### Contention One is The Wind Turbine as Object

Regulations on the wind turbine have been structured around an aesthetic of pure Nature – this is ultimately a facile attempt to save a concept of being in the world which has been lost

Morton 11

(Prof of Lit & the Environment in the English Dep’t @ UC-Davis 2011 Timothy Unsustaining World Picture Journal <http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_5/PDFs/Morton.pdf>)

In Lakewood, Colorado, residents objected to the building of a solar array in a park in 2008 because it didn’t look “natural.” 11 Objections to wind farms are similar—not because of the risk to birds, but because they “spoil the view.” A 2008 plan to put a wind farm near a remote Scottish island was, well, scotched, because residents of the island complained that their view would be destroyed. This is truly a case of the aesthetics of Nature impeding ecology, and a good argument for why ecology must be without Nature. How come a wind turbine is less beautiful than an oil pipe? How come it “spoils the view” any more than pipes and roads? You could see turbines as environmental art. Wind chimes play in the wind; some environmental sculptures sway and rock in the breeze. Wind farms have a slightly frightening size and magnificence. One could easily read them as embodying the aesthetics of the sublime (rather than the beautiful). But it’s an ethical sublime, that says, “We humans choose not to use carbon”—a choice visible in gigantic turbines. Perhaps it’s this very visibility of choice that makes wind farms disturbing: visible choice, rather than secret pipes, running under an apparently undisturbed “landscape” (a word for a painting, not actual trees and water). (And now of course there are wind spires, which do reproduce a kind of aesthetic distance common in landscape painting.) As a poster in the office of Mulder in The X-Files used to say, “The Truth is Out There.” Ideology is not just in your head. It’s in the shape of a Coke bottle. It’s in the way some things appear “natural” — rolling hills and greenery — as if the Industrial Revolution had never occurred. These fake landscapes are the original greenwashing. What the Scots are saying, in objecting to wind farms, is not “Save the environment!” but “Leave our dreams undisturbed!” World is an aesthetic construct that depends on things like underground oil and gas pipes. A profound political act would be to choose another aesthetic construct, one that doesn’t require smoothness and distance and coolness.

This refusal of the wind turbine is an unethical method of politics – the attempt to secure the world as-is is dangerous because it fails to confront the loss of World in the face of global warming – only an object oriented ontology can forge the alliances necessary to confront climate change

Morton 11

(Prof of Lit & the Environment in the English Dep’t @ UC-Davis 2011 Timothy Unsustaining World Picture Journal <http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_5/PDFs/Morton.pdf>)

Now for a kick off, there are many reasons why, even if world were a valid concept altogether, it shouldn’t be used as the basis for ethics. Consider only this: witch-ducking stools constitute a world just as much as hammers. There was a wonderful world of witchducking in the Middle Ages. Witch-ducking stools constituted a world for their users in every meaningful sense. There is for sure a world of Nazi regalia. Just because the Nazis had a world, doesn’t mean we should be preserving it. So the argument that “It’s good because it constitutes a world” is, to use the technical term, bogus. The reasoning that one should not interfere with the environment because doing so interferes with someone’s or something’s world is nowhere near a good enough reason. It might even have pernicious consequences. So I’m afraid we must part with Donna Haraway, whose ethics insists that nonhumans are worthy of our care and respect because they constitute worlds, they are in the worlding business. I part company with Haraway here, just as she parts with me, since she thinks that what I’m proposing by contrast is “exterminism”—getting entities oven-ready for destruction. To which I reply, how can you get an entity that doesn’t exist ready for destruction?

The second area of concern is historical, namely the way in which current ecological crises such as global warming and the Sixth Mass Extinction Event have thrown into sharp relief the notion of world. It is as if humans are losing their world, and their idea of world (including the idea that they ever had one), at one and the same time. This is at best highly disorientating. In this historical moment, the concept world is thrown into sharp relief by circumstances demanding conscious human intervention. Working to transcend our notion of world is important at this moment. Like a mannerist painting that stretches the rules of classicism to breaking point, global warming has stretched our world to breaking point. Human beings lack a world for a very good reason. This is simply because no entity at all has a world, or as Graham Harman puts it, “there is no such thing as a ‘horizon’.” 12

Let’s think about one way in which global warming abolishes the idea of a horizon. This would be the timescales involved—yes, timescales in the plural. There are three of them. We could call these, in turn, the frightening, the horrifying, and the petrifying.

1) Frightening timescale. It will take several hundred years for cold ocean waters (assuming there are any) to absorb about 75% of the excess CO2.

2) Horrifying timescale. It will then take another 30,000 years or so for most of the remaining 25% to be absorbed by igneous rocks. The half-life of plutonium is 24,100 years.

3) Petrifying timescale. The final 7% will be around 100,000 years from now.

There is a real sense in which “forever” is far easier on the mind than these very large timescales, what I call very large finitude. Hyperobjects produce very large finitude, scales of time and space that are finite and for that reason humiliatingly difficult for humans to visualize. Forever makes you feel important. 100,000 years makes you wonder whether you can imagine 100,000 anything. It seems rather abstract to imagine that a book, for instance, is 100,000 words long.

The “world” as the significant totality of what is the case is strictly unimaginable, and for a good reason: it doesn’t exist.

What is left if we aren’t the world? Intimacy. We have lost the world but gained a soul, as it were—the entities that coexist with us obtrude on our awareness with greater and greater urgency. Our era is witness to the emergence of a renewed Aristotelianism, an object-oriented ontology that thinks essence as right here, not in some beyond. It’s precisely the magical amazement of things like stones, beetles, doors, red hot chili peppers, Nirvana, Bob Geldof, quasars and cartoon characters in the shape of Richard Nixon’s head that truly has to be explained, not explained away. Three cheers for the so-called end of the world, then, since this moment is the beginning of history, the end of the human dream that reality is significant for humans alone—the prospect of forging new alliances between humans and nonhumans alike, now that we have stepped out of the cocoon of world.

Unfortunately the United States Federal Government engages in this attempt to secure the world as-is via its regulations on wind power on federal lands

Vann 12

(February 1, Adam Vann Legislative Attorney “Energy Projects on Federal Lands:

Leasing and Authorization” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40806.pdf>)

As with oil, gas and geothermal leasing, not all federal lands are available for wind and solar renewable energy project rights-of-way. Lands designated as Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas, National Monuments, National Conservation Areas (with the notable exception of the California Desert Conservation Area), National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Historic and Scenic Trails, are categories of land not open to solar and wind energy development.172 In addition, some special management areas, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, may not be suitable for development.173

#### These restrictions also mandate incorporation of the turbine into the surrounding landscape

Tidwell 11

(08/04/2011 Thomas L. Tidwell, Chief, Forest Service. “Final Directives for Forest Service Wind Energy Special Use Authorizations, Forest Service Manual 2720, Forest Service Handbooks 2609.13 and 2709.11” <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/08/04/2011-19673/final-directives-for-forest-service-wind-energy-special-use-authorizations-forest-service-manual#p-179>)

FSH 2709.11, section 72.21, addresses siting considerations for initial screening of wind energy proposals and review of wind energy applications. FSH 2709.11, section 73.4b, in the final directives requires authorized officers to ensure that applicants integrate wind turbine strings and design into the surrounding landscape, based on the scenic integrity objectives in the applicable land management plan. FSH 2709.11, section 73.32, paragraph 12, in the final directives requires authorized officers to ensure that applicants produce a visual simulation depicting the scale, scope, and visual effects of all components of their proposed wind energy project.

This relationship to ecology makes ecological disaster inevitable – the status quo🡺 environmental nihilism – we should instead reinforce our alienation from Nature

Vafin 12

(Institute of Philosophy Russian Academy of Sciences 2012 Arthur Zizek, Ecology, Conservatism International Journal of Zizek Studies 6.1 <http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/349/430>)

According to Žižek, modern understanding of ecology is the real false consciousness, connected with mystification of real problems. Postmodern mysticism arises when disasters begin to be rationalized, interpreted in strict logic terms of cause-effect relations. Such interpretation makes life easier. However, nature is not an absolute balance and total harmony (this aspect of Žižek’s thought makes him akin to classical conservatives). Nature is a series of unthinkable disasters. Žižek believes that ecology is transforming into a new western conservative ideology: “One should not play games with nature! Do not touch DNA! Do not develop new medicines! Do not invent new technologies!” How one should react to these reproaches? Žižek’s recipe is to reinforce alienation from nature, to become more artificial.

Isn’t this recipe too radical? If to examine it more closely, Žižek is expecting the same thing that Leontyev did, maybe on another, but not less horrifying scale. To reinforce alienation from nature does not mean to destroy it. Nature is a social construct that is to be reconsidered. But how? What should be done for this? Firstly, one should not run away from one’s problems and mystify, but should acknowledge them and deal with them. “Considering that depletion has reached its limits, they have started to talk everywhere about ‘responsibility’, the need for ‘selfrestriction’ and ‘asceticism’”, writes Gunther Rormozer, an exponent of conservative political philosophy. However, “after a short indignation at the scale of the ecological crisis, it can be said that almost naturally there came the triumph of nihilism… Reports on forest mortality don’t trouble anyone anymore.” [Rormozer 1996: 188] Nowadays forest mortality should be as important as social well-being improvement. Secondly, dealing with problems should be based on spiritual values and not on the approach of profit maximization and cost minimization. Otherwise new transportable Fukushimas will come.

This severing of relational understandings of the world is necessary to overcome the violence of Modernity’s dualism

Bryant 11

(Professor of Philosophy at Collin College 2011 Levi Democracy of Objects <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/9750134.0001.001/1:4/--democracy-of-objects?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

From the foregoing it can be gathered that the ontology I am proposing is rather peculiar. Rather than treating objects as entities opposed to a subject, I treat all entities, including subjects, as objects. Moreover, in order to overcome the dual world hypothesis of Modernity, I argue that it is necessary to staunchly defend the autonomy of objects or substances, refusing any reduction of objects to their relations, whether these relations be relations to humans or other objects. In my view, the root of the Modernist schema arises from relationism. If we are to escape the aporia that beset the Modernist schema this, above all, requires us to overcome relationism or the thesis that objects are constituted by their relations. Accordingly, following the ground-breaking work of Graham Harman's object-oriented philosophy, I argue that objects are withdrawn from all relation. The consequences of this strange thesis are, I believe, profound. On the one hand, in arguing that objects are withdrawn from their relations, we are able to preserve the autonomy and irreducibility of substance, thereby sidestepping the endless, and at this point rather stale, debate between the epistemological realists and anti-realists. On the other hand, where the anti-realists have obsessively focused on a single gap between humans and objects, endlessly revolving around the manner in which objects are inaccessible to representation, object-oriented philosophy allows us to pluralize this gap, treating it not as a unique or privileged peculiarity of humans, but as true of all relations between objects whether they involve humans or not. In short, the difference between humans and other objects is not a difference in kind, but a difference in degree. Put differently, all objects translate one another. Translation is not unique to how the mind relates to the world. And as a consequence of this, no object has direct access to any other object.

Onticology and object-oriented philosophy thus find themselves in a strange position with respect to speculative realism. Speculative realism is a loosely affiliated philosophical movement that arose out of a Goldsmith's College conference organized by Alberto Toscano in 2007. While the participants at this event—Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux—share vastly different philosophical positions, they are all united in defending a variant of realism and in rejecting anti-realism or what they call “correlationism”. With the other speculative realists, onticology and object-oriented philosophy defend a realist ontology that refuses to treat objects as constructions or mere correlates of mind, subject, culture, or language. However, with the anti-realists, onticology and object-oriented philosophy argue that objects have no direct access to one another and that each object translates other objects with which it enters into non-relational relations. Object-oriented philosophy and onticology thus reject the epistemological realism of other realist philosophies, taking leave of the project of policing representations and demystifying critique. The difference is that where the anti-realists focus on a single gap between humans and objects, object-oriented philosophy and onticology treat this gap as a ubiquitous feature of all beings. One of the great strengths of object-oriented philosophy and onticology is thus, I believe, that it can integrate a number of the findings of anti-realist philosophy, and continental social and political theory, without falling into the deadlocks that currently plague anti-realist strains of thought.

The tool – in this case the wind turbine – is always already withdrawn – we should refuse relational orientations and focus equal attention on the turbine itself

Richmond 10

(Ass’t Prof - Film & Media Studies – Department of English @ Wayne State University 2010 Scott Thought, Untethered. A review essay Postmodern Culture 21.1 project muse)

For Heidegger (the received Heidegger, anyway), any analysis of the world must take into account readiness-to-hand, presentness-at-hand, as well as their correlation. For Harman, this position is crassly anthropocentric. Readiness-to-hand does not name a special relation humans have to tools, but rather the available or disposable aspect of any object with respect to any other object. In "The Theory of Objects," he develops this analysis with the example of a bridge:

Walking across a bridge, I am adrift in a world of equipment: the girders and pylons that support me, the durable power of concrete beneath my feet, the dense unyielding grain of the topsoil in which the bridge is rooted. What looks at first like the simple and trivial act of walking is actually embedded in the most intricate web of tool-pieces, tiny implanted devices watching over our activity, sustaining or resisting our efforts like transparent ghosts or gels. (TSR 24)

For Harman, the tool—any given object—is enmeshed in a set of total relations (i.e. the world). Meanwhile, each object is visible only very partially from any given perspective. "The bridge has a completely different reality for every entity it encounters: it is utterly distinct for the seagull, the idle walker, and those who may be driving across it toward a game or a funeral" (TSR 25). The word utterly here is doing a great deal of work: the claim is that the relation between the seagull and the bridge is of a radically different, wholly unrelated, kind than the relation between the idle walker and the bridge.

This allows Harman to claim that "there is an absolute gulf between Heidegger's readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand" (TSR 26). No matter how it manifests itself, the bridge (or any other object) itself is always infinitely withdrawn. Any relation a walker, a seagull, or a driver in a car may have to it always radically misses what the bridge is, in itself. And any relation, in any modality, we may have with a tool, whether it be practical or contemplative, aesthetic or empirical, also always radically misses the object. Harman's object-orientation entails a concern with the "unchecked fury" of the withdrawn essence of objects (TSR 26). Doing justice to the object itself means affirming such fury, and also affirming that we never reach any object as it is in itself. But crucially, neither does any other object: objects are withdrawn from each other as radically as they are from us. The relation (or non-relation) between bolts and pylons is of exactly the same kind as between humans and the bridge: "all relations are on the same footing" (TSR 202). What's refreshing about Harman is his insistence that bolts and pylons deserve as much or more attention from philosophers as the typical objects of philosophy: language, knowledge, mind, etc.

A democracy of the object demands that ontology precede epistemology – epistemological questions 🡺 anthropocentrism

Bryant 11

(Professor of Philosophy at Collin College 2011 Levi Democracy of Objects

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/9750134.0001.001/1:4/--democracy-of-objects?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

Yet in all of the heated debates surrounding epistemology that have cast nearly every discipline in turmoil, we nonetheless seem to miss the point that the question of the object is not an epistemological question, not a question of how we know the object, but a question of what objects are. The being of objects is an issue distinct from the question of our knowledge of objects. Here, of course, it seems obvious that in order to discuss the being of objects we must first know objects. And if this is the case, it follows as a matter of course that epistemology or questions of knowledge must precede ontology. However, I hope to show in what follows that questions of ontology are both irreducible to questions of epistemology and that questions of ontology must precede questions of epistemology or questions of our access to objects. What an object is cannot be reduced to our access to objects. And as we will see in what follows, that access is highly limited. Nonetheless, while our access to objects is highly limited, we can still say a great deal about the being of objects.

However, despite the limitations of access, we must avoid, at all costs, the thesis that objects are what our access to objects gives us. As Graham Harman has argued, objects are not the given. Not at all. As such, this book defends a robust realism. Yet, and this is crucial to everything that follows, the realism defended here is not an epistemological realism, but an ontological realism. Epistemological realism argues that our representations and language are accurate mirrors of the world as it actually is, regardless of whether or not we exist. It seeks to distinguish between true representations and phantasms. Ontological realism, by contrast, is not a thesis about our knowledge of objects, but about the being of objects themselves, whether or not we exist to represent them. It is the thesis that the world is composed of objects, that these objects are varied and include entities as diverse as mind, language, cultural and social entities, and objects independent of humans such as galaxies, stones, quarks, tardigrades and so on. Above all, ontological realisms refuse to treat objects as constructions of humans. While it is true, I will argue, that all objects translate one another, the objects that are translated are irreducible to their translations. As we will see, ontological realism thoroughly refutes epistemological realism or what ordinarily goes by the pejorative title of “naïve realism”. Initially it might sound as if the distinction between ontological and epistemological realism is a difference that makes no difference but, as I hope to show, this distinction has far ranging consequences for how we pose a number of questions and theorize a variety of phenomena.

One of the problematic consequences that follows from the hegemony that epistemology currently enjoys in philosophy is that it condemns philosophy to a thoroughly anthropocentric reference. Because the ontological question of substance is elided into the epistemological question of our knowledge of substance, all discussions of substance necessarily contain a human reference. The subtext or fine print surrounding our discussions of substance always contain reference to an implicit “for-us”. This is true even of the anti-humanist structuralists and post-structuralists who purport to dispense with the subject in favor of various impersonal and anonymous social forces like language and structure that exceed the intentions of individuals. Here we still remain in the orbit of an anthropocentric universe insofar as society and culture are human phenomena, and all of being is subordinated to these forces. Being is thereby reduced to what being is for us.

By contrast, this book strives to think a subjectless object, or an object that is for-itself rather than an object that is an opposing pole before or in front of a subject. Put differently, this essay attempts to think an object for-itself that isn't an object for the gaze of a subject, representation, or a cultural discourse. This, in short, is what the democracy of objects means. The democracy of objects is not a political thesis to the effect that all objects ought to be treated equally or that all objects ought to participate in human affairs. The democracy of objects is the ontological thesis that all objects, as Ian Bogost has so nicely put it, equally exist while they do not exist equally. The claim that all objects equally exist is the claim that no object can be treated as constructed by another object. The claim that objects do not exist equally is the claim that objects contribute to collectives or assemblages to a greater and lesser degree. In short, no object such as the subject or culture is the ground of all others. As such, The Democracy of Objects attempts to think the being of objects unshackled from the gaze of humans in their being for-themselves.

Such a democracy, however, does not entail the exclusion of the human. Rather, what we get is a redrawing of distinctions and a decentering of the human. The point is not that we should think objects rather than humans. Such a formulation is based on the premise that humans constitute some special category that is other than objects, that objects are a pole opposed to humans, and therefore the formulation is based on the premise that objects are correlates or poles opposing or standing-before humans. No, within the framework of onticology—my name for the ontology that follows—there is only one type of being: objects. As a consequence, humans are not excluded, but are rather objects among the various types of objects that exist or populate the world, each with their own specific powers and capacities.

Anthropocentrism should be rejected - it offers no lens to evaluate contemporary violence

Coward 6

(Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University 2006 Martin Against Anthropocentrism Review of International Studies 32.3 Cambridge Journals Online)

Whilst it is common to embark upon investigation of the nature of political violence out of due concern for individuals facing death or persecution, an exclusively anthropocentric focus fails to get to grips with the issues raised by destruction of objects it regards as secondary equipmental supplements to the lives of individual subjects. Moreover, in failing to get to grips with the issue of the disavowal of heterogeneity revealed by consideration of urbicide, anthropocentric understandings can lead to the enactment of political solutions that effectively perpetuate the politics of exclusion. Anthropocentrism, thus, is not simply concern for humanity. Indeed, the examination of urbicide presented above can be said to have the coexistential condition of humanity as its principal concern. Rather anthropocentrism comprises a conceptual horizon which takes the pre-social individual as its principle subject. For the anthropocentric imaginary sociality and materiality are, therefore, secondary aspects of being. The principal crimes against humanity for the anthropocentric imaginary are, thus, the persecution of an individual, alone or as part of a group who share the same characteristics, on the grounds of their identity.

Given the urbanisation of warfare, and the prevalence of urbicide, it seems a failure of imagination to continue our investigations into political violence from within an anthropocentric imaginary. Indeed, if the contemporary era is one of rapid urbanisation and the increasing interconnection that is sometimes referred to as globalisation, the question of coexistence is of particular salience for our era. Given the problems that the anthropocentric imaginary has in addressing the politics of exclusion that attacks the conditions of possibility of such coexistence, it would seem to be a poor tool for examination of the violences that confront us in the contemporary era.

Our orientation towards objects decenters the privileged position of the Subject via transforming the subject into object - this move is key to politics and confronting climate change

Bryant 11

(Professor of Philosophy at Collin College 2011 Levi Democracy of Objects <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/9750134.0001.001/1:4/--democracy-of-objects?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

It will be noted that when objects are placed in the marked space of distinction, the sub-distinction does not contract what can be indicated, but rather expands what can be indicated. Here subjects and culture are not excluded, but rather are treated as particular types of objects. Additionally, it now becomes possible to indicate nonhuman objects without treating them as vehicles for human contents. As a consequence, this operation is not a simple inversion of the culturalist schema. It is not a call to pay attention to objects rather than subjects or to treat subjects as what are opposed to objects, rather than treating objects as being opposed to subjects. Rather, just as objects were reduced to representations when the subject or culture occupied the marked space of distinction, just as objects were effectively transformed into the subject and content, the placement of objects in the marked space of distinction within the framework of ontology transforms the subject into one object among many others, undermining its privileged, central, or foundational place within philosophy and ontology. Subjects are objects among objects, rather than constant points of reference related to all other objects. As a consequence, we get the beginnings of what anti-humanism and post-humanism ought to be, insofar as these theoretical orientations are no longer the thesis that the world is constructed through anonymous and impersonal social forces as opposed to an individual subject. Rather, we get a variety of nonhuman actors unleashed in the world as autonomous actors in their own right, irreducible to representations and freed from any constant reference to the human where they are reduced to our representations.

Thus, rather than thinking being in terms of two incommensurable worlds, nature and culture, we instead get various collectives of objects. As Latour has compellingly argued, within the Modernist schema that drives both epistemological realism and epistemological anti-realism, the world is bifurcated into two distinct domains: culture and nature. [3] The domain of the subject and culture is treated as the world of freedom, meaning, signs, representations, language, power, and so on. The domain of nature is treated as being composed of matter governed by mechanistic causality. Implicit within forms of theory and philosophy that work with this bifurcated model is the axiom that the two worlds are to be kept entirely separate, such that there is to be no inmixing of their distinct properties. Thus, for example, a good deal of cultural theory only refers to objects as vehicles for signs or representations, ignoring any non-semiotic or non-representational differences nonhuman objects might contribute to collectives. Society is only to have social properties, and never any sorts of qualities that pertain to the nonhuman world.

It is my view that the culturalist and modernist form of distinction is disastrous for social and political analysis and sound epistemology. Insofar as the form of distinction implicit in the culturalist mode of distinction indicates content and relegates nonhuman objects to the unmarked space of the distinction, all sorts of factors become invisible that are pertinent to why collectives involving humans take the form they do. Signifiers, meanings, signs, discourses, norms, and narratives are made to do all the heavy lifting to explain why social organization takes the form it does. While there can be no doubt that all of these agencies play a significant role in the formation of collectives involving humans, this mode of distinction leads us to ignore the role of the nonhuman and asignifying in the form of technologies, weather patterns, resources, diseases, animals, natural disasters, the presence or absence of roads, the availability of water, animals, microbes, the presence or absence of electricity and high speed internet connections, modes of transportation, and so on. All of these things and many more besides play a crucial role in bringing humans together in particular ways and do so through contributing differences that while coming to be imbricated with signifying agencies, nonetheless are asignifying. An activist political theory that places all its apples in the basket of content is doomed to frustration insofar as it will continuously wonder why its critiques of ideology fail to produce their desired or intended social change. Moreover, in an age where we are faced with the looming threat of monumental climate change, it is irresponsible to draw our distinctions in such a way as to exclude nonhuman actors.

### Contention Two is Translation

#### Our 1AC is a translation of the resolution

#### Embracing the Substance of our Object status necessitates embracing our local manifestation of the resolution – this is key to avoid an attempt to view objects as intermediates in the production of a closed social system

Bryant 11

(Professor of Philosophy at Collin College 2011 Levi Democracy of Objects <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/9750134.0001.001/1:4/--democracy-of-objects?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

As Leydesdorff puts it, if reflexive analysts begin to communicate among themselves not only in terms of how they analyze data, but also at the reflexive level, e.g., about standards of analysis, the standards may become de-personalized; they begin to circulate in the communication system of this community, and thus begin to form a supra-individual dimension of quality control for the actors. [218]

With the reflexive moment of communication, distinctions and selections begin to emerge, determining a marked state or that which is selected and an unmarked state or that which is excluded. Over time, this talk about talk spreads through the community and becomes a sort of assumed background of those involved in communication, such that communications that deviate from these newly formed norms, themes, and distinctions are simply coded out as noise. In other words, a social system organizes itself and now develops its own capacity for selection at the second-order level through the manner in which talk about talk has become sedimented in those participating in the discourse.

In this way, the system thereby attains closure, both being produced by its own elements and producing its own elements. The system only comes into being from the action of those participating in the communication, but their communications begin to play a constraining role and produce new elements in the form of both new communications within the framework of the distinctions and selections produced by the system, and to produce new communicators capable of participating within that system. The production of these new elements, of course, takes place through the training of those participating in scientific discourse. The important point to keep in mind, however, is that even while such a self-organizing system comes to constitute its own elements, these elements aren't just elements. Rather, they are substances in their own right as well. As a consequence, such systems always struggle against a system-specific entropy. Communications are perpetually emerging that either diverge from the system that has emerged, or that challenge that system. In other words, the elements of the system are never simple intermediaries. Communications within the system perpetually generate surprising results as they pass through the mediators in the form of the persons participating in the discourse.

The concept of translation encourages us to engage in inquiry in a different way. Working from the premise that entities are mediators, it discourages any mode of theorizing that implicitly or explicitly treats objects as mere intermediaries such that effects are already contained within causes. As Latour suggests, all entities are treated as having greater or lesser degrees of agency by virtue of having a system-specific organization that prevents the relation between cause and effect from being treated as a simple exchange of information that inevitably produces a particular result. Likewise, in approaching entities as mediators, we are encouraged to attend to the manner in which entities produce surprising local manifestations when perturbed in particular ways and to vary the contexts in which entities are perturbed to discover what volcanic powers they have hidden within themselves. That is, we begin to investigate the manner in which substances creatively translate the world around them. In this respect, we move from the marked to the unmarked space of much contemporary thought. Rather than treating deviations from our predications as mere noise to be ignored, we instead treat these deviations as giving us insight into the way in which entities translate their world.

Denying our translation denies debaters role as mediators - this leads to the formation of docile bodies

Bryant 11

(Professor of Philosophy at Collin College 2011 Levi Democracy of Objects <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/9750134.0001.001/1:4/--democracy-of-objects?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

Here, then, we can make sense of what Latour means when he claims that objects interpret one another. To interpret is to translate, and to translate is to produce something new. As Latour remarks, “[t]o interpret something is to say it in other words. In other words, it is to translate”. [208] The translated is never identical to the original, but rather produces something different from the original. For example, if this book is some day translated into, say, German, it will very likely take on resonances that it doesn't have in English. My discussions of “existence” might be translated into Dasein. Yet the German term Dasein has connotations that English doesn't have, such as “there-being” or “here-being”. In being translated into another language a text becomes something different. Likewise, when a perturbation is received by another entity, it becomes something different. As Latour says earlier in Irreductions, “[n]othing is, by itself, the same as or different from anything else. That is, there are no equivalents, only translations”. [209] The point here is that no perturbation ever retains its identity or self-sameness when transported from one entity to another, but rather becomes something different as a consequence of being translated into information and then producing a particular local manifestation in the receiving object.

Along these lines, Latour elsewhere draws a distinction between mediators and intermediaries in Reassembling the Social. As Latour articulates this distinction,

An intermediary [...] is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs [...]. Mediators, on the other hand, cannot be counted as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time. Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. [210]

All objects are mediators with respect to one another, transforming or translating what they receive and thereby producing something new as a result. By contrast, intermediaries merely carry a force or meaning without transforming it in any way. In this connection, we can say that the concept of intermediaries treats objects as mere vehicles of the differences contributed by another entity. In one of his most recent works, Latour drives this point home, remarking that,

what should appear extraordinarily bizarre is [...] the invention of inanimate entities which should do nothing more than carry one step further the cause that makes them act to generate the n+1 consequence which in turn are nothing but the causes of the n+2 consequences. This conceit has the strange result of composing the world with long concatenations of causes and effects where (this is what is so odd) nothing is supposed to happen, except probably at the beginning—but since there is no God in those staunchly secular versions there is not even a beginning [...]. The disappearance of agency in the so called “materialist world view” is a stunning invention especially since it is contradicted every step of the way by the odd resistance of reality: every consequence adds slightly to the cause. Thus, it has to have some sort of agency. There is a supplement. A gap between the two. [211]

Our treatment of objects in terms of autopoietic and allopoietic machines has explained just why this is the case. Insofar as all entities draw a system/environment distinction and transform perturbations into information as a function of their own internal organization, they always contribute something new to the perturbations they receive.

The concept of translation, coupled with the distinction between mediators and intermediaries has profound implications for both theory and practice. In the docile bodies chapter of Discipline and Punish, we encounter a prime example of theories and practices organized around the conceptualization of substances in terms of mere intermediaries. [212] There Foucault analyzes a disciplinary structure of power that aims to form the soldier down to the tiniest detail.

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; a posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier'. [213]

This conception of the formation of the soldier is premised on an implausible idea of causation where causes are transported from one object to another without remainder. Here the soldier is a pliable clay that can be formed however we like. Here information is conceived as something that is transported as self-identical, producing a univocal effect in the body of the soldier-to-be. What is entirely missed in such a model is the manner in which the entity receiving the perturbation transforms it according to its own organization.