history as a particular form of universally persecuted heresy. This is not a denial of the horrors of the Jewish Shoah and it is not in any way a justification for the many crimes committed against humanity by itself. Rather, it reveals something beneath the particularity of the name “Jew” or “Tutsi” or “Shi’a” (all names for peoples who have been murdered). It reveals that a human is murdered as a human. That the human endures crime. Laruelle puts it this way:

“The heretics reveal to us that man is in an ultimate way that being, the only one, who endures crime and is characterized by the possibility of being murdered rather than simply persecuted and taken hostage, exterminated as ‘man’ rather than as ‘Jew’. Why ultimate? *Because man is without-consistency, he is on principle, in contrast to other beings, able to be murdered, he is even the Murdered as first term for heretical thought and for the struggle that it performs.*”⁴⁴

This focus on the *minority* status or radical individual identity, *precisely because it is without-Essence*, of the human distinct from the forms of unitary identity that are bestowed upon human-beings by the World discloses the radically foreclosed nature of the Real to authority and tradition. Instead, the Real-One is always a challenge to authority, always a “outside-memory” that is lost to the Western form of memory, but that is at the same time not lost because it is the essence of thought’s non-consistency as always insufficient to think the Real.⁴⁵

Thus, heresy is the privileged form of non-theological thinking, because it is in its immanence always inconsistent, always the a shared inconsistency that marks the identity of the human. There are, of course, majoritarian or authoritarian forms of heresy and concerning these Laruelle remarks, “What is more hopeless than a *Principle of Sufficient Rebellion*”, but these can be differentiated from

⁴³ Laruelle, *Future Christ*, p. 4

⁴⁴ Laruelle, *Future Christ*, p. 34. I should note that, though this article is not the place to develop it, I don’t share Laruelle’s anthropocentric characterization of man as such and consider it a form of philosophical determination of the Earth that has remained within his theory. My own work within non-philosophy, drawing again on theological material is dependent upon the radical immanence of the in-Creature rather than the in-Man, for, at the more fundamental level, the Creature is more generic than Man, especially if there is no Creator. This will be the focus of another article in this series on non-theology.

⁴⁵ Laruelle, pp. 42-43.

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heresy as struggle.⁴⁶ Laruelle delineates this differentiation in *Future Christ*, tracing the differences between war, or the *Agon* of philosophical absolute immanence, and the rebellion of historical Gnostics. In the case of war and rebellion it is always a matter of an underlying authoritarian logic, a “because of”. The rebellion of Gnostics against Christian philosophy is always “a reaction of auto-protection against aggression”.⁴⁷ While the non-theological point is always to raise as primary that which is not auto-protective, that which is an “(immanent) because”, of that “revolt that commences and does not cease to commence in each instant, proletariat or not, exploitation or not. But if it has in itself sufficient reasons to start, it has only too many of them and cannot make a cause of them.”⁴⁸ In other words, struggle, when separated from even rebellion as a minoritarian form of authority, is separated from the World in general. It is a generic practice as universal rebellion of which the Future Christ is the generic subject.

Christ may take on the character of a subject for the masses as well. Laruelle recognizes this when he writes, “The Future Christ rather signifies that each man is a Christ-organon, that is to say, of course, the Messiah, but simple and unique once each time. This is a minimal Christianity. We the Without-religion, the Without-church, the heretics of the future, we are, each-and-everyone, a Christ or Messiah.”⁴⁹ It is in the positive religions that Christ is misunderstood: “Christianity is the limit, the whole content of which is a misinterpretation of Christ”⁵⁰ A student of Laruelle’s, Gilles Grelet, goes further and connects Christ with Jambet and Lardreau’s Angel, by separating a “marshmallow” Christ (“The marshmallow offers the perfect image of relation between the “fundamentally Christian” West and Christ, since we know that the soft and very sweet candy does not, in fact, contain any marsh mellow.”⁵¹ from the *Christos Angelos* (“Angel of all the angels, the Gnostic Christ is the Envoy charged with delivering men from their enslavement in this world by liberating in them the knowledge of their origin and the means of getting back to the place from which they have been exiled: *Christos Angelos* frees by the knowledge which gives men the means of rebellion that they are, against all humility, fundamentally driven by”.⁵²).

⁴⁶ Laruelle, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Laruelle, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Laruelle, pp. 4, 8.

⁴⁹ Laruelle, p. 117.

⁵⁰ Laruelle, “A Science in (*en*) Christ”, p. 318

⁵¹ Gilles Grelet, *Déclarer la gnose. D’une guerre qui revient à la culture* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002), p. 119f50.)

⁵² Grelet, p.119f49.

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So in order to understand Christ as generic subject we must understand him as radically separate from Christianity. What better way to do considering Christ from the perspective of a Gnostic-Islamic Christology? In the editors' introduction to *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern* Daniel Whistler and myself differentiated between a postsecular *event* and the appropriation of that event in the name of a theologization of philosophy or what we called "imperial secularism". The event marked a break with Western imperialism, which used Christian forms of thought to develop a post-Christian secularism in an attempt to separate the oppressed colonial subjects internally - a separation of the political and their religious identity, whereas the appropriation of the event is often an attempt to reinstate (at best) a war at the ideational level and (at worst) a new form of imperial war in the name of the clash of traditions.

The postsecular event, we claim there, was located largely with Islamic countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa and though the response to the postsecular event is not an Islamic turn in Continental philosophy, there should be more engagement with forms of thought outside of the Christian tradition. There are two clear non-theological reasons for this: 1) if the generic is to be located in a way that avoids the shortcomings of Hegelian philosophy and its continuing influence on the practice of philosophy of religion, where European Christianity comes to be the name for universalism as the only consummating historical religion, then it must take the infinite task of working with any material whatsoever in order to locate the power of the generic that lies there; 2) non-theology always begins from the perspective of the murdered, and thus from the perspective of heretical material, which is to say that there is within non-theology a principle of minority or preferential option for the poor as immanent to generic humanity. With regard to the second, in a very real sense, a very bodily sense, a certain appearance of the power of poverty, what Negri calls the "force of the slave" in regard to Job, has coalesced around the name "Muslim". In Europe the Muslim has become the exception that grounds the law, both political law and the economic law of class difference. As this structural aspect in-person the Muslim is, as Mehdi Belhaj Kacem has argued, the contemporary form of pariah: "The pariah is at once captured and delivered, locked within its exclusion and banished by inclusion."⁵³ The reality of the pariah is manifested clearly in the collusion of the institutional Left with the establishment Right of Europe regarding these "places of the ban" (Belhaj Kacem makes a clever play on the name of the suburban ghettos of France, *les banlieues*, as *les ban-lieux*) as *problems* to be neutralized (and both speak in this language if with differing

⁵³ Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française. Les banlieues: le ban de la République* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), p. 18

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degrees of violence) while also referring to them as what negatively grounds their existence as government.

Islam as pariah is repeated within thought in the same way as it is found in the political field. Within a teleological-oriented philosophy of religion, which carries with it always a certain amount of servitude to the European project of expansion, Islam poses a problem because it arises historically after the Christianity, which was to be the consummation of Spirit in the religious realm.⁵⁴ Islam is the religion that proves Christianity's true universalism, as an idea made concrete, while (as Toscano says) Islam "takes universalism too far" in its abstract passion for the real.⁵⁵ As such, it is both brought within the scope of the historical development of European spirit and excluded from it as a form of fanaticism which threatens the rational integration of people within the State. There is a ban on Islam in Continental philosophy of religion that grounds its practice within post-Christian secularism in so far as Islam is so dangerous as to be outside this form of the secular. This is why Islam must be material for the construction of a true non-theology, not in the name of an Islamic theologization of philosophy, but because the event taking place amongst Muslims, both as postsecular event and as name of the pariah, have consequences for philosophy and may help free philosophy, practiced here as non-theology, from its capture as imperialist weapon.

The Foreclosed One of Non-Philosophy and the Paradoxical One of Ismaili Shi'a Islam

Let us return to the question posed above: how do we save the angelism of Lardreau and Jambet from despair, a despair that comes from formulating the angel as a radical purity from all of nature? The wager here is that we do so by reconceiving nature, a reconception that places both the Angel and Rebel back on the earth, that locates a radical nature, one that is necessary for the Angel and the Rebel but that does not overdetermine them or require that they submit to the natural. To do that we have to conceive of a nature differently than nature is conceived in naturalism, even one differently conceived than we find in the attempted immanent materialism of Deleuze and Guattari. Nature must be conceived as radically immanent; the decline of naturalism in the name of nature.

⁵⁴ Cf. Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 164 and the entirety of the chapter "The Revolution of the East", which is an excellent examination and exposition of the weaknesses of the engagement of Hegel and Žižek with Islam, specifically with regard to the One of Islam.

⁵⁵ Toscano, p. 153.

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To lay the groundwork for this conception we must consider the unilateral relationship between thought and the One. I will begin by briefly summarizing the non-philosophical conception of the One. From there I will show that the Ismaili conception of the One described by Jambet is closer to non-philosophy's conception than Christianity and can therefore be used as a kind of One "already-cloned" from the Real-One. This exploration of this paradoxical or fissured One of the Ismailis will provide a new conception of nature different from both the transcendent analogical conception and the conception of nature as subsumed into absolute immanence.

Non-philosophy aims to be "neither Greek nor Jew", as Laruelle puts it, meaning to think neither from the primacy of Being or Alterity.⁵⁶ It aims to think *from* the Real, which Laruelle also gives the ancient philosophical name of "the One" and even sometimes calling it the Real-One. The One for non-philosophy does not engender a problematic of the One and the Many because it makes everything in some sense in-One. Not subsuming everything into a One-All, but by making the claim that all things are in-One as identity. To understand this it is important not to confuse the One with substance, with Being, with even the Other as such, for all these things must be thought as if One. Being is in-One, the Other is in-One; in each case the One speaks to either the radical immanence of their identity or the non-thetic transcendence of that identity. There is then in non-philosophy a "realist suspension" that takes place from the mutated and foreclosed figure of the One.

The Real is pragmatically asserted through a variety of axioms, rather than circumscribed and represented. The realist suspension is a pragmatic style of thought that asserts the ultimately Real identity of all things. That all things are, in-the-last-instance, Real, while still remaining what they are, while at the same time the Real is itself foreclosed to the thought, are the two aspects of the realist suspension. So, real objects may be described and known while the Real is always the deductively known cause of these real objects, not ontologically, but as One. Brassier helpfully summarizes six corollary axiomatic descriptions of the Real found in Laruelle's *Philosophie et non-philosophie*:

"1. The [R]eal is phenomenon-in-itself, the phenomenon as *already-given* or *given-without-giveness*, rather than constituted as given via the transcendental synthesis of empirical and a priori, given and giveness.

⁵⁶ François Laruelle, *En tant qu'Un: La « non-philosophie » expliquée aux philosophes* (Paris: Aubier, 1991), p. 253.

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2. The [R]eal is the phenomenon as *already*-manifest or manifest-*without*-manifestation, the phenomenon-without-phenomenality, rather than the phenomenon which is posited and presupposed as manifest in accordance with the transcendental synthesis of manifest and manifestation.
3. The [R]eal is that in and through which we have been *already*-gripped rather than any originary factum or datum by which we suppose ourselves to be gripped.
4. The [R]eal is *already*-acquired prior to all cognitive or intuitive acquisition, rather than that which is merely posited and presupposed as acquired through the a priori forms of cognition and intuition.
5. The [R]eal is *already*-inherent prior to all the substantialist forcings of inherence, conditioning all those supposedly inherent models of identity, be they analytic, synthetic, or differential.
6. The [R]eal is *already*-undivided rather than the transcendent unity which is posited and presupposed as undivided and deployed in order to effect the transcendental synthesis of the empirical and the metaphysical.”⁵⁷

This is not, then, a “negative theology” of the Real that we find in Lardreau, but rather takes the same posture that science does with regard to its own practices. That is, it takes the Real as the necessary “superstructure” for thought, rather than as that whose being or non-being negates the possibility of thinking in general.⁵⁸ In other words, the realist suspension, which can be found in science, is a relationship with Real that thinks without any recourse to a transcendent self founding.⁵⁹ Non-philosophy is a practice of liberty from philosophy, from the structures of the World, and not an account of foundation.

A non-philosophical discussion of the One then comes to be the site where non-philosophy develops an axiomatic formalism of the Real. Where it experiments with thinking from the Real, or looking at its material from the vision-in-One, and so to understand non-philosophy’s One is largely to formally understand the practice of non-philosophy. To begin with, since the Real-One is foreclosed to thought this comes to also be referred to as the One-in-One. Non-philosophy clones

⁵⁷ Ray Brassier, *Nil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 128.

⁵⁸ François Laruelle, *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (Mardaga: Liege-Bruxelles, 1989), pp. 176-177.

⁵⁹ François Laruelle, *Théorie des identités* (Paris: PUF, 1992), p. 59.

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its transcendental organon from this One-in-One.⁶⁰ Or, in other words, it clones a (non-)One that will be used as a organon of selection when applied to its material and that will operate on the philosophical resistance to the foreclosed nature of the Real, formalized as non(-One). The dualism, as a thought, is in unilateral causal relationship with the One where one aspect of the dualism, the one taking the place of transcendence, will correspond to a non(-One) while the other, taking the place of a relative philosophical immanence, will correspond to a (non-)One. The non(-One) indicates that the transcendent element of thought is a kind of negation, a hallucinatory aspect of thought that arises from the foreclosed nature of the Real-One. It is that aspect of thought that responds to the trauma of the foreclosing by negating the radical immanence of the One, reducing it to some hallucinatory transcendence of Being, Alterity, Difference, etc, but this aspect is at the same time *actually transcendent* within that philosophical occasion, but only as rooted in the radical immanence of the One.⁶¹ The (non-)One is the suspension of negation or the negative of philosophy and thus it does correspond to those conceptions of immanence, found for example in Henry and Deleuze, that resist in a philosophical way the philosophical negative, but they are radicalized here so that the (non-)One indicates its mutation of the radical immanence of the One. The last vestiges of philosophical transcendence have to be chased out from these philosophies *of* immanence in order to create an immanent style of thought. A thought that is, in its very practice, rigorously immanent.

This formalism is more easily seen in person when we turn to the Ismaili experience of liberty which was actually lived in the proclamation in the 12th Century of the time of Ressurrection (*qiyâmat*), after the collapse of their Fatimid caliphate that ruled over the Islamic world. The story of the Ismailis of Alamût is fascinating and should be of interest to anyone interested in messianism, but the historical details are not of particular interest here.⁶² Rather, it is the relationship between this messianic act and the One that is important. For Jambet locates a certain necessity of neoplatonism for the Ismailis, the theoretical structure of the One allows them to think the messianic event as such:

⁶⁰ See Eric del Buffalo, *Deleuze et Laruelle. De la schizo-analyse à la non-philosophie* (Paris: Kimé, 2003), p. 40.

⁶¹ Laruelle, *Les philosophies de la différence*, pp. 215-219. See also Laruelle, pp. 237-240 for an early formal schema of the One and François Laruelle, *Principes de la non-philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1995), pp. 168-192.

⁶² See Jambet, pp. 33-49 for a compressed history.

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“It seems to us that there are two simple enough reasons for this. First and foremost, the neo-Platonic schema of the One and the multiple permits the One to be situated beyond any connection with the multiple wherein it would be totalized or counted as one. The One is thought beyond the unified totality of its emanations in the multiple. On the other hand, freed from any link with the totality of the existant, and situated beyond Being, the One can signify pure spontaneity, a liberty with no foundation other than itself. In this way, the sudden messianic appearance of the Resurrector will be founded in the creative liberty of the originary One; thus, in the necessary reign of the existent, the non-Being that results from the excess of the One will be able to mark out its trail of light. But, conversely, this creative spontaneity will also explain the creation of the existent, the ordained and hierarchized formation of universes. Just as much as with the unjustified liberty, the One will be able to justify the procession of the intelligible and sensible, and the gradation of the spiritual and bodily worlds. Avoiding dualism, all while thinking the duality between the One and the order of Being which it interrupts; conceiving, on the other hand, of the unity of order and creative spontaneity - all while preserving the dualist sentiment - without which the experience of messianic liberty was impossible: this is what neo-Platonic thought offered to the Ismaili.”⁶³

In short, the One allows the Ismaili to think the pure formalism of the Real - there is the non-thetic transcendence found in the negation of Being, interrupting the order of Being and beings, and the immanence of (non-)One or the existant that is beyond any totality, that is pure fissure itself.

The immanental aspect of the Real-One, which is carried in each One, simply cannot be reduced to a totality, to some kind of idea of number. It exists without any ground whatsoever, and this is its source of liberty or autonomy from any attempt to capture it within philosophical or theological structures:

“The Ismaili experience of liberty is not the discovery of the autonomy of consciousness or the political rights of the individual. It is the feeling of a different and powerful idea: liberty is not a moment of Being, and it is even less a piece in the game of the existent. Liberty is not an attribute, but rather a subjective affirmation without foundation. Liberty is not a multiple

⁶³ Christian Jambet, “The Paradoxical One” trans. Michael Stanish in *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* (2009), p. 141; Christian Jambet, *La Grande résurrection d'Alamût*, p. 142. [Translation slightly modified.]

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effect of the One, but it can be nothing but the One, disconnected from whatever network of constraints it engenders or by which, on the contrary, it would come to be seized. Liberty is the experience of this non-Being of the One, through which the One inscribes itself in the universe of both Being and beings as pure alterity.”⁶⁴

This reveals something important about the identity of immanence: immanence has no ground and is thus, in some real sense, the other to any form of thinking that searches for a transcendental or absolute ground from which to think. Immanence itself is fissured, it itself is the Real-One and thus every real thing is in-Immanence and is Immanence-in-the-last-identity. Not as subsumed into immanence as absolute substance, but as lived. This Ismaili One of absolute liberty as already-cloned from the Real-One will provide the necessary material for thinking a non-theological nature from this radical immanence.

Nature as Condition for Unveiling, Non-Theological Nature

There are two standard options when trying to think nature outside of the limits of naturalism and in relation to messianism: from an analogical conception or from a position of absolute immanence. Both end ultimately by making the messianicity of creatures impossible.

The first, characterized by St. Thomas Aquinas, assumes that what is created by God is good because it contains in it some likeness of God. In this way the essence of God remains unknowable except by way of analogy with what is and what is then ultimately known through its relation to God. This analogical loop allows Aquinas to avoid making God too immanent, and thus not God, and too transcendent, and thus unknowable, while also giving relative dignity to creatures. It also has the consequence that what *is* is by necessity taken to be reflective of the essence of God and what *is* is the only way to gain access to an understanding of God. So, Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy ironically suffers from its own version of the naturalistic fallacy. Analogy must proceed from what is in order to understand the nature of the divine. In doing so it lacks any kind of organon for selection and thus may select, as Aquinas himself did, an analogy of monarchy. A discussion concerning the failings of this selection is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice to say that Aquinas is wrong when he writes: “[...] whatever is in accord with nature is best, for nature always operates for the best. But in nature government is always by one. [...] Among the bees is one king bee, and in the whole

⁶⁴ Jambet, p. 142; p. 143.

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universe one God is the Maker and Ruler of all.”⁶⁵Here Aquinas proceeds not from an understanding of nature to a properly analogical understanding of God but proceeds from what human government is to a misunderstanding of what government in nature is and then to a conception of God’s governance. Bees, we now know, do not have any one ruler as the queen of a particular hive does not direct the action of that hive; the hive, rather, proceeds in a way altogether unlike human government from monarchy to parliamentary democracy. Indeed, what is in nature may be best, because it is what is, but what is in nature is varied. Its organization is not reducible to any one organization and thus analogy may not find a secure position from any one part of nature and may not be able to think from the whole of nature in ways that allow it to remain within the fold of Christian orthodoxy.

The second option is found in Spinoza where immanence is made absolute. We can read this as a response to the Thomist lack of an organon of selection, for instead of selecting some aspect of nature from which to think God, Spinoza selects the whole of nature (*Deus sive natura*). This is an ingenious solution to the Thomistic problem, but ultimately relies on a philosophy of substance where nature is reduced to being and so is unthought as such. In other words, this selection of nature as whole or “One-All”, retains a transcendent shadow of a quasi-thing.⁶⁶ This allows for a certain liberty in nature, but such liberty is always limited as determined by its status as Being or what is. In both instances creatural messianicity is impossible because what *is* has already been consummated by the death and resurrection of the historical Jesus or, in less dogmatic terms, what *is* is already good and requires nothing more than right order or an ethical relation. In both cases nature comes to be a name simply for the *sékomma*.

Ya’qûb al-Sijistânî provides us with a proto-non-theological conception of nature that differs from both Aquinas and Spinoza. Whereas Aquinas occludes nature by making creation its proper apophatic name and Spinoza occludes creation within a subsumption of God and Nature into a One-All substance, Sijistânî places nature in the middle of six Creations that come from the uniqueness of the Creator for whom even essence is excluded.⁶⁷ These are not seven distinct, linear creations, but seven cyclical Creations that are contained in each other as expressions of the

⁶⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, “On Kingship or The Governance of Rulers (De Regimine Principum, 1265-1267),” trans. Paul E. Sigmund, in *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, ed. by Paul E. Sigmund (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), pp. 17-18.

⁶⁶ Cf. Laruelle, “The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter”, p. 41.

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manifestation the unique nature of the One, which begins in creation and runs down through the created from universe to angels to peoples to prophets before culminating in the resurrection. In non-philosophical terms, they are clones of the foreclosed One.

Nature is the third Creation and is treated alone, while in the second, forth and fifth Creations there are always two terms that move from one to the other. By treating nature alone in this way nature is raised to the same level as the Intelligence (from which the Angels are given their power and identity) and the Resurrector for Sijistânî. Sijistânî raises nature to the these levels by locating the real identity of nature as Earth rather than World:

“Do you not see that the human being, in who the most subtle quintessence of the two universes has been concentrated, lives on the earth? His subsistence is on the Earth. His return is a returning to the Earth, and his resurrection is a resurgence from the Earth. From these premises it follows that we have shown that the Earth is not inferior to heaven in dignity merits the presence of the angels, since a great number of potentialities [*puissances*] are achieved in the Earth that are in harmony with the angels. Understand this.”⁶⁸

Jambet sums up Sijistânî’s conception of nature by saying that it is not being or *physis*, but which allows for the appearance of every phenomenal existant.⁶⁹ Nature is then the condition for the appearance of what is totally different from the World, for what is the messianicity of creatures as the Angel rather than as Worldly.

The solution to the impasse between analogical transcendence and absolute immanence, where there can be no messianicity, is then a conception of nature as clone of the Real-One. Instead of trying to conceive of the relationship between the Absolute-God and Nature, which requires then some epistemological organon of selection, foreclose the One to thought as that which is beyond Being and Alterity, but which manifests itself as lived in-Person. In terms whose meaning is more directly understandable, instead of treating *Deus sive natura* as a relation between two terms, treat the equation as itself relative to the radical autonomy of the Real-One. This radicalizes the Spinozist response to the Thomist failure of selection, for instead of selecting the whole of Nature as the best

⁶⁷ Ya’qûb al-Sijistânî, *Le Dévoilement des choses cachées* (Kashf al-Mahjûb), trans. Henry Corbin (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1988), pp. 33-35.

⁶⁸ Sijistânî, p. 81.

⁶⁹ Jambet, *La Grande résurrection*, p. 210.

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way to think God, the non-theologian selects the whole of the dyad of God and Nature in order to think the cloned One.

What are the consequences of this choice? What does this choice do? And how, finally, does it bring together our angelology, which is ultimately a fictional way of thinking true liberation from this World or messianism, and nature?

Nature is no longer an object of knowledge nor is it the object of knowledge that comes to know itself, but itself is the condition for any such dialectic and is itself outside of any of this dialectic as radical immanence underlying the transcendental dialectic. Nature is identified with the Earth rather than with the World. As Sijistânî says, nature does not change state. Even if its parts were to be annihilated, it would still remain as nature, as the condition for the appearance of the messiah as divine potential.⁷⁰ Worlds may pass away, but their appearance and passing away depends on the Earth. Even when the Earth does pass away, nature as such will remain as *already*-inherent and *already*-manifest.

This choice then gives us a conception of nature that unifies a scientific stance towards nature as the One of what appears and the condition of that appearing and an ancient philosophical problem of nature that has all too often ended in a conception of an over-determining nature. Nature in this middle place between the One and the Future Christ as Resurrector does not provide any of the usual limitations to human and creatural liberty. Nothing in this conception is “unnatural”, for nature is itself perverse here. As the condition for the appearance of messianicity of the human and other creatures it stands against what simply is, against the *sékommaça*. And it is ultimately here, when nature can be turned against the natural, that we see the unified theory of messianism and nature. Yes, let everyone say with Jambet and Lardreau “let the Angel come!” but understand that the Angel can only come to the Earth, it can only overturn the World by overturning the absoluteness of either Being and Alterity. For the Earth, like the Angel, has no Master and is everywhere and always already in revolt.

⁷⁰ Sijistânî, p. 77.