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FW

It was a generic shell, nobody cares

OOO

For the affirmative, the world is a textual object, full of signifiers, narratives, and discourses – this creates a focus on how human subjects relate to the world and renders objects invisible

Bryant 12 (Levi, prof of phil @ Collin College, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/07/18/rsi-discursivity-critique-and-politics/)JFS

So in response to a previous post, a lot of folks gave me grief about the following passage: I do think, however, that OOO can problematize our current political thought and open new avenues of political engagement and theorization. As it stands, cultural studies is dominated by a focus on the discursive. We hear endless talk about signs, signifiers, “positions” or positionality, narratives, discourses, ideology, etc. Basically we see the world as a fetishized text to be decoded and debunked. None of this should, of course, be abandoned, but I do think we’re encountering its limitations. In the few years I’ve been writing on these issues, I’ve been surprised to discover just how hard it is to get people to sense that there is a non-discursive power of things; a form of power that is not about signs, ideology (as text), beliefs, positions, narratives, and so on. It’s as if these things aren’t on the radar for most social and political theorists. I get the sense that the reason for this has something to do with what Heidegger diagnosed in his analysis of the ready-to-hand. Heidegger argues that when the ready-to-hand is working it becomes invisible. We don’t notice it. It recedes into the background. Us academics live in worlds that work pretty well as far as material infrastructure goes. We are, for the most part, in a world where things work: food is available, electricity and water function, we have shelter, etc. As a consequence, all this disappears from view and we instead focus on cultural texts because often this is a place where things aren’t working. In response to these remarks, I was told that 1) of course no one has the naive belief that everything is text (what a relief! of course, the question is whether this belief registers itself in theoretical practice), and 2) that, in fact, these things are all the rage in the world of theory. I’m well aware that there is a tradition of theorists that don’t fit this mold, and perpetually refer to many of these theorists in my own work. Theorists that come to mind are figures such as Haraway, Stengers, Latour, Kittler, Ong, McLuhan, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, [Kevin Sharpe](http://www.amazon.com/Reading-Revolution-Politics-Modern-England/dp/B0064XMBMC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1342567497&sr=8-1&keywords=reading+revolution), [Jennifer Andersen](http://www.amazon.com/Books-Readers-Early-Modern-England/dp/0812217942/ref=pd_sim_sbs_b_5) et al, [Cathy Davidson](http://www.amazon.com/Revolution-Word-Rise-Novel-America/dp/0195148231/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1342567973&sr=1-1&keywords=revolution+and+the+word), Braudel, DeLanda, Pickering, etc. They exist. The point is not that they don’t exist, but that these forms of theory, I think, have been rather marginal in the academy; especially philosophy. In discussing these things, I’m not making some claim to being absolutely original or to be originating something full cloth. I’m more than happy to play some small role in bringing attention to these things; things that I believe to be neglected. I think, for example, that the new materialist feminists predate OOO/SR by 5-10 years, have many points of overlap with OOO, and have not nearly gotten the attention that they deserve. I think Latour and Stengers are almost entirely invisible in the world of philosophy conferences and departments; and I think that there are systematic reasons for this pertaining to the history of continental theory coming out of German idealism, the linguistic turn, and phenomenology. In German idealism you get a focus on spirit and the transcendental structure of mind. In the linguistic turn, you get a focus on how signifiers and signs inform our relation to reality (for example, Lacan’s famous observation that the difference between the men’s room and lady’s room results from the signifier in “The Agency of the Letter”, and Barthes’ claim that language is a primary modeling system in The Fashion System). In phenomenology you get a focus on the lived experience of the cogito, Dasein, or lived body and how it “constitutes” (Husserl’s language, not mine) the objects of its intentions. read on! In each instance we get a focus on the differences that humans are contributing, with a relative indifference to the differences that non-humans contribute. Material entities, as Alaimo observes in[Bodily Natures](http://www.amazon.com/Bodily-Natures-Science-Environment-Material/dp/0253222400/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1342568890&sr=1-1&keywords=bodily+natures), are treated as blank screens for human intentions, language, concepts, signs. The metaphor of the screen is here important, for a screen is that which contains no difference of its own beyond being a smooth and white surface, and is therefore susceptible to whatever we might wish to project upon it with a camera. This has been the dominant mode of theorizing that I’ve encountered in the last decade in my discipline of philosophy (and I have a fair background in rhetoric and literary theory as well). Phenomenology and the linguistic turn, I think, are the dominant positions represented at SPEP, for example, the main professional conference for continental philosophy (though thankfully things are beginning to change). When it is said that something is “dominant”, the claim is not that nothing different from it exists, but merely that a certain style of theorizing enjoys hegemony among that population. In media studies, I think, the situation is better. I think it’s better in geography as well. It depends on what population of theorists we’re looking at (a point entailed, incidentally, by my thesis that signifiers are material entities that must travel throughout populations).

We do not have an alternative in the sense of mandating action, but rather a different lens to view the world – a flat ontology, which holds that all objects equally exist

Bryant 10 (Levi, prof of phil @ Collin College, Flat Ontology, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2010/02/24/flat-ontology-2/)JFS

For DeLanda, then, flat ontology signifies an ontology in which there is only one ontological “type”: individuals. Thus for DeLanda the relationship between species and organism is not a relationship between the universal or essence that is eternal and unchanging and the particular or the organism as an instance of the species. Rather, both species and organisms are individuals that are situated in time and space. If species are not eternal essences or forms defining what is common to all particulars of that species, if they exist in space and time, then this is because species, as conceived by biology are not types but rather are really existing reproductive populations located in a particular geography at a particular point in time. For DeLanda, then, being is composed entirely of individuals. While I find much that is commendable in DeLanda’s ontology, where the sorts of entities that populate being are concerned, I’m a bit more circumspect. At present I’m not ready to throw in with DeLanda and the thesis that there are only individuals. I am agnostic on the question of whether universals exist, and my intuitions strongly lean in the Platonic direction of treating numbers as real objects in their own right that have being independent of human minds. If this is the case, if numbers are real, then I have a difficult time seeing how they can be treated as individuals in the sense that DeLanda intends and, moreover, I do not think that the genetic concerns that preoccupy DeLanda are relevant to questions of number, i.e., a genetic account of how numbers come to be– if, in fact, they do come to be and are not eternal objects –does not get at what numbers are. Consequently, if, within the framework of onticology, “flat ontology” doesn’t signify that only individuals exist, what does it signify? On the one hand, it signifies the trivial thesis that all things that are are objects. Objects differ amongst one another having their own unique properties and qualities (e.g. numbers have a different structure than organisms, obviously) but they are no less objects for this reason. On the other hand, and more fundamentally, flat ontology is designed to stave off strategies of what Harman refers to as ways of undermining and overmining objects. In short, a flat ontology is an ontology that refuses to undermine or overmine objects. What, then, does it mean to undermine or overmine objects. Of the two strategies, the concept of undermining is the easiest to get. Undermining is that operation by which the thinker attempts to dissolve the object in something deeper of which the object is said to be an unreal effect. Consequently, the minimal operation of undermining lies in 1) the assertion of a fundamental strata of reality that constitutes the “really real”, and 2) the dissolution of the object in and through that stratum. Lucretius is a prime example of an underminer. When Lucretius compares atoms to the alphabet and objects and states-of-affairs to words and sentences, what he is claiming is that atoms are the “really real” and that objects composed of atoms are bare epiphenomena that do not really have being in their own right (this is somewhat unfair to Lucretius as he does nod here and there to emergent properties that result only from relations among atoms). Likewise, when Plato distinguishes between the forms and appearances, he reveals a strategy of undermining. All the entities and states-of-affairs we see in the world around us are, under one reading of Plato, mere copies of the forms that lack genuine and full being in their own right. When Badiou claims that being qua being is pure multiplicity without one, he is an underminer, treating structured situations as mere ephemera that are not true realities in their own right. Consequently, one claim of the flat ontology advocated by onticology is a vigorous rejection of this sort of reductivism. To be sure, the mereological considerations borne out of OOO dictate that objects are composed of other objects, or that a rock also contains atomic particles and perhaps even “strings”, but the being of each and every object is irreducible in its own right. While it is certainly true that rocks are made up of atoms, the atoms are not more real than the rock and the rock is not less real than the atoms or atomic particles. This is the “weird mereology” of OOO, so forcefully developed by Harman and presenting a real challenge and alternative to the infinite multiplicities of Badiou, that undermines our traditional understanding of part-whole relations. The atoms are objects in their own right. The rock is an object in its own right. The being of the rock is not shorthand for “collection of atoms”. There is a link between these objects but it is a link between distinct objects. Within the framework of onticology, the proper being of an object is its virtual endo-relational structure and that endo-relational structure is not a property of the parts that compose the object, but rather belongs to the object itself. The parts of my body, for example, are constantly changing (cells die, cells are produced) but my proper being as an object or substance, my virtual endo-relational structure, remains the same. The flatness of flat ontology is thus first and foremost the refusal to treat one strata of reality as the really real over and against all others. It doesn’t forbid or reject talking about interesting correlations among objects such as the relation between atoms and a rock or a person and the neuronal web of the brain, but it does hold that this is a relation between objects, not a relation between appearance on the one hand and reality on the other hand. In this respect, flat ontology endorses Latour’s thesis that “nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else” (Irreductions, 1.1.1).

This flat ontology pays respect to the world of objects – it’s the most open form of ethics and solves extinction

Bryant 12 (Levi, prof of philosophy @ Collin College, Flat Ontology/Flat Ethics, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/06/01/flat-ontologyflat-ethics/)JFS

I think that Eileen Joy, in a comment over at Alex Reid’s [Digital Digs](http://www.alex-reid.net/2012/05/the-object-industry.html), best articulates what the aims of an object-oriented ethics (OOE) might look like. Responding to one of his recent posts, she writes: For me personally, turning one’s attention to animals, objects, post/humanism and so on is precisely about thickening our capacity to imagine more capacious forms of “living with”; it is precisely about developing more radical forms of welcoming and generosity to others, who include humans as well as trees, rocks, dogs, cornfields, ant colonies, pvc pipes, and sewer drains; it is precisely about amplifying the ability of our brains to pick up more communication signals from more “persons” (who might be a human or a cloud or a cave) whose movements, affects, and thoughts are trying to tell us something about our interconnectedness and co-implicated interdependence with absolutely everything (or perhaps even about a certain implicit alienation between everything in the world, which is nevertheless useful to understand better: take your pick); it is precisely about working toward a more capacious vision of what we mean by “well-being,” when we decide to attend to the well-being of humans and other “persons” (who might be economic markets or the weather or trash or homeless cats) who are always enmeshed with each other in various “vibrant” networks, assemblages, meshes, cascades, systems, whathaveyou. And just for me — likely, just for me– it is also about love, with love defined, not as something that goes in one direction from one person to another person or object (carrying with it various demands and expectations and self-centered desires), but rather, as a type of collective labor that works at creating “fields” for persons and objects to emerge into view that otherwise would remain hidden (and perhaps also remain abjectified), and which persons and objects could then be allowed the breathing/living room to unfold in various self-directed ways, even if that’s not what you could have predicted in advance nor supposedly what you “want” it to do (in other words: ethics as a form of attention that is directed toward the “for-itself” propulsions of other persons and objects, human and inhuman). So, for me, work in post/humanism, and in OOO, is attentive to the world, which includes and does not exile (or gleefully kill off) the human (although it certainly asks that we expand our angles of vision beyond just the human-centered ones); it is both political and ethical; and it is interested in what I would even call the “tender” attention to and care of things, human and inhuman (I think that the work of Bennett, Bogost, Morton, Harman, Steven Shaviro, Jeffrey Cohen, Stacy Alaimo, Julian Yates, Myra Hird, Freya Matthews, Karen Barad, Donna Haraway, and Levi Bryant, and many, many others who \*never\* get cited in these discussions, especially the women working in materialism, science/gender studies, queer ecology, environmental humanities, etc.) especially exemplifies this “tender” attention to and care of all of the “items” of the world. Any enlargement of our capacity to think about the agential, signaling, and other capacities of as many items/objects/persons, etc. of this world represents, in my mind, an enlargement, and not a shrinking, of our ethical attention. It’s asking for a richer, thicker ontology, which gives is more to be responsible for (after all, that’s partly where the specialness of humans comes in), but also: more to enjoy. It seems to me that the sort of ethico-political vision that Joy here proposes has two faces.  On the one hand, there is that face directed towards our contatus, our endeavor to persist in our being and flourish.  Recognizing our interconnection with nonhumanthings and our impact on nonhuman things is not simply some hippy-dippy thesis that “we’re one with the universe”.  No.  It is a matter of self-interest.  It’s the recognition that 1) we are dependent on this ecosystem to flourish, 2) that these relations upon which we are dependent are fragile and can be broken, and 3) that these things can also exercise oppressive power over us, undermining our ability to flourish or live well.  As Spinoza saw, we always act with other bodies.  Some of these bodies enhance our power of acting, while others diminish it.  By and large, ethical thought has been blind to our relations with nonhumans, focusing only on questions of how we should treat and live with other humans.  Yet this completely obscures our real ethical circumstances or conditions.  Today, more than ever, our collective survival depends on broadening the domain of what counts as sites of political and ethical concern, and that means taking into account our relationship to nonhumans.

Finally, the kritik is a huge case turn – real social change comes from engaging the material world of objects, not the academic world of textual discourse – only a focus on objects can solve the aff

Bryant 12 (Levi, prof of phil @ Collin College, McKenzie Wark: How Do You Occupy an Abstraction?, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/08/04/mckenzie-wark-how-do-you-occupy-an-abstraction/)JFS <this evidence has been modified and we don’t endorse gendered language>

Here I’m also inclined to say that we need to be clear about system references in our political theorizing and action.  We think a lot about the content of our political theorizing and positions, but I don’t think we think a lot about how our political theories are supposed to actually act in the world.  As a result, much contemporary leftist political theory ends up in a performative contradiction.  It claims, following Marx, that it’s aim is not to represent the world but to change it, yet it never escapes the burrows of academic journals, conferences, and presses to actually do so.  Like the Rat-Man’s obsessional neurosis where his actions in returning the glasses were actually designed to fail, there seems to be a built in tendency in these forms of theorization to unconsciously organize their own failure.  And here I can’t resist suggesting that this comes as no surprise given that, in Lacanian terms, the left is the position of the hysteric and as such has “a desire for an unsatisfied desire”.  In such circumstances the worst thing consists in getting what you want.  We on the left need to traverse our fantasy so as to avoid this sterile and self-defeating repetition; and this entails shifting from the position of political critique (hysterical protest), to political construction– actually envisioning and building alternatives. So what’s the issue with system-reference?  The great autopoietic sociological systems theorist, Niklas Luhmann, makes this point nicely.  For Luhmann, there are intra-systemic references and inter-systemic references.  Intra-systemic references refer to processes that are strictly for the sake of reproducing or maintaining the system in question.  Take the example of a cell.  A cell, for-itself, is not for anything beyond itself.  The processes that take place within the cell are simply for continuing the existence of the cell across time.  While the cell might certainly emit various chemicals and hormones as a result of these processes, from its own intra-systemic perspective, it is not for the sake of affecting these other cells with those hormones.  They’re simply by-products.  Capitalism or economy is similar.  Capitalists talk a good game about benefiting the rest of the world through the technologies they produce, the medicines they create (though usually it’s government and universities that invent these medicines), the jobs they create, etc., but really the sole aim of any corporation is identical to that of a cell:  to endure through time or reproduce itself through the production of capital.  This production of capital is not for anything and does not refer to anything outside itself.  These operations of capital production are intra-systemic.  By contrast, inter-systemic operations would refer to something outside the system and its auto-reproduction.  They would be for something else. Luhmann argues that every autopoietic system has this sort of intra-systemic dimension.  Autopoietic systems are, above all, organized around maintaining themselves or enduring.  This raises serious questions about academic political theory.  Academia is an autopoietic system.  As an autopoietic system, it aims to endure, reproduce itself, etc.  It must engage in operations or procedures from moment to moment to do so.  These operations consist in the production of students that eventually become scholars or professors, the writing of articles, the giving of conferences, the production of books and classes, etc.  All of these are operations through which the academic system maintains itself across time.  The horrifying consequence of this is that the reasons we might give for why we do what we do might (and often) have little to do with what’s actually taking place in system continuance.  We say that our articles are designed to demolish capital, inequality, sexism, homophobia, climate disaster, etc., but if we look at how this system actually functions we suspect that the references here are only intra-systemic, that they are only addressing the choir or other academics, that they are only about maintaining that system, and that they never proliferate through the broader world.  Indeed, our very style is often a big fuck you to the rest of the world as it requires expert knowledge to be comprehended, thereby insuring that it can have no impact on broader collectives to produce change.  Seen in this light, it becomes clear that our talk about changing the world is a sort of alibi, a sort of rationalization, for a very different set of operations that are taking place.  Just as the capitalist says he’s trying to benefit the world, the academic tries to say he’s trying to change the world when all he’s really doing is maintaining a particular operationally closed autopoietic system.  How to break this closure is a key question for any truly engaged political theory.  And part of breaking that closure will entail eating some humble pie.  Adam Kotsko [wrote a wonderful and hilarious post](http://itself.wordpress.com/2012/08/04/the-practical-know-how-of-humanities-academics/) on the absurdities of some political theorizing and its self-importance today.  We’ve failed horribly with university politics and defending the humanities, yet in our holier-than-thou attitudes we call for a direct move to communism.  Perhaps we need to reflect a bit on ourselves and our strategies and what political theory should be about. Setting all this aside, I think there’s a danger in Wark’s claims about abstraction (though I think he’s asking the right sort of question).  The danger in treating hyperobjects like capitalism as being everywhere and nowhere is that our ability to act becomes paralyzed.  As a materialist, I’m committed to the thesis that everything is ultimately material and requires some sort of material embodiment.  If that’s true, it follows that there are points of purchase on every object, even where that object is a hyperobject.  This is why, given the current form that power takes or the age of hyperobjects, I believe that forms of theory such as new materialism, object-oriented ontology, and actor-network theory are more important than ever (clearly the Whiteheadians are out as they see everything as internally related, as an organism, and therefore have no way of theorizing change and political engagement; they’re quasi-Hegelian, justifying even the discord in the world as a part of “god’s” selection and harmonization of intensities). The important thing to remember is that hyperobjects like capitalism are unable to function without a material base.  They require highways, shipping routes, trains and railroads, fiber optic cables for communication, and a host of other things besides.  Without what [Shannon Mattern](http://www.wordsinspace.net/wordpress/) calls “infrastructure”, it’s impossible for this particular hyperobject exists.  Every hyperobject requires its arteries.  Information, markets, trade, require the paths along which they travel and capitalism as we know it today would not be possible without its paths.  The problem with so much political theory today is that it focuses on the semiosphere in the form of ideologies, discourses, narratives, laws, etc., ignoring the arteries required for the semiosphere to exercise its power.  For example, we get OWS standing in front of Wall Street protesting– engaging in a speech act –yet one wonders if speech is an adequate way of addressing the sort of system we exist in.  Returning to system’s theory, is the system of capital based on individual decisions of bankers and CEO’s, or does the system itself have its own cognition, it’s own mode of action, that they’re ineluctably trapped in?  Isn’t there a sort of humanist prejudice embodied in this form of political engagement?  It has value in that it might create larger collectives of people to fight these intelligent aliens that live amongst us (markets, corporations, etc), but it doesn’t address these aliens themselves because it doesn’t even acknowledge their existence. What we need is a politics adequate to hyperobjects, and that is above all a politics that targets arteries.  OOO, new materialism, and actor-network theory are often criticized for being “apolitical” by people who are fascinated with political declarations, who are obsessed with showing that your papers are in order, that you’ve chosen the right team, and that see critique and protest as the real mode of political engagement.  But it is not clear what difference these theorists are making and how they are escaping intra-systemic self-reference and auto-reproduction.  But the message of these orientations is “to the things themselves!”, “to the assemblages themselves!”  “Quit your macho blather about where you stand, and actually map power and how it exercises itself!”  And part of this re-orientation of politics, if it exists, consists in rendering deconstruction far more concrete.  Deconstruction would no longer show merely the leaks in any system and its diacritical oppositions, it would go to the things themselves.  What does that mean?  It means that deconstruction would practice onto-cartography or identify the arteries by which capitalism perpetuates itself and find ways to block them.  You want to topple the 1% and get their attention?  Don’t stand in front of Wall Street and bitch [yell] at bankers and brokers, occupy a highway.  Hack a satellite and shut down communications.  Block a port.  Erase data banks, etc.  Block the arteries; block the paths that this hyperobject requires to sustain itself.  This is the only way you will tilt the hands of power and create bargaining power with government organs of capital and corporations.  You have to hit them where they live, in their arteries.  Did anyone ever change their diet without being told that they would die?  Your critique is an important and indispensable step, but if you really wish to produce change you need to find ways to create heart attacks and aneurysms.  Short of that, your activity is just masturbation.  But this requires coming to discern where the arteries are and doing a little less critique of cultural artifacts and ideologies.  Yet choose your targets carefully.  The problem with the Seattle protests was that they chose idiotic targets and simply acted on impotent rage.  A window is not an artery.  It doesn’t organize a flow of communication and capital.  It’s the arteries that you need to locate.  I guess this post will get Homeland Security after me.

Mao

The affirmative distances themselves from the real world within an academic cloister – Revolution is not writing an essay, revolution happens at the end of a gun barrel, and the negative is passing out rifles

The Honorable Chairman Mao Zedong in 1927 (report on an investigation of the peasant movement in hunan to CCP headquarters in Shanghai, Mao Zedong 1927)JFS

The main targets of attack by the peasants are the local tyrants, the evil gentry and the lawless landlords, but in passing they also hit out against patriarchal ideas and institutions, against the corrupt officials in the cities and against bad practices and customs in the rural areas. In force and momentum the attack is tempestuous; those who bow before it survive and those who resist perish. As a result, the privileges which the feudal landlords enjoyed for thousands of years are being shattered to pieces. Every bit of the dignity and prestige built up by the landlords is being swept into the dust. With the collapse of the power of the landlords, the peasant associations have now become the sole organs of authority and the popular slogan "All power to the peasant associations" has become a reality. Even trifles such as a quarrel between husband and wife are brought to the peasant association. Nothing can be settled unless someone from the peasant association is present. The association actually dictates all rural affairs, and, quite literally, "whatever it says, goes". Those who are outside the associations can only speak well of them and cannot say anything against them. The local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords have been deprived of all right to speak, and none of them dares even mutter dissent. In the face of the peasant associations' power and pressure, the top local tyrants and evil gentry have fled to Shanghai, those of the second rank to Hankow, those of the third to Changsha and those of the fourth to the county towns, while the fifth rank and the still lesser fry surrender to the peasant associations in the villages. "Here's ten yuan. Please let me join the peasant association," one of the smaller of the evil gentry will say.  "Ugh! Who wants your filthy money?" the peasants reply. Many middle and small landlords and rich peasants and even some middle peasants, who were all formerly opposed to the peasant associations, are now vainly seeking admission. Visiting various places, I often came across such people who pleaded with me, "Mr. Committeeman from the provincial capital, please be my sponsor!" In the Ching Dynasty, the household census compiled by the local authorities consisted of a regular register and "the other" register, the former for honest people and the latter for burglars, bandits and similar undesirables. In some places the peasants now use this method to scare those who formerly opposed the associations. They say, "Put their names down in the other register!" Afraid of being entered in the other register, such people try various devices to gain admission into the peasant associations, on which their minds are so set that they do not feel safe until their names are entered. But more often than not they are turned down flat, and so they are always on tenterhooks; with the doors of the association barred to them, they are like tramps without a home or, in rural parlance, "mere trash". In short, what was looked down upon four months ago as a "gang of peasants" has now become a most honourable institution. Those who formerly prostrated themselves before the power of the gentry now bow before the power of the peasants. No matter what their identity, all admit that the world since last October is a different one. The peasants' revolt disturbed the gentry's sweet dreams. When the news from the countryside reached the cities, it caused immediate uproar among the gentry. Soon after my arrival in Changsha, I met all sorts of people and picked up a good deal of gossip. From the middle social strata upwards to the Kuomintang right-wingers, there was not a single person who did not sum up the whole business in the phrase, "It's terrible!" Under the impact of the views of the "It's terrible!" school then flooding the city, even quite revolutionary minded people became down-hearted as they pictured the events in the countryside in their mind's eye; and they were unable to deny the word "terrible". Even quite progressive people said, "Though terrible, it is inevitable in a revolution." In short, nobody could altogether deny the word "terrible". But, as already mentioned, the fact is that the great peasant masses have risen to fulfil their historic mission and that the forces of rural democracy have risen to overthrow the forces of rural feudalism. The patriarchal- feudal class of local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords has formed the basis of autocratic government for thousands of years and is the cornerstone of imperialism, warlordism and corrupt officialdom. To over-throw these feudal forces is the real objective of the national revolution. In a few months the peasants have accomplished what Dr. Sun Yat-sen wanted, but failed, to accomplish in the forty years he devoted to the national revolution. This is a marvellous feat never before achieved, not just in forty, but in thousands of years. It's fine. It is not "terrible" at all. It is anything but "terrible". "It's terrible!" is obviously a theory for combating the rise of the peasants in the interests of the landlords; it is obviously a theory of the landlord class for preserving the old order of feudalism and obstructing the establishment of the new order of democracy, it is obviously a counter-revolutionary theory. No revolutionary comrade should echo this nonsense. If your revolutionary viewpoint is firmly established and if you have been to the villages and looked around, you will undoubtedly feel thrilled as never before. Countless thousands of the enslaved -- the peasants -- are striking down the enemies who battened on their flesh. What the peasants are doing is absolutely right; what they are doing is fine! "It's fine!" is the theory of the peasants and of all other revolutionaries. Every revolutionary comrade should know that the national revolution requires a great change in the countryside. The Revolution of 1911[[3](http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/HP27.html#en3)] did not bring about this change, hence its failure. This change is now taking place, and it is an important factor for the completion of the revolution. Every revolutionary comrade must support it, or he will be taking the stand of counter-revolution. Then there is another section of people who say, "Yes, peasant associations are necessary, but they are going rather too far." This is the opinion of the middle-of-the-roaders. But what is the actual situation? True, the peasants are in a sense "unruly" in the country-side. Supreme in authority, the peasant association allows the landlord no say and sweeps away his prestige. This amounts to striking the landlord down to the dust and keeping him there. The peasants threaten, "We will put you in the other register!" They fine the local tyrants and evil gentry, they demand contributions from them, and they smash their sedan-chairs. People swarm into the houses of local tyrants and evil gentry who are against the peasant association, slaughter their pigs and consume their grain. They even loll for a minute or two on the ivory-inlaid beds belonging to the young ladies in the households of the local tyrants and evil gentry. At the slightest provocation they make arrests, crown the arrested with tall paper hats, and parade them through the villages, saying, "You dirty landlords, now you know who we are!" Doing whatever they like and turning everything upside down, they have created a kind of terror in the countryside. This is what some people call "going too far", or "exceeding the proper limits in righting a wrong", or "really too much". Such talk may seem plausible, but in fact it is wrong. First, the local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords have themselves driven the peasants to this. For ages they have used their power to tyrannize over the peasants and trample them underfoot; that is why the peasants have reacted so strongly. The most violent revolts and the most serious disorders have invariably occurred in places where the local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords perpetrated the worst outrages. The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves severe punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly -- the peasants keep clear accounts, and very seldom has the punishment exceeded the crime. Secondly, a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous.[[4](http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/HP27.html#en4)] A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class. Without using the greatest force, the peasants cannot possibly overthrow the deep-rooted authority of the landlords which has lasted for thousands of years. The rural areas need a mighty revolutionary upsurge, for it alone can rouse the people in their millions to become a powerful force. All the actions mentioned here which have been labelled as "going too far" flow from the power of the peasants, which has been called forth by the mighty revolutionary upsurge in the countryside. It was highly necessary for such things to be done in the second period of the peasant movement, the period of revolutionary action. In this period it was necessary to establish the absolute authority of the peasants. It was necessary to forbid malicious criticism of the peasant associations. It was necessary to overthrow the whole authority of the gentry, to strike them to the ground and keep them there. There is revolutionary significance in all the actions which were labelled as "going too far" in this period. To put it bluntly, it is necessary to create terror for a while in every rural area, or otherwise it would be impossible to suppress the activities of the counter-revolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry. Proper limits have to be exceeded in order to right a wrong, or else the wrong cannot be righted.[[5](http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/HP27.html#en5)] Those who talk about the peasants "going too far" seem at first sight to be different from those who say "It's terrible!" as mentioned earlier, but in essence they proceed from the same standpoint and likewise voice a landlord theory that upholds the interests of the privileged classes. Since this theory impedes the rise of the peasant movement and so disrupts the revolution, we must firmly oppose it.

Their leftist criticism traps us in a marsh where our freedoms are limited and there is no authentic freedom to ACT – only the action of our alternative solves

Lenin 1902 (Vladimir, What is to be Done?)JFS

"Freedom of criticism" is undoubtedly the most fashionable slogan at the present time, and the one most frequently employed in the controversies between the Socialists and democrats of all countries. At first sight, nothing would appear to be more strange than the solemn appeals by one of the parties to the dispute to freedom of criticism. Have voices been raised in the advanced parties against the constitutional law of the majority of European countries which guarantees freedom to science and scientific investigation? "Something must be wrong here," will be the comment of the onlooker, who has not yet fully grasped the essence of the disagreements among the disputants, but has heard this fashionable slogan repeated at every crossroad. "Evidently this slogan is one of the conventional phrases which, like a nickname, becomes legitimatized by use, and becomes almost an appellative," he will conclude.     In fact, it is no secret that two trends have taken shape in the present-day international[[\*](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/WD02.html#np7)] Social-Democracy. The fight between these trends now flares up in a bright flame, and now dies down and smoulders under the ashes of imposing "truce resolutions." What this "new" trend, which adopts a "critical" attitude towards "obsolete dogmatic" Marxism, represents has with sufficient precision been *stated* by Bernstein, and *demonstrated* by Millerand.     Social-Democracy must change from a party of the social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand with a whole battery of symmetrically arranged "new" arguments and reasonings. The possibility of putting Socialism on a scientific basis and of proving from the point of view of the materialist conception of history that it is necessary and inevitable was denied, as was also the growing impoverishment, proletarianization and the intensification of capitalist contradictions. The very conception, "*ultimate aim*," was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was abso- lutely rejected. It was denied that there is any counter-distinction in principle between liberalism and Socialism. *The theory of the class struggle* was rejected on the grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society, governed according to the will of the majority, etc. Thus, the demand for a resolute turn from revolutionary Social-Democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less resolute turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism. As this criticism of Marxism has been going on for a long time now, from the political platform, from university chairs, in numerous pamphlets and in a number of learned treatises, as the entire younger generation of the educated classes has been systematically trained for decades on this criticism, it is not surprising that the "new, critical" trend in Social-Democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter.[[11](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/WD02.html" \l "n11)] The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois literature to socialist literature. To proceed. If Bernstein's theoretical criticism and political yearnings are still unclear to anyone, the French have taken the trouble graphically to demonstrate the "new method." In this instance, too, France has justified its old reputation of being the country in which "more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision. . . ." (Engels, in his introduction[[12](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/WD02.html#n12)] to Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.[[13](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/WD02.html#n13)]) The French Socialists have begun, not to theorize, but to act. The democratically more highly developed political conditions in France have permitted them to put "Bernsteinism into practice" immediately, with all its consequences. Millerand has provided an excellent example of practical Bernsteinism; not without reason did Bernstein and Vollmar rush so zealously to defend and praise him I Indeed, if Social-Democracy, in essence, is merely a party of reform, and must be bold enough to admit this openly, then not only has a Socialist the right to join a bourgeois cabinet, but must always strive to do so. If democracy, in essence, means the abolition of class domination, then why should not a Socialist minister charm the whole bourgeois world by orations on class collaboration? Why should he not remain in the cabinet even after the shooting down of workers by gendarmes has exposed, for the hundredth and thousandth time, the real nature of the democratic collaboration of classes? Why should he not personally take part in greeting the tsar, for whom the French Socialists now have no other name than hero of the gallows, knout and exile (knouteur, pendeur et déportateur)? And the reward for this utter humiliation and self-degradation of Socialism in the face of the whole world, for the corruption of the socialist consciousness of the worker masses -- the only basis that can guarantee our victory -- the reward for this is pompous plans for niggardly reforms, so niggardly in fact that much more has been obtained from bourgeois governments! He who does not deliberately close his eyes cannot fail to see that the new "critical" trend in Socialism is nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*. And if we judge people not by the brilliant uniforms they don, not by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions, and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that "freedom of criticism" means freedom for an opportunistic trend in Social-Democracy, the freedom to convert Social-Democracy into a democratic party of reform, the freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into Socialism.  "Freedom" is a grand word, but under the banner of free trade the most predatory wars were conducted; under the banner of free labour, the toilers were robbed. The modern use of the term "freedom of criticism" contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have advanced science would demand, not freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the new views for the old. The cry "Long live freedom criticism," that is heard today, too strongly calls to mind the fable of the empty barrel.[[14](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/WD02.html" \l "n14)]     We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance under their almost constant fire. We have combined voluntarily, precisely for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not to retreat into the adjacent marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now several among us begin to cry out: let us go into this marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: how conservative you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word "freedom," for we too are "free" to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!

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OOO

Pretending that only ideologies and signifiers structure social relations is wrong and it creates political failures – this correlationist criticism cannot change anything

Bryant 12 (Levi, prof of phil @ Collin College, Worries about OOO and Politics, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/05/29/worries-about-ooo-and-politics/)JFS

<correlationism = the idea that “thinking” and “being” are intrinsically tied, and that one cannot exist without the other>

2)  Correlationism and its Discontents:  For me, at least, the desire to overcome correlationism does not arise out of some pure speculative desire to “get at the things themselves”, but because I believe that correlationism has noxious political consequences that cultivate an attitude destructive to effective political practice or engagement.  As Stacy Alaimo, who is not an OOO theorist but who is very close to my onticology in many respects puts it, Matter, the vast stuff of the world and of ourselves, has been subdivided into manageable “bits” or flattened into a “blank slate” for human inscription.  The environment has been drained of its blood, its lively creatures, its interactions and relations– in short, all that is recognizable as “nature” –in order that it become a mere empty space, an “uncontested ground,” for human “development”.  (Bodily Natures, 1 – 2) Correlationism trains us to see all other material things as alienated images of ourselves in a mirror.  The question always becomes “what are things for *us*?”, and the thesis is that matter is merely a brute passive stuff awaiting our inscriptions.  In other words, the basic gesture that become dominant in cultural theory beginning around the 60′s was to show that what we take to be objects are really our own significations that we fail to recognize as our own.  A critical analysis– modeled on Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism but diverging quite significantly from his materialism –thus came to consist in revealing how these significations come from us, rather than from the things themselves. Now, as I have said, both here and elsewhere, I have no desire to abandon this form of analysis.  As I argue, all entities translate other entities in particular ways and this is no less true of humans.  However, the problem with this style of analysis is that it renders invisible the differences contributed by nonhuman objects to social assemblages.  We come to think that it is just significations that structure social assemblages and that if we want to change social assemblages all we have to do is critique and debunk significations or ideologies.  Clearly critiquing and debunking ideologies is a part of changing social assemblages, but it is not the only part.  And because correlationism functions as a theoretical axiom where we don’t even recognize the existence of this other part– say rice –because it treats the only real difference as signifying difference, we find ourselves surprised when we’ve adequately critiqued and debunked signifying systems and the social system doesn’t change.  Perhaps this would clue us into the possibility that perhaps there are other actors involved in these social assemblages, holding people in place in particular ways. The problem is that correlationism tends to render non-signifying differences in social assemblages invisible because it begins from the axiom that nonhuman things are just blank slates awaiting our inscription.  Anyone who’s ever gardened knows that this can’t possibly be true.  The diacritical nature of how I signify “tomato” will not make my tomatoes grow any better.  No, to grow tomatoes I have to navigate soil conditions, sunlight and heat (which are quite substantial here in Texas), the gangs of roving rabbits that populate my back yard, insects, worms, water, etc.  I am enmeshed in an entire network of actors that contribute to whether or not the tomatoes will grow and, more importantly, I must constantly attend to these nonhuman actors. The point here is not, as Berry suggests, to diminish human political interventions and promote a troubling conservatism, but to expand the sites of political intervention as well as our possibilities of acting.  We cannot effectively act and change things if we don’t know how the assemblages within which we are enmeshed are put together, what actors are present in those assemblages, and how we might intervene on these actors to change our social possibilities.  Correlationism tends to draw our attention to only one type of actor– the signifier –and while this is a real actor it is not the only one.

Radical freedom link

Creativity link

Bell and Russell 2k (anne and constance, Canadian journal of education, http://www.csse-scee.ca/CJE/Articles/FullText/CJE25-3/CJE25-3-bell.pdf)JFS

Take, for example, Freire’s (1990) statements about the differences between “Man” and animals. To set up his discussion of praxis and the importance of “naming” the world, he outlines what he assumes to be shared, commonsensical beliefs about humans and other animals. He defines the boundaries of human membership according to a sharp, hierarchical dichotomy that establishes human superiority. Humans alone, he reminds us, are aware and self-conscious beings who can act to fulfill the objectives they set for themselves. Humans alone are able to infuse the world with their creative presence, to overcome situations that limit them, and thus to demonstrate a “decisive attitude towards the world” (p. 90). Freire (1990, pp. 87–91) represents other animals in terms of their lack of such traits. They are doomed to passively accept the given, their lives “totally determined” because their decisions belong not to themselves but to their species. Thus whereas humans inhabit a “world” which they create and transform and from which they can separate themselves, for animals there is only habitat, a mere physical space to which they are “organically bound.” To accept Freire’s assumptions is to believe that humans are animals only in a nominal sense. We are different not in degree but in kind, and though we might recognize that other animals have distinct qualities, we as humans are somehow more unique. We have the edge over other creatures because we are able to rise above monotonous, species-determined biological existence. Change in the service of human freedom is seen to be our primary agenda. Humans are thus cast as active agents whose very essence is to transform the world – as if somehow acceptance, appreciation, wonder, and reverence were beyond the pale. This discursive frame of reference is characteristic of critical pedagogy. The human/animal opposition upon which it rests is taken for granted, its cultural and historical specificity not acknowledged. And therein lies the problem. Like other social constructions, this one derives its persuasiveness from its “seeming facticity and from the deep investments individuals and communities have in setting themselves off from others” (Britzman et al., 1991, p. 91). This becomes the normal way of seeing the world, and like other discourses of normalcy, it limits possibilities of taking up and confronting inequities (see Britzman, 1995). The primacy of the human enterprise is simply not questioned. Precisely how an anthropocentric pedagogy might exacerbate the environmental crisis has not received much consideration in the literature of critical pedagogy, especially in North America. Although there may be passing reference to planetary destruction, there is seldom mention of the relationship between education and the domination of nature, let alone any sustained exploration of the links between the domination of nature and other social injustices. Concerns about the nonhuman are relegated to environmental education. And since environmental education, in turn, remains peripheral to the core curriculum (A. Gough, 1997; Russell, Bell, & Fawcett, 2000), anthropocentrism passes unchallenged.1

Perm Answers

2. Sequencing DA – they make the object a footnote in cultural studies, we must focus on objects because discourse currently has a total hegemony in the academy

Bryant 12 (Levi, prof of phil @ Collin College, Worries about OOO and Politics, http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/05/29/worries-about-ooo-and-politics/)JFS

Again, it is difficult to see how any of these considerations are indifferent to politics– for me they’re riddles with political considerations –or how they aim to cultivate a political conservatism.  The entire aim is to enhance our ability to act, change the world about us, and intervene.  This requires that we actually know what is organizing situations.  And here I believe that nonhuman actors play a significant role in why assemblages take the form they do.  If there is currently a focus on nonhuman entities in OOO– and I perpetually go back and forth between human and nonhuman actors in my work, trying to show their imbrications with each other –then this is because signification currently hegemonizes cultural studies and the humanities and it is necessary to bring other things into relief.  I would invite Berry to tarry a bit with the question of what difference toilets make– especially in human assemblages where they are absent –and what changing introducing plumbing might make in those assemblages.  If he thinks seriously about such earthly things he might begin to see that signifying intervention is not the only form of intervention and that often big emancipatory differences can be introduced by attending to non-signifying entities.