

Book review

Anthony Paul Smith,***A Non-Philosophical Theory of Nature: Ecologies of Thought.*****New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013****(ISBN: 978–1–137–33587–6)**

Ecologies of Thought by Anthony Paul Smith is one of the rare examples of creating an autonomous non-philosophical project of theoretical investigation whereby the author thinks with or via Laruelle's theory instead of being just a commentator of his work. By way of rigorous elaboration of the operations of the radical dyad as conceived in non-philosophy - or by recourse to Laruelle's "dualysis" - Anthony Paul Smith explains the possibility of thinking nature in the radical mode as determined by non-standard philosophy. He also develops complex modalities of such approach. Namely, if nature is *always already* transcendental - a construct of the mind - in the last instance, it is a concept which is lived, "known" through bodily suffering. It is, therefore, inseparable from the real as experience (or the "lived," in Laruelle's vocabulary). One could say it is "the first transcendental," since it is the product of the most immediate urge to "speculate" the real. Anthony Paul Smith terms this transcendental that is most immediately linked with the immanent "one of the first names of the Real." That is why the author claims that "thought never thinks unnaturally."

An idea can lead to or participate in a change to a society. An idea can lead us to destroy an ecosystem or to restore a degraded one. Yet, none of this destroys or saves nature as such. The thought can never become unnatural; it is never not a real idea and what is real is natural. Thought can have real effects, but cannot affect the Real; thought can think the unnatural, but it does not do so unnaturally. (15)

Thought's most immediate form is the product of its immanent tendency to reflect the effects of nature and fix the unruly real (of nature) into a meaningful "being." As soon as translated into the register of "meanings," nature undergoes the unavoidable, radical estrangement whose form is explained by Laruelle as an operation of "the Stranger" or "the radical subjectivity." It is one founded upon an operation of dualysis. It also engenders any theoretical or scientific form of dualysis. It is an instance of thought which recognizes, affirms and departs from the lived experience of the inevitability of the dyad formed by the real and the transcendental. It does not see this duality as a "constitutive split" which should be overcome. It does not have any aspiration for or dream of (re)unification (of thought and reality, forming "the Being"), but rather radically affirms this dyad and the unilateral positioning of each of its components. Anthony Paul Smith calls upon creating an ecological theory which departs from the lived representation of nature rather than from philosophical abstractions. Philosophy's pretension to unveil "nature which hides" is one of its own (philosophy's), defining perversities. Nature does not hide. Philosophy only can postulate it as hiding and engage into an endless process of "unveiling" her. The same process of estranging objectivization and reduction of "the physical" (or of nature) to a concept, product of speculation is what enables capitalism to exploit nature as "resource," a value created philosophically, viz. by the operation of abstraction (of thought).

No, nature is not veiled, but thinking this allows our regional knowledges to think that they can unveil nature, that they can touch and circumscribe nature with thought and thereby either exploit her for our own gain or save her. Our contemporary climate, both in the physical and intellectual sense, is determined by a single force: the neoliberal capitalist ideology that demands everything reduce its value to the quantitative measure of money so that it can produce more of this measure. (14)

Bruno Latour's ecology without nature remains philosophical since it departs from the decision (not just a premise but a decision) that ecology should subsume itself within what he calls "political epistemology." This vision supplements the philosophical creation of nature with another philosophical creation - the idea of a "parliament of things." And this creation holds the status of a grounding philosophical decision since it does not permit any challenging from the outside (of the discipline of philosophy), including by the ecological science. "It does not allow the scientific practice of ecology to challenge the philosophical 'parliament of thought he proposes' (167). In his vision of ecology, Anthony Paul Smith proposes postulation of nature in a non-philosophical manner "which begins with the perversity of nature, aims to think nature as irreducible to an idealized matter (i.e., materialism) nor reducible to a transcendental idea that forms matter (i.e., naturalism)" (167).

For a thought which pretends to be ecological, the only way to depart from nature, the only way which is not philosophically alienated and alienating, is the one which takes recourse to the immediate effects of the lived (or the suffering) or the experienced. Ecological science works with the empirical, meaning with the experiential. In order to become fully non-alienating and non-alienated theory of nature, ecological science must disburden itself of the tenets of philosophy it has always already contained.

Anthony Paul Smith's "Ecologies of Nature" is a brave and inspiring theoretical project that emancipates not only ecology and thought of nature, but also "naturalness of thought" from the self-estranging, self-mirroring and auto-referential grip of philosophy.

Katerina Kolozova