

Abstract: Much recent scholarship in the social sciences has recognised the importance of grasping the significance of non-human forces in both social and natural life. Still, we remain faced with the task of reconceptualising some of our more classically humanist problems in other than human terms. This paper undertakes to refigure one such problem, an issue that in moral and political discourse in particular has presented itself as a pressing, and sometimes intractable, problem; namely, what does it mean to be indifferent

? The idea of political indifference, for example, evokes an attitude of neutrality or apathy deemed inappropriate to the sphere of political action. The assumption here is that indifference is a subjective quality, a characteristic inhering in those individuals or groups who are insufficiently motivated to exercise their capacity for free and deliberative action. This paper re-examines the common sense understanding of indifference, which, I argue, is bound to a moral purview and rests on an essentially confused view of human freedom. I suggest that rethinking the problem of indifference requires an 'ontological renaturalisation', in order to better understand the forces that condition human action. In pursuing this argument, I contribute to a growing body of scholarship that recognises the role of the aesthetic in opening our frameworks of thinking beyond their more humanist limitations. I argue that an aesthetic, as opposed to moral, framework, can re-conceptualise indifference as an ambiguous and potentially productive process, rather than a deficient state or subjective failing.

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