

*Ecce Homosexual:
Eros & Ontology in the Age of Incompleteness and Entanglement*

It was as if someone had spread butter
on all the fine points of the stars
'Cause when he looked up
they started to slip.
Patti Smith, *Birdland*¹

Condition 1: *used; somewhat dirty.*

Nietzsche's iconic *Ecce Homo* makes for a rather different read than the one associated with its original author, Pontius Pilate. As is well known, Pilate, in distancing himself from the question as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was 'just a man' or instead, 'the son of God' and therewith God Himself, was said to have pointed to the battered Jesus and, washing his hands of the consequences, adjudicated: "Behold the *man!*"² The rest, as they say, is history: Jesus was summarily and brutally, nailed to a cross on charges of blasphemy and treason, and an entire religious practice was, for better or worse, carved into life. It would also be fair to say that Nietzsche, deeply uninterested in that particular twist on the God v man debate, not to mention, Religion itself, nevertheless inhabited that expression, took it as the title of his major last work, an autobiographical work no less, every bit aware of the raw emotion and excess baggage its peel-back to the Jesus/Pilate incident brought to the table.

¹Patti Smith, "*Birdland*," from the album **Horses**. Lyrics by Patti Smith; music by Patti Smith, Richard Sohl, Lenny Kaye, Ivan Kral, (Linda Music Corporation: 1975).

<http://www.songmeans.net/songs/view/3530822107858521110/#HAUx8hQ3TBOKB2bF.99> Accessed 12/12/12.

² According to the Vulgate translation of John 19:5, Pontius Pilate is said to have used the Latin *Ecce Homo*, subsequently translated in the King James version as 'Behold the Man'. However, the original Greek Ἴδου ὁ ἄνθρωπος (*Idou ho Anthrōpos*) renders a slightly different timbre to the well-known phrase. *Ecce Homo* translated closer to: *This [is]/[would be] Man* – the conditional pluperfect of the 'to be-future' rendered – indeed, constitutively derived/expressed – here, now. I will return to this point momentarily, but for the Vulgate translation see: <http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/the-king-james-bible/john/19>. Accessed 11/12/12.

There are substantial, wildly conflicting and hugely entertaining interpretations recounting the ‘why’ of this move; and though most are extremely poignant, none will be addressed here. However, a small clarification must be drawn at this point. In the translation by R.J. Hollingdale of Nietzsche’s *Ecce homo*, a subtitle is added to the work so that it now reads *Ecce Homo: how it is one becomes what one is*.³ Importantly, rather than the infamous rendering ‘*Ecce homo!*’ (This is ~~a~~ man and not ~~a~~ God) foregrounding the debate, the reverse is at stake. A long shadow (perhaps hue, tonality or timbre as the better descriptor) is cast over Nietzsche’s proceedings so that the ‘excess baggage’ tucked into the re-staging of that pronouncement-cum-judgment-cum-consequence is never far behind, never detached, never completely obliterated from the problem at hand; but neither is that ‘excess baggage’ the direct (or even secret) object of his argument/autobiography. With Nietzsche/ Hollingdale’s recontextualisation, *Ecce homo* moves closer to the Greek version (*Ἴδὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος*) where the emphasis is on the conditions to which this entity ‘Man’ are called to account, not in a judgmental way, but simply and directly in a way that takes into account the uncomfortable, the inconvenient, the, let’s say, infected rationalities, of the whole picture of what is involved with grasping (understanding, taking hold of) the present *as it is*, in all its deeply problematic and hardly pristine conditions we call ‘being human.’ For Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* breaks the Hegelian dialectic in all of us, and, morphing a peculiar kind of Kantian enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) into its sensuous components of broken body, ego-ambition, defiance and fear, with and against the religious / establishment inquisitions of our times, Nietzsche proclaims in defiance to both God and mortal being: *Ecce Homo!* Here is Man (this man, this life and no other), right here, right now, in all its acne and smells, burning with the paradox of vitality, anger, cruelty, joy, weakness, intelligence, stupidity and temptation.

³ For a taste of the differing interpretations in part brought about via different translations of the same text, see for example Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How one Becomes What One Is*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, (Penguin Books, 1979/1991); as distinct from the translation by W. Kaufman, *On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, where this subtitle is tucked in the *Note on Publication*. Quoting from Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 209, Kaufman writes: “Perhaps one or another reader of the book will react in a manner similar to ‘Napoleon’s surprise when he came to see Goethe: it shows what people had associated with the ‘German spirit’ for centuries. ‘*Voilà un homme!*’” (p. 214). In the former, we have a more poetic take whereby ‘how one becomes what one is’ foregrounds the constitutive moment, a stylistics of existence (as Foucault might say); in the latter we have a description of the ‘this’ and the ‘here-now’ as such. disappointment in realizing that one’s hero is but a common ‘man.’

As a living God, one becomes not only ‘the anti-Christ’, but also, simultaneously, ‘the anti-Man.’ No original sin here, no particular judgment as of yet, this ‘*ecce homo*’ balances on the precarious context of messy, dirty logics of difference and decay, logics of movements, impulses and meanings that do not and indeed, cannot, ‘fit in’ to an Absolute Universal Truth or pure ontological given. As Nietzsche emphasizes, “One must learn *how* to live.”⁴ But this learning ‘how to live,’ this self-becoming/self-overcoming – this ‘how one becomes what one is’ – has little or nothing to do with the governing rules or abstract propositions, or, for that matter a transcendental intervention to the logic of life itself. Rather, it has to do with, as Wittgenstein might put it, the *application* of the “how” of *ecce homo* to the very conditions of reality, *this* reality, *this* right here and right now.⁵ One must take into account a complexity that side-steps the identity trap inherent in speculative idealism and teleological renderings of essences coming to light, always-already prefigured or established in an abstract proposition or contradictive unity (or both) and pressed ever-onward by an indefatigable will, to reach its universalized, some might say, tautologically given goal. As Nietzsche would say instead: “I do not refute Ideals, I merely put on gloves. (...) *My* humanity is a constant self-overcoming.”⁶ This, and nothing less, are the here/now groundless grounds of one’s humanity; a used, slightly soiled present-tense ‘is’, neither vacuous nor fully formed, both anti-Christ and anti-Man, at one and the same time.

Condition 2: *irritable*.

⁴ *Ecce Homo*, p.4.

⁵“People say,” says Wittgenstein, “If negation means one thing, then double negation equal affirmation; but if it means another thing, double negation equals negation. But I want to say its *use* is its meaning.” [my emphasis] in Ludwig Wittgenstein, “*Lecture XIX*,” *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics-Cambridge 1939*, (edited by Cora Diamond, (London/Chicago: Chicago Univ Press: 1975/76), p. 184. We will return to this point in Conditions 4 and 5 below, but see also *Lectures IV, XII, XVIII-XXI, XXIV- XXVI, XXIX*, pp. 39-48, 111-122, 171-201, 231-255, 282-287, respectively.

⁶ *Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, Section 4, p. 218 and Section 8, p. 223, respectively. Emphasis, mine.

The question thus arises: why is it then, that despite monumental attempts to put on those gloves and engage the tough tasks required to make *this* humanity, our humanity come to life in all its present-tense throbbing gristle, there appears today in the humanities and social sciences, a sharp U-turn – indeed, a virtual stampede – toward what seems to be an old-fashioned metaphysics, one whose vexed subject-object relations spin around the well-known wardrobe malfunctions of a speculative Transcendentalism writ large.⁷ Under the heading of ‘Object Oriented Philosophy’, whose byline is, not uninterestingly ‘The centaur of classical metaphysics shall be mated with the cheetah of actor-network theory,’⁸ Ray Brassier tightly delineates the strengths and weaknesses of this new-old-new turn:

“So, as I see it, the key challenge for speculative realism is: Can one be a realist about the sorts of entities and processes postulated by the sciences without having to shore up that commitment to realism with some sort of pragmatism on the one hand, or transcendentalism on the other? Can one be a naturalist without turning into Richard Rorty, and can one maintain that what science says is true without becoming a Husserlian or something of that ilk? And I think this is a really interesting question; I think this is where some kind of communication is needed between the speculative audacity which is a characteristic of so-called ‘continental philosophy’ and the really admirable level of engagement with the empirical sciences which is a feature of the most interesting work being done specifically in the kind of Anglo-American philosophy of mind that engages directly with, or that sees its

⁷ Of specific interest in a bid to reject both analytic and continental traditions, but seemingly managing to re-state slices of each: object oriented philosophy and the extremely potent work by Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, (Chicago & LaSalle: Open Court Press, 2005).

⁸ See Graham Harman’s web-blog, *Object-Oriented Philosophy* at <http://doctorzemalek2.wordpress.com/about/>.

project as continuous with, cognitive science. So, can one be a transcendental realist without idealising ideation, but without reducing it to a set of pragmatic functions either?⁹

Shining the best light possible, one must assume that much of this collective amnesia is due, at least in part, to an attempt, a sorely needed attempt, at re-establishing both theoretically and practically the role of social agency and ethics, identity and the political, art and invention, community and democracy, sexuality, the senses, rationality and reason – the list could go on – against the backdrop of an increasingly violent, corrupt and globally solidifying upper class-realignment, fostered, it would appear, by macro-corporatism, bank feeding frenzies, civil war(s), and the rise of fundamentalist populisms.

But when ethics, not to mention social agency and the aforementioned list, are analytically hammered out by a reliance on methodologies, ontologies or epistemologies that require some relation to a transcendental logic, a few Trojan horses come into the picture, unannounced and disregarded, to one's peril. These include the quiet reliance – despite critical attempts otherwise – on a cognitive dynamic to the question of temporality, change, history (or all three). Equally problematic but for different reasons, is the less quiet reliance on a conception of the present-tense 'now-time' as nought-time (no time; negative, uninhabitable, abyssal time) and with it, the impossibility either of getting 'there' or, in having gotten to 'the there' being forever dissatisfied with one's (lost/found) object of desire.¹⁰ As much as one might wish it otherwise, the Oedipal Olympics and the repressive hypotheses on which this latter type of abyssal logic depends – shot through with the usual castration

⁹ Ray Brassier, "Speculative Realism with Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux," in *Collapse III: Unknown Deleuze [+ Speculative Realism]*, Edited by Robin Mackay and Dustin McWherter, (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), pp. 320-21.

¹⁰ Vintage Žižek on the impossibility of heterosexuality, nicely addresses this point. See his "Cogito and the Sexual Difference," and *Part III: Sum: The Loop of Enjoyment*, 5. *The Wound Is...* and 6. *Healed only by the Spear that Smote You*," in his *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993/2010), pp. 45-82, and 165-200. For his attempts at negotiating subjectivity with transsexual/ism see his more recent: *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*. London: Verso, 2005.

complexes, penis envies, dominations of Logos, and interminable issues with the 'lack' – simply cannot address the sexual, sensuous 'does not fit in' pluralities of our *ecce homo* especially in light of the strange materialities, curved temporalities, and sliced dimensions expressed in, through and by the digital world.

On the other hand, uninvited collateral damage emanating from these quiet (or otherwise) transcendental Trojans, can quite possibly be written off – as is so often the case – when linked with traditional universalized concepts of power; that is, where the horizon of struggle is staged as if an always-already totalized field, divided into Leaders and Led, Us v. Them. This, the 'first law' of political science, as Machiavelli bluntly announced over 500 years ago, remains commonplace today, particularly in certain branches of the social and military sciences – so much so that it becomes a matter of urgency to create an Us v Them bifurcation should a political party/movement/coalition accede to power and find they have inherited anything other than a bifurcated matrix.¹¹ Sometimes it seems to be the only avenue to ensure justice can be done as Marx famously proclaimed, echoing the well-known comment by the great poet George Sand: "The last word of social science will then always be: '*Le combat ou la mort; la lutte sanguinaire ou le néant. C'est ainsi que la question est invinciblement posée*'. [Combat or death; bloody struggle or extinction. Thus the question is inexorably put]."¹²

The appeal is clearly not without its seductive and, some might say, practical, resonances. But if we are to take seriously the opening afforded by the inconvenient logics of heterogeneically networked ecologies, with their roughly patterned mimetic iterations, oddly cathected materialities and blackhole

¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, "*The Prince*," in his *The Discourses*, with introduction by Bernard Crick, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), especially pp. 34-37.

¹²George Sand, "Introduction" in Jean Ziska, *Épisodes de la guerre des hussites*, as quoted by Marx in his "The Metaphysics of Political Economy," *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the 'Philosophy of Poverty' by M. Proudhon*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 161, n. 53.

sensualities, then an entirely different development of agency – political, artistic, literary, social, ethical, military – can emerge (and indeed, is already emerging). What better time to take up the challenge Foucault so eloquently urged in his *Introduction: Towards a Non-Fascist Life*, “Prefer what is positive and multiple; choose difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems...”¹³ What better time to take up this challenge, when the very conditions of our everyday world(s) no longer adhere to the old categories of industrialized markets and mayhem and despite or because of this shift, produce as given, a series of massified, disparate, ecosystems, barely kept in check except through drone violence, spiraling poverty, and silos of corporatized knowledge-practice regimes, bolstered with thinly disguised sound-bites of truths or, when all else fails, with outright lies. What better time than now to be mindful of the variables; to fill in where required, and not be afraid to repeat as often as is necessary and in the spirit of Nietzsche: *Ecce homo!*

Condition 3: *onto-sensate-logical*

Not for the first time in the history of philosophy or for that matter, fine art, literature and the social sciences, has the influence of mathematics and physics taken on the role of a strong, sometimes silent, partner in the development of the logics, predictions, aesthetics, practicalities and political pathways associated with the aforementioned disciplines. Thomas Hobbes famously, in his *Leviathan* (1651), draws explicitly on Newtonian physics, foregrounding the entire argument around the founding of civil society based on a notion of the essence of ‘man’ as that which is always ‘in motion’, but, simultaneously, acknowledging that those motions cannot, by the very nature of the physical world, be able to occupy the same space at the same time.¹⁴ Giambattista Vico’s groundbreaking *New*

¹³ Michel Foucault, “Preface,” in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Vol 1, (New York: Continuum Press, 2004), p. xv.

Science (1725/1731/1744), develops from an anti-Cartesian position where *scienza* has both divine and natural branches, the latter of which lays the foundations to consider civil and political life as constructed by man alone, a view which helped pave the way for the rise of the individual, the emphasis on reason over divine thought as a foundation to the social and with it, the classical liberal conception requiring a separation of church and state as critical for the foundation of modern nationhood.¹⁵ Kant's well-known epistemological divisions of the mathematical/dynamical underlie the sublime aesthetic of the third *Critique*; Hegel's early development of measure, ratio, quantum, and infinite topography in direct opposition to the Newtonian conception of absolute space is inseparable from his concept of negation and dialectical development.¹⁶ And of course, the more recent, though often radically different from each other's ground breaking and vital scholarship of Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Badiou, Lyotard, Stengers, Barad – all playing with and against immanent planes, linearity/non-linearity, consistencies, horizons, logarithms, points, angles, et al of geometry, physics and/or mathematics – subtly or otherwise

¹⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan (or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill)*, For Andrew Crooke, at the green Dragon in St Paul's Church-yard, 1651, Prepared for the McMaster University Archive of the History of Economic Thought by Rod Hay, (Quebec: McMaster; site copyright: 1996-2007). See especially, "The First Part of Man: II. Imagination and V. Of Science Reason and Science," in <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf> pp. 10-15 and pp. 26-31. Recall, too, the military and economic "zero-sum" strategies of the time (and even today) with tactical divisions drawn by two advancing and opposing groups taking aim and shooting at each other until the one takes the space from the other, or vice versa. This is best expressed as "zero-sum" where two sides constitute the whole of reality, with the one side's gain of utility, balanced by the other side's 'loss'. Hence the gains and losses add up to 'zero'. This view of the world remains prevalent in game theory and economic theory alike, taking on the wider mathematical – and political – implication that the gains and losses are thus calculated within a tightly spun arena or sociality, one where if 'A' pushes forward, 'B' will fall back; if 'B' pushes forward, 'A' will retreat, and in neither case can A or B jump over the said perimeter. Also known as the 'binaric divide', the classical explanation is best worked out in the well-known work of John von Neumann, *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* (1944), with O. Morgenstern, (Princeton University Press: 2007). Of course, in guerilla warfare, this zero-sum rule is the first rule to be broken, leading one to remember that 'zero-sum' does not clearly represent, and never did represent, the whole picture.

¹⁵ Giambattista Vico, *New Science (The 1744 Third Edition)*, translated by D Marsh with Introduction by Anthony Grafton, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1999). Of interest, see also: S. Golding, "Gramsci's Epistemological Eclecticism: What he borrows from Vico and Croce, and why," in her *Gramsci's Democratic Theory: Contributions to a Post-liberal Democracy*, (Univ of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 19-24.

¹⁶ For the mathematical /dynamical division, see in particular, Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason, The Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp-Smith, with preface by Howard Caygill, (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2007). especially the Introduction, pp. 43-65. For Hegel's repositioning of the infinite as linked with ratio, measurement, quantum and finite being, see his *Science of Logic*, translated by George di Giovanni (Cambridge Univ Press, 2010), especially, Vol. One: Objective Logic, Book One: The Doctrine of Being: Section One: Determinateness (quality) Chapters 1 (Being) and 2 (Existence); Section Two: Chapter 2: Quantum; and Chapter 3: Ratio or the quantitative relation, pp. 46-82; 83-125; 168-270; 271-281, respectively.

incorporating them as requirements for an updated 18th c Enlightenment, modern/postmodern political philosophy, and the very concept-practice of being/becoming human.¹⁷

Acknowledging a family tree that includes both legitimate and illegitimate off-spring from the, sometimes wild, sometimes occasionally ill-advised, conjoined encounters with analytic, continental, mathematical, geometric and quantum onto-sensate-logics of science and of life, may at times seem a bit 'queer' in the way that Wittgenstein quaintly proffered the term.¹⁸ But to do otherwise, as Derrida clearly warns in his *Introduction to Husserl's Origins of Geometry*, lends itself to falling headlong into an old trap, possibly first set by Plato in his *Republic*; that is, the misguided removal of any trace of scientific method from the arts or, conversely, the inability to infuse scientific enquiry with the blood-poetic sensate of this mercurial process called art. Often because the former seems destined to rigidify/sterilize the latter, and the latter only capable of muddying the waters of the former, this remains an intractable position to this day, despite compelling advances in modern, postmodern and post-postmodern practice. Derrida targets the problem in this way:

¹⁷ This list of names of course does not exhaust the list; indeed, it is an all too brief nod in the direction of analytic, feminist, phenomenological and continental scholarship and the (often uncomfortable) partnership with 'the sciences'. But see for example, the well known and deeply criticized (by Gödel and Wittgenstein to name but two): B. Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1903) and A.N. Whitehead and B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, (Cambridge University Press, Second edition, 1925 (Vol. 1), 1927 (Vols 2, 3). Abridged as *Principia Mathematica to *56*, Cambridge University Press, 1962). See also in particular: L. Wittgenstein, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics-Cambridge*, op. cite, and his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics (3rd Edition)*, with G.E.M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees and G.H. Von Wright, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1981); Edmund Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, in J. Derrida, *Introduction to "The Origin of Geometry"*, translated with a preface and afterword by John P. Leavey, (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979/1989), pp. 155-180; G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by T. Conley (Minnesota Press, 1992); F. Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, translated by P. Bains and Julian Pefanis (The Power Institute, 1995); A. Badiou, *Being and Event*, translated by O. Feltham, (Continuum, 2007); Lyotard, *Miscellaneous Texts in Aesthetics and the Theory of Art, Vol 4.I and Vol 4.II*, edited and translated by P. Herman, Leuven University Press, 2012); I. Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, translated by M. Chase with foreword by B. Latour, (Harvard Univ Press, 2011); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, (Duke Univ Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Playing with the term 'queer' as in strange, possibly fishy, but certainly not uninteresting, and perhaps even compelling, the term is used throughout Wittgenstein's work. In this context see in particular, Lectures IV and XII in his discussion with Turing on the life and times of constructing a heptagon, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, pp. 45-47; 114-122. See also the compelling and playful 'wild and creative' adventures of Whitehead as noted above in Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead* and Shaviro's additional explorations in his *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics*, (MIT, 2009).

“Did not Plato describe this situation? Was not the eternity of essences for him perhaps only another name for a non-empirical historicity? ‘Geometry and the studies [sciences] that accompany it’ are exiled far from their fundamental intuitions. They are incapable of ‘vision’ (*idein*) and riveted to the hypotheses held as their principles. Confusing symbol with truth, they seem to us to dream (*orōmen ōs oneirottousi*) (*Republic* VII, 533c). The return inquiry is therefore urgent: through us and for us it will reawaken science to its primordial sense, i.e., as we know, its final sense.”¹⁹

A reminder, then, to all those who may need reminding: if we are to take seriously *ecce homo* as a way to entrench the complex objectivity and colour of life itself onto the being-/becoming- human, one must be prepared to accept at the very minimum, the necessary and intimate infusion of the analytic with the poetic, the sensual with the scientific. But, on the other hand, it also means that one cannot escape a particularly inconvenient truth: that the modern/postmodern onto-sensate-logic cocktail currently on offer brings with it a few Trojan horses of its own. For while a critical set of logics are brought into sharp relief – ones that disrupt essentialism, representational enframing, patterns of predictability, judgment and change – it may do so by re-instating the old geometries of the temporal and spatial divide, along with a notion of difference linked to repetition, quasi-transcendentalism and/or planes of immanence, often with the sexual-erotic delicacies either missing altogether or projected onto the psyche-social pit of an unconscious.²⁰ A heavy weather warning is thus in order.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Introduction to “The Origin of Geometry,”* Translated with a preface and afterword by John P. Leavey, (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979/1989), p. 107. Single quote marks and references within the text as in the original.

²⁰ A point to which I will return momentarily, but see for example this, somewhat disappointing, turn in Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*, translated by M. Lester with C. Stivale, edited by C.V. Boundas, (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), Series 27-31, pp. 186-223. Suffice it to be said at this stage, that the quiet (or otherwise) reliance on platforms that cannot address the slipperiness of multi-dimensionality or spacetime or unconventional forms of matter or speed (or all four) will always prompt a privileging of Euclidean or Newtonian geometry. For a longer explanation of this remark, see Roger Penrose’s masterpiece, *A Complete Guide to the Physical Universe*, (Jonathan Cape: 2004), especially, chapters 16-19, “Ch. 16: The

Condition 4: *incomplete*.

The searing, entangled and untimely landscapes of a Paris just awakening to a certain kind of urbanization, with its store-fronted passage-ways, abandoned lovers, luxurious goods, greasy back streets, delectable flâneurs, and murderous poverties, were famously stitched together in the *Arcades Project* – the last set of works by Walter Benjamin before his untimely suicide in 1940 whilst fleeing from the Nazis.²¹ It is here where we must (re-) enter the storm, ever mindful of the heavy weather warning issued above.

Under one topography, the entire *Arcades Project* maps out a rather different analytic platform from the historical dialectical materialist method traditionally called upon to address the ‘how’ of the making of a new social order. For Benjamin’s dialectical materiality emphasizes the role of the senses, and in particular, of the sexual-carnal embodiments, the dreamscape imaginations and erotic-aesthetic tastes in codifying the entangled step-transformations of a new sociality in all its contradictory expressions.²² Rather than situating the senses (erotic, sexual, tactile, intellectual, emotional) as either ideological decoration, superstructural fragment or an externalization of heretofore repressed, unquenchable and unreachable desires, instead they mark, and are marked by, a kind of never-ending recursive loop, whose collective libidinal economy, as Lyotard would name it, repeatedly drinks in,

ladder of infinity;” “Ch. 17: *Spacetime;*” “Ch.18: *Minkowskian geometry;*” and “Ch. 19 *The classical fields of Maxwell and Einstein,*” pp. 357-470.

²¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin and prepared on the basis of the German volume edited by Rol Fiedemann, *Das Passagen-Werk*, (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 1999).

²² The whole of the *Arcades* speaks to this point, but see in particular “J. [Baudelaire],” “L. [Dream House, Museum, Spa],” “V. [Conspiracies, Compagnonnage],” “Y. [Photography],” and “a. [Social Movement],” pp. 228-387; 405-415; 603-619; 671-692; 698-739. But see also the set of remarks by Benjamin where he starts to outline the impact of the sexual with the erotic on imagination and therewith, possibility: “One must turn from the [Flowers of Evil] to Goethe’s *Selige Sehnsucht* to see, by comparison, what powers are conferred on the imagination when the sexual is joined with the erotic.” *The Arcades Project*, p. 357.

rearticulates anew, and is engorged by, these curious sense-slices, these fractal loops of embodied multiplicity.²³ He writes:

“The new, dialectical method of *doing* history presents itself as the art of experiencing the present as waking world, a world to which that dream we name the past refers in truth. [...] [It] satisfies Goethe's requirements for the object of analysis: to exhibit a *genuine* synthesis. It is the primal phenomena of history.”²⁴

To write history means giving dates their physiognomy.”²⁵

This embodiment of history – this *doing* history and giving dates to its multiply fragmented physiognomy – breaks with the notion of a continuous unfolding, universalized concept of historical materialism, and instead offers a way to begin to articulate the in-/forming of a culturally networked materiality. Through the telescoping, peep-hole lens of the glass-housed passageways, Benjamin painstakingly recognizes, records and recycles the immense complex curved-time multiplicities and sliced cultural intensities of this burgeoning urban landscape, one whose severally induced nuclei gather their own logics of embodiment via those very Arcades. These somewhat ragged, ill-fitting ‘experiences’ are, now, not only taken into account as that which constitutes/re-constitutes and, by their *application*, makes heterogeneous the spatial-temporalities of the real.²⁶ It also delineates a move

²³ Jean Francoise Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Press, 1993), especially Chapter 1: *The Great Ephemeral Skin*, pp. 1-43.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, ”K. [*Dream city and Dream House, Dreams of the Future, Anthropological Nihilism, Jung*], in *The Arcades Project*, pp. 389, 474.

²⁵ Walter Benjamin, “N. [*On the Theory of Knowledge; Theory of Progress*]” in *The Arcades Project*, p. 476.

²⁶ The importance of emphasizing Benjamin's use of ‘application’ as linked to ‘doing’ history in all its jostling minutiae, will be detailed in the last section. Suffice to say at this point that it will underlie our return to the question of science (and more precisely that of mathematics and physics) in relation to philosophy. But see Wittgenstein's *lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, where he convincingly establishes that experience can and must form the basis of logic (and not the other way around). This has profound consequences for those who prefer to champion mathematics and over physics in understanding the ‘how’ of ‘life.’ He writes, “When it is held that logic is true, it is always held at the same time that it is

that re-thinks the very materiality of the social as a radically incomplete surface of shifting *entanglements*, where sensory experience – the ‘that which constitutes the is’ no longer falls outside epistemological or methodological concerns. Indeed, they structure/create/reinvigorate the very politics of social agency. Erupting at one and the same time, in one and the same space, Benjamin’s *Passagen-Werk* thus exposes the complexity of contemporary urban life, rubbing up as it did, against the rise of fascism(s), the encoding of city secrets, great fashion houses, atonal compositions and improv jazz, erotic curiosities, concentration camp resolutions, hopelessness; economic corporatism, wireless communication networks; erratic markets; sexual, religious, ethnic and racial torture; the impact of photography and cinema on art – all paragraphed amongst Marx’s assessment of power vacuums and resistance; all mired in new forms of technological reproducibility and uncommon materialisms roughly situated amongst dialectical and non-dialectical methodologies, all with discreet resonances, all playing with and against this storm called progress.²⁷

One could say that the *Arcades Project* remains one of early platforms that, not only, was not afraid to take seriously the sensual/erotic/sexual/senses as something other than the uninvited guest to any serious analytic endeavor. But it also offered an early direction as to how one could re-think materiality itself, so that the rough edges of life, in all their contradictions, dream-state antagonisms, systematic, sexual and rhizomatic expressions, could be taken into account and, in so doing, *be held to account*. This ‘holding to account,’ this introduction of, and grounding for, ethical-political agency, emerges via a relocating of the ‘how we become what we are’ at the very surface of the real, and with

not an experiential science: the propositions of logic are not in agreement or disagreement with particular experiences. But although everyone agrees that the propositions of logic are not verifiable in a laboratory, or by the five senses, people say that they are recognized by the intellect to be true. This is the idea that the intellect is some sort of sense, in the same way that seeing or hearing is a sense. ... This makes logic into the physics of the intellectual realm.” And later, “I want to say its use is its meaning.” *Lecture XVIII*, p. 172.

²⁷ On this point, see also his well known, *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, newly translated as “*The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility (second version)*”, in *Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited M. Jennings, B. Doherty and T. Y. Levin, (Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 19-55.

it, the re-presenting of the 'real' as itself a surface, with no depth, no width, no border, no inside nor outside, but packing a punch nevertheless. In an attempt to enable the dialectical method to capture this application, this fragmented materiality, Benjamin draws upon the dream state and writes:

“We teach that, in the stratification of the dream, reality never simply *is*, but rather that it *strikes* the dreamer. And I treat of the arcades precisely as though, at bottom, they were something that has *happened* to me.”²⁸

Perhaps one could say, further, then, that this new move initiated by Benjamin, employs a particular type of grammar – a kind of pluperfect subjunctive libidinal band grammar – one that is capable of insinuating onto the ethical-political-aesthetic urban, the broken landscapes of the past alongside the ‘excess baggage’ of the present, shot through with the nostalgia of the future conditional ‘were it to have been.’ It was a move that initiated a way to conceptualise the ‘how one becomes what one is’ in a world just entering the networked age, and doing so without losing sight of the social, the racial, the ethnic, the literary, the economic and the erotic, in all their minutiae. It was a move that seemed to lead to an immersive philosophy, one that placed emphasis on the necessity of inhabiting the ‘groundless ground surfaces’ of life itself. It was a move where ‘surface’ no longer could be understood as a fractional piece or atomistic element of the (social) ‘whole’. There was no ‘whole’, no totality – only the networked materialities that made it so.

On the one hand, then, this was a move to re-energise a philosophy/history still tied to the flaccid methods of an historical-dialectical materialism that could no longer (if ever it did) account for the constitutive conditions of reality and, in so doing offer a materialism whose embodiment was consecrated by a sociality which itself was always-already incomplete. In what today has been

²⁸ W. Benjamin, “Materials for the Exposé of 1935,” *The Arcades Project*, p. 908 [my emphasis].

overhauled and re-positioned as ‘ana-materialism’,²⁹ this bringing to the table, erotic curiosities, senses and sensibilities, was a move that, for better or for worse, ushered in a whole new paradigmatic shift away from dialectics itself without losing sight of the ‘that’ which must be held to account.

It was a move I want to call: *political*. Or, in a phrase: *Ecce homo sexual*.

Condition 5: *entangled*.

To say that something was ‘incomplete’ did not mean to say it was unfinished, though clearly in the case of the *Arcades Project*, it was precisely that: both incomplete and not finished. It is possible, perhaps, that had Benjamin survived the Nazi horrors, he may well have lived to re/write a more nuanced historical dialectical materialism; certainly that was one of his stated intentions throughout the work and certainly it is that which remains ‘unfinished.’ But it is also fair to say that given the way in which he positioned the work as requiring the conjoining of the onto-sensate-logics as earlier outlined with the *political/ecce homo sexual*, Benjamin teased out a conceptual basis with which to think objective materiality as constituted by its sliced/fragmented embodiments of life, which, in turn could never be approached as final, or bounded or, for that matter, entailing an ‘internal’ or ‘external’ reality, quasi-transcendental or otherwise.

²⁹ An introduction to the concept of ‘ana-materialism’ can be found in J. Golding, “*Ana-Materialism and the Pineal Eye: Becoming Mouth-Breast (Visual Arts in the Age of Algorithmic Reproduction)*” in P. Baler (ED), *The Next Thing: Art in the Twenty-First Century*, (Lanham, MD/London: The Farleigh Dickinson University Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 105-120, re-printed with permission in D. Leishman (ED), *Without Sin: Taboo and Freedom within Digital Media*, in *Leonardo*, Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology, (Cambridge: MIT, 2013). Earlier version in D. Rubinstein & A. Fisher (Eds), *The Philosophy of Photography*, (London: Intellect Books/Univ of Chicago, Dec 2012), Vol 3, Issue 1. The concept has been developed in part from the ‘theory of roughness’ as articulated by Mandelbrot via his fractal geometry. , *The Fractalist: Memoir of a Scientific Maverick*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), p. xi.

A similar (but different) set of logics concerning incompleteness emerged in the late 19th / early 20th century in science (mathematics, meta-mathematics, quantum physics). This was foregrounded by the paradigmatic shift away from probability and certainty, crucial for 18th c Enlightenment and various political, scientific and philosophical elaborations as earlier noted, to paradigmatic platforms of uncertainty, undecidability, and fractal repeatability.³⁰ Famously articulated by Heisenberg as the incompleteness relation, Gödel pushed the argument much further. In his 1931 groundbreaking paper *On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Related Systems*, he shows that in any formal system, basic arithmetic included, it's proof could never be developed from an abstract or definitional proposition. It was always 'undecidable,' an undecidability that could only be resolved by its *use*, not its axiom.

“The development of mathematics in the direction of greater exactness has—as is well known—led to large tracts of it becoming formalized, so that proofs can be carried out according to a few mechanical rules. [...] (However) It is shown below that this is not the case (...). This situation is not due in some way to the special nature of the systems set up, but holds for a very extensive class of formal systems, including, in particular, all those arising from the addition of a finite number of axioms to the two systems mentioned.”³¹

In 1939 – an auspicious year to be sure – Wittgenstein gave a seminar at Cambridge on the foundations of mathematics, articulating something very close to Gödel's position, and certainly in

³⁰ For an initial discussion of the uncertainty relation, see Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), elaborated by G.J. Chaitin in his path-breaking, “*Information Theoretic Incompleteness*,” in *Applied Mathematics and Computation*, (Elsevier Science Publishing Co, 1992), pp. 83-101. See also Karen Barad in her, “*Quantum Entanglements*,” and “*Appendix C. Controversy concerning the Relationship between Bohr's Principle of Complementarity and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle*,” *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, pp. 293-304; 402-404, respectively; and in Penrose, “*The Quantum Particle*”, “*Quantum Algebra, Geometry and Spin*,” *The Road to Reality*, pp. 502, 523-24, 538.

³¹ Kurt Gödel, *On Formally Undecidable Propositions in 'Principia Mathematica' and Related Systems* (1931), (New York: Dover, 1992), pp. 37-38. See also “*From Heisenberg to Gödel via Chaitin*,” written by C.S. Calude and M.A. Stay, C.S. Calude and M.A. Stay, *Research Report Series no. 235* (Centre for Discrete Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Sciences-CDMTCS: University of Auckland, NZ, Feb 2004/ Revised May 2004).

line with the wild sciences that were now interrupting and redesigning the field. The lectures are interesting in part due to the fact that he spars openly (and often) with his students, and in particular with one Alan Turing who, as is well known, was the inventor of contemporary computing and who, perhaps less well-known, deciphered the Enigma code, a move which de-cloaked the strategic maneuvers of the Axis powers and led to their defeat in WWII.³² Perhaps even less well-known, is the fact that the closeted Turing killed himself two years after taking the ‘option’ offered by British Intelligence to undergo chemical castration as the supposed cure for his homosexuality or face life imprisonment.³³ (But perhaps I digress).

Wittgenstein argues that mathematics can never rise above certain vulnerability: that of taking as always-already ‘firm’ and, therewith, unchallengeable or objectively true (for all time and place) – the logical proof of any mathematical axiom. This is because a mathematical proof requires only ‘itself’ to make it substantively hold together. Its realism ends up privileging tautology as the bearer of its (truth) claim, or, at best, invoking a series of statements that hold only by definition.³⁴ In this respect, says Wittgenstein, mathematics can never give any information – except about itself – and certainly is rather useless to adopt as an ontologically method-bearing platform for philosophy, arts, humanities, social sciences; indeed, for all of life in its myriad concentrations, the senses included. He dispatches the argument in this way:

³² For Turing’s initial thoughts on computing (1936), particularly as linked with undecidability, see Alan Turing, “*On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungs problem*”, in *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society*. 2 (1937) 42: 230–265, updated and corrected by Turing in 1937 in his revised “*On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem: A correction*”. *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society*. 2 (1937) 43 (6): 544–6.

³³ See Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, Centenary Edition, (Princeton University Press, 2012) and Hugh Whitmore’s celebrated play *Breaking the Code: A play*, (Samuel French, Inc., 2010).

³⁴ “I should like to show that one tends to have an altogether wrong idea of logic and the role it plays; and a wrong idea of the *truth* of logic. If I can show this, it will be easier to understand why logic doesn’t give mathematics any particular firmness.” *Lecture XVIII* in his *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 181.

“The point of Russell’s sentences [in *Principia Mathematica*] is that none of them gives us any information about anything. If we substitute propositions of botany of ‘*p*’ and ‘*q*’, then the whole gives us no information about botany; it ceases to be a botanical sentence. This is the point of a tautology: that if any part of it gives information, the rest cancels it out. [...] If I ask you, ‘What does it say?’, you might say, ‘Something about the weather’ or you might say it says nothing. But it doesn’t seem to say anything about *thinking*. So why should we call it a law of thought?³⁵

For Wittgenstein, the truth function of any given proposition could only ‘stand firm’ – could only act as a ‘law of thought’ – when the proof is rooted to its use.³⁶ In this sense, ‘standing firm’ neither sidesteps the undecidability/incompleteness of formal structures, nor dispenses with, in formalizing those expressions, the sensate experiences of life, nor does it have an infinite capacity to expand. No ‘natural realism’ here. Instead it is nothing less than the combination of its ‘incompleteness’ or ‘undecidability’ (in the way established by Gödel rather than Derrida), which becomes logically meaningful (ie, real) precisely and only by its ‘application’.³⁷ The logic expressing this materiality

³⁵ Wittgenstein, “Lecture XXIX,” *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 276-77. But in the same Lecture, see also pp. 280-81, where he writes: “What does it mean to say it gives no information? We should have to describe all sorts of situations in which one gives or gets information. We should have to describe the language-game: what we do with such a proposition. ‘If there are fifteen chairs, there are fifteen chairs.’ In the game in which we ask how many chairs, no behaviour is provided for in answer to this sentence. [...] (But) To say that mathematical propositions impart mathematical information is (also) misleading. For the information they impart is different from what is suggested by their structure as sentences.”

³⁶ See Wittgenstein, “Lecture XIX,” p. 184, where he writes: “People say, ‘If negation means one thing, then double negation equals affirmation; but if it meant another thing, double negation equals negation.’ But I want to say its use is its meaning.”

³⁷ For ‘undecidability’ as a troubled dichotomy (neither here nor there; whilst being here and there), see Derrida’s development as *pharmakon*, *hymen*, *spectral*, *tympanic* etc), *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, edited by P. Kamuf, (New York: Columbia Univ Press, 1991). As to the early development of a ‘quasi-‘ transcendentalism /messianism, see J. Derrida, *Glas*, trans. by John P. Leavy, Jr and Richard Rand, (University of Nebraska Press, 1986). See also Joshua Kates, “Ch. 1: The Success of Deconstruction: Derrida, Rorty, Gasché, Bennington, and the Quasi-Transcendental,” *Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstruction*, (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 3-31.

must itself be held 'to account' and therewith, argues Wittgenstein, '*responsible to the whole apparatus (\mathbb{N}_0)*' in all its myriad variations, roughness, colour, noise, dimensionality and decay.³⁸

Not surprisingly, for Wittgenstein, this is precisely the job of physics.

"[The statement:] 'To mathematical propositions there corresponds a reality' – if you take this in the sense of 'Some mathematical propositions we affirm,' then it is harmless, but meaningless. [...] That is, you can't say just anything in mathematics because there's the reality. This come from saying that proposition of physics are responsible to that apparatus – you can't say any damned thing. [...] – If you want the right image for \mathbb{N}_0 , you mustn't form it from mathematics. If you say 'How terrific!', if your head reels – you can be sure it is the wrong image. It is not terrific at all."³⁹

And yet, it was, and remains today, all a bit queer, this object oriented imaging of \mathbb{N}_0 . For its 'grounding', its firmness – relying as it does on both the heterogeneic necessity of radical incompleteness and its application or use – also ushers in a whole additional set of horses, not quite Trojan, but worth worrying about nevertheless. For despite (or because) of this radical undecidability and its use, it simultaneously establishes a 'finite' set of skin, bones, blood and guts to the 'what is' and the 'that' which lays to hand, a heterogeneic, one might say 'a-radical' sensuous groundless ground *finiteness* whose dimensionality can never exceed the fragmented / incomplete embodiments which constitute what it is. *That* is complex enough, but – and here's the rub – it does so by invoking

³⁸ Wittgenstein, "Lecture XXV," in *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 240.

³⁹ Wittgenstein, "Lectures XXV and XXVI," in *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, pp. 240, 253.

non-localised entanglements as the expression of its presence, a move that requires a dive headlong into the (quantum) physical paradox of multiversal-sameness at one and the same (curved-) time.

Welcome to queer theory in the 21st century.

Johnny Golding

Bio

Johnny Golding is a philosopher and artist. Her research covers the curious intersections of fine art, digital, media and electronic arts as thought through (i) ana-materialism and the new materialisms of space/ speed/ curved-time and dimensionality (ii) dirty theory and the erotic logics of sense (iii) the 'Enlightenment' filtered through feminism, queer studies and the wild sciences. She is the Director of CFAR and holds the Chair as Research Professor of Philosophy & Fine Art at the School of Art-BIAD (Margaret St). Her recent publications include: *The 9th Technology of Otherness: A Certain kind of Debt*; *Ana-Materialism and the Pineal Eye*; *Fractal Philosophy and The Small Matter of Learning how to Listen (Attunement as the Task of Art)*; *Conversion on the Road to Damascus: Minority Report on Art*; *The University Must be Defended*; and *Assassination of Time (or the birth of zeta-physics)*. Executive Editor of *zētēsis*: a peer-reviewed journal for contemporary art, philosophy & the wild sciences (ARTicle Press), it foregrounds research driven by curiosity, experiment, and risk.

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