

---

# The Ontology of Withdrawal (1): What is a Withdrawal?

UENO Toshiya

—Abstract

This essay is a part of my ongoing project, the “ontology of withdrawal”. In this introductory section, this work begins with comparative interpretations of both philosophical projects by François Laruelle and Toshihiko Izutsu. Some basic but quite idiosyncratic concepts by Laruelle are clarified and explained: One-in-vision, One-in-One, non-philosophy, given-without-givenness, unilaterality, clone, dualysis, stranger-subject, and so on. Each conception is considered and re-examined from the perspective of non-religious philosophy by Izutsu. Rather than being contented with a mere demonstration of similar or compatible points in these two philosophical systems, this paper would like to make some interventions for the recent philosophical debates after the “so-called speculative turn” raised by Object-Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism.

This project aims to elaborate the “ontology of withdrawal”. Its aimed field is not restricted to philosophical discourse, but may also relate to the various genres of theories and discourses: sociology, ecology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, urbanism, media theory and even political economy, etc. For a long time, philosophy has grappled with the notion of the One in order to acquire a vision of the world as a whole. The perfect comprehension of the One is as a condition of enlightenment(for instance, as the “absolute knowledge” in Hegelian dialectics or as the “ultimate Enlightenment”, *Satori*, in Buddhist discourse). Put differently, philosophy has always somehow failed to comprehend the One. The One as a concept is nameless or difficult to represent, so as to be never completely captured. The One is always evaded and eclipsed in its singular movement of keeping distance from the presence or direct access(by humans) to the existential world. However, philosophy never ceases to think about the One in its variety of attempted styles. The same is true for some types of religious or spiritual discourse to a certain extent. In fact, the living world is always already articulated within some differentiated structures of semantic articulations deriving from dichotomy, binary oppositions, and duality within Nature toward/in front of the divergence of universes.

What Whitehead called the “bifurcation of nature” seems to be adequate for understanding the difficulty of grasping the One in this context(Whitehead, 2004, pp.30-31). There is always an absolute decision invented by each philosophy and its “philosophical decision” between the sensible or phenomenal appearance of the world: ‘the greenness of trees, the

song of birds, the warmth of the sun...and the feel of velvet.’(ibid, p.31) and its hidden material reality (systems of molecules and electrons, ibid), which is compatible with the series of conventional duality in philosophy; for instance, noumena and phenomena, the abstract and the concrete, primary qualities and secondly qualities, and so on. Both thought and philosophy are always caught up in this kind of duality — if they intend to access the reality in/as the One. Then, the bifurcation is gradually and retroactively substituted by the process of binary oppositions, splitting and dividing experiences into linguistic formalization of existences. Thus it is difficult to grasp the One.

In order to break up this challenge, there is an interesting notion of the One that can be highlighted. In the account of the notion of the One, this essay addresses both philosophical theories by French (non-)philosopher, François Laruelle and Japanese (religious, or *non-religious*) philosopher Toshihiko Izutsu. As for the latter’s arguments, I have so far addressed it on several occasions <sup>(1)</sup>.

Why does philosophy wish to think about the One? Because it can exist insofar as it surpasses and sublates any empirical experiences. The notion of the transcendental was one of attempted directions in philosophy. But, the notion of immanence is also present in both the philosophy of Laruelle and Izutsu even, to the same extent, with a standard or conventional philosophical lineage. For both philosophers, the One means the radical immanence as given-without-givenness or separated-without-separation in terms of the incipient (in)articulation of the living world. The One has usually been categorized within the problematics of ontology in conventional or standard philosophy. The question is: why and how does this world or this body exist? Certainly, in occidental philosophy ontology in general has dealt with a presence, manifestation, and revealment of Being among beings, while “so-called oriental thoughts” has sometimes more directly focused on the notion of nothing(-ness) for their ontological explanation of the world; although, Laruelle has already warned for a hasty comparison or association between Zen or Buddhism and his non-philosophy (PNP, 169).

In the context of this essay, the One is not same as that is referred to in Neo-Platonism. The concept of One-all or univocity, inspired from Spinoza’s work, which is also employed by Deleuze, doesn’t necessary imply the One in the Neo-Platonic sense. Spinoza will be addressed in detail a to follow chapter of this project. The differences with Neo-Platonic thought can be enumerated and explained as below. First, in Neoplatonism, for instance, the One is always purely unique, omnipresent and simplified. But in our argument, inspired by Laruelle and Izutsu, the One is foreclosed or excluded to the in-division of the One/multiple in the ‘force of thought’ which is given anterior to any discursive conceptualization or symbolization. Second, unlike Neoplatonism, the One of which I take account is not beyond explanations by language, but instead enunciable in infinitely open-ended and deliberate dissensus. Third, in the thought of Neoplatonism, the One deploys itself through the emanation. Everything is the result of the emanation deploying from the One as the absolute or ultimate being. But for Laruelian (non-)philosophy and Izutsu’s (potentially *non*-)religious philosophy, the One operates through *unilateral* determination, which is nevertheless constituted or assembled by mutual prehension <sup>(2)</sup> of things. The One just acts as/in-the-last-instance. It can be also defined as the “determination-in-the-last-instance”, which seems to derive from

Althusser's Marxist philosophy, although its content here varies from that in his theory and holds a different value, for our infrastructure or "base" is not limited to the (political) economy in the narrow sense, but is extended to a broader sense of organization and conjunctures in general. For instance, ecology can provide another type of the unilateral base, and even cosmological or shamanistic universes can hold the formation of a certain "economy". Fourth, for Neoplatonism, the One is always posited "over yonder" beings or even the very Being as such. In other words, the One is located as an instance of the transcendence, while in this project, inspired by Laruelle and Izutsu, the multiplicity of beings is just an existential mode of the One and the "beyond" as such immanent to the One in the case of Being — in the Heideggerian sense. Rather than positing the One as the transcendence, this project would also conceive the One as the radical immanence(SU, 45, 99).

Here the term *unilateral* which is frequently utilized in Laruelle's works must also be clarified. It indicates a flight onward without return, in which there is no exiting or leaving before the return nor a return without going out. It is a kind of exodus out from the framework of representation and identification. There is just a single vector and singular movement, which he calls unilateral. In his view, the non-philosophy is always unilateral, there is no departure point(SU, 71). The unilateral causal relation is supposed between the One or the Real, and our thought. This is just one way. Rather than an analysis in general concerning the One as transcendental, *dualysis* — raised by Laruelle — explores the One as radically immanent, with all putative differentiations and articulations. The term dualysis also indicates the method of non-philosophy by utilizing varied philosophical resources, which is quite distinct from both the analysis in general and the synthesis in dialectics(FC, xxx). Dualysis doesn't divide its object, but explores it by cloning it in the unilateral duality and rejecting the dialectic integration of two opposites(PNP, 187). The unilateral duality is a kind of syntax of the semantic articulation which excludes the philosophical convention or commensurability of standard conceptions(PNP, 127).

What is the non-philosophy in Laruellian sense, and what does it mean by the *non-religious* (or *religious-non*) philosophy which I define — inspired by Izutsu's thoughts? In order to establish itself, every philosophical thought and position take crucial decisions which mark and enact the borders of its own territories. A philosophy demands an outside of itself. In fact, not only Laruelle, but also Deleuze and Guattari have already discussed the institution of a certain exteriority of each genre of discourse: non-art, non-music, non-philosophy, etc. In their last book, *What is Philosophy?* they say that 'philosophy needs a non-philosophy that comprehends it; it needs a non-philosophical comprehension just as art needs non-art and science needs non-science.'(Deleuze&Guattari, 1994, p.218) The same holds true for a religion and its exteriority to others. Every religious faith with some philosophical position excludes and forecloses its constitutive outside in order to deploy itself. At the same time, different religious positions which negate others and look incommensurable at each other, however, might happen to share conceptually some *translocal* or some common platform at some depths of thought and of the unconscious (as semantic layers within the *asignifiant* and non-linguistic articulation), with which Izutsu tried to engage with as his lifelong research project.

Certainly Izutsu's expertise was philosophy in various religions(Islamic, Buddhist, Zen,

gnosis, and Judaic, etc), but despite his very detailed studies of varied religious conceptions, he never took any fundamental dogmatic position on any religious faith. His posture is never reducible to a mere relativism, in any sense. His thought was always transversing different religions and their philosophies by raising a transversal conceptual platform. In order to analyze the generic constitution of religions, the exterior position to other principles must be taken into account. Izutsu explores the synchronic platform of religions in terms of their semantic structures envisioned by the non-religious thought and its non-conventional philosophy, rather than tracing back to a fundamental kernel of any religion or assuming a generic history of religions. In the sense that Laruelle also provides the example of non-religion in *The Struggle and Utopia*(SU,91), Izutsu's non-religious philosophy can be somehow confirmed.

The term 'vision-in-One' by Laruelle is crucial for elaborating on the notion of the One. For him the vision-in-One is the perspective or cognitive posture to avoid the bifurcation which invites all forms of dichotomy and dualism in philosophical thinking. The vision-in-One is a matrix of thought in which the One demands speaking/thinking in general(FDH, 290). It is the very non-relation as such, which overlaps with an unilateral duality. The vision-in-One envisions the world as the being-given-without-givenness(SU, 33). Thus, it would try to reach objects or things without any dichotomy or synthesis, which conventional philosophical decisions constantly tend to invent and employ. The vision-in-One is not just a part of the One, but rather immanent to the One itself. The vision-in-One is a radical immanence as the existential and material choice of the vector directed toward a given philosophy. The vision-in-One is capable of problematizing and criticizing philosophical decisions in its immanent cause in order to eschew each philosophical position's narcissism and hallucinatory effects. In this sense, the vision-in-One is equalized as the Real or at least, a radical posture toward science in general. Both the One (in the sense of vision-in-One) and the Real are always foreclosed to/for thought (or the 'force of thought') insofar as human cognitions cannot directly reach them.

Through the One-in-One, our thinking from/within the One is questioning what does 'as-One' or 'in-One' signify, rather than simply asking what is the One. The vision-in-One is also an attempt to face up directly with the One or grasping the One as itself/whole, not in its totality. Laruelle thinks that the One here presupposes a kind of its own copy, simulation, or clone. The vision-in-One is to be tuned with the One-in-One that indicates the radical identity as the last-instance, in which the varied dichotomies are superposed, rather than identified in each philosophical formation. Both the One and non-One are effects of the One-in-One, which also operates as a sort of clone of the One, and nevertheless, is not just its duplication or replication. The One as One-in-One or vision-in-One is an unrepresented non-thetic experience or lived thought, and supposed without being identified or presented, that is, *given-without-givenness*, Performed-without-performation, and the Manifested-before-all-manifestation(PNP, 18, 56). In other words, Laruelle tries to convert the absolute immanence in philosophy into a radicalization of non-philosophy which problematizes and unilaterizes philosophical decisions.

The One is inalienable but is articulated by itself through non-philosophy, whereas the

transcendental is not to be equivalent with the One or the Real, but rather it is the clone of the One(SU, 38, FDH, 299). This is the reason why thinking, for Laruelle, is the clone of the Real(FDH, 241). The notion of clone in Laruelle is defined as the ‘oeuvre-without-operation’(SU, 81) and is distinguished from that of simulacra, for it doesn’t assume any optical meaning and is never reducible to kinds of mimesis. Instead, the clone is defined as the *reflection without mirror*(PNP, 138). The clone has nothing to do with a reflection or specular simulacrum, but more aptly depicted as a reflection without a reflected, which is no longer able to be set within the notion of simulation. Nevertheless, this notion is still very much speculative, devoid of an optical nature of physical reflection. The clone in his non-philosophy is concerned with the temporality producing or identifying the future permanently, at the same time by affording the new concept of the past and the present rather than supposing ecstatic structure of time(FC, 123). The clone is real, in the sense that, cloning is a virtually or an immanently existential mode of the determination-in-the-last-instance. (SU, 99) Even the subject is defined as clone of the ego(PNP, 107), which is what we would call an instance of unilateralization(SU, 143).

Is it possible to contend that to know is to think in terms of the One or to withdraw into the One or even becoming the One? That is the question which is to be scrutinized. In this project, the notion of the One is analyzed (or even *dualized*) along with that of the Nothing (or nothingness) as well. Thus, in this essay, the term ontology means the thought of a withdrawal of beings, objects, things, and (both human and non-human) existences, rather than that of the presence or manifestation of Being or beings. Although it is often located as the ground of the presence of beings in most of western philosophy, insofar as the One is constantly vanished from the appearance of presentation as such, a fragile character of existences is in itself analyzed in terms of *withdrawal* in this project.

Objects don’t contact or relate to each other. They are not set in any relation. Objects cannot be accessed by human beings. This simple thesis is a quintessence of Object-Oriented Ontology(OOO), in a version which Graham Harman has succinctly formulated so far in his works on many occasions(Harman, 2010, 2013). In this view, objects never encounter each other, nevertheless, objects can relate to one another in a certain translation or allure (this point will be scrutinized later). Here objects aren’t posited as an opposite term of subjects. The recent discussion in continental philosophy(Object-Oriented Ontology = OOO, Speculative Realism = SR, New Materialism = NM, Actor Network Theory=ANT, etc) crucially criticizes the whole thread of philosophy since the Kantian scheme in the name of “correlationism” which always presupposes the correlation or interaction between subject and object in cognitive processes. The Thing in itself (*Ding an sich*) is a vanishing point of the perspective in Kantian philosophy, which the understanding (as frameworks of human cognition) cannot reach. Although it is a dark zone within the reason, it cannot be accessed by human knowledges. In other words, there is always a fatal gap between (human) subjects and (non-human) objects in any philosophical system after Kant, in terms of both epistemology and ontology. Then, is it possible to treat this gap as the very ground of a constitutive outside or even *materiality* as such of what is being in/as the world? In this challenging question, this project will proceed, to some extent, with Object-Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism in tandem.

With the term materiality, I mean *the unilateral determination* by something with which one cannot deal or has always certain difficulties within the very resistance from *existential or affective experiences of things*. The unilateral determination presupposes the “base” as a certain economy in which beings are situated within uneven or asymmetric relations that is sanctioned and determined by rarity or scarcity of heterogenous moments (resources, materials, things, etc). Nature and environment can be relevant examples of this. For instance, the concept of niche in biospheres gives rise to the very operation of biodiversity, as the deployment of multiplicity of the One, where a variety of bioregions such as watershed radically and unilaterally determines activities and behaviors of living beings. Of course, Nature as such is the result of reification and objectification from the human perspective. Nevertheless, humans cannot comprehend and subsume all operation of it as a whole. Mesh-works and assemblages within Nature are translated as an ambience that humans can somehow access. The ambience is to be called the clone of Nature, which unfolds the unique cause as the determination-in the last-instance from the One and the Real. The One deploys itself as the multiplicity (of varied niches and biodiversity) while it becomes an index of the multiplicity. For Laruelle, ecosystem is more radically determinant than economy in a general sense (Smith, 2013, p.113, 137, 144, 163).

The last instance is articulated and structured as a unilateral duality, that is never enacted as empirical or historical. In the ultimate enlightenment as discussed in Izutsu’s *Toward Zen philosophy*, for instance, there is no longer an interaction or correlation between subject and object. Certainly, Izutsu admits a correlation between them in the early stage of cognition (Izutsu, 1977, p.8), but in the last (and in fact, virtually current) moment of understandings, it is deconstructed and surpassed. When one sees the flower, one also becomes the flower in this last stage of knowledge and thinking. According to Izutsu’s interpretation of Zen Buddhist philosophy, the ego is envisioned as a crystallization of the immanent relational field or non-relational relation(Izutsu, 1977, p.51). The subject in the conventional or standard philosophy is just a hypothetical or rudimental stage of the ego as a (non-)relational field, if it is not the clone or copy of it. In this stage of a newly organized and ordered world by the ultimate knowledge, all entities are thoroughly differentiated and articulated. Although they are not yet fixed and identified essentially (in terms of essences of things), they are mutually transparent to each other. In this stage, the flower remains the flower but, at the same time, is becoming or fusing into the bird, while the bird is still the bird but becoming or fusing into the flower. This is the dimension of the One as a radical immanence. But it is always withdrawn, which is situated as ‘the withdrawal-(of)-the-One or One-as-withdrawal’(POD, 99).

Then what is a withdrawal? The word is originally translated from the German term ‘*Entziehung*’ in the context of Heidegger’s philosophy; especially in his *Being and Time (Zein und Zeit)*. All objects withdraw and recede from each other and at the same time do from all relations among objects. The cognitive subject cannot touch objects directly, at least within the circle of correlation between subject and object(Meillassoux, 2008, p.5). The world is filled and packed with objects which withdraw from all relation(Harman, 2005, p.87). Thus we cannot comprehend or grasp real objects and their relations. Harman’s argument of tool-beings is helpful in this context. When one (as a human agency) uses a certain tool (as an object), one can utilize it without any specific consciousness or intended attention. One can



use it without any difficulty and identifying all relationships in which a tool/object is located. In order that a tool can function and be operated smoothly, there is a related system which articulates the relationship of each tool and object for the specific purpose of utilizations and practices, that is the “as-structure” of beings which interrelates all objects retroactively. But one cannot usually accept its presence. The present at hand (*Vorhandenheit*) of tools is never contacted for users in the everyday consciousness and practices (unhandiness). The usage of tool is too transparent to realize and so difficult to grasp the tool-system as mutual relations to which it belongs. Only when a tool is broken or caught in malfunction, one can see its tool-system as whole. On the occasion of using a broken tool, one can realize a presence of tool-system as an uncovering of being in the Heideggerian sense. Paradoxically, The ready to hand (*Zuhandenheit*, handiness) can exclusively present itself at the dysfunctional operations (Harman, 2005, 2010, p.99, 111, 2013, p.44, 184, Morton, 2013a).

The same can be said also in the case of human agency. Only when one is caught in some kind of insufficiency and trouble in the everyday life, the very singularity or identity of a particular individual can starkly manifest and unfold itself. The issue of “so-called mental health” is definitely categorized under this framework. Then it should be noted that the term withdrawal is the buzz-word in a completely different context. According to the official data, there are almost 1.55 million persons who spend their life as *hikikomori*. They retreat from the everyday routine through which “ordinary” people pass. Psychiatrists have tried to explain this mass phenomena in terms of autism or as an Asperger disorder. Sociologists interpret this as symptoms of the crises of both personality and community within contemporary society. Unfortunately, such interpretations are not enough, but these can be analyzed from a more ontological perspective. In other words, it is possible to envision, hypothetically, this phenomena through the same platform as with withdrawals of objects.

After all, objects aren't only withdrawn from each other, but, rather, are withdrawn even from themselves. Doesn't the same hold for subjectivities in general? That is the crucial question of this project. Of course, in this question, a certain subjective pole or agency is to be envisioned in an objective pole of everything or every existence in the world. Thus the subject is always defined as a certain kind of proto-objectivity. It can be said that even subjects are a particular type of object, not something other than object, but instead, a proto-objectivity. Morton goes so far as to proclaim, ‘we humans are objects!’ (Morton, 2013a, p.149). In the context of activism, recently, Bifo raised the idea of engaged withdrawal as a tactical option in the contemporary political or cultural action under the dominance of neoliberal info-capitalism. He even suggests that what is at stake in the context of political or cultural activism is not just about militant or violent acts but about medic postures, or rather ‘active withdrawal’ (Berardi, 2011, p.138, 177). Also in his many works, Hakim Bey (Peter Lamborn Wilson) suggests that withdrawal can be one of the tactical choices of cultural or media activisms in contemporary info-capitalism (Bey, 1996, p.8, pp.53-54).

In order to develop the line of thought for this project, I will sometimes address literary works. There is a famous essay on the arts by Jean Genet. Basically, it was written about Giacometti's works and his studio. The reason why I quote Genet here is not to apply a

philosophical discourse (here especially inspired by the threads such as OOO, SR, NM and ANT) on literatures. On the contrary, I suggest that some literary texts such as Genet's implies a certain sense of ontology of objects (or things).

‘The capacity to isolate an object and make its own, its unique significations flow into it is possible only through the historical abolition of the one who is looking.....If I look at the armoire to know finally what it is, I eliminate all that is not it. And the effort I expend makes me a curious being : this being, this observer, stops being present, or even being a present observer: he continues to withdraw into an indefinite past and future.’ (Genet, 2003, p.55, emphasis by myself)

When we see some objects, the other beings beside it, even its surroundings disappear or just recede behind the focused thing. An object cannot be present without a certain fond or background contouring its figure, even if we are referring to absent objects. The absence as such of objects can be regarded as another appearance of them within their surrounding or ambience as a relational field, which is eliminated from humans perspectives at some focused cognitions. (This aspect is analyzed by Sartre in terms of concept of “nihilation” in his *Being and Nothingness*.) Objects and things exist in solitudes and consist each other by alone, just as human agencies can happen to be in their own solitude as well. The adjective ‘curious’ in the quotation might have to be read *strange* as well. Because it is quite certain that when one concentrates on something from the focused perspective (especially in writing literary texts), one has to become something stranger than itself as objects. This posture as a stranger might compel this observer (as a cognitive subject) to being absent and withdraw into undifferentiated flows of time. Objects dive into, and sleep in, solitude by withdrawing from the ostensibly presented horizon, while the observer (subject) also recedes from the same scene by stripping all historical traces away from both objects and its own agencies. The time is becoming indefinite and imperceptible in both past and future, when objects are perceived and conceived. There is always an asymmetry and unilateral relation. The ontological kernel of some literatures such as Genet's works lies in the potential of *isolating objects and becoming isolation of its own*. In order to conclude the essay about Giacometti, Genet says,

‘Giacometti's art is not, then, a social art because it establishes a social link——man and his secretions —— between objects; it's rather an art of high-class tramps, so pure that what could unite them might be a recognition of the solitude of every being and every object. “I am alone”, the object seems to say, “thus caught in a necessity which you can do nothing. If I am nothing but what I am, I am indestructible. Being what I am, unreservedly, my solitude knows yours.”’ (Genet, 2003, p.68)

What does it mean when he claims that ‘the object seem to say’? Can objects “say” something? Of course, it is not a mere metaphor, but it implies some ontological conceptions. Objects don't relate or communicate with each other, but they can make contact through sep-



aration or make allusions to each other unilaterally. When objects express themselves from the hidden core (the Real) without representation or perform their deployment without performance, objects seem to become or, at least, can be called, *things*, that assumes an uncanny or dark core in the monstrosity of objects. Now it is necessary to make a conceptual distinction between objects and things.

In Japanese folklore discourse (*minzokugaku*) or ethnology, for instance, there is a specific notion of taboo called *Monoimi*, the ‘spiritually sanctioned aversion of things’. (In Japanese, *mono* means things while *imi* means here religious aversion.) It is possible to analyze this concept in order to think about differences between objects and things, and also about the spiritual or religious strangeness of objects or things in a certain context. When Shinobu Orikuchi, a Japanese folklore writer and poet, employed the word, he had an ontological idea in mind, not only using it as an ethnological or anthropological notion. *Monoimi* means ‘keeping a distance from specific things. In a certain sanction, one tends to live by avoiding attachments or contacts with some specific objects in certain temporary periods or certain spatial fields. It is not to be achieved by human choices with free wills. Human agency cannot fully control the distance from objects in the religious or spiritual context. Instead, humans are compelled to be detached or distanced from objects by some strange force of both repulsion and aversion. (It is known that Orikuchi had already read in detail and had been inspired by sociologists and anthropologists such as Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert.) Within or among communication or negotiation with objects, human happens to encounter a form of excommunication or xeno-communication.

Similar to the case of broken tools, objects and their articulated relations which usually remain invisible for human cognitions can be seen and appear during *Monoimi* at the period of spiritual sanctions. In *Monoimi*, humans withdraw from objects, while objects withdraw from humans. The object in the spiritual or religious sanction is not simply objects in the conventional philosophical sense, but rather suggesting “strange objects” loaded with certain affections of anxieties and fears. Here strange objects, for instance, are related or affiliated to a mimicry or imitation (*Monomane*) or an apparition of monster or monstrous manifestation (*Mononoke*). Objects always retain some excessive force or parts within themselves, which enriches its interiority than exteriority. In the case of social or ethnological taboo, there is a strange force as the imperative of excommunicating humans from objects and its manner of utilizations. I would like to call these strange objects with strange forces, the ‘thing’ (*Mono*). In *Monoimi* as the spiritual sanction, the thing is liberated from objects not only by religious or spiritual sanctions but also through certain different regulations. In this case, Orikuchi’s *mono*, the thing, is to be interpreted as the allusive effect enacted by objects.

Originally how do things, isolated from each other, as individuals relate to each other? It is enabled by introducing the point of view of God, for instance. The notion of occasionalism is known in the history of western philosophy, which is linked to the name of a philosopher in the 17th centuries, Malebranche. Things and objects recede from one another and so never contact each other. However, they relate to each other partially. There can be no contact in any immediacy but contact has to be mediated by something, where the mediator is usually invisible. It is exactly by this absence or vanishment of the third term that

things seem to accomplish *partially* immediate relations or temporary direct contacts. That is to say, all phenomena and everything in Malebranche's occasionalism are treated as effects, occasions, means, medium, and resources of God. (Carl Schmitt found here the basis of the political romanticism or theology which could employ everything for its own political purpose.) Things which don't relate to each other can relate, but it is ascribed to the operation of God. This notion called occasionalism originates from Islamic philosophy, in which God presents and emerge within everything.

Graham Harman insists on this point in his numerous books and works <sup>(3)</sup>. In order to separate this notion, inspired by medieval Islamic philosophy from Christianity, Harman introduces the concept 'vicarious causation', which locates an invisible or indivine agency at the position of mediating or relating moments in the world <sup>(4)</sup> — inspired by Alphonso Lingis's idea of "medium" <sup>(5)</sup> as a kind of glue which enables the whole carpentry of things. Every object has a vacuum or even *is* a void. This vacuum, then, must contain and include the world as such, which is called a certain milieu or medium in which mutually different qualitative moments interact and flow bilaterally in a charged *ether* (Harman, 2005, p.94). An object always has its hidden depth with spooky vibes in the encrypted core in itself, not by a revealment (uncovering), but through an obscene/off scene, which is also called the 'molten core' (Harman, 2005, Morton, 2013b, p.84, 86). Objects always hold a virtual dimension which is never subsumed or exhausted by any partial manifestation, which can be called the "dormant parts" or the "dark zone" of objects. Certainly the world is packed with objects which withdraw from all relation, but at the same time, these objects all embrace and inhabit their own private void or vacuum. In other words, the world in which objects are settled is filled with a 'mutually isolated vacuum' (Harman, 2005, p.87, 97). Vacuum, void, and nothingness in (real) objects are crucial for the recent philosophical debate. In the paradigm after the 'linguistic turn', basically everything can be reduced to the discursive effect of language as a capacity of significations. Nature is not yet articulated, not because it is a pure continuity or undifferentiated chaos, but it is articulated exclusively according to the programs embedded within itself. For instance, as instincts of living beings, not through linguistic articulations to which humans are accustomed. Animals, plants, bacteria and slime molds are living in a different structure of semantic articulation. The recent debate around OOO or SR and others doesn't necessarily rely on this view. However, a series of notions such as the void, empty place and nothing (-ness) was sometimes significant even in the theories in human sciences after the 'linguistic turn' (with its putative language-oriented ontology). As is visible in the work of Levi-Strauss, what the notion of floating signifier suggests is the very potential of a void point in the structure of articulation, or a point of 'constitutive outside' that enables and empowers a given system. Even Sartre's argument, which is usually read as the humanistic discourse or too psychological existentialism, can be interpreted from this different perspective; 'Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies in coiled in the heart of being——like a worm.' (Sartre, 1956, p.56).

Historically, philosophy has problematized the gap between essence and appearance. The question of how to deal with the issue is a crucial criteria for each philosophical system. But now, the problem has shifted a bit. What is at stake here is the rift between 'real objects'

and ‘sensual objects’(Harman, 2005, 2010, 2013). Real objects can rarely be contacted and retain uncanny cores or dark voids, from which they are launching, unfolding a kind of plasma to their medium, elements, and levels, etc(Harman, 2005, p.97, 173, 190). Through some notes of their own sensual objects, they allure others in a contact with distance, if not directly related. In the allure, the causality among objects plays like magic, illusion and phantasm, while objects behave like ‘playful children’ and the reality as such becomes a trickster (Morton, 2013b, p.75). Instead of occasionalism by God, the hidden operation of allure is at issue. The allure is a tactic of withdrawal.

In this manner, the withdrawn in OOO doesn’t mean a gesture to place itself (agency of its engaged) behind the actual position. Withdrawal in this project doesn’t simply indicate a difficult challenge to find yet a potency of being actualized, visualized and mapped out. Withdrawal is not something spatially or temporally hidden to be discovered retroactively. It suggests more than some secrets behind or within. Instead, the withdrawal as a gesture is always already beyond all sorts of access or any kind of explanation in a given territory. For example, the series of coupling of hermit crabs and shells, octopodes and silos, spiders and webs can all be raised as an example of activities of withdrawal in which these living beings are slowly pulling themselves from their dark cell and rapidly moving toward the core of vibrant relations with their surrounding. To retire or to draw themselves within the everyday life is also the very posture of moving beyond the visible, perceptible and articulated in the usual manner. Thus withdrawal crucially constitutes moments of being. In other words, beings can happen to exist sometimes in the mode of withdrawal. The One presents and exists as itself in the withdrawal, rather than being in the unveiled. *Withdrawal withdraws* just as a singular event(POD, 89). This is a counterpart of *Ereignis* in Heideggerian philosophy. In this way, the withdrawal is a form of non-relation, for all objects are strange(r) to each other regardless of whether humans are concerned with their relations or not.

Deleuzian notion of the virtual is quite relevant for thinking and analyzing the withdrawn dimension of objects. The notion of the virtual for Deleuze and Guattari does not simply mean a latent agency, but rather, the virtual is about the potentiality of particular objects, beings, and substances, although the virtual cannot be treated as their equivalents. The virtual is a pure potential capable of assembling heterogeneous moments, which is also defined as mesh-works or inoperative (non-productive or squandering) interconnectedness of objects rather than the consequence of mere communications among subjects. Fruits of nuts, for instance, don’t necessarily retain qualities or characteristics of its tree, but is determined thoroughly in its virtual potentiality as affording or becoming a piece of nut. The virtual layer of objects can be consistent and immanent without being actual. Now it is possible to afford the conceptual platform in which we can envision a series of notions : Kantian ‘Thing in itself’, Freudian ‘lost objects’ or ‘objects of desire’, Lacanian ‘object petite a’ or ‘partial objects’, Heideggerian things as a composition of logos, and finally Orikuch Shinobu’s Mono, etc. Perhaps, the term coined by Timothy Morton, ‘hyperobjects’ is helpful for understanding the virtual force within things and objects as a “monstrous substances” (*Mono*)<sup>(6)</sup>. Then what is hyperobject? It is defined as the invisible but omnipresently operative within everything in the contemporary world. The more one tries to access and grasp it, the more it evades. What *things* as hyperobjects, show us is not the intersubjectivity of humans who rec-

ognize objects, but rather the ‘*interobjectivity*’<sup>(7)</sup>. It is impossible to comprehend the world and Nature as a composited whole or ensemble. They are always spread as a sort of mesh-works inextricably tied to the relational field. (I am tempted to call it assemblages in the Deleuze & Guattarian sense, but this point deserves to be further accounted for in following chapters.)

Hyperobjects, as something beyond ordinary things, compel us to think about our surroundings and lived environments. The wholeness of the world, not as its totality, attests that human subjects as spectators or observers are also meshed and assembled within itself as one of objects. In other words, *the thing* as a (hyper-)objective retains in itself a certain viscosity which tends to cling on to other objects and humans in remaining itself invisible and untouchable. Certainly, it reminds us of the slime or viscosity in Sartre, but moreover it suggests to us the varied phenomena such as global warming, outbreak of pandemics, radioactive pollutions, and perhaps, even capitalism as such, etc, rather than psychological, existential or hallucinative experiences of individuals(Morton, 2013a). Definitely Orikuchi’s notion of *Mono*, thing, has something very common with such a hyperobjective characters. This issue would be addressed and explored in some following chapter.

For both Laruelle and Izutsu’s philosophical projects, some errancy or contestation against the conventional thoughts is crucial. The notion of heresy is quite significant for Laruelle’s works, although Izutsu has never utilized this term. But some unconventional thought and heretic contestation in given philosophical systems are examined in his late works as well. Generally speaking, an incomprehensible force of heresy is built within both philosophical projects as immanent conceptual rebellions. In Izutsu’s translocal approach of non-religious philosophy, gnosis and its rebel posture are always implicated, even though he might be a politically conservative thinker; belonging perhaps to the Right Wing camp. Put differently, the spirit of struggle isn’t transcendental but real. Or it is possible to think about a ‘transcendental rebel, comprised of struggles’? (SU, 89-90) But at least, the conceptual or spiritual struggle is to be grasped as the heresy for thought itself. In Laruelle’s non-philosophy, the identity in general is heretic itself in-persons with different perspectives. Surprisingly he proclaims that ‘*Identity is the cause-in-the-last-instance of heresy; heresy is the thought and practice according to the cause-in-the-last-instance.*’(FDH, 268, Italic is in original). The living world is not directly given, but it is always given-without-givenness as the pure heresy or heretical form of thought in unilateral duality(FDH, 271-272). So both gnostic rebellion and class struggle are surprisingly combined in Laruelle’s philosophical view(FC, 11). In this perspective, the future is already given as in-Man itself, while the subject is the recovery of the future as such(SU, 143).

Laruelle’s conception of ‘future christ’ is about the elaboration of a heretical christ or in-divine messiah, which is not confined to simple contestation in heresy or gnosis, but about a permanent struggle toward the ‘vision-in-One’ or the ‘Man-in-Man’ by assembling both orthodox principles and heretics in each religion(FC,28). The concept of ‘Man-in-Man’, ‘Man-in-person’ or ‘human-in-human’ is a very idiosyncratic term in Laruelle’s philosophy. To a certain extent, it can somehow be translated as the “ordinary man” in sociology. It indicates the person without attributes or proprieties (BOM, 9). Until the 1980’s Laruelle

utilized the term ordinary man, but, after the middle of 1990's, he gradually began to adopt the series of terms above. Of course, although this terminology must deserve more considerations in terms of gender and sexuality<sup>(8)</sup>, it is a bit beyond the scope of this chapter, which has to be considered some following section. Laruelle suggests that the 'future christ' means a christian-organon within each man(FC,117). In each ordinary man or Man-in-person, the cause of the subject is given, occasionally and partially, the shape of a subject-stranger(SU, 165).

To become a stranger is not to be at home in the general condition of the contemporary world. But in Laruelle, the stranger is defined as a radical subjectivity. In the same token, the strange(r) is not an alienated mode of subject. Different from both sociological and philosophical understanding, the strange(r) is itself immanent within the subject, so that its figure is irreducible to a sociological or an ethnological stranger in general. The notion of the strange(r) is not just supposed as something unfamiliar, but rather means a permanently uncanny familiarity. (Morton, 2013a, p.124, Given Morton coined the term *strange stranger*, my terminology here is inspired by him.) What is crucial here is not only demanding to be "differentiating or detaching from oneself", but also "becoming stranger to oneself", because anterior to be a subject, one (through/in the One) becomes the strange(r) as the radical subjectivity, which mediates a non-relational relation of pure exteriority to the subject. The strange(r) exi(s)ting in itself without any stable point of identification in the (historical) world, in order to be separated radically through one's immanence to oneself in the (living) world. It is as operative as the non-identitarian identity, or separated without separation(FDH, 274). In Izutsu's thought, it appears in the shape of "cosmic man" in the ultimate stage of knowledge. In the very same way that all objects retain and hide some dark kernel or dormant part in themselves, the subject always embraces or incorporates the strange(r) in itself. There is no longer a dialectics nor interaction between the subject and the strange(r). This is exactly the point in which the figure of strange(r) comes up with Laruelle's non-philosophy and Izutsu's (non-)religious philosophy, by breaking the deviation from philosophical decision around sameness and difference or the self and the other. The strange(r) is not the figuration of excluded other, but instead, is the name for the generic identity of human agencies. In this sense, the strange(r) is no longer playing the game of specularity in duality, because exclusively the subject, as the clone of the ego, can become the strange(r), insofar as the One unilaterally determines individuals as the ordinary man (Man-in-person, human-in-human) in its last instance. This vision echoes with Izutsu's philosophical project.

In mythological thought in general, the shift from chaos to cosmos is always envisioned as an equivalent to a passage from semantic undifferentiation, unarticulation, and indivision to semantic differentiation and articulation. Izutsu set out the notion of *anti-cosmos* or anti-sacred, instead of dealing with the dialectics between chaos and cosmos or celebrating chaos in the mythological origin of religious faiths(Izutsu, 1994). Izutsu argued his notion of anti-cosmos and his interest in Islamic heresy and mysticism, especially through his radical interpretation of the Ismaili sect, which was one of the fractions within the "twelve Imam school", and established in the 11th centuries. They constructed firmed citadels in deserts and mountains, one of which was called Alamut and quite notorious by their violent acts such as assassinations against other Islamic sects or dynasties and also Christian crusaders, etc.



the Ismaili sect treated all enemies and opponents around them as heretic or evil agency. However, this sect was also aware of being seen and recognized as the heretic and pagan from the perspective of other religious groups. This is the very root of anti-cosmos — in which chaos and cosmos are constantly alternating their positions with infinite speeds. Or it can be stated that chaos unilaterally determines, and fuses into cosmos, in its immanence and consistency. I am almost inclined to call this anti-cosmos, *chaosmosis* in the Guattarian sense (Guattari, 1995). The Ismaili heretic vision also assumes a gnostic perspective to a certain extent, while Izutsu's notion of anti-cosmos retains gnostic idea, from which the world is always envisioned as evil or incomplete. In this manner, both Laruelle's non philosophy and Izutsu's *non-religious* philosophy have some gnostic moments in common. Just as Marxism is inseparable from its failure as much as it is irreducible to it, all philosophy and religions can establish themselves through gnostic negation or struggle against their own ground. Gnostic struggle is the rebellion or insurrection without principles. Laruelle even goes so far as to equate it with class struggle (FC, 11).

In the history of Islamic thought and mysticism, the (hidden) *Imam* is a very intriguing concept invented by Ismaili sect, which is comparable to Laruelle's 'future christ'. The position of *Imam* cannot be ascribed to the position of priest, prophet or guru, but rather defined as a sort of spiritual sovereignty. The reason why Izutsu paid such great attention to the notion of *Imam* as an Islamic messianic leader or heretic spiritual charisma in the mystic politics of the Ismaili sect is due to the significance of the figuration of the strange(r). Though the *Imam* isn't divine, but being thoroughly human while not have any filiation with Muhammad through blood lineage, nevertheless, it was evaluated as a singular and privileged person by other people. In the conception of *Imam*, the godhood or divinity is simply living within an ordinary person. *Imam* such as "Hasan the old man" in the mountain as the leader of the fortress Alamute is nothing but 'conceptual personae' for Izutsu's (*non-religious*) philosophy, especially in his elaboration of the concept of *anti-cosmos*.

The heretic subject, by passing through and beyond plural threads of religions, cultures, and spirits, is an agency that ceaselessly enters into immanent struggles, which are inclined to opt for a rebellion or insurrection with its unilateral cause. This struggle always precedes any concrete or practical politics, because it brings the everyday living into the status of given without givenness in order to settle its own relation with the world. Surprisingly, Laruelle contends that this radical form of democracy is equivalent to communism! At least, philosophy utilizes science more explicitly to think itself: it excludes science from itself as the State excludes foreigners to set up the differential identity of its own citizens. A nation-state needs the people who are excluded in order to know itself philosophically. In the same vein, every philosophical system establishes and constitutes itself by excluding other systems and being distinct from science, while non-philosophy tends to be in fusion with science, via quantum physics (FDH, 308). So the rebel is determined unilaterally as a part of duality that formulates the clone of opponents to establish and gain its own identity. In this sense, human is a rebel in the struggles without principles toward/through anti-cosmos. From the point of view of *non-(religious) philosophy*, one can become a rebel, heretics, and strange(r)-subject in the world, regardless of ideology and politics.



— notes

- (1) 和光大学表現学部紀要、第 11 号、同 12 号
- (2) This term originates in Whitehead, and Guattari seems to be inspired by Whitehead in his late works. Félix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, Bloomsbury, 2013, p.110, p.270 note.
- (3) Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles—More Speculative Realism*, Zero Books, 2013, p75, 174, 194, 220, 240, 274
- (4) Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics—Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, Open Court, 2005, p91~99, p173, 174, 189, 203, 204, 209, 215, 233, ‘Offshore Drilling Rig’, in *Circus Philosophicus*, Zero Books, 2010
- (5) Alphonso Lingis, *The Imperative*, Indiana University Press, 1998, p.27
- (6) Timothy Morton, *Hyper Objects—Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, The University of Minnesota Press, 2013
- (7) Ibid., p81
- (8) Anthony Paul Smith has already succinctly dealt with this problematics in his translator’s introduction, ‘The Philosopher and Heretic’, in his English edition of *Future Christ*. (FC, xxii)

— Abbreviation of Francois Laruelle’s book

BOM: *Biography of Ordinary Man*, 2018(1985)

FC: *Future Christ; A Lesson in Heresy*, Continuum, 2010(2002)

FDH: *From Decision to Heresy; Experiments in Non Standard Thought*, Sequence, 2012

PNP: *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, 2013(1996)

POD: *Philosophy of Difference; A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, 2013(2010)

SU: *Struggle and Utopia; At the End Times of Philosophy*, Univocal, 2012(2004)

Berardi, B.F. *After the Future*, AKpress, 2011

———. *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide*, Verso, 2015

Bey, H. *Millenium*, Autonomedia, 1996

Deleuze, G.&Guattari, F. *What is Philosophy?*, Columbia University Press, 1994

Genet, J. *Fragments of the Artwork*, Stanford University Press, 2003

Guattari, F. *Chaosmosis*, Indiana University Press, 1995

Harman, G. *The Guerrilla Metaphysics*, Open Court, 2005

———. *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures*, zero books, 2010

———. *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism*, zero books, 2013

Izutsu, T. *Toward Zen Philosophy*, Prajna Press, 1977

———. *Cosmos and Anti-Cosmos, (Kosumosu to Anchikosumosu)*, Iwanami, 1994

Meillassoux, Q. *After Finitude*, Compendium, 2008

Morton, T. *Hyper Objects—Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, The University of Minnesota Press, 2013a

———. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*, Open Humanities Press, 2013b

Sartre, J.P. *Being and Nothingness*, Washington Square Press, 1956

Smith, A.P. *A Non-Philosophical Theory of Nature: Ecologies of Thought*, Palgrave, 2013

Whitehead, A.F. *The Concept of Nature*, Dover Publications, 2004