

## Philosophy

**François Laruelle**

**PHILOSOPHIES OF DIFFERENCE**

A critical introduction to non-philosophy

Translated by Rocco Gangle

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**FUTURE CHRIST**

A lesson in heresy

Translated by Anthony Paul Smith

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Gilles Deleuze once wrote of François Laruelle that his work is “one of the most interesting undertakings of contemporary philosophy”. That was in a footnote, in 1991: yet Laruelle is only now seeing the first published translations of his work into English. They are introductory and fairly short, but mark a suitable entry point to a substantial body of work, spanning over twenty books and forty years of study. However, it is natural to ask why Laruelle has been for so long out in the cold.

He was born in northern France, but his village was as close to Frankfurt as it was to Paris. His first teaching positions were also marginal, far from the *grandes écoles* where

Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault taught; so far in fact, that Laruelle says he is “the only other philosopher than Fichte to have milked a cow”. Later, he taught ethics in Algeria as part of his armed service, choosing the work of Beauvoir “to mess with the officers’ heads”, as payback for his medical discharge from the front line.

Both theoretically and academically Laruelle has never been fashionable. The majority of his colleagues have never particularly appreciated his work: Derrida, for instance, called him a “terrorist”. (Paul Ricoeur supervised Laruelle, but even he was a comparative outsider, leaving for the United States before long, and becoming more famous there than he ever was in France.) Part of this ostracism is self-inflicted. Laruelle refuses to play the same games as his colleagues. In philosophy, he writes, everyone plays with “loaded dice”, for their own benefit. “See how clever I am”, they proclaim, “more Kantian than Kant, more Spinozist than Spinoza.”

Laruelle’s response is simply not to philosophize. And Laruelle’s refusal to “play the game” is not just the cause of his marginalization, but is central to his thought. The “loaded dice” he refers to are the prejudices of an institutionalized subject. They are the previous convictions a person brings to their writing, and ultimately – whether their aims are to deconstruct or to analyse – Laruelle believes these attitudes confound the process. Teaching such a lesson has taken its toll on him. Whether ignored or vilified, he has spent much of his life justifying why his non-philosophy is necessary; so much so that these slim translations barely touch the surface of his achievement. He asks the difficult questions that philosophy rarely asks itself. In response to Derrida, Laruelle simply agreed.

CHARLES HAYNES