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NASCENT SPECULATIVE NON-BUDDHISM

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**Abstract:** The present article is a contribution to a particularly urgent issue that is unfolding in Buddhist circles in North America and Europe. Although this issue is framed in various ways, it revolves around a single question; namely, what form will contemporary reconfigurations of Buddhism take in the twenty-first century West? The most influential groups in this discussion to date are those that style themselves secular-, progressive-, atheist-, agnostic-, liberal-, and post-traditional Buddhist. As these groups gain adherents in the West, traditional organizations, such as the various Zens, Tibetans, Vipassanas, etc., are stating their claim to “Buddhism” with increasingly vehement proprietorship. The present article, however, is not yet another attempt to reformulate or reform (in any sense of the term) “Buddhism.” Neither is it concerned with ameliorating traditional Buddhism's relationship with contemporary western secular values. In performing its first task, however, my emerging theory, called “speculative non-buddhism,” can contribute to the current debate in a decisive way by showing that all forms of Buddhism are identical. What makes them so is that they are all governed by what I call “buddhistic decision:” the syntactical structure that constitutes all things, discourse, and people, “Buddhist.” Decision thus constitutes both the ideological nature, and the ideological constant, of “Buddhism.”

**Key Words:** Buddhism; Buddhist criticism; conceptual theory; cultural criticism; François Laruelle; hermeneutics; heuristics; non-philosophy; religious ideology.

*“What is true cannot change; what changes is not true”— is this not the miserable dream in which too many have diffused their cleverness?*

François Laruelle

Speculative non-buddhism is a way of thinking and seeing that takes as its raw material Buddhism. It is a thought-experiment that poses the question: shorn of its transcendental representations, what might Buddhism offer us? Speculative non-buddhism is thus a critical practice. Conceivably, a critical-constructive methodology could emerge from its ideas. Its way, its practice, its ideas, though, render Buddhism unrecognizable to itself. Speculative non-buddhism is an approach to analyzing and interpreting Buddhist teachings. But, again, it results in buddhistically untenable, indeed, buddhistically uninterpretable, theorems. The theory is designed with three primary functions in mind: to uncover Buddhism’s syntactical structure (unacknowledged even by—especially by—Buddhists themselves); to serve as a means of inquiry into the sense and viability of Buddhist propositions; and to operate as a check on the tendency of all contemporary formulations of Buddhism—whether of the traditional, religious, progressive or secular variety—toward ideological excess.

Since speculative non-buddhism is a practical operation on a body of purported knowledge, namely “Buddhism,” the best approach to explaining what it does will be to name the methodological moves of which it consists as well as some of the assumptions underlying those moves. But before I do so, it will be helpful to the reader to explain what I mean by the terms “speculative” and “non-buddhism.”

## Speculative

It may appear ironic that the substantive that describes the critical practice I have in mind is modified by a mental operation universally eschewed by Buddhism itself (*diṭṭhi*, *dr̥ṣṭhi*). The paradigmatic example of this attitude is found in the *Culamalukya Sutta*, where the Buddha warns against the futility of speculating on indeterminate questions and on concerns that he, in his wisdom, left “undeclared.”<sup>1</sup> My use of the term thus gives notice that as a critical practice, as a way of looking and thinking, speculative non-buddhism is of necessity disinterested in “what the Buddha said” and un beholden to Buddhist values. Most importantly, it reaches this neutral position precisely via speculation. For speculation, as its cognate perspicuity reveals, names a clear, plain, and intelligent seeing through of a matter. Such seeing presupposes a unique relationship to the matter at hand. In our case, the matter at hand is “Buddhist teachings,”

“Buddhism,” or “Secular Buddhism.” A speculative position toward Buddhism neither embraces nor rejects Buddhism’s postulates. On the contrary, its operation requires full acceptance of the Buddhist status quo as is—nothing changes. If this were not the case, speculation would devolve into a series of indicative statements that compete with those it aims to consider.

Speculation thus commences in interrogation. Therein lies its importance to critical method. In fact, given the importance of criticism to the speculative non-buddhism project, a brief excursus might be useful here. The term critical is derived from the Greek word meaning “to separate,” *krinein*<sup>2</sup>. Separation creates crisis in the professed whole that is under examination. A person—and only such a person—who enables separation and instigates crisis is qualified to be a *krites*, a judge. The guarantor of this qualification, moreover, is the judge’s newfound skill as *kritikos*—a person who is able to discern, a person who is thus precisely able to judge. The term *kritikos*, in addition, carries an important nuance: the person does his or her separating, discerning, and judging with care.

An animating contention of speculative non-buddhism is that throughout its history, right down to the present-day “x-buddhism” dichotomies—traditional-progressive, eastern-western, ancient-modern, conservative-liberal, religious-secular, overt (Zen, Vipassana)-covert (MBSR, mindfulness), etc.<sup>3</sup>—Buddhism has persistently failed or refused, indeed is perhaps wholly unable, to perform the kind of self-critical evaluation of itself that is required for maturation beyond visionary forms of knowledge. Speculative non-buddhism sees as a result of Buddhism’s critical opacity a continuous circling in on itself to the point of incessant redundancy.

Speculation thus serves the critical project in that the question-asking of the sort I have in mind is a precursor to rupture; and from rupture ensues disruption. Speculation breaks open the closed system, the One, the Whole, of Buddhism. It is not difficult to see, then, how rupture of Buddhism also creates its disruption: the normative claims underlying Buddhism’s ostensible continuity and unity (as, for instance, the Dharma or indeed as “Buddhism”), is, in the interrogation of speculation, interrupted. What ensues from such an interruption? Perhaps discontinuity or even disassembly. Perhaps radical transmutation or even destruction. Certainly disruption of some form and extent. But we cannot know until we speculate. And we cannot speculate until we have created the heuristics for doing so, which I sketch later.

## Non-Buddhism

The original impetus to my specific formulation of “non-buddhism” was my reading of François Laruelle’s “A Summary of Non-Philosophy” together with his Dictionary of Non-philosophy and *Philosophies of*

*Difference*<sup>4</sup>. Laruelle is simultaneously exhilarating and frustrating. I find the mere struggle to follow his thought exhilarating. Indeed, what is most stimulating about Laruelle is not that he creates new content for philosophy or makes spectacular breakthroughs concerning philosophy's obsessions with truth or being, for he makes no contribution to philosophy whatsoever (he sees his work as neither critical nor constructive). Rather, what is stimulating about Laruelle is his very performance as thinker and writer. In attempting to follow his thought and to pierce his words, I was catalyzed to consider new possibilities for thinking and writing about Buddhism. Laruelle is, however, at the very same time almost agonizingly frustrating. He thinks and writes at a level of, in my experience, unprecedented abstraction. As Ray Brassier says of this aspect of Laruelle's work:

Those who believe formal invention should be subordinated to substantive innovation will undoubtedly find Laruelle's work rebarbative. Those who believe that untethering formal invention from the constraints of substantive innovation—and thereby transforming the latter—remains a philosophically worthy challenge, may well find Laruelle's work invigorating. Regardless of the response—whether it be one of repulsion or fascination—Laruelle remains indifferent. Abstraction is a price he is more than willing to pay in exchange for a methodological innovation which promises to enlarge the possibilities of conceptual invention far beyond the resources of philosophical novelty.”<sup>5</sup>

I should mention here that Ray Brassier's explication of Laruelle in the just cited article was a third, and indispensable, source for my encounter with Laruelle's thought.<sup>6</sup>

Non-buddhism is not a transposition of Laruelle's non-philosophical procedures for understanding the nature of philosophy over to a study of Buddhism. Rather, my conception of non-buddhism received its first jolt from non-philosophy, and then proceeded on its own way. Four concepts in particular were initially formative: decision, auto-position, specularity, and radical immanence.<sup>7</sup> (Given space limitations, I can treat only the first term in any depth.) Laruelle alludes to these concepts in the following definitions of, first, non-philosophy per se and, second, non-philosophy's subject, philosophy. After citing Laruelle's definitions, I will, with the aid of Brassier, appropriate and adjust Laruelle's concepts to show not how they serve non-philosophy, but how they serve my conception of non-buddhism.

Non-philosophy typically operates in the following way: everything is processed through a duality (of problems) which does not constitute a Two or a pair, and through an identity (of problems, and hence of solution) which does not constitute a Unity or synthesis.<sup>8</sup>

[Philosophy] is a faith, with the sufficiency of faith, intended by necessity to remain empty but which necessarily evades this void by its repopulation with objects and foreign goals provided by experience, culture, history, language, etc. Through its style of communication and “knowing” it is a rumor—the occidental rumor—which is transmitted by hearsay, imitation, specularity and repetition. Through its internal structure, or philosophical “Decision”, it is the articulation of a Dyad of contrasted terms and a divided Unity, immanent and transcendent to the Dyad; or the articulation of a universal market where the concepts are exchanged according to specific rules to each system, and from an authority with two sides: one of the philosophical division of work, the other of the appropriation of part of what the market of the concepts produces. The philosopher is thus the capital or a quasi-capital in the order of the thought. Or the shape of the World understood in its more inclusive sense.<sup>9</sup>

Every utterance, every written word, every claim of the type “Buddhism holds” or “the Buddha taught” or “according to the Heart Sutra/Pali canon/Shobogenzo/this or that teacher,” every attempt to formulate a “Buddhist” (or crypto-Buddhist/mindfulness) response/solution to X invariably instantiates buddhistic decision. This decisional operation constitutes the structural syntax of buddhistic discourse, and, in so doing, governs all such discourse—the most scientistically covert and the most secularly liberal no less than the most religiously overt and most conservatively orthodox. Without it, there would be no Buddhist discourse, no such utterances, no Buddhism, no Buddhists. Buddhists qua Buddhists, moreover, are incapable of discerning the decisional structure that informs their affiliation because admittance to affiliation ensues from a blinding condition: reflexivity. Indeed, reflexivity is commensurate with affiliation: the more instinctive the former, the more assured the latter. Optimally, Buddhism, like all ideological systems, aims for hyper-reflexivity. The degree to which this goal is accomplished, however, is also the degree to which decisional

structure, the very “internal structure” of all of Buddhist discourse, becomes unavailable to the Buddhist. Non-buddhism is needed, in part, in order to discern the decisional machinery of Buddhism. For, a mere negation of Buddhism is “coded in the same semiotic” (Laruelle) as Buddhism itself: though its terms and aims necessarily differ, a negation of Buddhism is fashioned from the same—namely, decisional and ideological—grammar as “Buddhism.” Non-buddhism, as neither Buddhism nor a negation of Buddhism, fulfils the cognitive and affective conditions that render decision intelligible.

What, then, is the decisional structure that regulates all things “Buddhist”? First of all, unlike Laruelle, I think that decision has an affective as well as cognitive dimension. (Both are occluded commensurate with the degree of reflexivity.) The word “Buddhist” names a person who has performed a psychologically charged determination that Buddhism provides thaumaturgical refuge. In this sense, decision is an emotional reliance on or hopefulness for the veracity of Buddhist teachings. As such, affective decision violates the methodological spirit of all legitimate knowledge systems, whether in the sciences or in the humanities. Because Buddhism cloaks itself as a purveyor—indeed, as the purveyor par excellence—of the most exigent knowledge available to human beings, this violation cancels the very warrant that Buddhism grants itself as supreme organon of wisdom. In so far as affective decision operates on personal identity and worldview, this particular machination of decision, moreover, provides the inroad for blind ideology into Buddhism.

We can modify Laruelle’s definition and say this: for Buddhism, decision, in its cognitive dimension, consists in the positing of a dyad (and countless ensuing sub-dichotomies) that serves to split reality in an attempt to comprehend reality, together with a unifying structure that grounds the dyad transcendently and, simultaneously, by virtue of the necessary intermixture, partakes of immanence. “Decision” is thus meant literally. It involves a cutting off, a scission, of reality in the positing of particular terms of representation. The purpose of scission is to come to an understanding of the actual, immanent world. In the very process of understanding, though, decision divides the world between ostensibly evident immanence and ideally grounding transcendence. The decisional division is between (1) a major dyad, consisting of a conditioned given and that which conditions it, a fact, and (2) a prior synthesis necessary for grounding (transcendently) and guaranteeing the (immanent) unity of the dyad. In being both intrinsic to the dyad and constituting an extrinsic, transcendent warrant, synthesis is thus a “divided unity.”

Decision is, given its specifically Buddhist terms and the representations that ensue from those terms, always, already, and only a buddhistic understanding of the world. Buddhistic decision is, moreover, precisely constitutive of that understanding. Although phenomenality is

implied in the terms given (datum), fact (faktum) and synthesis, no components of the Buddhist decisional structure need necessarily be empirical. Like all ideological systems, Buddhism, of course, holds that its postulates are inextricably implicated in phenomenal reality and given to the most perspicuous thought. This, even though reality is, as a major Buddhist axiom has it, “empty of inherent existence.” Indeed, Buddhism’s estimation of itself as paladin of empty reality coupled with its axiomatic representations of reality is what constitutes it as “a faith, with the sufficiency of faith, intended by necessity to remain empty but which necessarily evades this void by its repopulation with objects and foreign goals provided by experience, culture, history, language, etc.”

Buddhist cognitive decision consists in positing spatiotemporal vicissitude (samsara) as a conditioned given and contingency (paticcasamuppada) as its conditioning fact.<sup>10</sup> The machinery of Buddhist decision is particularly relentless in that it produces a seemingly inexhaustible reserve of sub-dichotomies that obtain from the dyad: suffering/ease, form/emptiness, delusion/awakening, boundedness/liberation, grasping/release, desire/renunciation, beneficial/detrimental, cause/effect, proliferation/concentration, and so on. Finally, the structure that synthesizes, and thereby articulates the syntax of Buddhist decision is The Norm (dharma<sup>11</sup>; in contemporary Buddhist writing, this word is almost invariably topped, like the point of a Prussian Pickelhaube, with a Germanic capital D: The Dharma). Dharma is a multivalent term; but its salient sense for non-buddhism’s purposes can be summed up in the statement the *dharma* is the *dharma* because it mirrors the dharma::Buddhist teaching (*dharma*) is the norm of existence (*dharma*) because it mirrors cosmic structure (*dharma*). Hence, *dharma* as The Norm (capitalized word are synonymous terms): the cosmic Ought machine establishing the Scale of the All, the physical and perceptual-conceptual cosmos, in relation to humans; revealing the Patterns governing humans in the face of the All; setting the Standards of behavior of humans toward one another and toward all sentient beings; proclaiming the Archetypal Equation of the All and Buddhist teachings; Founding the teachings in the worldly sphere of human being; and providing the Touchstone for human beings to the teachings. (I will, for reasons that should become clear, leave the term largely untranslated as The Dharma.)

In Buddhist decision, The Dharma is the function that synthesizes the dyad of spatiotemporal vicissitude and contingency. Crucially, the dyad occurs nowhere, bears no sense, outside of this idealized representation. In order to serve as the dyad’s synthesizing (and necessary) guarantor within the world that the spatiotemporal-vicissitude-contingency dyad aims to lend intelligibility, however, The Dharma must simultaneously be extrinsic to the world given by the dyad. The function of The Dharma, and nothing else whatsoever, articulates the syntactical relationship of contingency and spatiotemporal vicissitude.

The Dharma—the tri-part buddhistic dispensation, truth, and cosmic structure—functions, then, as a gathering together of reality’s splintered whole. In performing its function, The Dharma must necessarily operate as both an intrinsic or immanent and extrinsic or transcendent feature of reality: intrinsic precisely because spatiotemporal vicissitude-contingency immanently instantiates it; extrinsic because it transcendentally (ideally—in thought) grounds that instantiation. This operation constitutes an inescapable circularity. The premise (The Dharma is the case), is contained in the conclusion (thus spatiotemporal vicissitude-contingency), and the conclusion, in the premise. In other words, the entire decisional structure of Buddhism amounts to an explanans (The Norm: The Dharma), that is always and already present in every instance of the very explanandum (phenomenal manifestation: spatiotemporal vicissitude-contingency), and an explanandum, every instance of which always and already attests to the truth of the explanans. In Buddhist terms: The samsara-paticcasamuppada dyad (including the countless posited dichotomous realities that flow from its fecund font), is visible through the pristine speculum of The Dharma. And The Dharma is visible in the contingent and dichotomous unfurling of the samsaric swirl that it, The Dharma minutely indexes. Indeed: the dharma is the dharma because it mirrors the dharma.

Decisional circularity, or what Laruelle calls “auto-position,” constitutes Buddhism’s “specularity.” Buddhistic decision renders Buddhism a world-conquering juggernaut from which nothing can escape. As passengers, Buddhists of all varieties—as those who possess reflexive commitment to buddhistic decision—are granted perspicuous knowing of all exigent matters related to human being. “Buddhist” names a person who, as Brassier says of philosophers, “views everything (terms and relations) from above.” Thus, to cite Brassier:

decisional specularity ensures the world remains [Buddhism’s] mirror. [Buddhistically theorizing] the world becomes a pretext for [Buddhism’s] own interminable self-interpretation. And since interpretation is a function of talent rather than rigor, the plurality of mutually incompatible yet unfalsifiable interpretations merely perpetuates the uncircumscribable ubiquity of [Buddhism’s] auto-encompassing specularity. Absolute specularity breeds infinite interpretation—such is the norm for the [Buddhist] practice of thought.<sup>12</sup>

The interminable debates (“infinite interpretation”), past and present, concerning the nature of Buddhism—its proper expression, its time-place-appropriate formulation, and so on—are merely instances of what Laruelle calls, in our earlier quote, “the articulation of a universal market where the concepts are exchanged according to specific rules to



each system, and from an authority with two sides: one of the [buddhistic] division of work, the other of the appropriation of part of what the market of the concepts produces [Secular Buddhism, MBSR, etc.]. The [Buddhist affiliate or practitioner] is thus the capital or a quasi-capital in the order of the thought. Or the shape of the World understood in its more inclusive [i.e., x-buddhistic] sense.”

“The World,” for a Buddhist, is the “thought-world” shaped by buddhistic decision. “A Buddhist” is by the same measure the representative of that thought-world “in the order of the thought” that is precisely the Buddhist dispensation. And herein lies a crucial task for speculative non-buddhism. It concerns empty reality, or what Laruelle calls “radical immanence”—reality shorn of “hallucinatory” representation. The actual world is empty of Buddhism’s dharmic inventory. “Buddhism,” contrary to its narcissistic estimation of itself as custodian of “things as they are,” indexes nothing in the world. Indeed, in hyper-fulfillment of itself as principal representer of exigent human knowledge, “Buddhism” indexes an occlusion of the world. Buddhistic specularity is impossible without the splitting of The Dharma into both immanent and transcendent functions. Such splitting, however, irrevocably corrodes Buddhism’s integrity as arbiter of empty reality, of radical immanence. Stripped of specularity, Buddhism is, in virtually every instance of its dispensation, quickly overrun by science and the humanities. Buddhistic decision therefore constitutes an unbending resistance to the very world that it aims to index, reflexively projecting its dharmic dream onto every instance of empty reality’s unfolding. Indeed, without this resistance, there is no Buddhism. But in the same vein, without this resistance there is no non-buddhism. For, as Brassier says of non-philosophy:

The decisional resistance to radical immanence provides [non-buddhism] with the occasional cause which it needs in order to begin working. It is what initiates [non-buddhistic] thinking in the first place...[Non-buddhism] is the conversion of [Buddhism’s] specular resistance to immanence into a form of non-specular thinking determined according to that immanence.<sup>13</sup>

The current debates concerning all manner of x-buddhisms amount to endless permutations of the same: buddhistic decision conjoined with resistance to radical—representationally empty, culturally unspecified, the subject of science—immanence. Given Buddhism’s numerous tropes touching on empty reality—sunyata, anatta, anicca, yathabhuta, tathata, nirvana, dependent origination, a finger pointing to the moon, discarding the raft, dismounting the donkey, killing the Buddha, and so on—this resistance is darkly ironic. It suggests that the twin impulses of flinching

before empty reality and of evading Buddhism's own intimation of itself as an ultimately occluding representation of reality is native to the very reflexivity that is required for an embrace of Buddhism. From the perspective of non-buddhism, the result is the extravaganza of x-buddhisms that currently swirl in our midst.

## Heuristics

Speculative non-buddhism aims to stop that swirl so that, dust settled, we may gain a fresh perspective on Buddhist thought and practice. In light of the machinations of buddhistic decision, this perspective must necessarily be neither from within nor from outside of Buddhism itself. The investigator must remain un beholden to Buddhism's structural schemes, rhetorical tropes, and decisional strategies. To these ends, speculative non-buddhism offers specific methodological operations, or a heuristic. The terms of the heuristic may be viewed as exploratory postulates. As such, the investigator may choose to perform a critical-constructive dialogue with Buddhism on the basis of discoveries made via the heuristic—articulating, for instance, what a “Secular Buddhism” or “Zen Buddhism” might look like given the operation of speculative non-buddhism postulates. As stated at the outset of this article, however, speculative non-buddhism itself is wholly disinterested in any reformulation of Buddhism. Indeed, from a speculative non-buddhism perspective, reformulation is an empty exercise because Buddhists of each and every variety play with “loaded dice” (Laruelle’s term): Buddhism, and by extension its acolyte, always and already knows (specularity). “Being Buddhist” means: refusing to silence the Siren-like vibrato of buddhistic decision. Thus, another use of the heuristic is as map to help the investigator navigate away from Buddhism’s representational Scylla. This is not to suggest that speculative non-buddhism is merely a destructive project (see “Destruction,” below). To view its constructive, or really vivifying, contribution, we can briefly consider the function of the non in “non-buddhism.”

Laruelle says that the non in “non-philosophy” is akin to that in “non-Euclidean geometry.”<sup>14</sup> The difference between Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry lies, of course, in the behavior of a line. Euclid’s fifth postulate assumes parallelism. In upholding this postulate, along with the other four, Euclidean geometry radically limit the field of possible forms. Rejecting this postulate (though preserving the other four), non-Euclidean geometry envisions, so to speak, radical new possibilities; namely, it permits elliptical and hyperbolic curvature.

This image is instructive. “Non-buddhism” makes no decision about (1) what structures or postulates properly constitute “Buddhism,” or (2) the value, truth, or relevance of any of the claims made in the name of “Buddhism.” Such non-decision enables a speculative, and perhaps even

applied, curving toward or away from, as the case may be, that which is indexed by “the teachings of Buddhism.” Crucially, though, the criteria for any given move lie wholly outside of “Buddhism’s” value system. From within the fold, such a move is unpalatable, even heretical; for, the integrity of the system—its premises, authorities, and institutions—must, axiomatically, remain inviolate, for they are precisely what constitute “Buddhism.” Non-buddhism stands outside of the fold, but not as a violent revolutionary storming the gates of venerable tradition.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the postulate of requisite “disenchantment,”<sup>16</sup> non-buddhism is too disinterested in “Buddhism” for such a destructive stand. This disinterest, however, does not manifest in rejection. Non-buddhism is acutely interested in the potentialities of Buddhist teaching, but in a way that remains un beholden to—and hence, unbound by and unaccountable to—the norms that govern those teachings. As Laruelle claims for non-philosophy, I claim for non-buddhism: only once we have suspended the structures that constitute Buddhism, only once we have muted Buddhism’s cosmic vibrato, are we free to hear fresh, terrestrial, resonances.

We can now turn to an abbreviated alphabetical list of the heuristics that enable speculative non-buddhism to do its work. Space limitations permit only partial treatment of an incomplete list. A word about style: I am more interested in evocation than denotation at this point. A heuristic device is a means to exploration and discovery. At this nascent stage of speculative non-buddhism, I hope only to chart a course toward a vista, and leave the details to the reader. The terms treated here are:

Ancoric loss  
 Aporetic dissonance  
 Aporetic inquiry  
 Buddhemes  
 Buddhism  
 Buddhist  
 Cancellation of warrant  
 Curvature  
 Decision  
 Destruction  
 Devitalization of charism  
 Dharma, The  
 Disinterest  
 Disruption  
 Empty reality  
 Fitting proximity  
 Ideology suspicion  
 Incidental exile  
 Inhibiting the network of postulation

Postulate deflation  
 Principle of sufficient Buddhism  
 Protagonist, The  
 Re-commission of postulates  
 Rhetorics of self-display  
 Saliency of requisite disenchantment  
 Thaumaturgical refuge  
 Ventriloquism  
 Vibrato  
 Voltaic network of postulation

**Ancoric loss.** An affective condition. The irreversible termination of hope that “Buddhism” indexes the thaumaturgical refuge adduced in its rhetorics of self-display. Speculative non-buddhist investigation presupposes an attitude of having no hope. Interestingly, ancoric loss resembles Buddhism’s own requisite dispensation of “disenchantment” and echoes its trope of “leaving home.”

**Aporetic dissonance.** An affective condition. The believer’s discovery within himself or herself of a dissonant ring of perplexity, puzzlement, confusion, and loss concerning the integrity of Buddhism’s self-presentation. It involves an apprehension that buddhistic rhetorics of self-display are but instances of acataleptic impassability. This ring is the signal for aporetic inquiry.

**Aporetic inquiry.** An cognitive, investigatory feature of speculative non-buddhism ensuing from an affective condition, namely aporetic dissonance. The act of vitiating augured by such dissonance effectively suspends Buddhism’s network of postulation, thereby devitalizing Buddhism’s charism. Such vitiating alerts the practitioner to (i) fissures, gaps, aporia, in the Buddhist dispensation and (ii) the possibility that Buddhist rhetorics constitute precisely an attempt to stock aporia with buddhistic phantasmagoria or evade the aporia altogether.

**Buddhemes.** The iterative vocabulary, phrases, and sentences that comprise virtually one hundred percent of buddhistic discourse. I may refrain from providing examples here because buddhemes are axiomatically and abundantly displayed in all x-buddhism journals, blogs, magazines, dharma talks, canonical literature, commentaries, secondary books, dialogue, and Facebook pages. In reflexively speaking and writing in buddhemes, Buddhists effectively reduce reality to the descriptive terms provided by Buddhist discourse. Significantly though, buddhemic usage evades its own ostensible indexing of empty reality by simultaneously repopulating reality with, and on, its own terms. In the speculative non-buddhism heuristic, such reflexive usage appears as

symptomatic of not only decision, but of ideological subscription. Buddhemic speech usurps the practitioner's potential expression of his or her own lived process. Speculative non-buddhism suspects that buddhemic utterance, like the employment of all borrowed language, is a sign of evasion, of taking comfort in the warm embrace of the thaumaturgic sangha. But, again, such utterance functions at the expense of the very purpose that that community is (ostensibly) meant to serve, namely, the combustion of representational delusion vis à vis empty reality.

**Buddhism.** An explicit representation or thought-world founded on a universally accepted syntax, or decisional structure. As the history of the tradition exemplifies, this structure permits perpetual mutation, wherein decision is re-inscribed in ever-developing expressions of "x-buddhism." Doctrinally: a specular, ideological system founded on teachings given canonically to a literary protagonist named "the Buddha." Aesthetically: a consistently recognizable rhetorics of display (texts, costumes, names, statuary, hair styles, painting, ritual artifacts, architecture, etc.). Institutionally: the manufacturer and conservatory of buddhistic charism. In the terms of its own rhetorics, "Buddhism" names the principal and superior representer of exigent human knowledge. Yet, as mentioned earlier, given the inexhaustible inventory of reality engendered by buddhistic decision—indeed, given the very syntax of decision itself—Buddhism can be formulated and arranged in innumerable guises. The word "Buddhism" thus indexes a consistent multiplicity: consistent, given its omnipresent decisional syntax; multiple, given its protean adaptability. The history of Buddhism shows it to be, to cite Laruelle, "the articulation of a universal market where the concepts are exchanged according to specific rules to each system, and from an authority with two sides: one of the [buddhistic] division of work, the other of the appropriation of part of what the market of the concepts produces"—for instance, morphological innovations, such as MBSR, Soto Zen, Atheistic Buddhism or even Post-traditional Buddhism.

**Buddhist.** A person reflexively beholden to the structural syntax of buddhistic decision. The embodiment of ("the shape of"), hence the central agent in, the buddhistic thought-world. A person whose speech concerning exigent matters is constructed from buddhemes. Given the radically protean nature of decisional adaptation, the possible modifications (X-) of the abstract noun "Buddhist" are illimitable.

**Cancellation of warrant.** A major consequence of applying speculative non-buddhist heuristics: the comprehensive withdrawal of buddhistic verity. Indeed, given the coercive function of decision, the work of speculative non-buddhism cannot proceed until cancellation of warrant

occurs. Cancellation is not an intentional act. It is the sudden dissipation— affective and cognitive—of a *fata morgana* (warrant).

**Curvature.** Analogous to non-Euclidean geometry, whereby de-commissioning of a single postulate—thus severing Euclidean geometry’s integrity—permits elliptical and hyperbolic curvature. Speculative non-buddhist heuristics yield a distorted image of Buddhism. Lines of connection, juxtaposition, and intersection intended by Buddhist rhetorics appear as in a hall of mirrors. Yet, in distortion, new patterns become visible.

**Decision.** An affective and cognitive operation. Affectively, “decision” is used in its colloquial sense. It involves a psychological and emotional (and, in many cases, economic) determination to accept a particular condition or state of affairs over and against other options. In this case, the decision involves (i) adherence to Buddhism’s claims to verity and (ii) dependency on its charism. Cognitive decision is a technical usage. Derived from Laruelle, it involves a fissure between an immanently given (empty reality of the world) and a transcendently idealized (dharmic representations of the world). This splitting permits Buddhism the specularity that constitutes it as the totalizing dispensation given in its rhetorics. Simultaneously, however, decisional splitting disqualifies Buddhism from the community of knowledge. Speculative non-buddhism unmasks this decisional syntax, which operates without exception in every instance of “x-buddhism.”

**Destruction.** What is not being destroyed is buddhistic decision. For, in order for speculative non-buddhism to do its work, that structure must remain intact. For only if intact can it be exposed. Once exposed, however, a re-description occurs that has destructive consequences. Speculative non-buddhism, it can be said, is eminently interested in viewing Buddhism in the afterglow of its destruction. But the destruction that ensues from its analysis is closer to Heidegger’s notion of *Destruktion* in *Being and Time*, than it is to an “end of Buddhism/religion” rhetoric. It will be instructive to quote Heidegger at length here:

When tradition thus becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it “transmits” is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial “sources” from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose

that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand.<sup>17</sup>

Speculative non-buddhism methodology makes proximate to the practitioner Buddhism's specular oracularity, thereby "unblocking" the "primordial 'sources'" (concepts and practices indexing phenomenality: *sunyata*, *anatta*, *anicca*, etc.<sup>18</sup>) from which those utterances are, ostensibly, drawn. While this unblocking of tradition's occlusion constitutes a destruction of canonical infrastructure, it may also provide a speculative opportunity for a vivification of the "sources." Speculative non-buddhism aims to "go back to the sources"—conceptually, not philologically—unburdened by tradition's concealing and tedious tessellation, and see what happens.

**Devitalization of charism.** The Buddhist vallation is sealed by charism. Buddhistic charismata are the incalculable averred "gifts" of wisdom, knowledge, community, teacher-student relationship, healing, and so forth, that cascade out of the dharmic dispensation. Such gifts exert a binding influence on the Buddhist. One result of charismatic influence is the blinding of the Buddhist to decisional structure and decisional commitment. Enactment of speculative non-buddhist heuristics enables the Buddhist to unbind and unblind from the coercive yet largely unconscious effects of the charism. Imaginative curvature—speculative applied reconfiguration—is impossible until this *charism* is quelled.

**Dharma, The.** The specular omen pontificator of samsaric contingency. Like God, Justice, Logos, Rta, The Dao, and so on, The Dharma (English: The Norm as buddhistic trinity of dispensation, truth, and cosmic structure) is the architect of the cosmic vault and the keeper of its inventory. As such, The Dharma is the buddhistic hallucination of reality. In its decisional function, The Dharma is the transcendent-immanent operator that synthesizes the purely immanent dyad of spatiotemporal vicissitude (*samsara*) and contingency (*paticcasamuppada*). The hallucinatory quality results from the fact that The Dharma is a function of a purely idealized (transcendent) grammar that produces oracular statements infinitum about the finite world (immanence). The Dharma is the buddhistic gathering together (under the authority of The Dharma) of reality's posited (by The Dharma) splintered whole, which splintering is exhibited by the (dharmically indexed) world condition articulated (by The Dharma) as spatiotemporal vicissitude-contingency.

**Disinterest.** An affective quality. The speculative non-buddhism investigator forfeits his commission if he serves as either the shape of the buddhistic thought-world or as a revolutionary storming the gates of the Buddhist vallation. Disinterest's physical corollary, when confronted with charismatic Buddhist omens, is the shrug of a shoulder, followed by a

concerned glance toward the harbinger. For, to someone disinterested, interest appears symptomatic of yearning for the thaumaturgic sangha.

**Disruption.** Buddhism's network of postulation is a power grid pumping buddhistic charisma through the lines of venerable transmission. Steadied by its rhetorics of display, the network extends to sangha sub-stations and into the affective-cognitive-decisional apparatus of the individual Buddhist. Speculative non-buddhist heuristics enable an interruption of the power surge in order to inspect its machinery and analyze its juice.

**Empty reality.** The most banal, disappointing, uninteresting, unremarkable, indeed, vacuous, fact of life: nothing that is not there, and the nothing that is (apologies to Wallace Stevens<sup>19</sup>). Science charts empty reality. Ancestral statements about the earth's accretion and cell formation as well as descendent statements concerning cell dissolution and the earth's incineration point toward empty reality. Culture adds its representations. The primary purpose of enacting speculative non-buddhist postulates is to encourage us 200,000-year-old homo sapiens apes to settle alongside of empty reality with, of course, whatever culturally minimal representation is required. Dispelling occlusion of empty reality—which occlusion ensues from excessive, e.g., buddhistic, representation—constitutes speculative non-buddhism's very reason for being. Against the narcissistic impulses of the homo sapiens ape to reify and aggrandize his evanescent cultural fictions, empty reality must not be re-inscribed as buddhistic shunyata, no-self, "things as they are," dependent origination, and so on. Empty reality is given in the "just so" of everyday life. The term "empty reality" is used because it names the intimately real, the radically immanent, while refusing to pluck the heartstrings of the soul's vibrato. Buddhicized terms, like "shunyata," do the latter. Shunyata, for instance, is Joe Jikyo Jones Roshi to empty reality's Joe Jones; namely a rhetorical flamboyance that serves to occlude what it purports to name precisely because it overwrites what it names (with its grandiosity, cultural-historical complexity, etc.). Buddhists, as the shape of Buddhism, may attempt to comment on empty reality; but, in doing so qua Buddhists via buddhemic utterance, this would amount to yet another inscription of buddhistic decision—yet another turn on the circularity of the dharmic dispensation. Empty reality is not an issue for Buddhism; it is none of Buddhism's business. Empty reality is nothing at all. To a great extent, the term "Buddhism" names a particular manner of representationally stylizing empty reality. As terms such as shunyata intimate, finally, a dark irony is at hand here: Buddhism encodes its own undoing. But no Buddhist is able to undo it. That would be impossible. (Hence: non-buddhism.)



**Fitting proximity.** A relation of the investigator to Buddhism's vallation. Too close, and the effulgence of Buddhism's charism blinds; too far away, and the embers turn cold.

**Ideological suspicion.** Buddhism is nothing if not a vortex of participation and identity. It aims, both explicitly and implicitly, to form particular types of subjects, and to do so in its own image. The basis of its transformational program is, furthermore, its own prescribed practices (social, linguistic; devotional, contemplative, etc.). All of this is, finally, accompanied by robust institutional commitment (hyper-reflexivity). Such features describe not a contestable program of knowledge or skill acquisition, but rather an ideological system of indoctrination. It describes, that is, a systematic program of personal transformation and social reproduction whose ideas—beliefs, goals, actions—derive not from individual agents, but from a pre-established putative norm, in this case: The Dharma. Speculative non-buddhism is constantly alert to any signs in buddhistic decree that indicate a comprehensive view of self, society, and cosmos. Indeed, the very fact that, unmolested by the kinds of methodological moves that speculative non-buddhism makes, The Dharma operates unseen (it's just "how things are"), is evidence of the ideological machination of Buddhism.

**Incidental exile.** An exile is someone who finds himself in fitting proximity to Buddhism's vallation. I say "finds himself" because exile, in this case, is not forced: it occurs incidentally and unexpectedly. Aporetic dissonance initiates it; aporetic inquiry further drives it. The process goes something like this. Contentedly ensconced within Buddhism's thaumaturgical refuge, you find yourself soothed by tradition's self-proclaimed "compassionate" charism. (A sufficient apprenticeship within Buddhism's workshop—locking oneself onto the "grooves of borrowed thought"—is a necessary precondition for exile to even be an option.) But, for whatever reasons, at some point you discover within yourself sense of ancoric loss and aporetic dissonance. On examination, you hear this ring as the resonance of a complex of disturbing emotions and thoughts: perplexity, puzzlement, confusion, disappointment, and loss. You discover, to your surprise, that Buddhism leaves much to be desired. It postures as the giver of solutions, as the harbinger of peace. It may answer many questions, but, you are beginning to realize, it all too often does so in a facile and hasty manner. It even encourages superstitious belief and new forms of neurotic attachment. And in the meantime, it is creating for you many questions which it seems impotent to answer. Suddenly, you find yourself incidentally and unexpectedly exiled from the thaumaturgical refuge, from the innocent embrace of the pure dispensation. What will you do? You may, of course, abandon the project altogether and wander on your way, seeking refuge in another

dispensation or in a desert of confusion or in nothing at all. Another possibility: you engage the bewildering aporias that have opened before your unsuspecting mind. Hence, you set up camp in fitting proximity—fitting, that is, for an exile.

**Postulate deflation.** Unsettling the charismatic braggadocio of Buddhism's conceptual magistrates so that they are forced to join the table of common-law discourse. Buddhistic decision is a specular court of justice that rules from above. Its representatives include, for instance, enlightenment, compassion, suffering, delusion, mindfulness. Consideration of any of these representatives devoid of the royal warrant provided by decision reveals these representatives to be, as buddhistically presented, unfit, unusable, unreliable, and even suspect characters. For, deflation acts to make manifest the representatives' display of self-importance, necessity, obviousness, assumed desirability, pretense to truthfulness, etc. Speculative non-buddhism escorts Buddhism's representatives to the Great Feast of Knowledge. Seated at the table there, the representatives must hold their own alongside of art, philosophy, literature, biology, psychology, and so on. From a speculative non-buddhist estimation, the representatives, devoid of their dharmic body guards (the network of postulation), lose all status in such an exchange. That status, founded on the specularity given in decision, is thereby deflated. Sitting at the Great Feast of Knowledge, radically alters the contribution of Buddhism's representatives. (I hear art and evolutionary biology, for instance, holding forth passionately on the absolute necessity and glorious fruits of "delusion.")

**Principle of sufficient Buddhism.** Parallel to Laruelle's "Principle of Sufficient Philosophy," which states that everything is philosophizable.<sup>20</sup> Buddhistic decision is similarly a pretension of that mechanism's creators (i.e., Buddhists) that all things under the sun are matters for Buddhism's oracular pronouncements, and that the totality of pronouncements (the network of postulation) constitutes an adequate account—a unitary vision—of reality. "Buddhism" thus names, for "Buddhists," a sufficiency. As postulate deflation reveals, however, this view of sufficiency is maintained only insofar as Buddhism successfully avoids conversing with the sciences and humanities at The Great Feast of Knowledge. This avoidance amounts to a myopia whereby Buddhism only appears sufficient. This appearance, given the blighted field of reality that it entails, amounts to buddhistic hallucination whereby "the Buddhist view of Y" is confused with—seen in place of—"Y."

**Protagonist, The.** The progenitor of the Buddhist dispensation. He is referred to by various names, such as "The Buddha," "Gotama," "The Blessed One," etc. Speculative non-buddhism's designation "The

Protagonist” is intended to indicate the irrefutable fact that “the Buddha” is a historical figure entirely overwritten by a literary one. Not the slightest wisp of evidence has survived that sheds light on the historical progenitor. Any reliable historical evidence that once existed has been reduced to caricature by the machinations of internecine Buddhist institutional shenanigans and the stratagems of ideological dupery. The figure of the Buddha in the classical Pali texts is a concoction of the collective imaginations of the numerous communities that, over several centuries, had a hand in the formation of the canon. Add to this imaginative *mélange* the imaginings—cultural, political, fantastic, ignorant—of all the iterations of all forms of x-buddhism, and the result is Buddha as Cosmic Magic Mirror, reflecting all things to all people. A viable composite human figure “The Buddha” can be salvaged from this protean symbol of buddhistic vanity only with force of the darkest, most atavistic yearning of puerile nostalgia for The Great Father.

*Re-commission of postulates.* Once deflated, muted, subjected to the inquiries of the participants at the Great Feast of Knowledge, and otherwise divested of charismatic potency, Buddhism’s postulates may be put back to work. The result, however, is in every instance, a buddhistically uninterpretable result. For instance, the postulate of the second preeminent reality (*idaṃ dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccam: taṇhā*) claims exigent and superior knowledge of the cause of human unease or “suffering” (*dukkha*), namely “craving” (*taṇhā*). Stripped of specularity, derived as it is from the transcendental dharmic inventory, the postulate may be brought into dialogue with, for example, bio-science’s Biological Incentive System (BIS)<sup>21</sup>. BIS identifies the reward-punishment mechanism that explains human craving *vis à vis* evolutionary adaptation. In short, the notion of “uprooting,” “extinguishing,” or otherwise extirpating craving (all additional Buddhist postulates) in light of BIS looks not only unfeasible but outright hackneyed. Or perhaps not. We won’t know how well the re-commissioned postulate holds up at the Great Feast of Knowledge until we observe it in vigorous dialogue.

*Rhetorics of self-display.* The entrancing nimbus enfolded the palace of Dharma. The aesthetic affectation of thaumaturgy—clothing, naming, hair styles, painting, sculpture, architecture. To wit: The cult of the book; the exaltation of the dharma talk; the apotheosis of the teacher. To wit: Buddhas and bodhisattvas arrayed in magnificent robes, sitting majestically in their heavenly abodes—their buddha fields—exuding auras of healing light. Magical flesh and bone, fresh as the breath of the Blessed One, efficacious as *amritya*, nectar of the gods. Magnetic mantras—*nembutsu*, *daimoku*, *dharani*—sound tsunamis surging throughout the universe. Ritual paraphernalia—statues, bells, a twirling wheel clutched like a crucifix in the dark. Those living exemplars, as charismatic and

clairvoyant as the Buddha walking unscathed on an open road: Roaring roshis, shamanic lamas, wizardly tulkus, and wonder-working arahants. (= A rhetorically-charged display of the rhetorics of display.)

**Saliency of requisite disenchantment.** “Disenchantment” is, of course, an eminently buddhistic notion. The Protagonist posits it as the catalyst par excellence, indeed, the requisite affective condition, of “home-leaving,” of embarking on the “holy life.” In good speculative non-buddhism fashion, however, we can divest it of the limit circumscribed by Buddhism. Doing so, we claim it as a value of flesh and blood, and turn it back on “home-leaving,” back on “the holy life,” back on Buddhism. Indeed, disenchantment—with, for instance, buddhistic specular oracularity—is the catalyst to speculative non-buddhist enquiry.

**Thaumaturgical refuge.** The affectation of Buddhist teachers to wonderworking community (sangha). Telling signs of thaumaturgical display among Buddhist teachers include: masking identity with special naming, clothing, and hair styles; exalted utterance, verbal demiurgy; narratological seizure; assumption of privileged status as ritual officiate; wielding unique power objects; functioning as high pageantry eminence; serving as guardians of the sanghic axis mundi. Such displays communicate to the practitioner what Pascal Boyer calls “hidden causal essence.” Given the role that thaumaturgical refuge plays in ideological allurement, it will be instructive to quote Boyer at length:

Notions of ritual specialists are based on non-religious notions of causal essence. People think of such ritual specialists as having some internal, vaguely defined quality that sets them apart from the common folk. Learning to perform the rites [is secondary]; what matters most is possession of that internal capacity, conceived in quasi-biological terms. This is where, once again, what may have seemed a specifically religious phenomenon is derived from common cognition. The notion of a hidden causal essence that cannot be observed yet explains outward form and behavior, is a crucial feature of our spontaneous, intuitive way of thinking about living species. Here, it is transferred upon a pseudo-natural kind, as it were: a sub-kind of human agents with different essential characteristics.<sup>22</sup>

The notion of “enlightenment,” is a prime example of “hidden causal essence.” Why does the Dalai Lama present himself in the way he does? Because he is, of course, an “enlightened” being. His actions are impelled

by this “essence,” hence it is “causal.” The essence, moreover, is invisible to us; hence, it is “hidden.” Being hidden, how are we affected by it? An all-too-common result of this imputation of hidden causal essence is that we easily—indeed, spontaneously and “naturally”—elevate certain humans to an exclusive status. Cognitive science aims to show that such a move results from the habits of everyday cognition. We assume that entities, whether human, animal, or even imagined (such as “God”), possess qualities that are intrinsic and, indeed, essential to that kind of entity. Buddhist teachers, in North America as in Asia, excite and encourage assumptions of their, and by extension their “sangha’s,” special, hidden, causal—in a word, thaumaturgical—essence.

**Ventriloquism.** The Buddhist (person) manifesting buddhistic representation via speech and writing. An instance of the Buddhist as “the shape of the [dharmic] World.” Evidence of ventriloquism is the predictable iteration of buddhemes in everything from canonical literature to dharma talks and blog posts.

**Vibrato.** Any statement that assumes—whether tacitly or explicitly—that Buddhism reigns over the court of knowledge resounds with a vibrato that originates within Buddhism’s own orchestration. That vibrato results from the strike of multiple postulation. Non-buddhism mutes this vibrato, and thereby enervates the postulates’ potency. It does so, in part, by abstaining from enabling buddhistic decision about the value of the postulates lying there, now diminished. Speculative non-buddhism views this deflation as salutary. Whereas the inflated (Buddhist) postulates cast shadows on the ground of thought, non-buddhism’s deflation clears a bright space for speculation. Whereas Buddhist inflation attempts to determine the course of thinking (always back to itself), the course of thought and application ensuing from non-buddhist deflation is undetermined.

**Voltaic network of postulation.** A totality that constitutes the Buddhist dispensation. It is the totality of premises, claims, propositions, presuppositions, beliefs, axioms and so on coupled with the totality of utterances, talks, interpretations, commentaries, sub-commentaries, secondary literature, and so on. Because of the colossal and intricate accrual of this twenty-five hundred year old dispensation, infinite x-buddhisms, each complete in itself, may be generated from this network.

## Conclusion

The alphabet of x-buddhisms runs virtually from A (as in Atheist) to Z (as in Zen). Fragmentation and splintering is endemic to all cultural forms, so that is not surprising. Neither is it surprising that along with the

twenty-first century and the proliferation of the internet many new forms have emerged. The result is that a robust debate is taking place in the West concerning the status and relevance of traditional forms of Buddhism. A “wither Buddhism” mood hangs over countless books, blogs and journals. Some argue that the details of how these new forms will distinguish themselves from more traditional forms are still being worked out. The heuristic reveals: it does not matter. For, in light of speculative non-buddhist heuristics, all forms of x-buddhism—from the most scientistically covert, such as MBSR and “mindfulness,” and the most progressively, agnostically, atheistically, secularly, liberal to the most religiously overt and conservatively orthodox—are the same. What makes them the same is that they are all governed by buddhistic decision: the mixing of the immanently given world, empty reality as spatiotemporal vicissitude (samsara)/contingency (patticasamuppada), with its transcendently given warrant, The Dharma (the norm). Buddhism claims to offer exigent, superior knowledge concerning human being (i.e., of the immanently given). To do so in the terms that it advocates (exigency, superiority, etc.), however, Buddhism must intermix its “identity” (The Dharma) into its own description of “difference” (spatiotemporal vicissitude/contingency). The result of this representational circularity is precisely what we have seen throughout the history of Buddhism down to the present: a fecund supposition of uncircumventable validity that manifests as infinite iterations of “x-buddhism.” The progeny of Buddhism, namely, all x-buddhisms, replicate the decisional syntax, however they may modify and adjust the terms of the primary supposition. Speculative non-buddhism is unconcerned with operating on this supposition precisely because doing so would constitute yet another iteration of x-buddhism. The “non” is, for that reason, subtractive. What it subtracts from Buddhism—its subject—is decision. The act of subtraction is like tilting Buddhism’s vertical line (the [dharmically inventoried] world-Dharma axis) to a horizontal position (world-world-world all the way through). In the tilting, the ground of thought is littered with the transcendental flotsam and jetsam of The Dharma. Speculative non-buddhism cleans up this excess. Operating from an open space, Buddhism, as system of postulation, is escorted over to the Great Feast of Knowledge for discussion. But here Buddhism must stand face to face with, and subject itself to, the same rules of engagement as all of the sciences and the humanities. Buddhism is thus stripped of its aristocratic regency and democratized. How well does it do? Can Buddhism, devoid of its dharmic caduceus, make the adjustment to democratic citizen of knowledge? Devoid of their transcendental warrant, how do, say, the claims of vipassana or shikantaza as special, indeed superior, eudaemon, hold up in conversation with cognitive psychology and neuroscience? Given the unbounded catalog of The Dharma, there is virtually no end to such questions.

“X-buddhism” indexes a sacrificial rending from reality. Its rhetorics of display constitute an act of high pageantry, whereby empty reality is both ruptured and repaired. But the sacrifice and its sacrament are confined entirely to a circle of x-buddhism’s own creation. Reality remains untouched. X-buddhism does not offer up knowledge. It is a matrix of hallucinatory desire—the manufactured desire of the x-buddhist for realization of x-buddhism’s self-created world-reparation. Speculative non-buddhism is concerned with reclaiming from x-buddhism the person of flesh and blood who lives in the world emptied of the dharmic dream.

Finally, if I may press Nick Land into service and butcher (with apologies), to suit my needs, a comment he made about literature:

Speculative non-buddhism is a transgression against buddhistic transcendence—the dark concealment of an atavistic yearning to rise above the status of homo sapiens ape and to escape, unscathed, from empty reality. Speculative non-buddhism permits an understanding of Buddhism more basic than the pseudo-understanding of Dharma-infused buddhistic discourse. The life of speculative non-buddhism is the death of buddhistic pretension to specular oracularity. It thrives on the violent absence of the dharmic good, and thus of everything that protects, consolidates, or guarantees the interests of the individual personality. The death of this transcendent pretension is the ultimate transgression, the release of narcissistic humanity from itself, back into the blind infernal extravagance of the sun.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya*, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995). *Cūḷamālukya Sutta* is text no. 63. For an analysis of this text, see Glenn Wallis, *Basic Teachings of the Buddha*, (New York: Random House, 2007), 74-78.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. *crisis*, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=crisis>. For a general analysis of *krinein* in relation to critique, see Hakan Gürses, “On the Topography of Critique,” trans. Gerrit Jackson, *Eipcp: European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies*, June 2006, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/guurses/en>. For a discussion of this how this term relates to critique in Heidegger’s work, see Rodolphe Gasché, *The Honor*

of *Thinking: Critique, Theory, Philosophy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 108ff.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the basic contours of Buddhism in North America, see Charles Prebish, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism and America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). For a more recent account of trends in “secular” Buddhism, see Winton Higgins, “The Coming of Secular Buddhism: a Synoptic View”, *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 13 (2012): 109-126, <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/toc.html>.

<sup>4</sup> François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins, (Paris: Editions Kime, 1998); “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” trans. Ray Brassier, *Pli* 8 (1999):138-148; *Philosophies of Difference*, trans. Rocco Gangle, (New York: Continuum, 2010). See also, François Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?”, trans. Ray Brassier, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 8, no. 2, August (2003): 169-189; Marjorie Gracieuse, “Laruelle Facing Deleuze: Immanence, Resistance and Desire,” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, eds. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 42-59; and Katerina Kolozova, “The Figure of the Stranger: A Possibility for Transcendental Minimalism or Radical Subjectivity,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, vol. II, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 59-64.

<sup>5</sup> Ray Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy: The non-philosophy of François Laruelle,” *Radical Philosophy*, September/October (2003): 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> See also, Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 118-148.

<sup>7</sup> For *auto-position* and *radical immanence* see Laruelle, *Dictionary*, 3, 61; for *specularity* see Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy,” 24ff; for *decision*, see Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*, 196-223.

<sup>8</sup> Laruelle, “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” 2.1.2.

<sup>9</sup> Laruelle, *Dictionary*, 57.

<sup>10</sup> On these Pali Buddhist technical terms, see Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1953).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Nyanatiloka, s.v. *dhamma* (the Pali equivalent of the more widespread Sanskrit *dharma*). For the term’s varied usage throughout history, see Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy”, 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy”, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> See John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, eds., *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>15</sup> On this aspect of non-philosophy, see Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy,” 25.

<sup>16</sup> This is a translation of the Pali technical term *nibbida*, on which see Pali Text Society, London, *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, (Chipstead, 1921-1925), s.v. *nibbidā*.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), 43.

<sup>18</sup> See Nyanatiloka, s.v. *suññatā* (the Pali equivalent of the more widespread Sanskrit version), *anattā*, and *anicca*.

<sup>19</sup> See Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man," in Harold Bloom ed., *The Best Poems of the English Language*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999), 831-832.

<sup>20</sup> See Laruelle, *Dictionary*, 48ff.



<sup>21</sup> On the Biological Incentive System, see William B. Irvine, *On Desire: Why We Want What We Want* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145ff.

<sup>22</sup> Pascal Boyer, "Out of Africa: Lessons from a By-Product of Evolution," in Timothy Light and Brian C. Wilson (eds.), *Religion as Human Capacity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 33. See, also by Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Foundations of Religious Belief*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001); and *The Naturalness Of Religious Ideas*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), xix.

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