



How to be Okay with...

This thesis was written while researching the presence of animism within the modern context and the relationship between modern and pre-modern societies. The title alludes to a self-help book that can teach how to be okay with the unknown, with what we do not understand, by learning from cultures that tend to embrace that, and to recognize the contradictions infiltrating the modern world as we try to suppress our same tendencies that exist through only slightly different veins.

Ashley Cook | Work.Master HEAD Geneve | MFA Memoir | Winter 2016  
Mentored by David Zerbib

## **Contents**

### **Introduction**

Unearthing the Dead to Bury the Living  
The Ethics of the Archive

### **I. Beyond the Great Divide**

Psychic Automatism i.e. Psychosis  
Looking Through the Mirror  
Sequel

### **II. Engagements of Alterity**

The Decolonization of Thought  
Have You Ever Met a Dividual?

### **III. Our Animism**

Probing the Gordian Knot...  
Life In the Land of Things

### **IV. Memories**

Losing the Mother Tongue  
Becoming the Body Without Organs

### **V. Artist as Anthropologist**

New New  
The Creative Practices of the Machinic Assemblage

**Okay**

## Unearthing the Dead to Bury the Living



The remote Mosquitia region in eastern Honduras. Photograph by Dave Yoder. Courtesy of National Geographic

In an aerial survey taken in 2012, Archaeologists have found three “lost cities” in La Mosquita, the easternmost region of Honduras. With high hopes of locating the legendary “White City” or “Lost City of the Monkey God”, teams of searchers trenched through the jungle in March of 2015, where they found “a real lost city, complete with

earthen pyramids, plazas, and a cache of stone artifacts.” Now, “nearly a year after discovering these mysterious artifacts, a new expedition seeks clues to the identity of the civilization that made them.”[Strauss, 1] Since discovery, the stone artifacts have been under protection of the Honduras military, until the archaeological team from Colorado State University, with support from the Honduran government and financial backing from the National Geographic Society, would return for a month long process to recover the artifacts at the site. By the end of January, investigators of this case will begin developing a “strategic plan” to widen their search, as they have a hunch this particular location is just one of many potentially lost cities that is harbored inside La Mosquita. Their further investigation could lead to something far greater than a lost city; it could lead us to a lost civilization.

In St. Augustine, Florida, the construction process of a new waterline revealed at least “four graves dating from the sixteenth through the early eighteenth century at the site of the church of Nuestra Señora de Los Remedios on Charlotte Street”[Archaeology Magazine, 1] According to archaeologists called in to investigate the site, this area was a heavily occupied grave site before being covered with roads in the 1800’s. The report confirms the recovery of “four partial human remains, and probably a fifth one in very bad condition.” As reported also, they have not found any “good material” from the graves, only many loose teeth with a lot of wear and cavities. Due to a water main break, the ex-

cavation has become quite difficult, so the crushed remains and fragmentations recovered in the graves will just be reburied at a local church cemetery.

In Cambridgeshire England, “no one knows why a catastrophic fire tore through a small settlement that rose by a river channel, incinerating the homes of several families and sending burning timbers crashing into a small marsh below.” [Castle, 1] The archaeological team Must Farm has been “tackling” the mystery of a site dated back to the Bronze Age, that is considered so rich in findings that it has been compared to Pompeii, the Roman town entombed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Throughout the investigation, researchers explain the uncovering of the remains of a big event, a fire, that basically captured and froze their day to day life in time, “dropped it into our channel and sealed it there for us to excavate.” [Castle, 1] These artifacts are shining a light into the everyday life of this settlement 3,000 years ago. Findings include a bowl complete with an unfinished meal, “a discovery that suggests that whoever lived here left in a hurry” and a skull, indicating that “perhaps not everyone was quick enough” [Castle, 1] This site was found more than a decade ago, and has been the topic of debate regarding what to do with it since discovery. “Finally a decision was made to excavate and remove the artifacts because of worries that they would deteriorate” [Castle, 2]. Iona Robinson, a project supervisor mentions this as “an amazing window to the other side”, but now, solving this mystery has become a race against time. Once the remains have been excavated, everything will be removed and the site will be “filled with soil and broken bricks, and the setting of this mysterious and very old settlement will become a roadway” [Castle 3].

The British Museum is planning an extensive exhibition of over “200 spectacular ancient Egyptian treasures buried beneath the Mediterranean seabed for more than 1,000 years” [Brown, 1]. The two lost cities of Thonis - Heracleion and Canopus have been under excavation by the Institut Europeen d’Archeologie Sous-Marine since 1996, vacuuming off the seabed to reveal various sunken treasures including a “5.4 metre-high granite statue of the Nile flood of Hapi” and a “beautiful, sexy statue of Arsinoe II, who was the eldest daughter of Ptolemy I, founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty.” The artifact’s particularly pristine condition and astonishing preservation owes itself primarily to the protection of the waters that have engulfed them. Upon the initial dives into this excavation, “one of the first things the divers discovered was an enormous walled temple at Thonis-Heracleion and a week later a fantastically well-preserved stela (or large tablet) on which a 380BC royal decree from the pharaoh Nectanebo I



© STR New / Reuters

Courtesy of STR New/Reuters

was advertised.”[Brown, 2]. The stela will travel to London for an exhibition and 10% of the taxes collected on each of the “goods” imported from this excavation will be donated to an, unspecified, Egyptian temple.

“Berlin’s Pergamon Museum loses Pergamon”[Bristow p. 1], as it undergoes a 6 year restoration project that began in September 2014 to restore the state of the museum building itself. The Pergamon in Berlin has earned it’s reputation for being Berlin’s most popular museum. Visitors travel from all over the world to visit one of the most monumental archaeological contributions in history. The Pergamon Altar is a “huge marble work dating from the 2nd Century BC [that] depicts Greece’s greatest heroes and gods locked in battle and destroying enemies”[Bristow p. 1]. This extremely important piece of Greek heritage was brought to Germany from it’s own home in the late 19th century, by engineer Carl Humann, with the purpose of establishing Berlin as a “rival to the British Museum in original works of Greek art”[Makris, 1]. The full excavation resulted in the removal of the entire Pergamon Altar from its original site in northwestern Anatolia, and reconstructed in Berlin, in it’s original size, with most of it’s original material. Significantly, in 2010, a confrontation initiated by Turkey demanded the return of the monument, stating that “the people of Bergama feel that they have been robbed of their cultural heritage.”[Bilsel, 6] Despite the enormous efforts to bring home their ancient monument, the “Pergamon, a land of wealth in the lost heartland of Asia Minor, is [still] represented in this UNESCO site in Berlin, Germany.”[Makris, 2]



View of the Pergamon Altar across the Agora, on the first day of excavation. Courtesy of [www.agathe.gr](http://www.agathe.gr)



Ruins of the Pergamon Altar taken 2014 Courtesy of CBN.com

It is quite a peculiar factor of modern culture to feel the need to seek, excavate and cannibalize the lost. What is striking about the discipline of archaeology, and the language used in the news reports, is that the narrative of the discoveries always present these sites as representations of disconnected times, objects and spaces, as if they are simply awaiting our arrival, waiting for us to give it a place within a narrative of which it has never belonged. This process of “coming to the rescue” to unearth these artifacts, complete their lost history and give them a com-



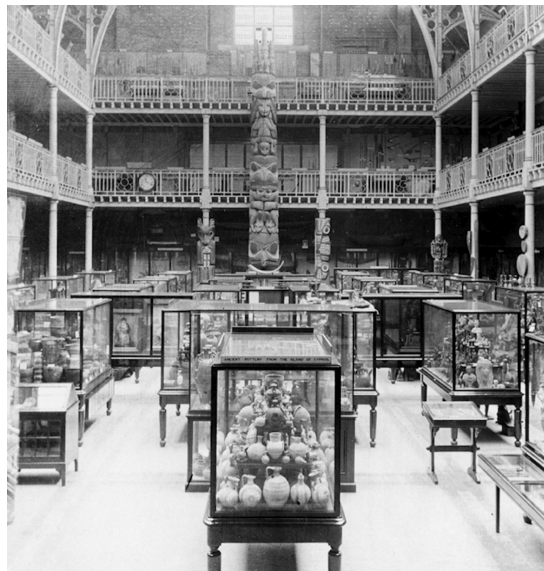
comfortable home, is a habit of the moderns. The process of analyzing unfamiliar cultures, coming to an understanding of them only through our understanding of ourselves, and defining their values, abilities and worth by weighing it against our own is a habit of the moderns. Upon the discovery of events coming from the lost past or from unfamiliar parts of the world, our contemporary western culture is also often warned. For instance, in the newspaper it is necessary for us to know that a “sexy” old God is emerging from the mediterranean sea, or that four graves containing nothing besides a bunch of loose teeth were discovered in St. Augustine, Florida. Although we are obviously desperate to fill in any emerging gaps and reduce the newness of the new, it seems that with every new cite, we are confronted with alternative views that destabilize the frontiers of our own present space, of our own modern identity; what is “other” becomes “our” in order to avoid “our” becoming “other,” time and time again. The problem here is, how is it possible to feel okay with these precarious situations? How can we begin to re-assess how we deal with the unknown realm floating between the poles of duality, in order to achieve a level of fluidity that allows us to be okay with the things in life that we do not fully understand? “OK” (/oʊkeɪ/; also spelled “okay”, “ok”, or “O.K.”) is a word denoting approval, acceptance, agreement, assent, or acknowledgment. “OK”, as an adjective, can also express acknowledgment without approval. [Wikipedia] Being okay often alludes to a passive inactivity, an automatic acceptance, but being okay in the sense that I am referring to is not passive, because Okay is also a word that means to not be ill, hurt or unhappy and I recognize passive inactivity to be inherently problematic because it is almost always subjected to levels of control of an outside party. The kind of okay that I am referring to is the kind that grants autonomy through a refusal to be controlled, the kind that allows you to recognize and think outside the boundaries put in place by Western thought, that tell you that you are not okay. Every thought, desire, action, etc. is consciously and unconsciously determined by our understanding of ourselves in relation to the values and customs of the modern world. To be able to reassess how we deal with the unrecognized in modern culture, and restore our abilities to be okay with what we do not fully understand, requires a deconstructive approach to unveil how we have become so weary of the unknown to begin with.

Archaeology is a process of unearthing material remains of the ancient or recently lost past. The modern process of understanding begins with the institutional knowledge delivered to the soon-to-be archaeologists, so that they are equipped with the methods for de-coding future artifacts of past civilizations. Once de-coded, the material artifacts are brought to a museum in which they will deliver and further support the foundation of knowledge that make up the various contexts of history. “Whatever enters the museum is subject to de-animation in this very basic sense, as

it becomes an object of the very conservation; that is the purpose of the museums existence. Whatever enters the museum must also be positioned within a classificatory order of knowledge through which the object is fixed and identified". [Franke, 2012 (3), 3] On every continent, all around the world, Western archaeologists are flooding the ruins of the Earth with tools and knowledge, ready to uncover the past and decode the puzzles buried beneath our feet. Thousands of sites are simultaneously active, brought into practice for reasons spanning from an accidental interruption of a construction project to the final discovery after an extensive search. But what is it about our Modern culture that prompts us to seek and disrupt the resting state of these lost cultures? Where does the intention lie, in the unearthing, obtaining and housing of history's countless ancient artifacts? And what could be the dangers of this?

"Can the ruins of a distant past be considered the property of any given country?"[Bilsel, 5]. This particular question was raised during the cultural dispute regarding the confiscation of the Pergamon Altar, but has become an essential tool for reflection on the practices of historical archaeology as a whole. These sites are found "broken" and "incomplete". They have a history and a story that is now left to be completed and explained by a history known only to those who are working and seeing through the lenses of Western culture. The artifacts are put in museums, acting as mirrors in which we see ourselves in relation to what we are not. The umbilical cords that maintained their connection with their origins have been severed and they have been brought home to us, to be part of our culture. The story and history, the background information of these cultures and objects are provided to the consumer of these artifacts in museums or books, and, through this, we are fed an understanding of ourselves by the professionals who teach us about "the other". The field of ethics, or moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy concerned with morality and moral judgments, right or wrong conduct. "Prior to the late 1970s, most archaeologists developed a sense of ethically appropriate behavior on more or less an individual, ad hoc basis, relying upon whatever role models presented themselves during graduate training and upon subsequent personal experience in the office or in the field. Despite developments, the majority of archaeologists, at least until very recently, have paid little attention to standards of practice and ethical concerns surrounding what archaeologists do."[Beaudry, 1] The beginning of understanding the ethics of archaeology as a practice is the beginning of understanding that archaeological sites, their artifacts and the cultures that they represent, are "fragile, finite, and non-renewable material vestiges of the human past."

Pitt Rivers Museum was established in the 1880s as an extension of Oxford University's Museum, and constituted a new ethnographic department to go with the zoology, anatomy, geology and all the other scientific departments of the University. Each of these departments considered objects to be intellectual capital and the driving force of academic enquiry. Scientific knowledge was generated by collecting, comparing and classifying the world's products, whether they were moths or minerals, baskets or bones. Courtesy of <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/>

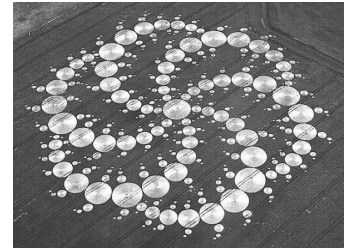


Mary C Baudry, in her essay *Ethical Issues in Historical Archaeology*, considers one particular “heedless and heartless removal of hundreds of interments” from a site known now as the African Burial Ground, a major burial site for over 15,000 slaves and African American people in New York City. The discovery and excavation of this site sparked a controversy that provoked protest within the African American community of New York, as it unearthed the forgotten history of African slaves in colonial New York, who acted as a fundamental part of the state and city’s development. “Much of the anger felt by the protesters focused on the perception that removal of the remains of enslaved Africans by teams of white archaeologists was just one further attempt by the white majority to deny the existence of slavery in colonial New York City and the important role African bondsmen and women played in building the city and in creating vast fortunes in which they did not share.” Long before the discovery and excavation of the African Burial Ground, archaeologists have been exploring and examining African American sites, whose efforts have been subject to well reasoned critique. Archaeologist Parker B Potter Jr. in 1991 stated that “the results of plantation archaeology [the archaeology of slave settlements] offered little to contemporary African Americans and thus were of little merit.” From his perspective, conclusions drawn by plantation archaeologists could even be used to support the various racist arguments of our culture. Furthermore, Potter has recommended that “plantation archaeologists undertake greater self-reflection, with the goal of making archaeology ‘good politics,’ focusing directly on the historical structures of oppression. ‘Archaeological ethics are not just about us as archaeologists but are also about how we behave as professionals and how we relate to people who are not archaeologists.’”[Beaudry, 5] In the fields of archaeology, new developments regarding standards of research performance are being put in place in order to represent and ensure that all archaeologists are equipped with a consideration of moral ethics, approaching each new site with the aim of max-

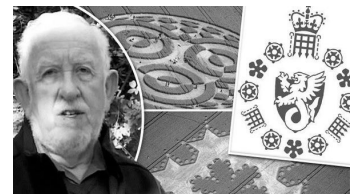
imizing the gaining of information with minimal impact to the base. The modern processes of understanding that are taken through the fields of archaeology have a direct impact on our history as well as how we see ourselves in relation to the cultures of the past. Through the cannibalization of the remains of these cultures, we complete their story in a way that serves our own best interest. What I am interested in here is the similarities and differences between how we as a culture handle the mysterious material artifacts of lost histories and how we as a culture handle and the unfamiliar cultures of living people.

Archaeology is a subfield of anthropology, which is “the study of human races, origins, societies and cultures” [Merriam-Webster]. Archaeology and anthropology have always acted as tools for the development of modern thought, and the growing belief in science as the explanation for the mechanic functions of the world. The cultures being excavated in archaeology, the cultures being examined in anthropology, are vulnerable because they are, to us, seen as empty vessels or broken stories, in which we need to complete with our own understanding; view and decode with our own toolbox of historical references. They are only complete to us once we have become part of them; before that, they seem less, they seem behind, they seem in need of us. The processes of archaeology and anthropology highlight the vulnerability of these cultures being examined, who rarely have been able to speak for themselves to verify whether the story that they have become animating props for is even accurate. Are the history books surely filled with certain events? Or is it more like the game of telephone? Where one person whispers a thought into the ear of another, and that person whispers what they think they heard into ear of another, and by the end of the line, the message is a completely new construction. Everything that we know of history, we know because it further confirms who we are as moderns. The history that we use to map out and de-code what we do not understand is a construction of Western Enlightenment that began with the separation of nature and culture, and the rise of the belief in modernisms own notions of science and rationality. This history has been a war of duality between the negative and the positive, the pre-modern and the modern, non-human and human, “a combat in which there are the victors and the vanquished” [Latour, 1993(2) 10]

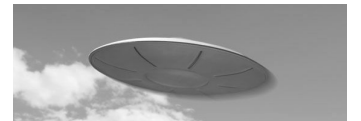
What is the impact of archaeology, anthropology and of the invention of knowledge? I speak of the vulnerability of the cultures being dissected by Western archaeology and anthropology, but it is not them alone who are at stake. By unearthing these objects, we are essentially burying ourselves alive. With every new image that challenges the worldview of the moderns, a counter image needs to be created. We are constantly confronted by contradictions, every image, every color, every object has a story and an anti-story, in which we are expected to accept and follow. With the massive flood of information and technology coupled with the



“There are many theories about what creates crop circles, from aliens to mysterious vortices to wind patterns, but they all lack one important element: good evidence. Perhaps one day a mysterious, unknown source will be discovered for crop circles, but until then perhaps they are best thought of as collective public art.” Courtesy of [livescience.com/26540-crop-circles.html](http://livescience.com/26540-crop-circles.html)



“Former RAF engineer: MI5 ‘paid people to fake crop circles’ to discredit UFO research. David Clayton, crop circles and the MI5 logo.”



“Some crop circles are made by UFOs, but most by people working for MI5, says David Clayton.” Images courtesy of <http://www.express.co.uk/news/science/607074/Former-RAF-engineer-MI5-paid-people-to-fake-crop-circles-to-discredit-UFO-research>



Artists have always used the images of modern culture as inspiration to create and interject. *Spiral Jetty* (1970) was inspired in part by the Pre-Columbian Indian Great Serpent Mound, in southwestern Ohio. With a goal to place work in the land rather than on the land, Robert Smithson contributed to the ever-growing library of the mysterious earthworks throughout the world. Courtesy of [spiraldrawingsunrise.wordpress.com/4-sources-of-inspiration/](http://spiraldrawingsunrise.wordpress.com/4-sources-of-inspiration/)

overarching influence of the dualism of the Modern worldview, we have become confused, feeling helpless and hopeless, unsure of how to think about each other, or things, anymore. Symptoms of the pluralistic nature of postmodernism have resulted in the inability to move forward any longer; our culture is now fragmented to such an extent that we are living in a schizophrenic society, having constant variety attacks. And it does not look like this flood will subside anytime soon; with the constant digging up of other cultures, excavating their ruin-scapes, with the constant observation of other cultures, defining their world views, we are adding more and more weight to the archive. Perhaps these efforts are not only epidemics of our need as Moderns to understand and control the outside world, but also our unconscious tactics to avoid the inevitable confrontation of our own.

The modern culture is built at the poles; information bounces from one pure entity to another, as it actively maintains a negligence of the spaces in between, the undefinable entities, energies of movement, mystery or anything that cannot be defined clearly and distinctly through its own notions of science and rationality. So, do these space even exist? The spaces in-between? If so, what goes on there? “What is beyond the immediate realities that the news media and our own shortcomings cement into a shell of credible fantasy that protects our nakedness? The unquestioning faith of primitive man, and perhaps of some people today, in a divine source is a thing which has become increasingly unreachable, incredible, unsupportable in the face of the powers existing in the modern world. We wish to put on skins, to clothe the unspeakable, to fill the vacuum. A flood of irrelevant cliches, a panic to close the opening as though it were a leak in the dike which would let in the ocean and destroy civilization. We should trust ourselves to venture into this unknown wilderness beyond the confined walls of our civilization.” [Young] What does it mean, as contemporary moderns, to recognize these areas, the hybrids, the blocks of movement of something which is in transition between what it was and what it will be? The moderns have worked so hard to set boundaries and expectations, hopes, and predictions, often acting unethically toward anything “other”, denying its existence until it breaks from its past and becomes modern itself. As many contemporary philosophers and anthropologists are beginning to see this need for control as paradoxical and highly problematic, they are asking, how do we break from these tendencies? And what kinds of potential comes with the suspension of our need for control? Every thought, desire, action, etc. is consciously and unconsciously determined by our understanding of ourselves in relation to the values and customs of the modern world. To be able to reassess how we deal with the unknown in modern culture, and restore our abilities to be okay with what we do not fully understand, requires a deconstructive approach to unveil how we became so weary of the unknown to begin with. This kind of autonomous state of being okay can only be achieved through a

detrterritorialization that plucks you out of your comfort zone and allows you to exist on the peripheral long enough to see the mechanical functioning of the modern machine. You must first become a satellite, orbiting outside of the modern culture, to achieve a birds eye view of the areas to penetrate through to reach the notion of what it even means to be okay. Any event of detrterritorialization offers us an opportunity to study our own culture from the periphery, amongst the undefinable, to suspend investment of taste and transcend the boundaries of modernism. This is essential for any modern studying and/or manipulating the mechanics of their own culture. But what would it mean to pursue a study of our own culture? And, how would one begin? Well, naturally, from the start. With a look at the invention of Animism.

## The Ethics of the Archive

“Animism”, as a term, was invented by English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in the year 1871, with the release of his world renown text “Primitive Culture”, which served to formalize his researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and customs. This text has succeeded in presenting a positivist categorization of the belief systems of indigenous cultures, whose societies were built on pre-modern understandings of human kind in relation to spirit and nature. The animist worldview has generally been characterized by modern anthropologists as the lack of ability to distinguish between human and non-human forms, which has been observed by studying their practices largely involved in the attribution of human-like behavior and characteristics onto non-human entities. This belief system, in it’s infinite variations, is one that served as a way of life on a universal scale, spanning continents from Africa to Asia to the Americas. Although each culture has its own unique mythologies and rituals, “animism” is a term used to describe the most widespread and fundamental thread of indigenous peoples spiritual and supernatural perspectives, which encompasses an inherent connection between the spiritual and material world, attributing soul and spirit not only to humans, but also to animals, plants, rocks as well as other geographic features including mountains, rivers, thunder, wind and shadows. [Park].

The animistic worldview predominantly places the human being on the the same ground, with equal footing, as other animals, plants, and natural forces; furthermore, this perspective held such a fundamental position in the way of life for indigenous people, that “their respective languages include no word for ‘religion’, and maintain an emphatic distinction between ways of life in which



Picture of Slow Bull Praying to the Great Spirit, created in 1907 by Edward S. Curtis. Courtesy of [pinterest.com/JosephAGallant](https://www.pinterest.com/JosephAGallant)

Deerfield, Massachusetts, men imitate “Indians” praying in Deerfield’s 1913. Like many historical pageants of the time, Deerfield’s depicted Native Americans in association with nature, soon to be conquered by the “civilizing” English. In pretending to be engaged in a Native American religious activity, they belittle the customs of Native people. [Memorial Hall] Courtesy of Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield MA



economy, politics, medicine, art, agriculture, etc., are ideally integrated into a spiritually-informed whole”(Research Report); the term “Animism” is an anthropological concept. In Tylors *Primitive Culture*, it’s immediate delivery announced the modern investigations of science to be formed on the basis that “inorganic nature recognizes the unity of nature and the fixity of its laws, the definite sequence of cause and effect through which every fact depends on what has gone before it, and acts upon what is to come after it [affirming that nature is] not full of incoherent episodes, like a bad tragedy...[and] nothing happens without sufficient reason”[Tylor, 2] It would be appropriate to understand this text to be a founding product of modernisms attempt to free itself from the constraints of superstition that seemed to constitute the mechanics of “primitive” cultures. “To many educated minds, there seems something presumptuous and repulsive in the view that history of mankind is part and parcel to the history of nature, that our thoughts, wills and actions accord with laws as definite as those which govern the motion of waves, the combination of acts and bases, and the growth of plants and animals...we may hasten to escape from the regions of the transcendental philosophy and theology, to start on a more hopeful journey over more practicable ground”. [Tylor, 2]

To the modern man, the belief system of indigenous cultures was seen as a “world of magic transformations and misconceived borders”[Franke, 2012(1) 8], a perception that was instigated by the growing influence of Christianity, the philosophies of Cartesian dualism and the colonial expansion of Europe. The influence of Tylors mis-representation of animism was founded in the progressive “purification process” between “nature” and “culture”, which provided him a platform to place animistic practices of indigenous cultures as “primitive”, creating a mirror in which to see themselves in relation to the “other”, “less evolved” cultures. There could have been no positivism without the negative to reflect upon. “The positivism of the



Masked Dancers of the Native American Qagyuhi tribe. Courtesy of Heliotricity.com

modern description of the world relies on the imagination of a negative, which is the result of the same divisions, and becomes equally naturalized. It was through the idea of animism that modernity conceived a good part of this negative, condensing that imagination in one term". Tylors concept of the "primitive" was inscribed into an evolutionary scheme from the primitive to the civilized, in which civilized Europeans had evolved out of polytheism into monotheism, rising from nature to civilization, while the rest of the world's people, described by Tylor as "tribes very low in the scale of humanity" had remained animist. [Franke, 2012 (1) 28] This evolutionary scheme would then be taken up by the field psychology, asserting that every human passes through an animist stage in childhood, a stage that is characterized by the projection of it's own interior world onto the outside. Within psychology, the concept of "the primitive", with direct recourse to Tylor, has continued to play a central role in the context of the theory of "projection." Freud's influence on the perception of "animistic tendencies" affirmed that it was simply a narcissistic view, asserting their inability to separate themselves from their surroundings because of an overly adorning love for themselves. "While for Tylor the term animism was a means for establishing the "correct" distance between matter (objects, things, nature) and people (souls, subjects, persons), between the modern present and archaic past, for Sigmund Freud it was a means for determining the "correct" boundary between inner self and outer reality." [Franke, 2012 (1)12] Outer reality became defined in terms of an objectified nature, uncontaminated by social representations, mimetic behavior, symbolizations and projections. In the marginalizations of these "projections" that humans were making onto the outside world, they were simply placed within the field of psychology; everything that "primitive men" had projected outwards into the world has to be subsequently translated into psychology in order to place them in a "proper" fashion within society.



Courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division



“The regime of positivist signification sees its opposite in ‘wildness,’” [Franke 2010 (2) 18], just as the division of nature and culture finds its contrary in animism. As the image of animist “savage” served to unify the positive side of the Great Divide, it was also used to inflict terror within the boundaries and borders of modernity; an image of a darkness that has yet to be touched by the light of reason, a space of negativity, a space of death. “This space of death has a long and rich culture. It is where the social imagination has populated its metamorphosing images of evil and the underworld” The struggle for Christianization and the induction of the space of death, also referred to as the Theatre of Negativity, was presented through martyrdom, and the experiences like the witch hunt, in its suppression of magic and the worshiping of many gods or talking with spirits; all of which gave birth to the European conception of “evil”. “This theater would find ceaseless continuation in the Enlightenment and secular modernity, in the progressive exorcisms of all states of mind that resisted the Christian, and later, the modern discontinuity between humans and nature...The boundary of the modern world generated an imagery at its internal margins correlative to the colonial death space, but yet articulated in more familiar morphologies of the “night of the world” what much later would become the ‘unconscious’. This space is populated by dismembered bodies, by fragmentation, and scenarios of disintegration, providing a monstrous mirror of objectification, discipline, mechanistic fragmentation, and political terror.”[Franke, 2010 (2), 19] The Theatre of Negativity served as a tool in further affirming the oppression of animistic world-views, practices of magic and idolatry, marginalizing any belief system outside of science, christianity and rational thought, through the threat of jailing, torture and/or death. The logic of the Great Divide also found another method for example, psychiatry and the asylum. “The fantasy of animism as the conflation of modern distinctions is once again key to the maintenance of the power of the institutional machine.”[Franke 2010 (2) 19]. The boundaries of positivist thought invented superstitions, paranoias and anxieties that were presented in the forms of images of threatening mimetic infections, in which the order of positivist rationality is always at stake and secured by an extension of its rule. i.e, sinners go to hell, law-breakers go to jail, the insane go to the hospital.

Whatever exists outside of the positivism of bright reason, anything “other” that represents a contradiction now poses a serious threat to the rationalist system as it has outstanding capability to evoke panic in the foundation of modern power. The modern idea of animism appears necessary as a category that allowed the moderns to put those who did not make the same dualistic distinctions between nature and culture, those who “projected” social roles to non-human things, into a category that made the modern world imagine the collapse of the boundaries they had installed. It is in its extinction, along with the ongoing separation and “purification” of subject and object, that characterizes the process and progress of modernization,

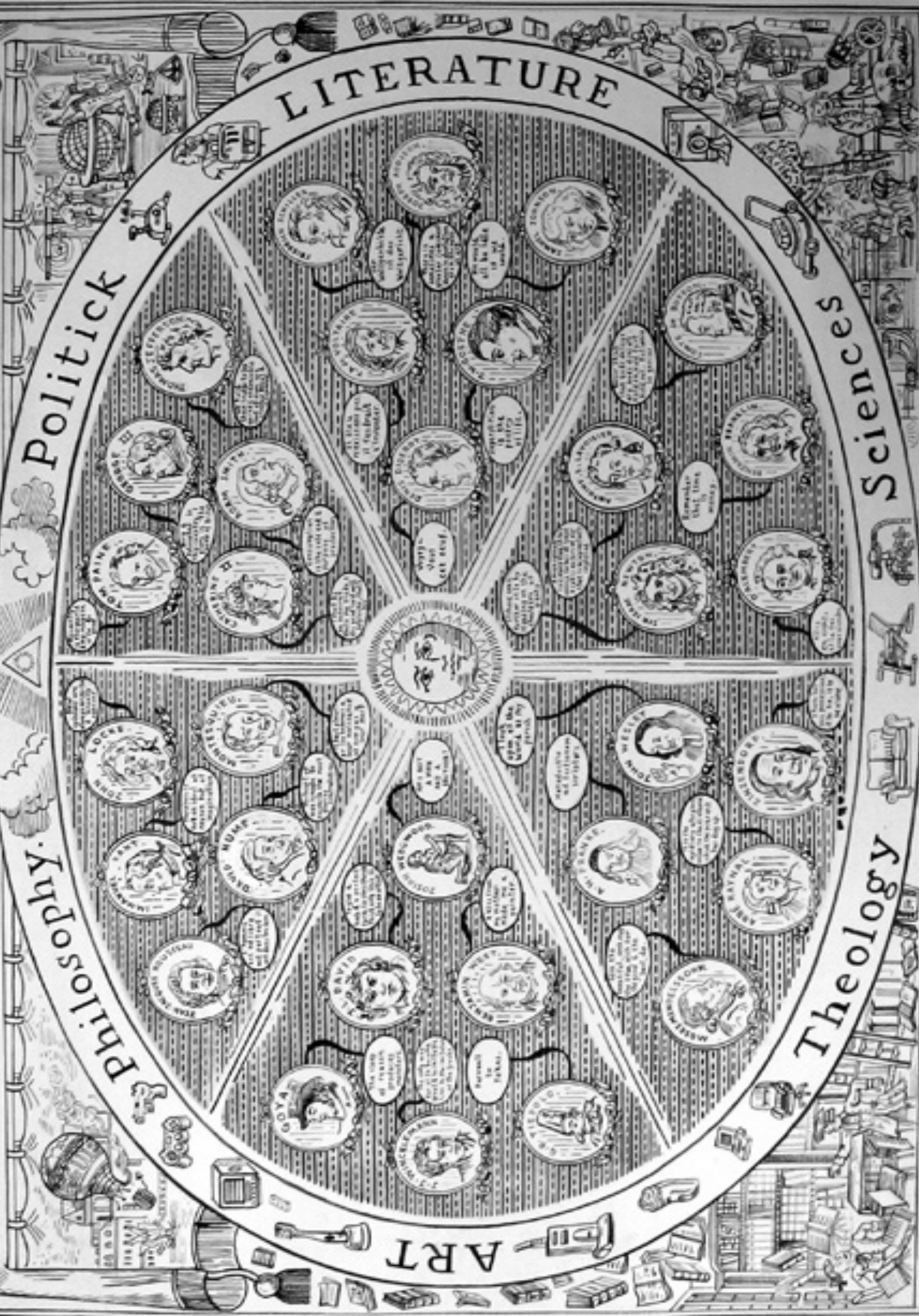
which was conceived, and strictly upheld, by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and the positivist, rationalist sciences. Modernity only found its stability through the objectification and oppression of animistic beliefs, resulting in pointless wars, genocide of many indigenous tribes and cultures, and the widespread colonization of thoughts and practices. “[The] Enlightenment’s program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow phantasy with knowledge. The disenchantment of the world means the extirpation of animism...The price paid by the moderns for cutting off their social ties to nature was that this nature, together with its social representations, lost its meaning; what they gained with this stance was the belief in the universality of their knowledge, and, above all, the freedom to manipulate and mobilize nature in ways unthinkable in pre-modern contexts”. [Franke 2010 (2) 16] The disenchantment of nature and the cultural marginalization of animism was effective to such an extent that “the world had been unified, and



Students of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, circa 1900. “Children were usually immersed in European-American culture through appearance changes with haircuts, were forbidden to speak their native languages, and traditional names were replaced by new European-American names (to both “civilize” and “Christianize”). The experience of the schools was often harsh, especially for the younger children who were separated from their families.” [Wikipedia] Courtesy of Carlisle-www.army.mil

there remained only the task of convincing a few last recalcitrant people who resisted modernization; and if this failed, well, the leftovers could always be stored among those “values” to be respected, such as cultural diversity, tradition, inner religious feelings, madness, etc. In other words, the leftovers would be gathered in a museum or a reserve or a hospital and then be turned into more or less collective forms of subjectivity. Their conservation did not threaten the unity of nature since they would never be able to return to make a claim for their objectivity and request a place in the “only real world under the only real sun.” [Bruno Latour 2001 (1) 8].

AN ENCYCLOPEDY of y AGE of ENLIGHTENMENT citizens & kings.



19th century print of the Enlightenment, courtesy of Satyagraha Foundation for Nonviolence Studies

## I. Beyond the Great Divide

We are always leaving our modernist bubble to venture out into the world and discover the unknown. But what would happen if we decided to turn the looking glass around so that it is ourselves we are looking at? In his essay *Artist As Anthropologist*, Joseph Kosuth asks “why not have the anthropologist, as a professional, ‘anthropologize’ his own society?” This proposal, when asked in the mid-1970s, was one that called for a nearly impossible task, because it is the nature of the anthropologist to be dis-engaged with the culture of which they are observing. “Anthropologists have always attempted to discuss other cultures (that is, become fluent in other cultures) and translate that understanding into sensical forms which are understandable to the culture in which they are located. As we said, the anthropologist has always had the problem of being outside of the culture which he is studying.”[Kosuth, 182] The artist, on the other hand “perpetuates his culture by maintaining certain features of it by ‘using’ them. The artist is a model of the anthropologist engaged.” [Kosuth, 182] Artists select and excavate their own culture, dissecting, analyzing, deconstructing, and after, mirroring back a reflection in which we have become unrecognizable to ourselves. “There obviously are structural similarities between an ‘anthropologized art’ and philosophy in their relationship with society (they both depict it – making the social reality conceivable) yet art is manifested in praxis: it ‘depicts’ while it alters society. And it’s growth as a cultural reality is necessitated by a dialectical relationship with the activity’s historicity (cultural memory) and the social fabric of present-day reality”[Kosuth, 182] The artist-as-anthropologist is the revealer of the vulnerable in the Modern world, the one who plays between the established dualities, the one that chooses to explore and exist there, in a space that is ignored by the constraints of positivist thought. Through the exploration and exposition of these spaces, the artist has always assisted in revealing our most fragile states, shining a light through the cracks in the walls of modernism and then breaking them open even more. “The artist-as-anthropologist may be able to accomplish what the anthropologist has always failed at; a non-static ‘depiction’ of art’s (and thereby culture’s) operational infrastructure is the aim of an anthropologized art. The hope for this understanding of the human condition is not in the search for a religio-scientific ‘truth, but rather to utilize the state of our constituted interaction”[Kosuth, 182] The role of the artist has always been a duty, one that keeps modernism on its feet and demands transparency; since the beginning of the enlightenment, art was the only place in society where these

cracks were allowed to be explored, the only safe space where the unconscious and imagination was allowed to foster and exist in an active and productive way. Art was the first sustainable form of anthropological praxis to study the Moderns.

## Psychic Automatism i.e. Psychosis

Art has always maintained a special position within the Great Divide, with its enduring investment in the dissolution of borders between fiction and non-fiction, the unconscious mind and objective reality. Mimetic behaviors that constituted the animistic thought was marginalized to the extent that it is recognized to be present only in the cognitive developments of children, in psychosis, and in art. Throughout the 1900's, the realm of art served as a modern "ghetto" that allowed for the legitimate persistence of mimetic impulses, an emancipation space for the

unconscious mind to roam freely. It was in art and art alone, that modern civilization had reserved a place where animism was allowed to survive. "Sigmund Freud arrived at the conclusion that in art, modernity preserved a place for animism, for in art, we have retained an animistic relation to pictures and objects alike." [Franke 2010 (2) 35]. In this "ghetto", the autonomy of modern art was achieved only at

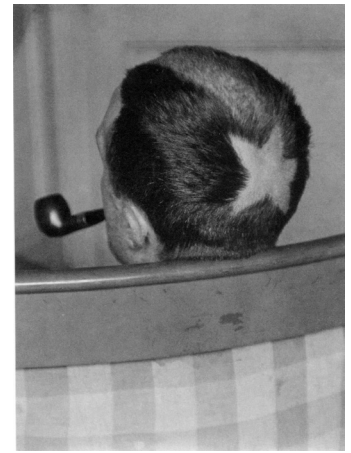
the price of becoming a fictional, safe play-space made up of 'politically inconsequential' subjective expressions of the unconscious mind. What was explored in art was relatable to what a modern would consider a historical and subjective regression, acceptable only if it remains institutionally framed and incapable of interacting with objective reality; of course, such an interaction was likely to be regarded as outright pathological anyway. "This very contract that lies at the foundation of what we call "art" today, this magical circle that unhinged art from the collectivity of life and rendered it fictional, was like a red rag in the eyes of the bull called the avant-garde. Wave after wave of avant-garde artists attacked this shameful line that was drawn around art. They wanted to bring art back into life, back into politics, back into practice." [Frank 2010 (2) 35]. The artists of the avant-garde recognized animisms ability to expose and provoke the modern principle of reality, which has become so deeply inscribed in our perception of everyday life.

Hans Arp  
*Mediterranean Sculpture I*  
(*Orphic Dream*)  
Courtesy of ArtNet



Hans Arp *ARPADEN*  
Courtesy of en.amorosart.com

Dada was a movement that was initiated with the opening of Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 in Zurich, Switzerland, as a protest against the world of art and politics. Artists included immigrants from Germany and Romania who “were not only against the war, but wanted to express a new kind of mentality; they wanted to include art into the fight for a new ethic”[OttOmOIOTov]. Dadaist painter, filmmaker and art theorist Hans Richter recognized Dada as a critique of the dominating rationality of common-sense, with an aim to restore the lost balance between reason and unreason. “Once anarchy breaks out in the order of things, the social order breaks apart too.” [Franke, 2012 (1)32] Dada announced itself as an “elegant and unprejudiced leap from a harmony to the other sphere, a trajectory of a word tossed like a screeching phonograph record; to respect all individuals in their folly of the moment: whether it be serious, fearful, timid, ardent, vigorous, determined, enthusiastic; to divest one’s church of every useless cumbersome accessory; to spit out disagreeable or amorous ideas



*Tonsure*

In 1919 or 1921, the exact date remains uncertain, Marcel Duchamp had a five-point star shaved on his head. Photograph by Man Ray. Courtesy of Sylvio Perlestein, Antwerp.

like a luminous waterfall, or coddle them—with the extreme satisfaction that it doesn’t matter in the least...Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, a roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies.”

[Tzara] The movement explored the world of traditional techniques including painting, sculpture, photography, film, performance, theatre, music and poetry, while also distributing material like the DADA newspapers and posing strange manifestations into the circulations of everyday life.

TH<sup>à</sup>tre MICHEL  
40 rue Des mathurins

vendredi 6 et samedi 7  
JULIET  
1923  
S O I R É E  
D U C Œ U R

la grande semaine a été prolongée jusqu'au 7 juillet

fine art through sculpture, architecture, location

ORGANISÉE PAR !

Une place de loge	30 fr.	Bernheim Jeune 25 Bd de la Madeleine
Fauteuil d'orchestre	25 fr	Durand 6 Place de la Madeleine
Fauteuil de balcon		Povolosky 13 Rue Bonaparte
1 <sup>er</sup> rang..	15 fr.	Au Sans Pareil 37 Avenue Kléber
Fauteuil de balcon.	12 fr.	Six 5 Avenue Lovendal
		Paul Guillaume 58 Rue la Boétie
		Librairie Mornay 37 Bd des Capucines
		Paul Rosenberg 21 Rue la Boétie
		et au Théâtre Michel Tél. Gut. 63-30

DADA Poster 1923  
Courtesy of sandraleggitt.wordpress.com

*La Clairvoyance*  
(A Self-Portrait) 1936  
By Rene Magritte  
Courtesy of [renemagritte.org](http://renemagritte.org)



*Ostrich Egg*  
Man Ray 1944  
Courtesy of Man Ray Trust



Negative of X-Ray of Meret Oppenheim's Skull, 1964  
Courtesy of [sfmoma.org](http://sfmoma.org)

Dada exercised the work of the assemblage through 2D and 3D collages of found material, sculptures that appropriated elements from various different cultures and times simultaneously, layering of sounds and texts or manipulation of video clips, resulting in a consistently schizophrenic aesthetic that teetered on the boarder of sanity and madness, and in the most extreme moments, nearly overflowing into complete psychosis.

Surrealism as a movement began in the early 1920's, developing largely out of the Dadaist efforts in protest of WWI. The artist and writers regarded their work as a philosophical, revolutionary movement first and foremost, considering the writing, art, performances and manifestations to be the only artifacts of their philosophical perspectives. Andre Breton, prior to becoming the major spokesperson for the Surrealist movement, studied and worked within the field of psychology with soldiers of WWI. He was highly influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud and specifically his writings on the Unconscious Mind and "saw the unconscious as the wellspring of the imagination. He defined genius in terms of accessibility to this normally untapped realm." [Encyclopedia Britannica(2)] The non-conformist attitude of the Surrealists was a means of revolting against the notion of reality constructed and upheld by modern society. "The realistic attitude, inspired by positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, clearly seems to me to be hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement. I loathe it, for it is made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit. It is this attitude which today gives birth to these ridiculous books, these insulting plays. It constantly feeds on and derives strength from the newspapers and stultifies both science and art by assiduously flattering the lowest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog's life." [Breton] Breton and his fellow artists and writers sought to understand the influences of the imagination and to reunite the conscious and unconscious experience so completely that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in "an absolute reality, a surreality." [Encyclopedia Britannica]

In the Manifesto, Breton concludes that "Surrealism is the "invisible ray" which will one day enable us to win out over our opponents. 'You are no longer a trembling, carcass.' This summer the roses are blue; the wood is of glass. The earth, draped in its verdant cloak, makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live which are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere." [Breton] The philosophy developed by the surrealists was manifested through psychological, unconscious thought processes with a strong emphasis on methodological research and experimentation with the logic and structures in place by modernist society, underlining the purpose of art to "prompt personal psychic investigation and revelation, and to evoke psychological response" [Encyclopedia Britannica(2)] The work of the Surrealists varied extensively, with each artist seeking his or her own unique approach; some of these approaches involved explorations of spontaneous unconscious revelations, freed from the controls of

the conscious mind, while others used the movement as a platform to explore dream-like fantasies that often resulted in more formal works involving tranquility and beauty. In any case, it can be said that the artists and viewers were confronted with a world recognizable to the conscious mind, but logically inexplicable, lacking any inherent sense. Like Dada, this movement also spread throughout the world, effecting nearly every form of creative expression as well as having a significant impact on political thought and practice, philosophy and social theory.

The avant-garde sought to bring about a type of invasion of one reality by another, an intersection of one reality by another, as a way of evoking problems in language that would be needed for explanation and understanding. The bringing art back into life of the avant-garde was perhaps a first attempt as an artist to function as an anthropologist, in order to examine and play, with hopes to reverse the dis-enchantment of the positivist modern structure. They were able to provoke the boundaries in such a way only by assuming a position on the periphery, suspending their own taste and even taking on an ambiguous role in society, studying and identifying under various disciplines simultaneously. Through objective observation and a subjective understanding of the functions of things and the effects or affects they have on the unconscious mind, they were able to access the middle grounds that were suppressed by the modern world and create manifestations of deterritorialization in both the artist and the viewer that enticed the soul and exposed the conditions of its oppression. As they became increasingly influential in the fields of art, politics and social theory, they were considered a major threat to the enlightened, purified world, especially at the brink of uprising of the Nazi Party in Germany, where the Avant Garde had been most prevalent.

The term “Degenerate” was invented and used in the various wings of sciences to marginalize those who thought differently; physicians had all the signs and symptoms to look for, and any deviation from the norm was deemed mad and crazy. But, the avant garde outwardly announced itself as mad, saw itself as outside of the norms of accepted action, statement and belief; they thought of themselves as the mentally ill of the art world, standing outside of all institutions, using their own language. This was very dangerous for the Nazi party, who had no choice but to recognize that the culture was being infected by them with every effort to put a stop to these movements, including public book burnings, the organization of the Degenerate Art Exhibition and eventually, the threat of death over any artist, musician or philosopher that continued to pursue these degenerate modes of expression. Various films were banned, abstract art and jazz was strictly forbidden, and the museums were filled again with only classical, technically sound picturesque scenes of nature and renditions of normal, everyday life. It was the death of art in Germany.



Gallery in the Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German Art Exhibition) Courtesy of paraphilia-magazine.com 1939



Great German Art Exhibition Depicting a gallery of nudes. Courtesy of whitecubediaries.wordpress.com. 1939



“In order to continue any kind of free expression, you have to know what happens when free expression gets stifled and that great art can be vilified like that. It makes you think, it makes you question authority. I think that is where art is dangerous”

[Grubin] The avant garde

always knew that it was dangerous, and it was especially through these acts of repression that they realized what they were doing really mattered, it really counted in the way that influenced how people reacted with one another and the way in which states were formed; their language effected daily life.

## Looking Through the Mirror

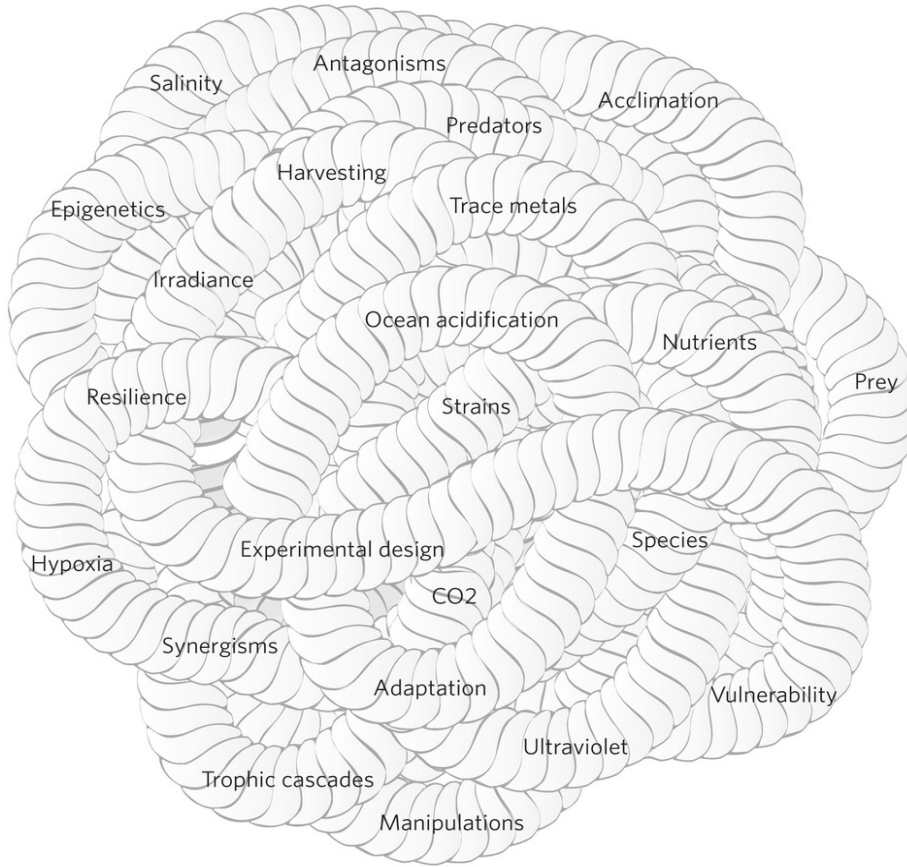
In the 1975 essay *Artist as Anthropologist*, Joseph Kosuth proposed that the modern anthropologist perform a study of his own culture. In 1993, Bruno Latour did just that. I presented a brief narrative of the history of animism as a way to lay out the mechanics of founding, building and maintaining a culture based on a specific ideology. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour presents an acute assessment of the mechanics of that very culture, after 200 years of progress. This book functions as one of the first real contributions to the anthropologization of the culture of the Moderns. Latour introduces this study with a detailed description of his newspaper reading experience. On page 4 of his daily newspaper, scientists specify the measurements taken above the Atlantic, with an update that things don't seem to be going very well. Just below is an article about the chief executive officers of Atochem and Monsanto companies that are modifying their assembly lines, beside this article is one that discusses the heads of state of major industrialized countries who are getting involved with chemistry. The paper covers the horizons, the stakes, the time frames, the actors. Page 9 talks about the right to keep frozen embryos, the Paris AIDS virus contaminating the culture medium in the laboratory, computer chips being controlled by the Japanese. Latour calls this “The Proliferation of Hybrids”; and what not a better a way to begin talking about

the eternal paradox of modernism than to exemplify the overwhelming simultaneity of our most widely consumed reading material, the daily news. “If reading the daily paper is modern man’s form of prayer, then it is a very strange man indeed who is doing the praying today, while reading about these mixed-up affairs. All of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day.” [Latour, 2] The variety of newspaper headings remain in place, allowing for a distinct and clear movement from a serious crisis like the AIDs virus to articles relating to the unconscious, then to news on fetal tissue and then to updates on USA’s influence on the war. “This fragile thread will be broken into as many segments as there are pure disciplines; Politics, Religion, Family, Law, Economics, Fiction, Technology.” [Latour, 3] In order to begin exploring the argument that we have never been modern, the first question to ask was this: What does it mean to be modern?

Through this essay, Bruno Latour seeks to understand and present the mechanics of contemporary modernist conditions with intention to highlight a crisis, a real paradox; that, as we desperately attempt to keep things at their distinct poles, disallowing any hybridic activity to take place outside of a clear definition and purpose, we have never really been able to achieve the purification that we think we have. Latour deconstructs the inner workings of the modernist machine in an attempt to solve the problem through the proposition of a solution to rewrite the modern constitution and begin to look at premodern perspectives as a way of transcending our current state into one of the non modern. This essay demonstrates clearly a concise and effective approach to the question of Josef Kosuth; what does it mean to perform an anthropological study on the moderns? I see *We Have Never Been Modern* as a tool for deterritorialization; one that gives the reader a birds eye view of the culture, one that draws a literal diagram of its paradox and potential. Through the presentation of a brief overview of Latours *We Have Never Been Modern*, I will attempt to provide here, a clear, deconstructed view of our current modern situation.

Crisis: It is generally understood that modernism is the categorical distinction between nature and culture, serving as “the destruction of superstition and it’s embodiments, resulting in the establishment of a triumphal world of indisputable facts brought to light by the power of reason applied in the sciences. In opposition to the Animistic beliefs of indigenous peoples, which fully encompassed simultaneity and hybridic correspondences with nature, the Enlightenment philosophy of the modern world seeks to destroy the hybrid, to recognize and categorize differences in the pursuit of an objectified world pure of “phantasy and ignorance” [Franke, 2010 (2), 7] The arrival of every new entity required a series of interventions that must be made in order for it to fit comfortably within the modernist framework. For instance, in the newspaper, even though there are many different topics presented on one page, the headlines are put in place, such as Science, Religion, Technolo-

gy, Sports, Weather, etc. in order to maintain a distinction as to precisely which discipline is involved in which new story. “By all means, they seem to say, let

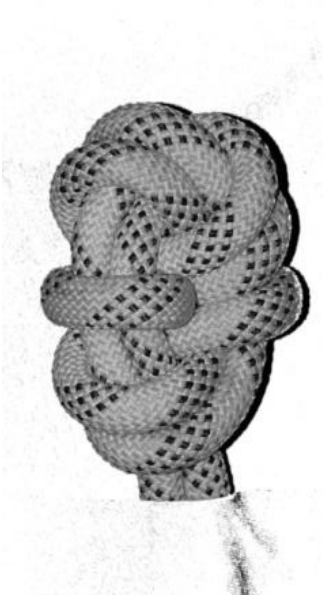


A Gordian Knot made up of differing thematic information. Courtesy of www.nature.com

us not mix up knowledge, interest, justice and power. Let us not mix up heaven and earth, the global stage, the local scene, the human and the nonhuman. But[nevertheless], these experiences, like reading the newspaper, does this mixing before our very eyes, as a way to “weave the world together!” [Latour, 3] Another reflection regards the professional position of an intellectual as an amalgamation of various fields and subfields. For instance, as the newspaper is severed into multiple headlines, we have several specific terms for professionals to identify with, including “sociologist, historian, economist, political scientist, philosopher, anthropologist” to which we add qualifiers such as “of science and technology, etc.”

Whatever label we end up with, society is only reinforcing the paradox as it continues with its traditional methods of crisscrossing the lines as it feels necessary, so that the divide that constitutes knowledge and separates nature and culture will remain in place. “Hybrids ourselves, installed lopsidedly within scientific institutions, half engineers and half philosophers, we have chosen to follow the imbroglios wherever they take us” [Latour, 1993 (2), 3]

As an anthropologist of the modern world, for him to successfully present this clear and concise analysis of a culture in which he is a product of, Latour needed to step outside of his own notions of reality, his own tastes and opinions, to observe objectively enough to produce a true anthropological study. The process of taking a look at our own culture, and trying to dismantle the perpetual interweaving of disciplines seems so impossible, in the modern world, that he has referred to it as “Untying the Gordian Knot”. The Gordian Knot, an ancient greek legend of Phrygian Gordium associated with Alexander the Great, is now used in language as a metaphor for an unmanageable problem which can only be solved by thinking outside of the box, or “cutting the Gordian knot”. [Encyclopedia Britannica (1)] Bruno Latour describes the conditions within the box and the historical scenarios



Gordian Knot Courtesy of igkt.net

that have served as a backdrop scenography for our understanding of the role of animism in the constitution of modernity. Latour asserts that the great divide of nature and culture, followed by the objectification and purification of each domain makes the moderns “see double.” Every modern must take sides, must choose to perceive the world either from nature, with its scientifically determinate, indisputable and eternal laws, or from the society who constructs their world freely in politics and culture. However, each perspective sees the two domains of nature and culture as absolutely separate, following a mutually exclusive understanding that one can not occupy both perceptions simultaneously without regressing back into our animistic, archaic past. But, Latour asserts that in reality, the moderns have never been able to successfully suppress the hybridic, simultaneous nature of animism, and develop this assertion with the argument that the proliferation of hybrids in our culture is a direct effect of the purification of nature by modern enlightenment, a detail which indeed has become the defining paradox of the modern world.

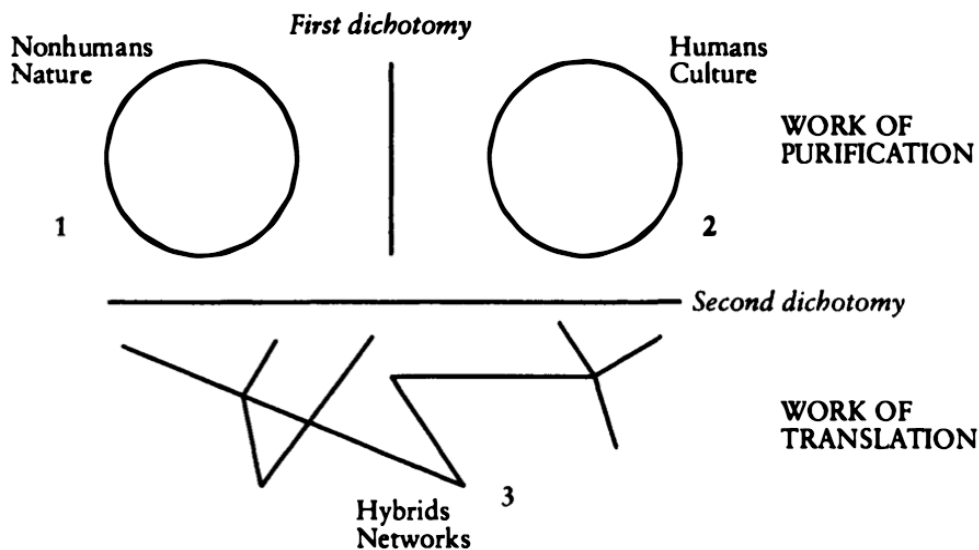


Figure 1.1 Purification and Translation from *We Have Never Been Modern*

Critics of modernism have three distinct approaches to talking about our world: naturalization, socialization and deconstruction. And just as we see in the newspaper, these approaches are active simultaneously but they have always remained distinct from one another. “Each of these forms of criticism is powerful in itself, but impossible to combine with the other two. Our intellectual life remains recognizable as long as epistemologists, sociologists and deconstructionists remain at arm’s length, the critique of each group feeding the weakness of the other two. We may glorify the sciences, play power games or make fun of the belief in a reality, but we must not mix these three caustic acids.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 7] Latour makes a reflection about the relationship between our analysis of pre modern cultures and our analysis of our own, asserting that when studying pre modern cultures, the

anthropologist displays a capability to bring together the myth, ethnohistory, religion, politics, etc. of that culture into a concise, consumable report through the same complex categorizations that we outline in our own societies; as I touched on already, we consistently use the matrix of our own western fabric to understand and explain the fabrics of others, even if we know that our world view is not the same as the “savages” we are studying abroad. Mirroring the concern of Josef Kosuth, Latour asserts that no anthropologist has ever been able to study us in the way we study pre moderns, because no anthropologist so far has been able to “dis-engage”. It has always been believed by traditional anthropologists, that “there is not, there cannot be, there should not be, an anthropology of the modern world.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 7] Latour briefly touches on this crisis of the critical stance, bringing up that it has been considered impossible to do an anthropological analysis of the modern world, but he continues further to challenge this notion, stating that it is indeed possible to do an anthropological analysis of the modern world, but to do so would require the very definition of the modern world to be altered and this would require a strong dose of deterritorialization. “When we dig beneath the surface of our elders’ surprise at the networks that, as we see it, weave our world together, we discover the anthropological roots of that lack of understanding. Fortunately, we are being assisted by some major events that are burying the old critical mole in its own burrows. If the modern world in its turn is suddenly becoming susceptible to anthropological treatment, this is because something has happened to it.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 8]

It has always been known that it takes cataclysmic events for the intellectual cultures to change their habits, alter their focus, and to open doors that, before, were never even installed. Latour selects the year 1989 to talk about a change of perspective in the West. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, and for many years before, seeing the best, most progressive intentions of modern man go terribly wrong, the moderns “seem to have lost some self-confidence”. [Latour, 1993 (2), 9] The doubt about the intentions of the modernist west have pushed some of us to become reactionary “anti moderns” and others to take up the position of the “post modern”. Post-modernism “remains suspended between belief and doubt”, unable to continue faith in the duality of society and nature put in place by Modernism, but also not willing to reject the modern perspective totally.” There are also those who remain truly Modern, who continue on following the guidelines of the constitution as if nothing happened. Regardless, this collective loss of confidence is evident that something significant has happened. “In art galleries and concert halls, along facades of apartment buildings and inside international organizations, you can feel that the heart is gone”, the collective will to be modern is no longer there.[Latour, 1993 (2)] Everything was called into perspective by the significant events that happened in or around the year 1989, leading to a significant point in time, one that allows us or even urges us now to consider the performance of an anthropological study of the moderns.

Constitution: Latour understood that the appropriate step to begin the performance of the anthropological study of the moderns was to take a careful look at what he refers to as the modern Constitution. The modern Constitution is founded on the separation of nature and culture and the purification of disciplines, however, despite the perpetual efforts to maintain these distinctions, hybrids nevertheless continue to show up, entering and existing for a short period of time as an unknown entity, until the moderns have found a place for it to stay. As soon as one begins to recognize these hybrids within a symmetrical space and re-establish the constitution that organizes the natural and political powers, one has stepped outside of the framework and ceases to be modern. “If an anthropology of the modern world were to exist, its task would consist of describing in the same way how all the branches of our government are organized, including that of nature and the hard sciences, and in explaining how and why these branches diverge as well as accounting for the multiple arrangements that bring them together” [Latour, 1993 (2), 13] What Latour is suggesting here is the need for a new approach to understanding the codependence of the various entities in our culture, in order to be okay with accepting the simultaneity that is present.

The paradox of the modern constitution is that hybridization and purification have never been allowed to be considered together. “If we consider the hybrids, we are dealing only with mixtures of nature and culture; if we consider the work of purification, we confront a total separation between nature and culture” [Latour, 1993 (2), 30]. To maintain stability despite the paradoxes presented, the constitution needed to offer three guarantees; the first assures that “even though we construct Nature, Nature is as if we did not construct it”, the second guarantee assures that “even though we do not construct society, society is as if we did construct it,” and the third guarantee is that “Nature and society must remain absolutely distinct from each other, purification must remain distinct from mediation.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 32] These three guarantees solidified the purification between nature and culture, but eventually, the moderns needed to add a fourth guarantee to the constitution, the crossed-out God. “A fourth guarantee had to settle the question of God by removing Him forever from the dual social and natural construction, while leaving Him presentable and usable nevertheless...No one is truly modern who does not agree to keep God from interfering with Natural Law as well as with the laws of the Republic. God became the crossed-out God of metaphysics, different from the pre modern God of the Christians.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 33] His transcendence from natural and social intervention placed Him at an infinite difference from which He could disturb neither the free play of nature nor the inventions of society, however, the way in which His absence was delivered still allowed for people to call on Him at their own will, in private. His crossed-out position became literally ideal; He would no longer interfere in any way with the development of the Moderns, but He

remained effective and helpful within the need for humans individual spirituality.

The moderns have figured out a way to mobilize nature, objectify the social, and feel the spiritual presence of God, all while firmly maintaining the notion that Nature escapes us, that Society is our own work and that God no longer intervenes” [Latour, 1993 (2), 34]. The moderns now see the hybrids of the old, pre-modern as nothing but illegitimate mixtures that need to be purified by separating the mechanics of nature from the passions of man. “The obscurity of the olden days, which illegitimately blended together social needs and natural reality, meanings and mechanisms, signs and things, gave way to a luminous dawn that cleanly separated material causality from human fantasy”. [Latour, 1993 (2), 35] The ability to separate humans and nonhumans, and then by simultaneously canceling out this separation, the Constitution of the moderns has been rendered invincible. With any new image that does not fit into a preconceived spot, the moderns create a counter-image that allows them to identify and categorize without question. “They hold all the sources of power, all the critical possibilities, because they displace them from case to case with such rapidity that they can never be caught redhanded.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 39] This has accelerated the socialization of nonhumans, never allowing them to appear as elements of real society. “By rendering mixtures unthinkable, by emptying, sweeping, cleaning and purifying the arena that is opened in the central space defined by their three sources of power, the moderns allowed the practice of mediation to recombine all possible monsters without letting them have any effect on the social fabric, or even any contact with it. Bizarre as these monsters may be, they posed no problem because they did not exist publicly, and their monstrous consequences remained untraceable.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 42]

As we follow the official Constitution, looking at what it forbids and allows, as we study the work of the production of hybrids and the work of elimination of these same hybrids, we are able to realize then that we have never been modern; Modernity has never even begun. “The less the moderns think they are blended, the more they blend”. As more and more categorical distinctions are made in order to house anything that does not have a name, the culture is being divided into smaller and smaller pieces. This condition has no option but to assume hybridic roles, as exemplified by Latour talking about his professional title: a French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist of science. “The more science thinks it is absolutely pure, the more it is intimately bound up with the fabric of society.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 43] Latour is not saying that we are entering a new era, in fact, we have never even entered into the modern era, which we have been made to believe is coming to an end. Latour introduces a character called the non modern or a-modern, who has the retrospective attitude of adding instead of subtracting, sorting out instead of debunking. “A non modern is anyone who takes simultaneously into account the modern Constitution and the populations of

hybrids that the Constitution rejects and allows to proliferate.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 47] A new field, much more broad and less hostile than the fields of the anti moderns or post moderns, has been opened up before us, the field of the non modern world. The non moderns occupy what Latour calls the “Middle Kingdom,” which he describes as ”as vast as China and as little known”. [Latour, 1993 (2), 48]

If we can no longer maintain faith in the tasks of modernization, and see the desperate need for an anthropologization of modern thought, then unforeseen obstacles must have interfered with the Modern machine to change our views of it. “What has happened that makes the work of purification unthinkable, when a few years ago it was the deployment of networks that appeared absurd and scandalous?” [Latour, 1993 (2), 50]. Latour asserts that the Moderns have been victims of their own success. The magnitude of the efforts to mobilize nature and society had resulted in the multiplication of hybrids to such an extent that the constitutional framework, which both invents then denies their existence, could no longer keep everything in place. Basically, the modern Constitution is collapsing under its own weight. “When the only thing at stake was the emergence of a few vacuum pumps, they could still be subsumed under two classes, that of natural laws and that of political representations; but when we find ourselves invaded by frozen embryos, digital machines, hybrid corn, data banks, psychotropic drugs, etc, when our daily news-

papers display all these monsters on page after page, and when the chimera can properly exist on the object side or on the subject side, or even in between, something has to be done.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 51] There are no longer enough judges and critics to partition the hybrids and so the purification system has become clogged with what Bruno Latour calls the quasi-object.

What is a quasi-object? Quasi-objects, as explained by Latour in his reflections on the notions of social sciences, are hybrids that have been invented through influence of science and technology, that exist between nature and culture. Science studies has played an instrumental role in forcing everyone to rethink the role of objects in society. “To become a social scientist is to realize that the inner properties of objects do not count, that they are mere receptacles for human categories. All the sciences (natural and social) are now mobilized to turn the humans into so many

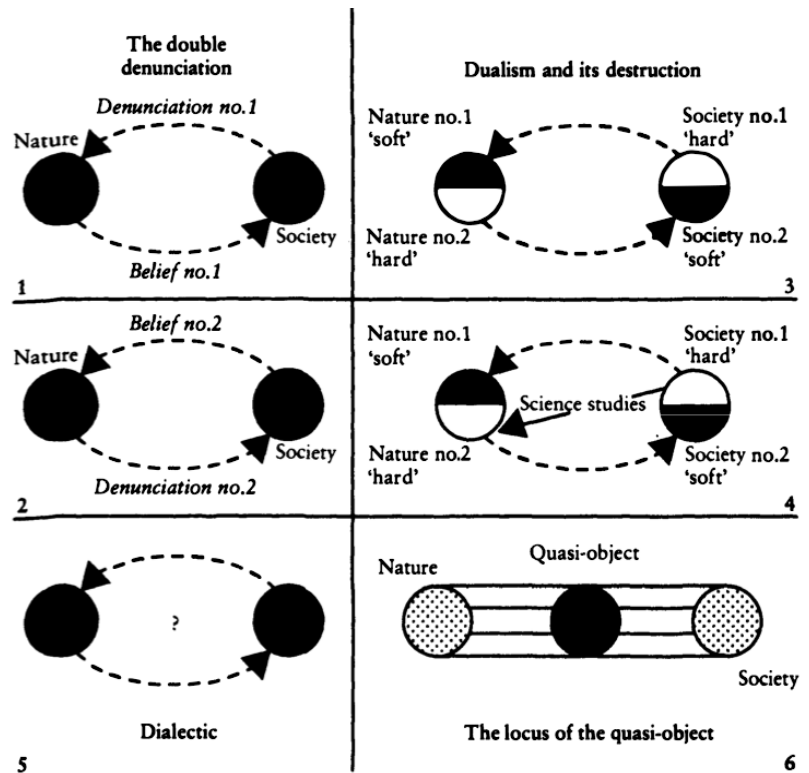


Figure 3.2 What is a Quasi Object? from *We Have Never Been Modern*



puppets manipulated by objective forces.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 52] There are two different critical denunciations of social scientists, which makes it very difficult to reach agreements on objects; the two denunciations, both having a dualism and destruction, begin with a belief in the separation but flow from nature to culture and back. In the dualism and destruction of the first denunciation, objects count for nothing. They are just there to be used as “the white screen on to which society projects its cinema.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 53] In the dualism and destruction of the second denunciation, “objects are so powerful that they shape the human society, while the social construction of the sciences that have produced them remains invisible” [Latour, 1993 (2), 53]. By disturbing the dualism put in place by the modern Constitution, the science studies revealed the asymmetry of these denunciations, also revealing the poor construction of the social theory and the epistemology that went into developing and maintaining those denunciations. Quasi-objects are the things that make up the middle kingdom between nature and society, the middle area that has been ignored but keeps on expanding. The more these quasi-objects multiply, the more the major philosophies treat the two constitutional poles as incommensurable; these philosophies directly illustrate the modern paradox, by forbidding what they allow and allowing what they forbid. True moderns have always secretly multiplied intermediaries in order to try to compensate for the massive expansion of hybrids and quasi-objects; and it is precisely this contradiction that has caused the speculations that make up post-modernity.

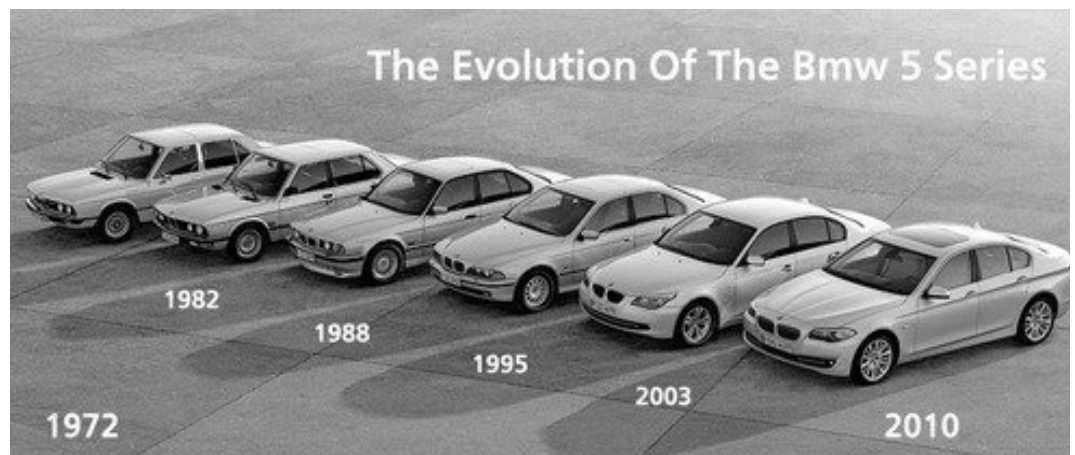
Revolution: *We Have Never Been Modern* discusses how we have actually never abandoned the anthropological matrix. “No radical revolution can separate us from these pasts, so there is no need for reactionary counter-revolutions to lead us back to what has never been abandoned.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 67] Modernism is typically defined with a break in time from the pre-modern past and the current modern state. The distinction is made between these two modes with the use of an understanding of time, which, to the moderns, has become irreversible because of our conception of progress. The historicism of modern science wants to keep everything, date everything, because they think they have definitively broken with their past. “The more they accumulate revolutions, the more they save; the more they capitalize, the more they put on display in museums. Maniacal destruction is counter-balanced by an equally maniacal conservation” One of the roles of the museum is to objectify the past after a revolution has taken place. Latour describes this theory of progress to be essentially the same as the concept of a savings bank. Overall, modernisms handling of the past is a universal savings bank for the entire human community, where humanity would make deposits into history and never withdraw from it. And in this sense, the contributions would eventually start depositing themselves, on their own tireless initiative. “Such is the theory of progress.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 69]

In reflecting back on animism and the modern notion of time, Latour recognizes that although historians consume and rebuild the past piece by piece, driven by the notion that we are indeed removed from it, we are actually not as removed as we think that we are. “The past remains, and even returns” as a resurgence that is incomprehensible to the moderns. In turn, the moderns treat this return as a symptom of the positivist suppression of animism, otherwise referred to as the “return of the repressed”. This return is seen as a threat by the moderns, who believed that “if we are not careful, we are going to return to the past; we’re going to fall back into the Dark Ages.” The impossible feat of Modernism’s notion of the irreversible passage of time directly results in two specific symptoms, historical reconstitution and archaism. Each time the past seeps out from the cracks of the modern regime, history has to be reconstructed/recomposed in order to accommodate. Latour understands that the idea of revolution is directly related to the modernist understanding of the passage of time. “For moderns and their anti modern enemies, time’s arrow is unambiguous. One can go forward, but must break from the past; one can choose to go backward, but then one must break with the modernizing avant-gardes, which have broken radically with their own past.”

The practice of mediation is perhaps the most essential component to the modern paradigm, as it acts as the glue that holds everything together; it makes the pure things work amongst other pure things, peacefully. The practice of mediation is “a practice that has always mixed up epochs, genres and ideas...[a practice as] heterogeneous as the belief systems of the ‘pre moderns.’” Because of the inevitable return of the “archaic” past, we are realizing, in this post-modern time, that we are incapable of actually carrying out a “revolution” in the sense of making a clean break from the past, any longer. To understand this fact as a disappointment and to be fearful that “archaism” has invaded everything would be truly modern. Modern time is a succession of unexplainable apparitions; ghosts applied to the separation between the history of sciences or technologies and just plain history. But, if historical events were really suppressed, eliminated, crossed-out, than the discoveries that we are working with today are no longer accounted for. These discoveries suddenly “come from nowhere; human fabrications exist that no human has ever made.”[Latour, 1993(2),70] The modernist constitution’s reliance on pure form have no choice to consider radical revolution upon the emergence of hybrids because revolution is another purification process, which distinguishes itself and cuts itself off from history. Because of the progress of scientific or technological innovations, we are now faced with two different histories: one dealing with universal things that lack any historicity besides that of total revolutions or epistemological breaks, and another focusing on varied occurrences with a lasting agitation of humans detachment from things. On the occasion that a new discovery or invention takes place, “time will be reckoned starting from these miraculous beginnings, sec-

ularizing each incarnation into the history of transcendent sciences.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 71] Modernization consists of continually exiting from any obscure state of hybridization in order to go through a revolution and enter a new age which things can be pure and clearly distinguished between either what belongs to temporal nature and what comes from humans. The history of modernity is outlined by a series of radical breaks and revolutions, which constitute such a magnitude of irreversibility that it prevents us from ever going backwards.

This new state of the world, which is effected by efforts of globalization, is at an ever-growing scale, with a nature and a society who’s players are constantly multiplied, but who’s mobilization implies no ordered, systematic passage of time. Even though this new state has the potential to challenge the given notion of time in the modern world, “thanks to their quite peculiar form of temporality, the moderns will order the proliferation of new actors either as a form of capitalism, an accumulation of conquests, an invasion of barbarians or a succession of catastrophes.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 72] This ordering system is a technique to remain modern, to continue with the trend of purification that has made up what modernism is and has been. “What is the source of the very modern impression that we are always living in a new time that breaks with the past?” Our impression of the irreversible passage of time is created when we group and categorize the specific elements that make up our every day reality. This is a “systematic cohesion” of these elements, which are replaced by other, newer, elements “rendered just as coherent” as those of the last period. This systematic cohesion is what gives the impression of a time that has passed, a flow that looks continuously from the past to the future. “Modern temporality is the result of a retraining imposed on entities” [Latour, 1993 (2), 72]; entities that would pertain to all sorts of times and possess all sorts of ontological statuses, without this retraining discipline. An example to reference here would be the progression of aesthetics of past generations, considering the independence of, yet linear cohesion between, the people and lifestyles in the 1930’s, 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, 90’s and on into the future; each of which cannot be considered without all that comes with it...product design, art, fashion, philosophy, popular culture etc.



The designs evolution of the BMW 5 Series, from 1972-2010. Courtesy of starecat.com

The transcendence of science and technology of the moderns from the 30's until now has been substantial, and this is what provides us with the impression of the irreversibility in the course of time. "Just as they eliminate the ins and outs of all the hybrids, the moderns could interpret the heterogeneous rearrangements as systematic totalities in which everything would hold together." [Latour, 1993 (2), 73]

The modern progress functions only under the condition that all contemporary elements act according to the same calendar; these elements would have to form a complete and recognizable unit. "Then and only then, time forms a continuous and progressive flow." But this order is disturbed once the quasi-objects start mixing up different periods, ontologies or genres of history, giving the impression of a turbulent flow of whirlpools and rapids, as opposed to the modern systemic and cohesive, luminary flow. This effect of the quasi-object can be allowed for a bit, but for the modern notion of temporality to continue to function and remain credible, there must always be the return of the impression that there is some sort of "ordered front" of entities sharing the same contemporary time, because in allowing for the turbulence to reside, too many counter examples would make it impossible for the moderns to maintain their purifying agenda. Nevertheless, the proliferation of quasi-objects "has exploded modern temporality along with its constitution" [Latour, 1993 (2), 73] as with them came multiplications of exceptions that nobody could situate in a regular flow of time, exceptions that have continued to pop up un-stopably, "actors" that are impossible to categorize.

"Fortunately, nothing obliges us to maintain modern temporality with its succession of radical revolutions." [Latour, 1993 (2), 74] We do not have to be forever attached to modern notions of time that inhibits us from understanding either our past or our future. Actually, it would even be accurate to say that in this post modern era, with the proliferation of hybrids and quasi-objects, that the modern temporality has stopped passing by. Time is no longer a general framework, but a provisional result of the connections among entities. The moderns have always attempted to reassemble, hook together and systematize contemporary elements while eliminating those who do not belong; but this attempt has always failed. "There are no longer, there have never been, anything but elements that elude the system, objects whose date and duration are uncertain" [Latour, 1993 (2), 75] Latour introduces a different conception of time, one that is based on a spiral instead of a line. In this model, "we do have a future and a past, but the future takes the form of a circle, expanding in all directions, and the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops. Conversely, elements that are quite contemporary, if we judge by the line, become quite remote if we traverse a spoke." With such a model of temporality, the labels 'archaic' or 'advanced' no longer really apply, and the begin-



Yanomamö man of South America.  
Courtesy of [www.wegodlessanimals.com/put-the-noble-savage-to-rest/](http://www.wegodlessanimals.com/put-the-noble-savage-to-rest/)

ning of a new conception of temporality takes place, since every grouping of contemporary elements may bring together elements from all times. In this framework, actions and occurrences are suddenly recognized to be polytemporal. “I use my electric drill, but I also use a hammer. The former is thirty-five years old, the latter hundreds of thousands. Will you see me as a DIY expert ‘of contrasts’ because I mix up gestures from different times?...Some of my genes are 500 million years old, others 3 millions, others 100,000 years, and my habits range in age from a few days to several thousand years... ‘we are exchangers and brewers of time’”[Latour, 1993 (2), 75] The times are created by the sorting efforts of anthropology, archaeology. After-all, the modern framework, like the anti-moderns and the post-moderns was only the temporary result of a selection made by a small number of agents speaking in the name of everything. If there were more of us who regain the capacity to do our own sorting of the elements, we will rediscover the freedom of movement that modernism denied us, a freedom that, in fact, we have never really lost. We will re-achieve an autonomy that escapes the modernist frameworks.

Modernization has never really occurred, and because of this we can go on to other things, and return to the multiple entities that have always passed, but in a different way. The work of purification recognized the existence of quasi-objects, but emptied them of any relevance through the process of intermediation, simply allowing only for the transport, transfer and transmission of energy from one of the two poles of the Modern Constitution. Mediation, however, is an “original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 77]If we are able to restore this mediating role to all of the agents and actors, then the same world composed of the same entities suddenly ceases to be modern and resumes it’s position in a state that we have never really left, the state of the non-moderns. “The modern operation has three aspects it must follow: preliminary purification of hybrids, a divided separation, and a progressive re-blending, which begins from the poles and heads toward the middle. This middle point was always simultaneously maintained and abolished, recognized and denied” because there needed to be a middle point in order for the poles to exist. So, as opposed to this modern understanding of nature and society, beginning from the outer poles and moving in, perhaps we can begin to consider the Middle Kingdom, where instead, the points of separation and conjunction would become the starting point. The explanations no longer begin from the pure forms and move toward phenomena in the center, but begin from the center and move toward the extremes. The explanations will still obtain Nature and Society, but only as a final outcome, not as a beginning. Nature no longer revolves around the Subject/Society, but around the collective that produces things and people. The subject no longer revolves around Nature, but around the collective that generates the people and the things. “At last, the Middle Kingdom is represented. Natures and societies are it’s satellites.”

Relativism: “If anthropology is to become comparative, if it is to be able to go back and forth between moderns and non-moderns, it must be made symmetrical...it must become capable of confronting the true knowledge to which we adhere totally. It must therefore be made capable of studying the sciences by surpassing the limits of the sociology of knowledge and above all, of epistemology.” [Latour, 1993 (2), 92] It is only when the balance of symmetry is precisely regained that the explanations and the inconsistency that has made some of us winners and others losers becomes more visible. As opposed to asymmetrical explanations, the generalized principle of symmetry is the one that Bruno Latour is proposing, as a method to explain nature and society that begins from the middle ground, the Middle Kingdom of quasi-objects, and moves outward to the poles in which Nature and Culture have become satellites.

For the generalized principle of symmetry to be put into action, the anthropologist of modern culture must position himself at the median point where he can follow the attribution of both human and nonhuman properties. The general principle of symmetry aims not only at establishing equality, setting the scale to zero, but also as a way to recognize differences, the asymmetries, in the process of understanding the practical means that allow some collectives to dominate others; as it studies the production of humans and nonhumans simultaneously and it also refrains from making a priori declarations as to what might distinguish Westerners from Others. Modern universalism locked cultures away through the labeling of the exotic or strange other, through the marginalization of animistic beliefs to cognitive developments of children, psychosis and the arts, as a way to push the modernist viewpoint in full with no questions.

Early on, the moderns realized that if no common, unique and transcendental measuring instrument exists, then all languages are untranslatable, all intimate emotions incommunicable, all rites equally respectable, all paradigms incommensurable; Modernist Relativism came from the invention of tools and the establishment of measuring systems in order to judge or measure what is being assessed or observed. From then on, whatever is being observed or judged, is scientifically and technologically relative to the culture which is observing or judging it; most of the time, these tools are used to measure cultures in which these tools do not already exist. There are the universalists, who “define a single hierarchy”, then there are the absolute relativists, who “make all hierarchies equal” and then there is the relativist relativists, “whose perspective points out what instruments and what chains serve

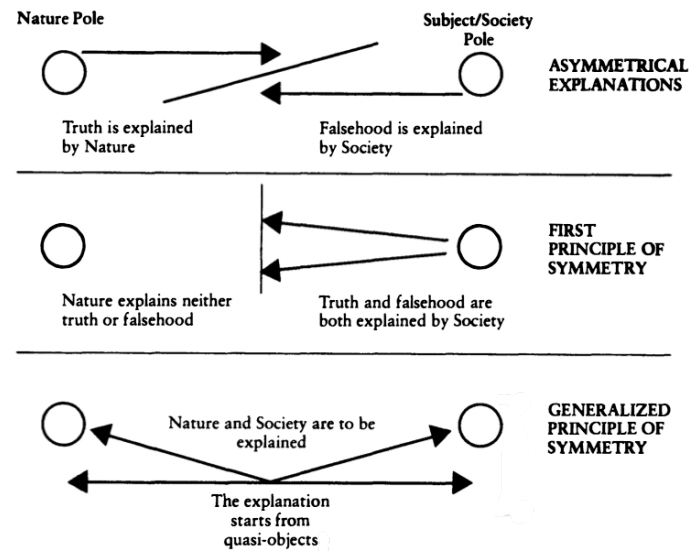


Figure 4.1 The Principle of Symmetry from *We Have Never Been Modern*

to create asymmetries and inequalities, hierarchies and differences”. [Latour, 1993 (2), 114] If we can seize to follow the universalists or absolute relativists in their attempts to measure cultures at home or abroad, then we can break from the target practice of modernism and allow relative relativism, also referred to as relationism, to become a new resource for relating collectives.

Redistribution: After an elaborate introduction to the Modern Constitution and the reasons for which it had been invincible for so long, after also showing why the critical revolution has now become impossible because of the emergence and proliferation of quasi-objects that forces us to see the modern together with the non-modern dimension, after laying out a plan for the reestablishment of symmetry among collectives and re-examining the question of relativism, Bruno Latour ends this essay with a new constitution, one that constitutes the non-modern world. Modernism has left a path of force and bloodshed as it destroyed nearly all of culture and nature that did not fit into its own framework, with a clear agenda to distinguish between the laws of nature and the conventions of society. This partitioning process was accompanied by a coherent and continuous lineage of radical revolutions in science and technology, which led to so many hybrids that no one knows any longer how to deal with them in the traditional modern ways, birthing the postmoderns and their abrupt paralysis. The postmodern reality understands that nothing has value and that everything is a reflection, a floating sign; postmodernism is a symptom of the contradictions of the moderns. But for lack of a better option, are we going to have to continue in the “twilight zone of the postmods?” [Latour, 1993 (2), 132]. “The modern world can no longer extend itself without becoming once again what it has never ceased to be in practice, a non modern world like all the others”[Latour, 1993 (2), 135]. As Bruno Latour sorts out the various positions of the pre modern, modern, anti modern and post modern, in order to bring the non modern to terms with the best combination of those positions, he contemplates what we are going to purge and what we will retain from the Modern Constitution. But, before we can amend the Constitution, we have to begin with a relocation of the human. “So long as humanism is constructed through contrast with the object that has been abandoned to epistemology, neither the human nor the non human can be understood.” Instead of attaching the human to one constitutional pole or another, we should move it closer to the middle, then it becomes the mediator and even the intersection of the two. The human is not something on a constitutional pole that should be opposed to the nonhuman; the two expressions ‘humans’ and ‘nonhumans’ are results of the great divide that no longer suffice. “The scale of value consists not in shifting the definition of the human along the horizontal line that connects the Object pole to the Subject pole, but in sliding it along the vertical dimension that defines the non modern world.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 137] The expression ‘anthropomorphic’ consid-

erably underestimates our humanity; we should be talking about morphism. Morphism is the place where technomorphisms, zoomorphisms, psychomorphisms, etc. all come together. Their alliances and their exchanges, taken together, are what define the humans position as a weaver of morphisms. “The human is in the delegation itself, in the pass, in the sending, in the continuous exchange of forms. Human nature as a symmetrical position is the set of delegates and representatives, figures and messengers, shifting the old modern subject/society position.

In order to sketch out the non modern Constitution, it is important to take into account what the modern Constitution left out, and to sort out the guarantees we wish to keep. Latour has confirmed a commitment to providing representation to the quasi-objects. The first guarantee of the new draft thus becomes the non separability of quasi-objects/quasi-subjects. In order to adhere to this first guarantee, every concept, every institution, every practice that interferes with the continuous deployment of collectives and their experimentation with hybrids will be deemed dangerous, harmful and immoral. The work of mediation becomes the very center, and networks can again come out from their hiding place; here, the Middle Kingdom is represented. The second guarantee of the new draft seeks to recover the first two guarantees of the modern Constitution but without separating them. All concepts, all institutions, all practices that interfere with the progressive objectivization of Nature, and simultaneously the progressive subjectivation of Society will be considered harmful, dangerous and immoral. The third guarantee, is that we can combine associations freely without any longer confronting the choice between archaism and modernization, the local and the global, the cultural and the universal, the natural and the social. Any new call to revolution, epistemological breed, Coperni-

	<b>What is retained</b>	<b>What is rejected</b>
<b>From the moderns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-long networks</li> <li>-size</li> <li>-experimentation</li> <li>-relative universals</li> <li>-final separation between objective nature and free society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-separation between nature and society</li> <li>-clandestineness of the practices of mediation</li> <li>-external Great Divide</li> <li>-critical denunciation</li> <li>-universality, rationality</li> </ul>
<b>From the premoderns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-non-separability of things and signs</li> <li>-transcendence without a contrary</li> <li>-multiplication of nonhumans</li> <li>-temporality by intensity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-obligation always to link the social and natural orders</li> <li>-scapegoating mechanism</li> <li>● ethnocentrism</li> <li>● territory</li> <li>-limits on scale</li> </ul>
<b>From the post moderns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-multiple times</li> <li>-constructivism</li> <li>-reflexivity</li> <li>-denaturalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-belief in modernism</li> <li>-critical deconstruction</li> <li>-ironic reflexivity</li> <li>-anachronism</li> </ul>

Figure 5.1 What is retained and what is rejected from We Have Never Been Modern



can upheaval or claim that certain practices have become outdated forever will be considered a threat to the non modern Constitution. The fourth guarantee, perhaps the most important, is to replace the secret proliferation of hybrids with a regulated and commonly-agreed-upon production. It is time, perhaps, to speak of democracy again, but a democracy extended to things themselves. “We want a meticulous sorting of quasi-objects to become possible, no longer officially and under the table, but officially and in broad daylight.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 142]

In it’s confines, the continuity of the collective is reconfigured. There are no more naked truths or naked citizens, and the mediators have the space all to themselves. This is a new object-discourse-nature-society, with a network that extends from our backyard to the Antarctic through the application of many disciplines including law, economy, the State, satellites, etc. The imbroglios and networks that had no place now have the whole place. They are the ones that need to be represented anyways, the Quasi-Objects of the Middle Kingdom; it is around them that the Parliament of Things gathers. “Half our politics is constructed in science and technology. The other half of Nature is constructed in societies. Let us patch them back together, and the political task can begin again.”[Latour, 1993 (2), 144] It is our responsibility now to change our ways, or else it will have meant nothing for us to experience the cataclysmic events that offered us a clear, unique and pivotal lesson about the failure of the separation of socialism and naturalism of the moderns.

Over the past 10-20 years, there has been a growing interest in deconstructing what we understand about our perceptions of, and interactions with, human and nonhuman forms, and *We Have Never Been Modern* has acted as a solid jumping off point for many contemporary anthropologists and philosophers, who follow in Bruno Latours footsteps, as they make their own anthropological studies of modernism, or make serious efforts to re-look at how we perform anthropological studies on contemporary pre modern cultures. I see this book as a very important contribution to the development of the modern world, as a tool for achieving a deterritorialization of heightened precision, really providing a clear birds eye view of the contemporary modern situation, and giving the reader an opportunity to achieve a position in the periphery, in order to assess the customs and value that are held in place, with a comfortable new ability to question them and envision what could be beyond the great divide.

## Sequel

“A ghost is haunting modernity, the ghost of animism. It awaits us everywhere when we step outside modern reason’s cone of light, outside its firmly mapped order, when approaching its frontier zones and ‘outside.’ We find it in the imagined darkness of modernity’s outside, where everything changes shape and the world is reassembled from the fragments that reason expels from its chains of coherences.” [Franke, 2012 (3)] The release of *Primitive Culture* by Edward B. Tylor has marked a significant moment in Enlightenment philosophy, as it presented studies that framed “animism” and its practitioners as the “nonhuman”, subsequently presenting a platform on which to judge the ‘pre moderns’, launching the suppression of the beliefs of indigenous cultures and building a durable Great Divide between nature and culture, a divide which has, until very recently, been successfully maintained. With every seeping of the juices of “the other” into the modernist framework, with any little animistic light shed through the cracks of the wall of the great divide, with any emergence or break out of the mimetic unconscious, the moderns needed to create a counter image, a counter initiative, a revolution, in order to maintain anything and everything that contradicted what was truly modern. They spent the past two millennia working to repress what would turn out to be unrepressible, and the time has now come that the leaks in the dykes of modernism have become so plentiful that it is no longer stable enough to stand. The purification process of Modernist rationality has reached its limits.

Within the fields of anthropology, there has been a significantly critical re-engagement with the concept of Tylorian animism, in particular through an exploration of the various different ideas of what constitutes a person, personification and the self. What do we perceive as being alive, and why do we perceive it in this way? When we ask this question, it requires an entire look back on the history of animism, what followed the coining of the term and also what came before. The first dimension that contemporary anthropologists are looking at is the animism of the nineteenth century, the “old” animism of modernity. “Between this “old” animism and the cultural practices that it sought to describe and classify, we find a gap marked by colonial subjugation, appropriation, and mis-recognition. The practices at stake are ones that need to be understood independently of their description by anthropologists, although the two have, of course, become historically entangled.” [Franke, 2012 (1), 60] Then there is “new” animism, “which proclaims to have come closer to the realities of the cultures in question, which seeks to take ‘animist’ cultural practices seriously, considering forms of relational knowledge, and, above all, practices different from those predominant in modernity.



Five Ojibwe chiefs in the 19th century; it was anthropological studies of Ojibwe religion that resulted in the development of the “new animism” Courtesy of wikipedia.org Ojibwe

This distinction between “old” animism and “new” animism, between the animism Western anthropologists conceptualized and what they referred to, is mirrored in the relation of so-called indigenous societies. In particular, the work of Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has been central in defining the contours of “New Animism” as a means of re-energizing the previously discarded concept of “animism” [Jensen, Blok, 87]. The rise of the “New Animism” is contemporary philosophies attempt to re-envision what had been lost in the interpretations made by Tylor in 1871. With “new” animism, anthropologists are attempting to take a slower and more careful approach to deconstructing their observations of indigenous cultures in the past until now, as opposed to judging what they are seeing through the lenses of Western culture founded on their own notions of science, religion, rationality and reason. “Modernity’s ‘trouble with the soul’ can essentially be traced to the fact that over the course of the last 2,000 years it has become an internally displaced transcendental substance, something that one does or does not ‘possess.’”[Franke, 2012 (1), 60] As mentioned by Anselm Franke in *Animismus*, as long as the moderns continue as a culture to perceive the soul in this way, as long as they continue taking the power into their own hands to decide whether something is or is not endowed with a soul, the entire question of ensoulment will remain only within the realm of positivist theological debates that essentially serve enlightenment philosophy’s efforts to frame arguments of whether things, i.e. ‘savages,’ ‘animals,’ ‘plants’ etc. legitimately have a soul. “What if we were to imagine the soul as an “event,” as something that cannot be owned but only exists in the intermediary realm? Wouldn’t this enable us to pose the question of animism differently?”[Franke, 2012 (1), 61]

The question of what possesses a soul suddenly opens up to consider what it means to be animated, it encourages us to look at and think about different forms of animation, and also examine different levels of communicative events. “What if “the soul” was the medium of such events?”[Franke, 2012 (1), 61] What kind of revolutionary potential is at stake with this question, and the many other facets that come into play when revisiting animism in relation to modern life on earth? Many artists and philosophers have worked with this question. Efforts of “New” Animism, as assessed by Anselm Franke “sees animism as a node, a knot, that, when untied, will help unpack the ‘riddle of modernity’ in new ways, helping us to understand modernity as a mode of classifying and mapping the world by means of partitions, by a series of “Great Divides.”[Franke, 2012 (2), 11]. “New” Animism provokes the modern principle of reality that has become so deeply inscribed in our everyday perception. It explores the borderlines of animation, where the rigid order of knowledge and objectification is loosened and the border is crossed. On the other side of the border begins “a world of wondrous transformations, monstrosities and horror”.([Franke, 2012 (1) 29] “The task is to bring those constitutive others at the ‘dark’ side of modern

reason, like ‘animism,’ but also the ‘imaginary,’ the ‘negative,’ ‘otherness,’ or even ‘evil’ back into the relational diagram of modernity.”[Franke, 2012 (3)] The history of animism constitutes a history of closure and division, suppression and bloodshed, but a history that was shaped by the constant “returns of the repressed.”

Animism is a history of what Anselm Franke refers to as “ontological anarchy”, where any exclusions have become comprehensible only through their constant displacement within our desires, fantasies, psychosis etc. “It is important to mention here that anarchy in this sense does not find its horizons of agency in a historical void or a tabula rasa known as the future. It does not seek an absence of power, but rather the insistence on the right and possibility not to be subjected to power. It finds its field in the immediate actuality of that which offers itself to dialogic contestation and engagement, in the permanent modulated exchange between the implicit and the explicit, or, in aesthetic terms, between what constitutes ‘figure’ and what constitutes ‘ground’ in any mapping that implicates us” [Franke, 2012 (3)] The ontological anarchy of Anselm Franke is of the same principles as the state of being okay that I am presenting here. How to be okay is not to assume a passive role, but to be autonomous, to refuse to be subjected to the dictatorial powers of the modern constitution through an active awareness and refusal of them.

The anthropologists of “New” Animism have a mission that they are ready to assume, a mission that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro refers to as the “de-colonization of thought”. This mission is a proposal for another method, outside of philosophy, to create concepts. The de-colonization of thought is presented as a reflection of a concept presented in Patrice Maniglier’s *The Kinship of Others*, where he imagines a veritable anthropology that “returns to us as an image in which we are unrecognizable to ourselves”. Every experience of another culture offers us an opportunity to engage not only with new and unfamiliar customs, values and beliefs, but to also engage in experimentation with our own culture. “The specter of animism is no longer one that returns from the past, for the reversal of modern temporality has announced itself for sometime in the ability to challenge monolithic modernist narratives with a multitude of other separations, inscriptions and fixations.”[Franke, 2012 (3)] Within the past three decades or so, there have been many anthropologists inspired by, and rising to the challenge to further develop the efforts of, “New” Animism. They have been developing concepts and theories that facilitate in refreshing our perceptions of the relationships between nature and society, the “human” and “nonhuman”, etc. “Here, animism shifts to become the experience of the event and experience that sets in when a naturalized, fixed order of signs is de-stabilized and opened up towards possible transformations, like a map covering the territory that is lifted to unveil multiple movements below what had appeared to be stable ground.”[Franke, 2012 (3)]

## II. Engagements of Alterity

“The de-exoticization of the indigenous has the counter-effect of a rather strong exoticization of the anthropologist.”[Castro, 41] The efforts of “New” Animism is on a steady pursuit of emancipatory measure that would accommodate for all things, “living” and “non-living” entities, “human” and “non-human” actors, modern and pre modern perspectives. In order to address these un-mapping and un-disciplining perspectives, the anthropologists stress that it is necessary to create a new narrative, an alternative frame that is at the same time an anti-frame. One which can account for the phenomena of animation beyond the modernist division. This alternative frame, however, must not adopt an indifference that leads to all borders and hierarchies to be abolished. The limiting constraints of modernism has for a very long time cancelled out any potential for pre modern world views to take influence on the development of culture or modes of communication. The newly established directions of anthropology seek to slowly and carefully address the constraints that causes modernism to dominate the world, and with this, there are hopes to move on from the need to classify everyone or anything into a constricted definition and to take up new viewpoints using the foundations of thought mentioned throughout this thesis.

### The Decolonization of Thought

Following in the footprints of Bruno Latour, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro begins his book *Cannibal Metaphysics* by stating a particularly strong viewpoint that the time has come to for anthropology to “fully assume a new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent decolonization of thought” [Castro, 40]. Against the over-arching presence of the great divide, this “minor anthropology” would make small multiplicities proliferate; “not the narcissism of small differences, but the anti-narcissism of continuous variations” [Castro, 44] through the process of “unreducing” and undefining the borders that separate sign and signifier, humans and nature, “us” and “the other”. The first chapter is titled Anti-Narcissus, in principle, objectively poses the question to contemporary forms of ethnography; “What do anthropologists owe, conceptually, to the people they study?” [Castro,

39] The question posed by Anti-Narcissus is a political one that presents a break from the modernist approaches that, for the past 2,000 years have been used to define other cultures through the use of its own lenses and tools. Viveiros de Castro notes that since there is more or less a developing consensus that the anthropology of colonial positivism is reaching its fatal end, then it is also time to come to terms with the fact that a new and radical reconstitution of the discipline will doubtlessly emerge. It is not a matter of erasing the lines, but by bending and highlighting the infinite complexities of them. This proposal to provide an alternative description to the modernist conception of animistic indigenous cultures ultimately creates a mirror that has the capacity to reflect an image back to us, an image in which we can no longer recognize ourselves. “This double, materialist-speculative twist, applied to the usual psychological and positivist representation of animism, is ‘perspectivism’”[Castro, 55].

As opposed to Bruno Latour, who placed a strict focus on the moderns as a subject to question the modernist framework, Viveiros de Castro places a focus on indigenous, pre modern tribes, comparing their views to those of the moderns, as a way to present proposals for new perspectives in the modern world. One of Viveiro de Castro’s first contributions to the reformation of the anthropological agenda is his conception of “Amerindian Perspectivism” with the sub-contexts of “Interspecific perspectivism,” “ontological multi-naturalism” and “cannibal alterity.” Multi-naturalism, as a suggested term, can be used to identify one of the most particular traits of Amerindian (otherwise known as American Indian or Native American) thought, which is acutely understood when viewed in comparison to modernisms “multiculturalism”. As multiculturalism is founded on a subjective individuality of minds and signifiers, with each cultural being distinctly separate from the next, the Amerindian multi-naturalism is founded by an objective universality of bodies and substance, with a unity of mind and a diversity of bodies. With multi-naturalism, there is an “interspecific resemblance”, a likeness that exists or occurs between species, that encompasses the belief that “animals and other nonhumans having a soul ‘see themselves as persons’” and therefore “are persons.”[Castro, 56] Interspecies resemblance or “interspecific perspectivism” can be explained as a contrast to the disenchanting Enlightenment philosophy of old Europeans and their continual suppression of the mimetic cosmology of the human and non human condition, as it perpetually moves back and forth between two forms of relativism: the first consisting of small differences between their fellow humans who often share too much of a likeness, and the second made up of substantial likenesses between entirely different species.

The concept of “personhood” is also central to perspectivism, which is the “capacity to occupy a point of view”, however, it is usually only applied to predator and scavenger type animals like jaguar, anaconda, vultures, monkeys, fish, deer,



19th Century Drawing of Native American shaman, dressed in bear skin. Courtesy of bbc.co.uk

etc., because one of the most important aspects of the inversions brought about by perspectivism concerns the relative and relational status of predator and prey [Castro, 57]. “All Animals and cosmic constituents are intensively and virtually persons, because all of them, no matter which, can reveal themselves to be a person. Personhood and perspectivism is a question of degree, context and position rather than a property distinct to specific species”[Castro, 57]. Most indigenous practices encompass a fundamental assumption that non humans possess a “prosopomorphic [possessing a human resemblance] side”, but it’s vanguard can be found in the particular context of shamanism. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro focuses on Amerindian Shamanism to be the “authorization of certain individuals to cross the corporeal barriers between species, adopt an exospecific subjective perspective and administer the relations between those species and humans.”[Castro, 60] With the ability to see nonhuman as they see themselves, the shaman achieves a capacity to participate in trans-specific dialogue, or as Viveiros de Castro calls it a “political art of diplomacy”. He states clearly that “if Western relativism has multiculturalism as their politics, Amerindian shamanic perspectivism has multi-naturalism as it’s cosmic politics”[Castro, 61].



Yupik shaman in Nushagak, Alaska, North America. Courtesy of <http://factsanddetails.com/>

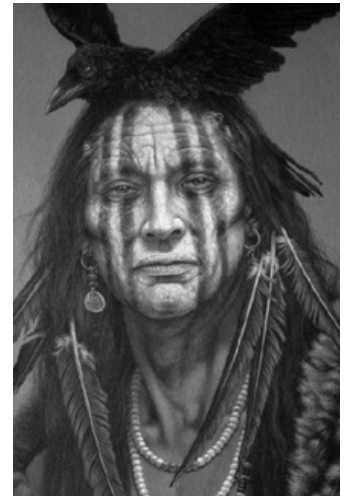


Prosopomorphic vessels from Moesia Superior (photo by A. Radoman)  
Courtesy of Academia.edu.

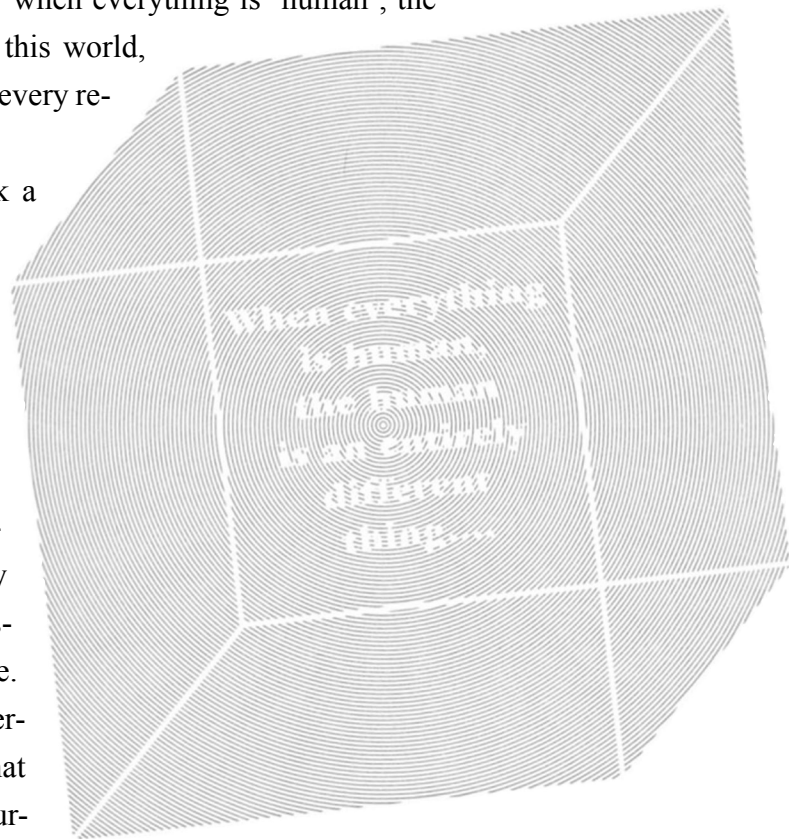
To the Amerindian shaman, in order to know, one must personify; to know “the who of things”. If, through observations from a distance, and the reduction of everything to a scientific chain of causal events is modernisms way of understanding the world, the epistemology of the Amerindian convention follows the inverse principle. The bottom line of the shaman perspectivist theory understand that “true knowledge aims to reveal a maximum of intentionality through a systematic and deliberate abduction of agency. One must know how to personify, because one must personify in order to know.” The practices of the Amerindian shaman is able

to know through personification, which fully encompasses the event of deterritorialization that will lead to a reterritorialization through the eyes of the entity he is knowing. This idea that non-human entities perceive themselves and their actions under a human form is essential to the concept of perspectivism, and when this perception is adopted, it has the potential to provide a translation of experience that can redefine ideas of natural objects and events in relation to social agency. “The most common case is the transformation of something that humans regard as brute fact into another species’ artifact or civilized behavior: what we call blood is beer for a jaguar, what we take for a pool of mud, tapirs experience as a grand ceremonial house, and so on.”[Castro, 62] Experience becomes ontologically ambiguous as it is influenced by a subjective nonmaterial intentionality. “What one side calls nature, then, very often turns out to be culture for the other.” But the idea of the multi-naturalist and perspectivism of Amerindian cultures does not necessarily render our world easier or more comforting, because the notion of multi-species perspectivism brings up a point of complication that “when everything is ‘human’, the human becomes a wholly other thing”, in this world, every difference becomes political, because every relation is social. [Castro, 63].

What is myth? “If you were to ask a Native American, he would most likely tell you that it is a story of the time before men and animals became distinct beings.” [Castro, 65] A time before modern rationalist thought dis-enchanted the world and created a dividing lines between nature and culture. What defines the actors and experiences of these mythic events summarized by Amerindian thought, is their natural and essential capacity to become something else. And the multi naturalism and interspecies perspectivism of the Amerindians constitutes that essence has not been actualized and that a turbulent flux continues to rumble beneath the apparent discontinuities between all types and species. As presented in the Native Americans hypothetical definition presented above, myth acts as the universal point of flight of perspectivism as it speaks of a state of being where “bodies and their names, souls and their actions, egos and others are interpenetrated, immersed in one and the same pre-subjective and pre-objective milieu”. [Castro, 68] The particular question raised by Viveiros de Castro here is “Why is it that animals see themselves as humans?” [Castro, 69]. The reason that animals see themselves as humans is pre-



Portrait of a crow shaman by Kirby Sattler. Courtesy of kirbysattler.sattlerartprint.com/



Courtesy of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro



cisely because as we see them as animals, we see ourselves as humans.

What perspectivism brings into light is the fact that an animal cannot possibly see itself as anything besides human because it has its own unique perspective of which it understands itself in relation to other living entities. For instance, if a human regards itself as human, then perhaps what we constitute as humans are seen as animals or spirits by what we constitute as nonhumans. “If every mode of existence is human for itself, none of them are human to each other such that humanity is reciprocally reflexive (jaguars are humans to other jaguars, etc).” This is again a reflection of the endless debate on ensoulment; “if everything and everyone has a soul, nothing and no one coincides with itself. If everything and everyone can be human, then nothing and no one is human in a clear and distinct fashion.”[Castro, 70] This idea that the world consists of various subjective positions relies primarily on the notion of relativism, constituting that “every perception is equally valid and true”, ultimately eliminating all ideas that there is any correct way to represent the world. All beings occupy a point of view, they all see the world in the same way, but what changes is the world that they see. Like humans, animals rely on the same values and necessities including hunting, mating, war, rest, but in this “world of relative semblances, different kinds of beings see the same things differently...animals perceive the same way as us but perceive different things than we do, because their bodies are different than ours.”[Castro, 71] The goal of perspectivism and its transformative subjective modes of translation allows us to understand the similarities and differences between our language and that of other species.

Anthropology has always had trouble getting in touch with its imagination; perhaps that is why the moderns were never able to acutely examine and explain cultures that did not share the same viewpoints and values as their own. But “what happens when the classified becomes the classifier?”[Castro, 84] What happens when the power of ordering differences is retired and the anthropologists begin an attempt to understand how the species in question order themselves? “What happens when the question becomes to know how the totemic operator functions from the point of view of the totem? What happens when we ask indigenous people what anthropology is?” The biggest problem between positivist anthropology and the indigenous cultures that it is studying, is the overarching use of intercultural equivocation, or in other words, the method of communication that encompasses ambiguous language as a way to conceal the truth or avoid committing or exposing oneself. This equivocation is typically realized through linguistic incompetence, an ignorant relay of information, a lack of empathetic consideration for the “other”, etc. Perhaps, when asked indigenous people what they think anthropology is, they would say that it is nothing more than a version of myth. “Anthropology is about misunderstandings, including anthropologists own misunderstandings, because they are usually the outcome of the mutual incommensurability of different notions

of common sense.”[Castro, 90] Equivocation ends up being not a weakness of subjectivity, but the tool that runs the machine of objectification, taking part in the “paradox created by imagining a culture for people who do not imagine it for themselves.”[Castro, 91] The transformation of the discipline of anthropology into the permanent decolonization of thought is a matter of realizing and participating in the infinite becomings-other that exist in the essence of thought. Not unlike Latours “Untying the Gordion Knot”, to decolonize thought is to think outside the box, against the grain, by starting from the “other” end, and recognize that “every experience of another thinking is an experience of our own.”[Castro, 93]

How does one become a perspectivist? In the third part of *Cannibal Metaphysics*, *Demonic Alliance*, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro gives significant attention to the Amazonian tribe the Tupinamba, as he addresses perspectivism’s relation to sacrifice and predation of cannibalism. The system that constituted the cannibalistic rituals of the Tupi people was practiced in elaborate detail from the initial capture, to the imprisonment, to the execution and lastly, to the ceremonial consumption. The captive was a prisoner of war, usually a member of a neighboring tribe who frequently even shared the same language and customs as his captors. As a prisoner, the individual usually lived a very comfortable life for long periods of time among his captors, as he awaited a formal public execution in the center of the village. The prisoner was even pretty much free, living under watch by his enemy only so that he did not escape. In fact, it was part of the overall ritual that the captor provide the victim with women from his group to marry, in turn, actually transforming the prisoner from an alien neighbor to a brother-in-law. In the language of the Tupinamba, the word *tojavar* meant both “brother-in-law” and “enemy.”[Castro, 140] The cycle continued with the event of the killing of said brother-in-law, whose killer was no less affected by the sacrifice than the prisoner himself. “The act held an initiatic value for the executioner-officiant (who thereby received a new name, commemorative scarifications, the right to marry and have children, access to paradise, etc.)”[Castro, 141] Finally the ritual reached its ending point with the ingestions of the prisoners body by those who attended the ritual, everyone from locals to neighboring tribes partook in the consumption, with the exception of the executioner, who would not only not eat the meat of his “brother-in-law”, but he would later on perform a funeral ceremony followed by a period of mourning. Understanding the position of the executioner is a crucial step in understanding the perspectivism happening here; through the initiation of this person into his family as his brother-in-law, then killing him, after which he would have organized a funeral which followed with a period of mourning, the executioner ultimately “entered into a process of identification with his ‘opponent’ whose life he had just taken”. A very important note to mention regarding the cannibalistic cycles taken up by the Tupi is that it is a spiritual process “for the transmutation of perspectives whereby the ‘I’ is deter-



*“Tearful greetings”*  
Describing the Tupinambás, in *History of a journey deed in the land of Brazil* (1578), Jean de Lery, 1580 edition. Courtesy of [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupinamba\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupinamba_people)

mined as other through the act of incorporating the other, who in turn becomes the 'I'...but only ever in the other, literally that is through the other." [Castro, 142]



Photographs of the Arawete Tribe by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Courtesy of <http://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/povo/arawete/102>

Considering the symbolic and spiritual components to the consumption of the human flesh, one asks, "what is really eaten in this enemy?" Given that the literal amount of flesh eaten was irrelevant to the consumption experience, what is being eaten cannot be the substance. The thing being eaten was not just a "thing" because it was a "body", a signifier of a position. "What was eaten was the enemy's relation to those who consumed him". What was being consumed was his state as the "enemy", his "otherness", with an aim to reach a point of alterity within the self. "If the goal of multiculturalist European anthropology was to describe human life as it is experienced from the indigenous point of view, indigenous multi naturalist anthropology presumed as a vital condition of its self-description, the 'semi physical' prehension, [in other words] taking life through eating, of the point of view of the enemy. Anthropophagy as anthropology." [Castro, 143] Rituals that adhere to the focus on the obtainment of the viewpoint or perspective of the enemy is not uncommon and actually range in the methods taken to achieve the enemies point of view. In the Awawete, a hunter-gatherer tribe of indigenous people located in Brazil, war songs are sung where the warrior speaks of himself, through a complex and specific formation of linguistics, from the point of view of a slain enemy. In the Arawete tribe, the cannibalism happens not through the consumption of flesh but a consumption of words; "the victim, who is in both senses the subject of the song,

speaks of the Arawete he has killed, and speaks of his own killer, the one who 'speaks' by singing the words of his deceased enemy, as a cannibal enemy." The Arawete victor understands himself only once he sees himself through the eyes of his victim, he declares his uniqueness through the voice of the one he has slain. This is perspectivism. Whether it be through words or flesh, the idea was that the inner character or subjectivity of the social body was defined through the capturing of symbolic resources, i.e. names and souls, persons, words, memories, experience, as separate from the exterior physical form. "By taking for it's principle this move-

ment of the incorporation of the enemy's attributes, the Amerindian socius has to 'define' itself with these same attributes". This concern and the actions surrounding it are pivotal to what Viveiros de Castro calls "metaphysics of predation". Quoting Levi-Strauss, "primitive society is a society lacking an interior that only comes to be 'itself' outside itself. It's immanence coincides with transcendence." [Castro, 144]

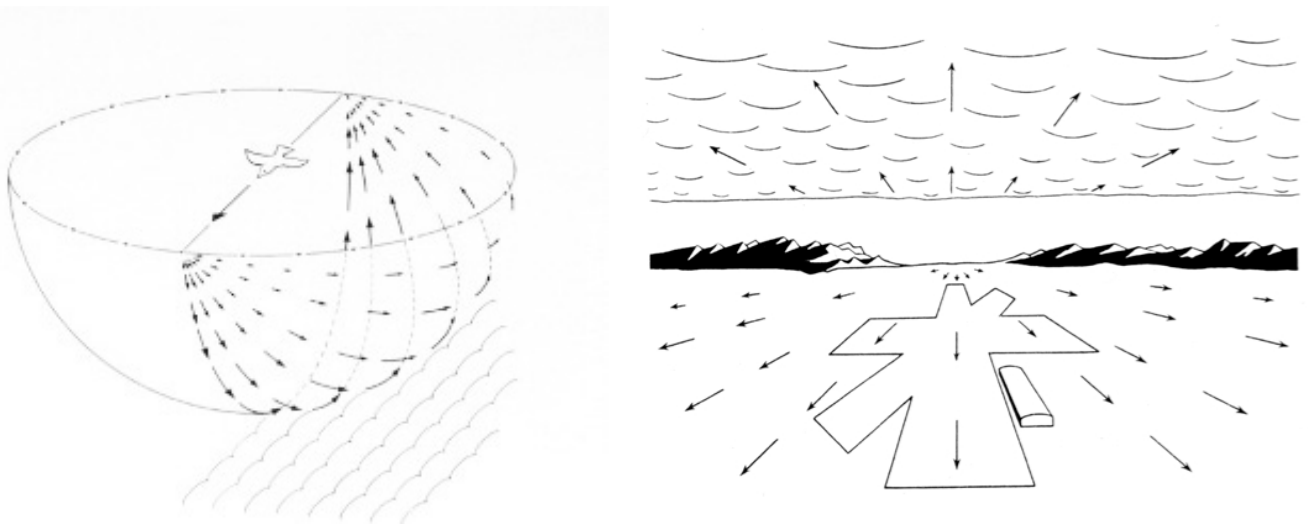
The investigations into the indigenous tribes of the Amerindian and Arawete give us an insight into contemporary animistic customs and values as well as the evolved ethical considerations that are now in place when looking at the pre modern culture anthropologically. Just as Viveiros de Castro talks about his developed concepts of perspectivism, multi-naturalism and cannibal alterity, not only does he seem to understand the practices of these cultures, but he seems to care. In fact, the level of care that has gone into to presenting the studys of *Cannibal Metaphysics* shines a light on the theories of perspectivism, multi-naturalism and cannibal metaphysics in relation to the practices of anthropology. As opposed to the "old" animism objectifying approaches to anything "other", the only way for Viveiros de Castro to engage in such a way with these cultures, granting them the time and respect and attempting to explain their practices with as much precision as he can, he needed to himself adopt a perspectivists state of mind and in this way; he is truly an anthropologist engaged. These theories that he presents in his essay are essential deterritorializing tools for us as moderns to use as we embark on the journey towards a decolonization of thought.

## **Have You Ever Met a Dividual?**

Like Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Nurit Bird-David also worked with indigenous, pre modern tribes as a way understand new perspectives that have the potentials to alter our perceptions of how we see ourselves in relation to nonhuman entities in the modern world. In her brief essay "*Animism*" *Revisited*, she develops theories of Personhood and Relational Epistemology as an active critique of the Tylorian conceptions of Animism. She presents observations made throughout her work with the hunter-gatherer tribe, the Nayaka of South India, who's worldview constitutes a relational epistemology, which is knowing the world by "focusing primarily on relatedness, from a related point of view, within the shifting horizons of the related viewer." [Bird-David] In her attempt to explain the Nayakas understanding of social environment, she introduced the concept of the "dividual". A "dividual", in contrast to the "individual", is a "person constitutive of transferable particles that form his or her personal substance." [Bird-David] "When I individuate

a human being, I am conscious of her “in herself” (as a single separate entity); when I dividuate her, I am conscious of how she relates with me...I am conscious of the relatedness with my interlocutor as I engage with her, attentive to what she does in relation to what I do, to how she talks and listens to me as I talk and listen to her, to what happens simultaneously and mutually to me, to her, to us.“ [Bird-David]

The Nayaka led their domestic lives together, sharing space, things, and actions as they experienced the simultaneity of effects happening between themselves and the other Nayaka. In every social interaction, they normally referred to and addressed each other by kinship terms (“my big-uncle.” “my brother”, “my sister in law”), anyone they persistently shared with was regarded as family. “Their kinship was primarily made and remade by recurring social actions of sharing and relating with, not by blood or descent, not by biology or by myth or genealogy”. As the Nayaka move through and act in the environment, they pay close attention to mutual behaviors and events, and work towards creating relatedness. The beings that are absorbed into the “we-ness” that is the product of the sharing relationships are called devaru. “In one basic sense of this complex notion, devaru are relatives in the literal sense of being “that or whom one interrelates with”...they are super-relatives who both need and can help Nayaka in extraordinary ways”. Nayakas perspective recognizes the devaru that exist in the world; this perception becomes comprehensible through studying JJ Gibson’s ecological approach to visual perception, in which he concerns himself with “ambient vision”. Gibson states that “ambient vision” can be acquired as the observer “is turning his head and looking around”, this vision is one that human and animals perceive the surrounding environment.



Diagrams from James J. Gibsons Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. Courtesy of simplypsychology.org

Gibson is particularly concerned with the permanence and impermanence of environments. People perceive these things by registering the invariance's of "relative persistence". "Meaning is not imposed on things, it is not pre-given in consciousness, but "discovered" in the course of action; it is also "both physical and psychical, yet neither". Gibson also brings up that there is endless information in the environment, stating that "people continuously "pick up" information in acting within various environments, by means of attention. "Gibsonian 'attention' is a 'skill that can be educated' to pick up information that is more and more subtle, elaborate and precise. Knowing is developing this skill; knowing is continuous with perceiving, of which it is an extension...According to Gibson, attention is 'educated' through practice and also by means of 'aids to perceiving' such as stories and models of things, words and pictures" [Bird-David]. Aids of perceiving can be pictures and motion pictures, which place the viewer in the scene, creating an awareness of being in the world". Pictures and motion pictures "transmit to the next generation the tricks of the human trade", without them, everything would be much more difficult to understand. JJ Gibson also considers the event when developing his theory on the ecological perspectives, stating that "events are ecologically perceivable as 'any change of substance, place, or object, chemical, mechanical, or biophysical,' which can vary in speed, permanence and frequency.

The Nayaka attention focuses on events. "They are attentive to the change of things in the world in relation to changes in themselves. As they move and act in the forest, they pick up information about the relative variances in the flux of interrelatedness between themselves and other things against relative invariance's" [Bird-David] It is in these invariances that communication is perceived between the human-persons and things, for example, not all stones are considered alive, it is the ones which move and "open a mouth towards them" which are. These events involve response and engagement between things and/or movement. In the paradigm of relational epistemology, learning involves "dividuating the environment rather than dichotomizing it, and turning attention to 'we-ness', which absorbs differences, rather than to 'otherness', which highlights differences and eclipses commonalities" [Bird-David]

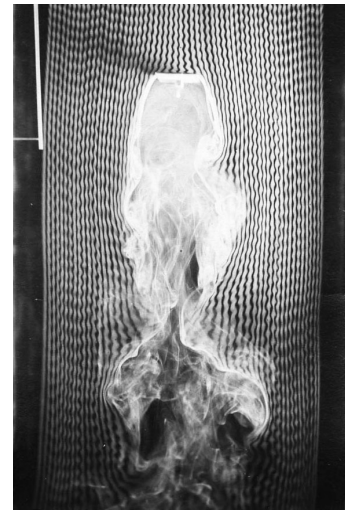
### **III. Our Animism**

Perspectivism, personhood, ontological multi-naturalism, cannibal alterity and relational epistemology all explore the occupation of points of view, that, when adopted, have the potential to invoke events of deterritorialization that can redefine our ideas of nature culture and events in relation to social agency. These concepts have great potential when applied to the Western concepts of relations, in that each encompasses the power to address the dividing lines that hold in place our ignorance towards nature, and our prejudice towards each other. These perspective propositions are just a few of the most prominent ones being discussed in contemporary anthropology and philosophy, but are these propositions limited in any way? For instance, is this direction only possible to explore through philosophy and anthropology? How can this critical direction be present in other areas like psychology, science, technology, language and the arts, in a conscious way? If modernism is founded on the divides between nature and culture, this divide has developed into a separation between the modern and the other, and eventually, as Bruno Latour points out when talking about the multifaceted world of disciplines, there has been a separation between the modern and the modern. With the decolonization of thought, considering the various disciplines mentioned above, perhaps it is possible that this new perspective would in fact unite disciplines in ways never before seen in the modern world. For the past 30 years, there has no doubt been evidence that within different professional communities, new perspectives are emerging that allow and encourage us to reconsider our relations as moderns to nature and the “other”. These new perspectives, if considered and developed carefully, can perhaps deeply effect our understanding of ourselves as part of nature, and also elicit a newly transparent understanding of our individual and cultural influence in the world.

#### **Probing the Gordian Knot**

Since the enlightenment, the sciences of the positivist society have worked through their own notions to develop an inherently rational West. But through rapid progress, science and technology itself had made discoveries that have left many bewildered; a particular emergence of new communication technologies have spawned

speculations about knowledge that pushes it beyond its usual limits, speculations that have expanded as it has also connected to new advancements in science. [Borck] One particular example that actually dates back to the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, are the scientific investigations of Etienne-Jules Marey. Marey studied movement through photography, and is specifically known for his studies of air that revealed a revolutionary discovery, that matter can be animated. These discoveries have sparked continued interest in the observation of the animating nature of matter, which is something that is still being pursued with advanced technological methods today. “Materializations were once results of seances and strange encounters with ghostly powers, and photography was mobilized to document these instances typically in the form of milky and plasma like substances protruding somewhere from the ‘medium’. One hundred years later, today’s high tech machines detect the results of social interactions as amorphous color blobs in the active brains of participants. This is truly fascinating stuff, attracting large sums of funding; it is the latest too to demonstrate (what Marey demonstrated 100 years ago) that matter can be animated”[Borck] Like this, many examples suggest phenomenon that can lead to new ontologies beyond our nature/cultural divisions.



An image of one of Étienne Jules Marey's studies of the movement of air. He used a machine to produce thin streams of smoke and captured the way the smoke circulated. Courtesy of <http://theday.co.uk/>



Fuji electronics managing director and chief of research Dr. Ken Hashimoto created special instruments which translate the electrical output of plants into modulated sounds. Courtesy of *The Secret Life of Plants*

“The Secret Life of Plants by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, is a fascinating yet controversial book that was published in 1973, that releases newly developed data about the physical, emotional, and spiritual connections between plants and man. The book documents experiments that reveal unusual occurrences regarding plants, such as a plant's ability to perceive and feel. Walon Green made a film based on this book, that was released under the same name, in 1979. The Secret Life of Plants explores the physical, emotional, and spiritual agencies of plant life through the medium of a documentary. Like the book, the film presents the knowledge that despite lacking a central nervous system and brain, plants are sentient beings. This is supported by several experiments in the film from the parapsychologist who strives to demonstrate the emotional ties that plants build with humans, to



Scientists have captured incredible footage of what it's like to fly, by attaching tiny cameras to BIRDS. The lightweight devices were fitted to a number of gannets who were then released into the wild off the Pembrokeshire coast. The technology allowed researchers to watch remotely as the creatures flew off into the sky and pulled off dizzying aerial aerobatics. They were also seen building nests, feeding and plunging into the sea in footage that experts say could give us a new understanding of how birds behave and boost efforts to protect them. Courtesy of SWNS TV



the couple who use technological gadgets to teach a cactus the sounds of Japanese which in turn, has literally given the plant a voice. This film also utilizes the tool of time-lapse in order to perceive the growth and movement of a plant at its own speed. What is interesting here is that although science and technology have always been the leading factors in the development of the great divide, their persistent developments have actually made remarkable contributions that put into question the very boundaries that for the past 200 years they have helped to maintain. We are at a point now where we cannot look back anymore and deny the agency and autonomy of the “inanimate”; the only place to go is to the middle kingdom, where we can learn to coexist with matter, in a different way, and finally taking into account the hybrids of nature and quasi-objects among us.

### **Life In the Land of Things**

Animism is all around us. As one walks into the toy section at any large store, they are bound to discover that nearly every toy on the shelf comes complete with prosopomorphic, human-like features. Of course, there have always been your typical teddybear, your barbie doll, that was created as a representation of ourselves in a plastic form, but now, as Diedrich Diederichsen points out in his essay *Animation, De-Reification and the Charm of the New Inimate*, “there is not a single car, not a single locomotive, crane, truck, construction vehicle, sports car, tractor without eyes, a nose and a smiling mouth.”[Diederichsen] Moreover, these toys usually also come with background stories complete with their names, where they come from and what they are here to do! Children have always been the only animistic creatures of the Western world. Children are the compliment, the parallels to the “savages” of the pre modern world, sharing the same animistic world-view, a world-view that was strictly permitted to permeate only in the cognitive developments of children within positive modern societies. As the child grows, the animistic tendencies become suppressed and the child grows into a rational, functioning adult. A childhood experience today differs greatly from a childhood experience from 50 years ago. As Diedrich Diederichsen reflects back on his childhood, he remembers the animist zone to be peopled by teddy bears and other stuffed animals and dolls, but was also countered by a second, inanimate zone of games and toys that were geared towards the hard rationalist reality of the mid 1900’s. Growing up during this time, the animate and inanimate coexisted in an interdependent relationship, one that balanced the needs of the



imagination of the child with the needs of society for the child to eventually, and perhaps even prematurely, exit the animistic mentality and enter into progressive modernism. “Today, however, it seems that an overarching holistic sphere of animae fills the world of children and, to a degree, that of Harry Potter-reading, esoterica-believing adults.”[Diederichsen] “Children no longer know what do to in this world”. The old educational tactics confronted animals and the idea of animated nonliving entities with the bombardment of hostile technological matter as a means of toughening up the soft sides of the child. Most of the time, the tools used to train a child to know how to live in this progressive industrial world worked, and the child would gain appropriate skills. But sometimes, the training of this soft attitude does not fall into the world of hard matter, but the world of love.

A woman named Eija Riitta-Berliner-Mauer describes herself as “object – sexual”, an objectophile. “Objectophilia is distinct from fetishism, she claims, in that it is directed at things themselves rather than things as something else.”[Diederichsen] Eija fell in love with the Berlin Wall, and married it. Although this case may seem psychopathic, she has continuously insisted that it is non-pathological, “arguing that her sexual orientation was simply unfamiliar to most people.”[Diederichsen] There are two fetishistic cases here, one of the child, whose objects must resemble a human to be considered animate and one of Ms. Riita-Berliner-Mauer, the objectophile who is in love with an object precisely because it

Alice in Wonderland (2010) is one of the many new fantasy movies that are geared toward both children and adults simultaneously. Courtesy Walt Disney Pictures



Eija Riitta-Berliner-Mauer with the Berlin Wall circa 1978 Courtesy of valentina-guarie.wordpress.com

is not human. In both cases however, the objects come to life in relation to the subjects that interact with them. There is also though, a third case of fetishism, which is the desire of the subject to become objectified themselves. Hito Steyerl explains that traditionally, the idea of emancipation was to achieve full subject-hood, to become a subject of history, politics, with agency of its own, including generations of feminists have strived and worked hard to escape the objectification that men have placed on them. “But as the struggle to become a subject became mired in its own contradictions, a different possibility emerged. How about siding with the object for a change? Why not affirm it? Why not be a thing? An object without a subject? A thing among other things?”[Diederichsen]

In Ovid’s poem *Metamorphosis* about the shapeshifting lives of vampires, there also existed supernatural and metaphysical entities of all kinds, i.e. gods, nymphs, satyrs, humans, birds, lions, etc. all of which perpetually morph from one entity to the next. “This Ovidian narrative guarantees the permanent translatability of any mode of existence into any other...what I always found profoundly unsettling, however, was something else: How could Ovid claim that a being that has changed form, a human who has become a stone, or a god who has turned into a bird, is still the same thing and must therefore be called by the same name? The time someone spent living as a flower and the time that same someone spent living as a woman are part of the same fate, and make sense within the horizon of that fate. That, apparently, is exactly the meaning of the principle or the concept of the narrative in general: building a relation, and indeed a relation that can even take the form of identity, between two completely different things”[Diederichsen] An interesting point made here concerns the role of the narrative to establish interconnections between different things, to the point where they become one another through transformation and identification. The subjects presented in Ovid’s poem are nothing without it’s compositions of narrated relations with other entities. “Not a single molecule remains when a woman is turned to stone, but her relation to her lover, her enemy, and the jealous goddess to whom she owes her metamorphosis persists through transformation.”[Diederichsen] These relations survive thingness as well as personhood, as both become transposed into the same world of possibilities. With these new philosophies of perspectivism, thingness, personhood, etc, there is a particular sentiment that may be coming to light. “With regard to things, that they have changed and, with regard to us, whomever that includes, that we are no longer fundamentally different from them. We either turn them into persons or fall in love with them because they are not persons; we want to be loved the way they are because we are sick of being loved as persons or because we are only loved the way things are anyway”[Diederichsen]

Reification is a term invented by classical critical theory to describe the moment when a living relation becomes a thing, which considers the idea of a

thing and thing-likeness in quite a different way than contemporary theorists do today. The critique of reification argues that capitalism and its modes of production gives rise to a separation between the human producers and the products they produce, so much in fact, that the producer can no longer recognize the product as something that they have themselves created. Instead of seeing them as products of their own creation, the producer sees them in an utterly disconnected fashion, as simply things. This separation exists on a variety of levels from level of economy, to organization of labor, to commodity-form, commodity-fetishism, the division of labor, etc. In productive industrial societies before capitalism, the relationship between the producer and the product had not yet been broken. As opposed to the capitalist network of multiple directions, the pre-capitalist laborer knew only one line and direction. But the classical critique of reification is in need of revision today because capitalist production has changed greatly since the critique was first put into place. Actually, “put simply, we might describe the current state of capitalist logic of exploitation as one of de-reification rather than reification, the only constant being the commodity-form.”[Diederichsen]

In reflecting back to deconstruct the initial critique of reification, and their concern for the workers alienation from their product, a significant component was also that the laborer was ultimately fully dependent on the decisions of others, i.e. company manager, company owner, etc. any authoritarian figure to whom she sold her labor and power. In order to maintain psychological health under the powerless alienating laborious experience day in and day out, the worker needed to daydream, to travel mentally, to leave where he/she actually was. “Fordist workers severed their laboring bodies from their dreaming minds, which drifted elsewhere while their hands, here, tightened screws and stamped sheet metal”[Diederichsen] This daydreaming only furthered the distance between the objects being produced and the humans producing them. Yet in today's capitalism of immaterial labor, the machine that “exploits knowledge and commercializes aliveness in the service industry, tourism, the beauty industry, and the mass-production of courteousness and subservience,” the central quality demanded of the workers is no longer technical skills or physical stamina; the central demand is that the worker transform themselves in order to identify with their workplace, and on top of that, to be authentic about it. “The persuasive presentation is more important than practical ability; being trumps application. This robs the wage-laborer of any place to which he/she might escape. Old-school alienation at least left room for the daydream. Now it has no place in the contemporary management of the self.”[Diederichsen] In today's capitalism, the product now has to come to life just as the worker has to become transformed into the product itself. “The worker is the object of her own subjective labor”[Diederichsen] It has become far too difficult to be a subject under this neoliberal capitalism, who are all very tired of the double

function. Diederichsen asks “so why not affirm the inanimate, be it in one’s own self or in the beloved other? Why not choose a self without essence of history, as nothing but a conjunction of relations in the here and now?”[Diederichsen]

Two specific fields in which the struggles for liberation and emancipation of the past fifty years have reaped success are sexuality, gender politics and sexual orientation on the one end, and psychedelia on the other; and significantly, both of these areas relate directly to things and objects. Sexuality has always encompassed the fantastic notion that the subjects in themselves bounce between subject and object, comfortably accepting that experience without fear of actually becoming an object in real life; this notion is ultimately linked to an expanded conception of freedom. “True sexual freedom consists not so much in my realizing my desires, but rather in my ability to experience something that is not owed to the controlling, framing, and planning faculties of my subjectivity”[Diederichsen] In the field of psychedelia, the experience allows us to perceive objects beyond their simple concrete functions, a perspective that allows the viewer to enter into a world where objects “cease to be objects, and begin to become things”. [Diederichsen] The status of the object is constituted by tension between the psychedelic metaphysical thing and the psychedelic laughable commodity. But the question is “do we take hallucinogens to laugh ourselves silly about the world, or do we take them to finally get serious?”[Diederichsen]

“How do we experience the thing-likeness of the thing, and how is it the basis of our own becoming things?”[Diederichsen] To conclude a thought that has been a contemporary concern in a wide range of fields over the past few decades, which is to “declare things to be (ghostly) beings and to call for their emancipation is a response to a contemporary capitalism of self-optimization, with its imperative to produce a perfect self as a perfect thing.”[Diederichsen] The reified soul destined to eventually become a thing, just as a sexually exploited body seeks to become pure physical energy. The tendency here also relates to the cannibalistic rituals which attempt to salvage an entity as the representation of otherness, which we as humans desperately need for the production of self. Bruno Latours Middle Kingdom is proving to, in fact, be quite active already, as we can assess through the observation of ourselves in relation to objects and “inanimate” entities and matter; however in order to even be able to see this, whether it is right before your eyes or not, requires first a deterritorialization, whether presented in the form of an article by Diederichsen, a work of art, a psychedelic or sexual experience, to present a view of our familiar world deconstructed. In this way, we are able to see the inner workings of the matter at hand, and then reconstruct it according to how we feel about it after.

## IV. Memories

Postmodern psychology, as a practice, understands that language is not the child of the mind that one is inherently born with, as understood under the modernist regime, but a result of cultural processes. Our languages of description and explanation are generated throughout our relationships with each other and the world and gains its meaning not from our own mental or subjective understandings, but from its active use. Language is world constituting; it generates and sustains various forms of cultural practices and its interpretive conventions. The major question that postmodern psychology asks of scientific and anthropological practices, is not whether they are linguistically ‘true to nature’ but what, in being ‘true’, do their interpretations offer to the culture in study? [Gergen, 9] The theories of post-modern psychology have the use of language in the modern world at the forefront of its discipline, with a strong direction dedicated to understanding how it has been used as a tool for oppression in the past and seeking to identify the oppressive uses of language in contemporary culture. In the current growing interest of “new” animism, and the concerns for how to develop new ways of seeing and understanding, we are continuing to maintain the distribution of information, and the language used to talk about these new perspectives in a way that primarily appeases the structure of the modernist framework. The questions asked by post-modern psychology are essential as we move forward to develop ways to present the concepts that “new” animism is exploring.

### Losing the Mother Tongue

“How do we account for the recent resurgence of interest in animism and animist thought? The literature on animism, animistic thought, animation, and so forth across a range of disciplinary domains, from science studies and philosophy to sociology and anthropology, all seem to support this re-evaluation, with some going so far as to proclaim that the end has come for objectivism and its dualistic epistemology. This may be overly optimistic, but that it can be proclaimed without sounding entirely absurd is worth noting.”[Garuba] In the modernist sense of the word, the object is meaningless material that constitutes our knowable reality. This

viewpoint is coming very close to being turned on its head, as new revelations expose agencies and symbolic meanings that do not exactly fit into the certainties of the modernist perspectives. A new invocation of animistic understandings and a new focus on the worldview of indigenous cultures have come about through environmental and ecological movements including the relativist epistemologies of post-modernism, New Age spiritualism, and contemporary anthropologists discussions of relational epistemologies and different conceptions of personhood around the world. In the brink of what may be the end of the dualistic epistemology that constituted modernity, the question is, “what happened to the order of knowledge on which modernity was grounded?”[Garuba] Do we revert again to premodern thought? Many theorists have argued throughout the years that this is not necessarily possible in the literal sense.

Many theorists claim that we cannot return in full to adopt the indigenous worldview because “once touched by modernity, the colonized are conscripted into its regime of knowledge/power. Theorist Masao Miyoshi for example, states that ‘Once absorbed into the ‘chronopolitics’ of the secular West, colonized space cannot reclaim autonomy and seclusion; once dragged out of their precolonial space, the indigenous of the peripheries have to deal with knowledge of the outside world, irrespective of their own wishes and inclinations.’”[Garuba] Modernity and the colonizing world achieved its success precisely by making objects and people that existed on the oppressed side of the colonial world think and behave like those in the dominant positions. As we look into the future and see the epilogue of positivist rationalist thought on the horizon, the main concern of Henry Garuba in his essay *On Animism, Modernity/ Colonialism, and the African Order of Knowledge: Provisional Reflections*, along with other theorists and anthropologists, encompass the question of whether it is possible to “construct an epistemic position that does not re-inscribe the dichotomies and paradigmatic oppositions that define the colonizing structure?”[Garuba] There is some doubt about this possibility because although it may appear that we can take another look at animistic cultures in order to think outside and beyond traditional modernist thought, it also seems as though we are trapped within the epistemological framework and languages of modernity. It is here that Garuba introduces the argument that if we are going to retire from the framework of modernity, “there is a need for new conceptual vocabularies that transcend the modern episteme in order to take advantage of this recent convergence of interest in the logics of animist thought, however difficult it may be to achieve this.” [Garuba]

It is noted that ever since the institution and consolidation of this separation, from E. B. Tylorism onward, “the aspiration of those that fall within the latter domain to mimic the protocols of the former in the acceptable methodologies of knowledge production is analogous to and mirrors the promise of passage from one paradigm to the other, as a central ‘colonizing structure’ and its knowledge

regime”[Garuba]. Without the “other” and its “primitive” viewpoints, western values would be very difficult to imagine. In order for the positivist modern perspective to develop on stable ground, there needed to be a counter image in which the moderns saw themselves in relation to what they are not. Since the beginning of the progressive European colonization of the world, this oppositional framework has persisted, and even until now, it is the only method of language available to us in order to explain our position in the world. “Contesting its authority is a fine thing, but it is much more difficult to overturn its legacies.”[Garuba] So, the challenge posed by Garuba in this essay is “to find a conceptual space and a language of discourse to restore or reclaim that constitutive co-presence that Marx recognized between the commodity as material and mystical object and to find an order of knowledge that captures this and through which this can be represented.”[Garuba]

Many anthropologists and theorists are excited about moving forward with the endorsement of a “new” or “alternative” epistemology with a goal of overturning the overarching narrative of modernism, but it is important to maintain acute focus on how we go about reconstructing our perspectives in the Western world. Garuba mentions this; “I find that I cannot shake my unease about the linear temporalizing of these developments. Often when the story is told, the emergence of these new discourses is presented as an epistemological advance over the previous modernist paradigm (as the name postmodern suggests, for example) in an unproblematized, linear fashion.” He asserts his observation that any knowledge or alternative viewpoints that have been gained from these new approaches to looking at animism have just been inserted into the predictable template of the linear narrative that has been used to mark progressions in Western knowledge. Thus, the subject of any new knowledge itself is still modern so long as it moves forward in linear time. As asserted by Johannes Fabian in his book *Time and the Other: How anthropology Makes its Objects*, the linear paradigm that constitutes our Western

7vadi NOTE                      XIV piano piece for David Tudor 4  
disegno del 1949  
 adozione pianistica: 27.3.1959

SYLVANO BUSSOTTI

1. Introduction Rhizome a composition by Sylvano Bussotti (born 1931) who is a contemporary Italian composer who works with music and sound to create special problems of interpretation. Courtesy of [archivioflaviobeninati.com/](http://archivioflaviobeninati.com/)



world is so present and impeding that even though it may seem that “animism” is the chosen foundation for an epistemology, it is not actually the “real” animism that is practiced by indigenous cultures, but it is the Western construct of “animism” that is establishing this new foundation. Now, presented in this way, the whole situation seems highly problematic, because the West maintains its position as the “sovereign theoretical subject of knowledge”, one that provides just one discursive form in which to understand and describe things, experiences or cultures of the world. “The paradigms and protocols of the discourse of academic history do not provide a discursive space from which to write a ‘non modern’ history, if you like, a history that does not inscribe the modernist, linear conception of time.”[Garuba] He goes on to state that “my fear is that this could also be true of all the new literature on animism, as admittedly exciting as it has been.” The challenges of temporality has always been crucial to the modernist narrative, and it’s invention and mobilization of the concept of linear time has been one of modernisms greatest achievements, however, Garuba stresses here that “if the new convergence of interest in animism is to bear any advantage for those on the other side of modernity, it is here that we should begin with a concept of time that rejects linearity but recognizes the complex embeddedness of different temporalities, different discordant discursive formations, and different epistemological perspectives within the same historical moments. And then we should search for a language to represent this knowledge.”[Garuba]

### **Becoming the Body Without Organs**

The suppression of the belief systems of animistic cultures and the oppression of the imagination and the unconscious in the western world has, of course, spawned many battles between philosophical viewpoints. Until the mid to late 20th Century, the most common of conceptions of humans relationship with nature rested in the beliefs and teachings of either Evolutionism, believing that organisms inherently improve themselves through a progressive change over time, [Haeckel] or Naturalism, the belief that only natural laws and forces operate the world without any possibility of metaphysical or spiritual forces. In 1980, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari published a text that challenged nearly all of what we understand about our relationships with nature and each other in modern society. *A Thousand Plateaus*, and specifically the chapter Becoming Intense- Becoming Animal- Becoming Imperceptible, lays out an entirely new philosophical worldview that, in many ways, can also be a starting point for the development of a new form of language that Garuba is mentioning above.

Naturalist philosophy served as a valuable contribution to the aesthetics of modernism, and Claude Levi-Strauss, one of the chief representatives of Modern structuralism, used totemism in such a way that it served as one of the most widely used methods for conceptualization between humans and nature in the modern world. "Totemism" was derived from the Ojibwa word *ototeman*, meaning ones brother-sister kin [Haekel]; it is made up of varying complex ideas and ways of behavior based on the worldview of ingenious peoples, spawning from their correspondences with nature. It is a "system of belief that unites humans into kinship or mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant. A spirit-being, also referred to as the entity, or totem, is believed to interact with the given kin, group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol" [Haekel] Totemistic emblems and symbols, taboos and prohibitions apply to the specific species themselves or can be limited to just parts of animals and plants. Collective totemism is generally associated or coordinated on the basis of analogies or on the basis of myth or ritual, and is traditionally common among peoples in Africa, India, Oceania, North America and parts of South America. [Haekel]"

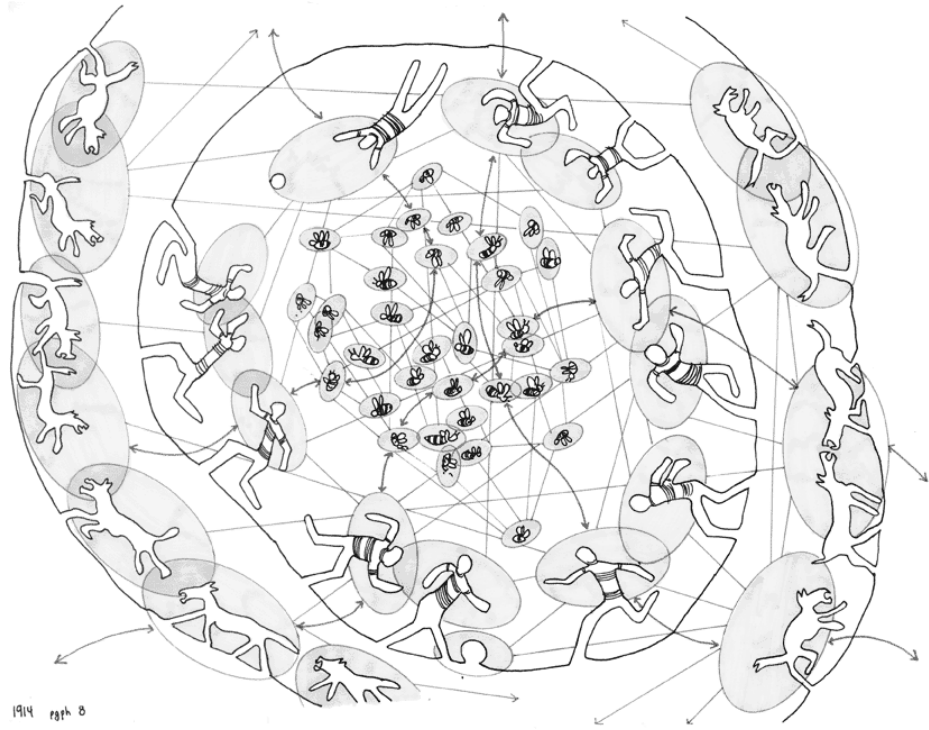
Claude Levi-Strauss' scheme was implemented in a table of oppositions, polarities, or mutual relationships; the basic opposition or relationship was between nature and culture. On the one hand, there were, in nature, certain realities such as species of animals or plants and specific animals or plants. On the other hand, there were, in culture, various groups and individuals who identified themselves with particular species or with specific animals or plants" [Haekel] Efforts were put into practice by structuralist philosophers and psychologists to explain the unexplainable. According to Levi-Strauss, each of the combinations developed through his theory corresponds to the phenomena that are to be observed in one people or another. Totemism was the structuralists means to describe, in a reasonable and understandable way, our relationships between the material and spiritual world. What this did was allow us as Moderns to move a bit closer to nature, as we recognized certain emotional patterns and psychological tendencies that drew us in relationships with predatorial creatures like the eagle, jaguar, snake, etc, without compromising our pinnacle position as modern man in the established hierarchy of enlightenment philosophy. Structuralist totemism attempted to explain the unconscious in relation to nature, participating as a construction of modernism to identify and take control of the unconscious, to diagnose mental illness and continue with the processes of marginalization of the imagination and unconscious mind. "During the later 20th century, anthropologists and sociologists became increasingly preoccupied with such issues as the construction of meaning and identity in a postcolonial world." [Haekel] Structuralist totemism honored, and in fact was invented by, the poles of modernism, to maintain purity, and avoid what they saw as the poison of the immeasurable.

In the text *Becoming-Animal*, Deleuze and Guattari immediately introduced the critique of the naturalist scheme of totemism, stating that “one of the main problems of natural history was to conceptualize the relationship between animals”. [Deleuze & Guattari, 233] Natural history was comprised of a language between A and B as it developed a conception of relationships between animals in two ways: Series and Structure. In a series, A resembles B, C resembles D, and so on. In a structure, A is to B as C is to D, etc. This conception of series and structure was applied to modernist philosophy, psychology and sociology to identify or determine a collective imagination or social understanding; a primary example of this lies in the explorations of psychologist and symbolist Carl Jung, in his elaboration of the notion that animals have a particularly important role in dreams, myths and human collectivities. As Carl Jung did integrate dream imagery into the archetypal series of symbols, his methods were, however, in slight contrast to natural history, replacing man as the eminent term of the series, with the animal, i.e. the lion, crab, bird of prey, etc. in relation to any given act or function, in coordinance with a given demand of the man’s unconscious. Jung’s work with the processes of mimesis and analogy succeeded in bringing nature and culture together, in which all animals occupy a middle position, confirming various cycles of conversion between nature and culture. Structuralism appropriated and manipulated the beliefs of totemistic tribal cultures; no longer was the relationship between nature and culture a mystical participation, but a “structuralist development of ordering differences to arrive at corresponding relations”. [Deleuze & Guattari, 235] A crow is to a falcon what a wolf is to a fox. A man is to a woman what a bull is to a cow. This method was also applied to child, man, woman relationships, i.e. Marriage is to a woman what war is to a man. This was a revolutionary contribution to Enlightenment philosophy and the continual maintenance of modern thought, for with this, the whole world became increasingly rational, and the unconscious became easy to explain. But Deleuze and Guattari were dissatisfied with the restricted viewpoint of structuralist totem, noting that in the study of myth, psychologists and sociologists were frequently encountered with rapid acts by which human becomes-animal, noting their attempt to explain these “blocks of becoming” by a correspondence between two relations, but in doing so, impoverished the phenomenon under study. “Does it not seem that alongside the two models, sacrifice and series, totem institution and structure, there is still room for something else, something more secret, more subterranean?” [Deleuze & Guattari, 237]. With Deleuze and Guattari’s critique came the denial of the structuralist notion of the relations between animal and human, and the presentation of a new perspective which consists of the “traversing between human and animals, sweeping the two away, affecting the animal no less than the human” [Deleuze & Guattari, 237].

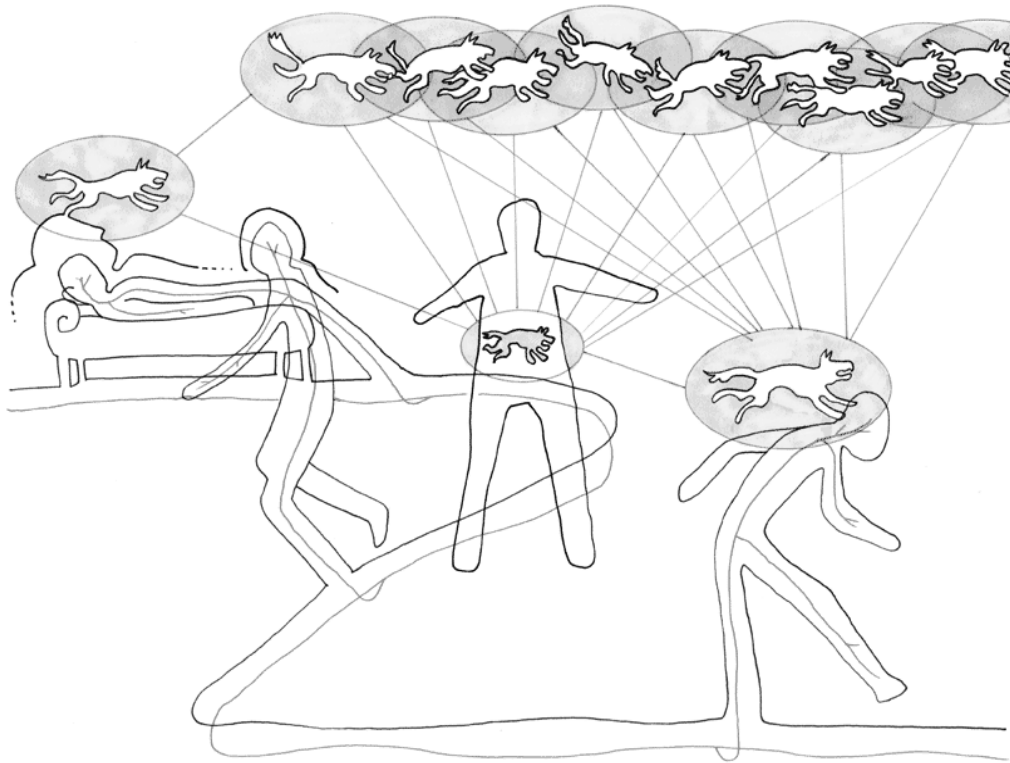
This new philosophical perspective is called “Becoming”. It is not a correspondence between relations, a resemblance, an imitation or an identification. It does not involve “playing animal” or any physical transformation from one thing into something else. It is not a progression or regression and does not occur in the imagination. To Deleuze and Guattari, Becoming is not something that exists in dreams or fantasies, as it may have been placed by the psychological depictions of Carl Jung; Becoming is very real. In introducing this concept, Deleuze and Guattari are highlighting the spaces of transition and the movement that occur between two “pure” entities. “What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which the becoming passes” [Deleuze & Guattari, 238]. This allows for the becoming-animal of the human to be real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; it allows for the becoming-other of the animal to be real, even if the something that the animal becomes is not. The Becoming that happens in the transition and movement between two entities does not have a term; any temporal start or end occurs only as it is taken up in another becoming to which it is subjected, another becoming which coexists and forms a block with the first. Becoming is also not an evolution in the sense of descent or filiation; it does not produce, nor is it produced by, familial relationships. Its concern is alliance. Becoming is contagious, involuntary and creative. “There is a block of becoming that snaps up the wasp and the orchid, but from which no wasp-orchid can never descend. There is a block of becoming that takes hold of the cat and baboon, the alliance between which is effected by a C virus. There is a block of becoming between young roots and certain microorganisms, the alliance between which is effected by the materials synthesized in the leaves (rhizosphere).”[Deleuze & Guattari, 239].

To understand becoming is to understand that the animal is not defined by its characteristics, as in the structural totem, but by the populations that vary from milieu to milieu, background to background, context to context. With every becoming the components of the becoming change. The movement does not occur by actions of filiation but by intersecting communications between heterogeneous populations. “Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory nor genealogical tree. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, “appearing,” “being,” “equaling,” or “producing”. [Deleuze & Guattari, 239] The pivotal introductory segment of *Becoming-Animal*, titled *Memories of a Bergsonian*, could be regarded as a sort of homage to French philosopher Henri Bergson, whose influence on thought convinced many thinkers that immediate experience and intuition are more significant than rationalism and science in understanding reality.[Lawlor]

With every becoming the components of the becoming change. The movement does not occur by actions of filiation but by intersecting communications between heterogeneous populations. Illustration by Marc Ngui. Courtesy of [www.bumblenut.com/](http://www.bumblenut.com/)



Becoming recognizes the use of animal characteristics by the society or the state, in order to classify people and animals through the graduation of resemblances and the ordering of differences, but Becoming is not interested in following this line of classification. It is not interested in these characteristics or the evolutionary classifications that place certain packs as inferior and other packs as superior. Becoming denies that there are specific characteristics that belonging to one kind of animal, and understands how the animal relates to experiences of its past becomings and current states. That is why the distinction made in Becoming is less between kinds of animals, or the act of marginalizing them to certain capacities and abilities, and more about the different states which they have been integrated into and are integrated into at the moment. What Becoming is interested in is the “modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling” [Deleuze & Guattari, 239]. Becoming states that every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack, with pack modes, rather than characteristics and we do not become animal without this fascination for the pack, for the multiplicity. This experience of being caught up in the multiplicity is explained in a particular reference to the story of the many becomings of Randolph Carter, recalled by H.P. Lovecraft; “Carters of forms both human and non-human, vertebrate and invertebrate, conscious and mindless, animal and vegetable. And more, there were Carters having nothing in common with earthly life, but moving outrageously amidst backgrounds of other planets and systems galaxies and cosmic continua...merging with nothingness in peaceful oblivion; but to be aware of existence and yet to know that one is no longer a definite being distinguished from other beings, nor from all of the becomings running through us” [Deleuze & Guattari, 240]



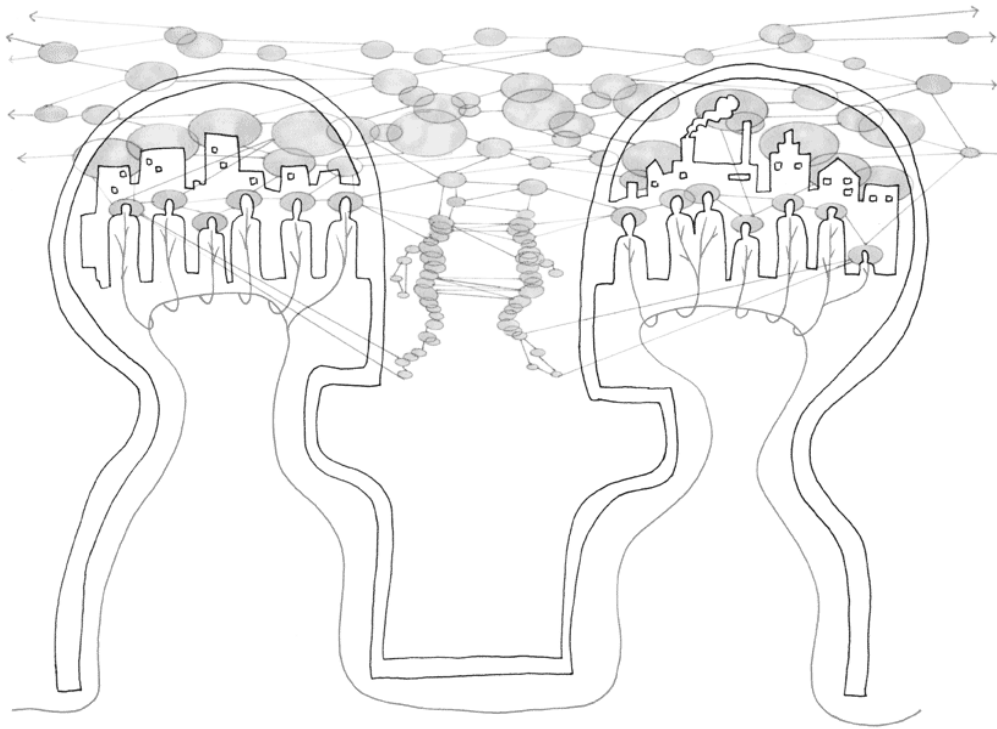
Becoming is a captivating alliance of unnatural participation. Illustration by Marc Ngui. Courtesy of [www.bumblenut.com/](http://www.bumblenut.com/)

The experience of being caught up in this multiplicity involves a particularly important aspect which is recognized in the philosophy of becoming, the experience of unnatural participation. Becoming is a captivating alliance of unnatural participation. Deleuze and Guattari relate the act of becoming to a form of sorcery, elaborating on this notion though a particular focus on the act of writing. “If a writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc...many suicides by writers are explained by these unnatural participations, these unnatural nuptials” [Deleuze & Guattari, 240]. The affect of becoming is not a personal feeling or a particular characteristic, but an effect of the power of the pack, the multiplicity, that causes one to throw itself unto upheaval and make itself stagger. Another example of a becoming of unnatural participation is Igor Stravinsky’s 1913 debut of the *Rite of Spring* in Paris, a theatre piece in which the dancers and the music were so magnificently wild and inappropriate for the time that it actually caused a public riot amongst the bourgeois men and women. “Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which up-root one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one’s bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline?”([Deleuze & Guattari, 240] Who has not know this involution, this unnatural participation, this contagion, that calls us toward unheard-of experiences of becomings?

The politics of becoming-animal is, and has always been, extremely ambiguous and difficult to understand; all societies, even indigenous cultures, have appropriated these blocks of becoming in ways that reduce them to explainable

relations, using totemic or symbolic correspondences. In society, we have three different levels in which we relate to animals. There are the oedipal animals, which are your typical domestic pet cat, dog, etc, then there are animals with characteristics or attributes, presented in myth and used by the state and psychology in a totemic structural approach; eagle, snake, bear, etc, and the third is the demonic or pack animals that form a multiplicity, a population, a becoming. Although these distinctions have been made, Deleuze and Guattari do not deny that any animal at any moment has the potential to take the form of any of these three levels, just as they do not deny that any human at any moment can also take on the form of any of these three levels. "Schools, bands, herds, populations are not inferior social forms; they are affects and powers, involutions that grip every animal in a becoming just as powerful as that of the human being with the animal" [Deleuze & Guattari, 241] and these bands, these packs, whether it be human or animal, proliferate by contagion. They involve terms that are entirely heterogeneous, combinations that are neither genetic nor structural, but alliances, inter-kingdoms. The multiplicities of these packs, these bands, herds, schools, create what Deleuze and Guattari call assemblages; it is within the assemblages that the human beings are able to enter into Becoming.

The initial principle of Becoming is the pack and contagion, which I have briefly introduced above. The second principle of Becoming constitutes that wherever there is a multiplicity, there is also an exceptional individual, and it is in the alliance with this exceptional individual where becoming-animal takes place. "There may be no such thing as a lone wolf, but there is a leader of the pack...Moby-Dick in its entirety is one of the greatest pieces of becoming; Captain Ahab has an irresistible becoming-whale, but one that bypasses the pack or the school, operating directly through a monstrous alliance with the unique, the leviathan, Moby-Dick. There is always a pact with a demon; the demon sometimes appears as the head of the band, sometimes as the loner on the sidelines of the pack...the exceptional individual has many possible positions"[Deleuze & Guattari, 243] To find the exceptional individual in the pack is to find the anomalous, a deviation of what is standard or expected; it is with that exceptional individual that the anomalous exists, and it is through the anomalous that one enters into an alliance to become-animal. An-omalie is a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, but was used as a word to designate the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization. [Deleuze & Guattari, 244] But, it is important to note that the anomalous is neither an individual or a species, the anomalous is only affect. The anomalous is a phenomenon of bordering, a deviation from the pack. And it is the affect of that bordering that one enters into a becoming. In order to enter into a becoming-animal, one must enter into a state of bordering, teetering on the edge of the multiplicity in which it belongs. A multiplicity is defined by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose its comprehension. If you change



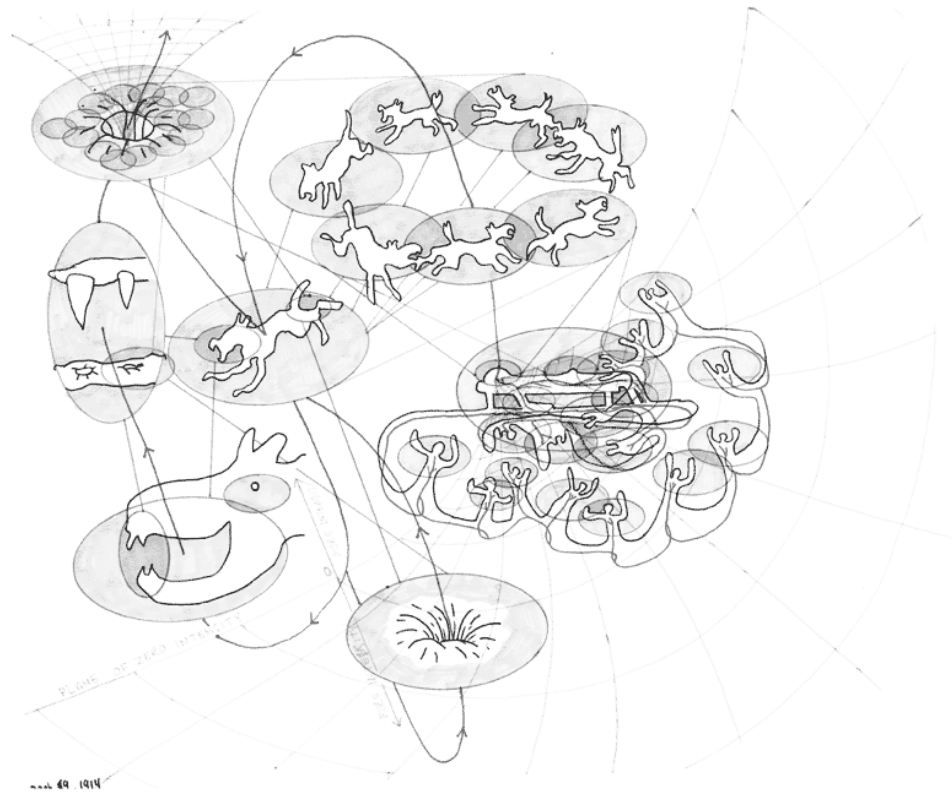
The anomalous is a phenomenon of bordering, a deviation from the pack. And it is the affect of that bordering that one enters into a becoming. Illustration by Marc Ngui. Courtesy of [www.bumblenut.com/](http://www.bumblenut.com/)

it's dimensions, if you add or subtract, if you manipulate the borderline, you are occupied by the affect of the anomalous. No band is without this phenomenon of bordering, of the anomalous and it is almost always impossible to tell whether the anomalous is in the band, outside of the band, or at the shifting boundaries of the band.

We must not place importance on becoming-animal alone, because we are also always encountering phenomena including becoming-women, becoming-child, becoming-elementary, -cellular, -molecular and finally, becoming-imperceptible. Packs and multiplicities continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other. A multiplicity is not defined by it's elements, nor by it's center of unification; it is defined by the number of dimensions it has. A multiplicity is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension without changing its nature. In this, the anomalous, the bordering affects, have a very essential function. It borders each multiplicity, determining its stability, it acts as the precondition for the alliance necessary for becoming, and it also carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always farther down the line of flight, into other becomings. And it is also important to mention that this line of flight follows no logical order in particular. "Every multiplicity is symbiotic, tying together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy." [Deleuze & Guattari, 250] The reason for the a-logical order followed by blocks of becoming is simple "not even God, can say in advance whether two borderlines will string together or form a fiber, whether a given multiplicity will or will not cross over into another given multiplicity, or even if given heterogeneous elements will enter symbiosis, will form a consistent,



or co-functioning, multiplicity susceptible to transformation.” [Deleuze & Guattari, 250] It is here where Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of the plane of consistency, which cuts across all of the multiplicities and intersects with all concrete forms. The plane of consistency is the phenomena, the rhizome, the criterium, the abstract machine in which each concrete assemblage is a multiplicity, a becoming, a vibration, a line of flight, a deterritorialization. This plane of consistency is similar to the Middle Kingdom of Bruno Latours *We Have Never Been Modern*, where there is an allowance of the hybrid to proliferate. The Middle Kingdom, however is one that is the proposal for a new foundational philosophy of the western world, and the plane of consistency in becoming, as with all areas touched by this theory, is a concept that is and always has been, universally applicable.



Becoming follows no logical order in particular. “Every multiplicity is symbiotic, tying together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy.” Illustration by Marc Ngui. Courtesy of [www.bumblenut.com/](http://www.bumblenut.com/)

Baruch Spinoza was a radical Dutch philosopher who was highly influential on early modern thought and also a substantial influence to Deleuze and Guattari’s development of the concept of Becoming; his concept of the plane of consistency pushed them one step further to break down differentiations and relations to solely speeds and slowness, movements and rest. Substantial or essential forms are ones that always come in infinities, but, depending on their degree of speed or the relation of movement and rest into which they enter, they belong to a given individual, which may itself be involved in an assemblage with another individual that is governed by another, increasingly complex relation or alliance, “and so on to infinity”. Each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and all of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities. In this case, Deleuze

and Guattari imagine us as forms made up by atoms, whose one gain their identity through movements of slowness and rest, and this is changed as it moves through the plane of consistency. “The plane of consistency of Nature is like an immense Abstract Machine; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations” [Deleuze & Guattari, 253] The plane of consistency then lays out a unity in the plane of nature, which applies equally to the inanimate and the animate, the artificial and the natural. This plane has nothing to do with a form or a figure, design or function, it is a plane on which everything is laid out, a machine of all functions and in this fixed plane, things are distinguished from one another only by slowness and speed, movement and rest .

Ultimately Spinoza provided Becoming with a fixed plane of life upon which everything stirs, slows down or accelerates as it is caught up in cognition, alliance and unnatural participations. This perspective can be compared to The Nayaka of South India, whose attention focuses on the events of subtle change. For example, when they are walking through the forest, they pick up the flux of information between variances and invariances. It is in these invariances that communication happens between human and non human entities, for example, not all stones are considered alive, it is the ones which move and “open a mouth towards them” which are. [Bird-David] From these events, which require movement and rest to achieve a form of communication, communication and engagement takes place. But Becoming’s idea of the plane of consistency takes on a more transformational proposal than those of the Nayaka, who assume much more passive levels of communication. Becomings quite mechanical make up of movement and rest is elaborated upon here; “A unique plane of consistency or composition for the cephalopod and the vertebrate; for the vertebrate to become an Octopus or Cuttlefish, all it would have to do it fold itself in two fast enough to use the elements of the halves of it’s back together into one of it’s extremities, like ‘a clown who throws its head and shoulders back and walks on its hands’” [Deleuze & Guattari, 255] At this point, becoming is no longer concerned with specific organs and its functions, but a concern of composition; it is not a question of differentiation, but of movement and rest. It is simply a matter of particles that arrive on time, or do not arrive fast enough, to effect an alliance of becoming. The Nayaka again share a similar perspective with a much more subtle approach, in their concept of the Dividual, a foundational idea that supported their relational epistemology, which believed that a person is constitutive of transferable particles that form his or her personal substance.

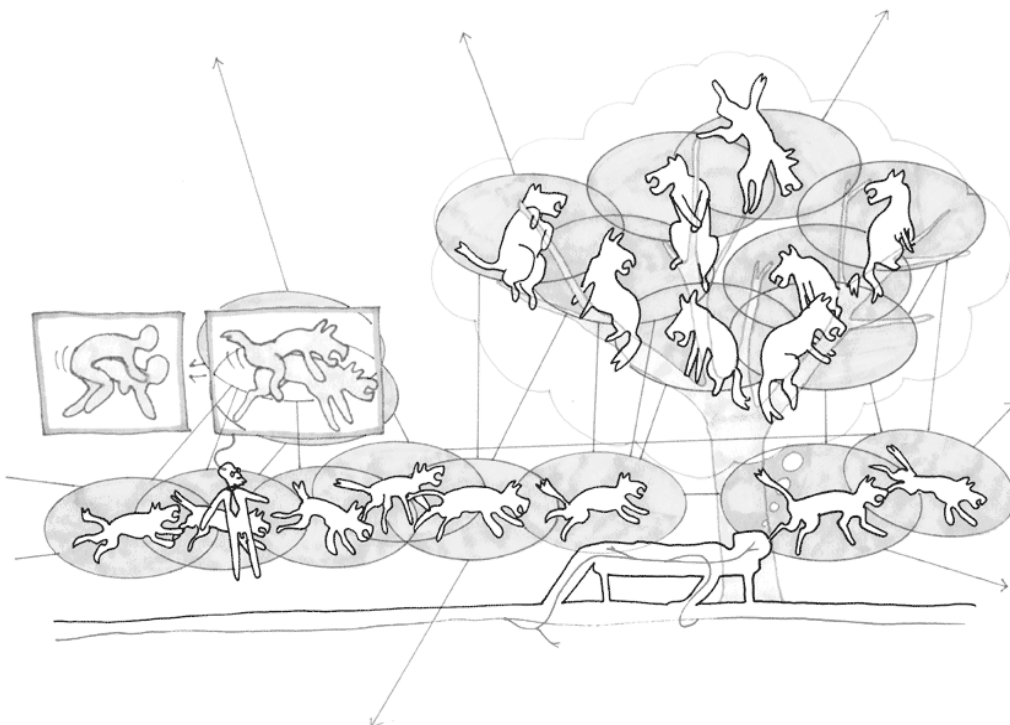
“We must try to conceive of this world in which a single fixed plane-which we call a plane of absolute immobility or absolute movement is traversed by non-formal elements of relative speeds that enter this or that individuated assemblage depending on their degrees of speed or slowness. A plane of consistency

peopled by anonymous matter, by infinite bits of impalpable matter entering into varying connections”. [Deleuze & Guattari, 255] Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari see the elements, the individuals that are laid out upon a plane of consistency, as packs without characteristics, bodies without organs, and instead focus only on the mechanical functions of speed, movement and rest. “We know nothing about the body unless we know what it can do” [Deleuze & Guattari, 257] Deleuze and Guattari explain that children are Spinozists when they talk about a “peepee-maker”, as they are not talking about the organ but the function of the organ. On this plane of consistency, the organ is experienced as a part or object, it is exactly what its elements make it according to their relation to movement and rest, and the way in which this relation combines with or splits off from coexisting elements. “Spinozism is the becoming-child of the philosopher”, one that recognizes the plane of consistency as peopled by anonymous malleable matter, infinitely entering into varying connections constituted by machinic functioning rather than established characteristics.

There is another aspect to Spinoza's plane of consistency; to every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness grouping together an infinity of parts, there also corresponds a degree of power, which is determined by the intensities of the relations composing, decomposing or modifying the individual. In the same way that Spinoza avoided defining a body by its organs, he also avoids defining it by species of genus characteristics, instead, seeking to count its affects, or its degrees of power. “A racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse from an ox...we know nothing about the body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects or bodies.” Once again, they refer to children for a clear explanation; “it is not a question of imitating a horse, ‘playing’ horse, it is whether Little Hans can endow his own elements with the relations of movement and rest, the affects that would make it become a horse, forms and subjects aside” [Deleuze & Guattari, 257] This would not involve imitating the horse, nor an analogy of relations; Little Hans would need to succeed in endowing the parts of the body with relations of speed and slowness that will make him become the horse, in an original assemblage proceeding neither by resemblance nor by analogy. He cannot become the horse without the horse itself becoming something else. To break the becoming-animal, all one needs to do is to extract a segment from it, to abstract one of its moments, to fail to take into account integral speeds and slownesses, to arrest the circulation of affects. To break the becoming, then, nothing remains but imaginary resemblances between terms, or symbolic analogies between relations. Deleuze & Guattari continue on to define the body not by the form that determines it, nor by the organs it possesses but by a longitude and a latitude. The longitude constitutes the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and

slowness, the latitude constitutes the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential. It is the entire assemblage in it individuated compound that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects. “It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child, that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life. The street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into composition with the air, and the beast and the full moon enter into a composition with each other.” [Deleuze & Guattari, 262] Longitude and latitude are inseparable. It was Spinoza who called attention to these two dimensions of the body, and the nature of the plane as being purely made up of longitude and latitude, as the earth is in cartography.

As mentioned above, becoming-animal is only one becoming among others; many different orders include becoming -mineral, -woman, -child, then leading into becoming-molecular, becoming-particles. In fact, all becomings are molecular, because becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone, it is not a concern of relations, analogies or imitations of a subject. Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest as they enter a particular zone of proximity. You become-animal only if, by whatever means, you emit corpuscles that enter the relation of movements and rest of the animal particles. You only “become” molecularly. “You do not become a real barking ‘molar’ dog, but by barking, if done with enough feeling, you emit a molecular-dog...the actor Robert DeNiro walks ‘like’ a crab in a certain film sequence; but he says, it is not a question of his imitating a crab; it is a question of making something that has to do with the crab enter into composition with the image, with the speed of the image.” [Deleuze & Guattari, 274] It is an essential point to make, that becoming-animal



It is the entire assemblage in it individuated compound that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects. Illustration by Marc Ngui. Courtesy of [www.bumblenut.com/](http://www.bumblenut.com/)

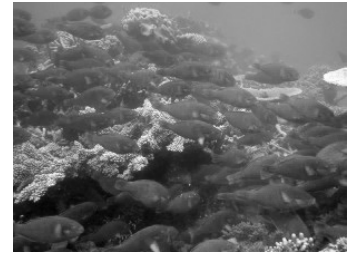
requires the emittance of corpuscles to enter the relation of movement and rest, a zone of proximity with the animal particles. You only become animal molecularly. Yes, all becomings are molecular; the animal, flower, mineral or stone one becomes are not molar subjects, they are not objects of forms that we know from the outside and recognize from experience through science but molecular collectivities, assemblages, alliances.

Deleuze and Guattari also elaborate on the inevitable becoming-woman of all man, stating that all human becomings begin with, and pass through, becoming-woman. It is key to all other becomings because the indissociable aspects of becoming-woman must first be understood as a function of something else. "It is not the girl who becomes woman, but it is the becoming-woman who produces the universal girl...the question is fundamentally that of the body, the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms. This body is stolen first from the girl: 'stop behaving like that', 'you're not a little girl anymore', 'you're not a tomboy', etc. The girl's Becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, a prehistory, upon her. The boy's turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too." [Deleuze & Guattari, 276] The girl is certainly not defined by virginity; she is defined by relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles, an haecceity assemblage. If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal linking up with it to come next, what is it all leading to? Indeed, it is leading toward the final stage of becoming, becoming-imperceptible.

Becoming-Woman links to Becoming-Animal which is constituted by Becoming-Molecular, finally reaching it's immanent end, it's cosmic formula, in Becoming-Imperceptible. But what does it mean to become-imperceptible? Becoming-imperceptible is to become everybody and everything, "to world". In becoming-imperceptible, one is no longer anything more than an abstract line or a piece of the puzzle that is itself abstract. By continuing with other lines, one makes a world that can overlay the first one like a transparency. Animal camouflage, for example, is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, but it "worlds" with the lines of a rock, the particles of sand, the colors of plants, becoming-imperceptible. "If one reduces oneself to one or several abstract lines that will prolong itself in a conjugate with others, producing immediately and directly, a world in which it becomes-everybody/everything." [Deleuze & Guattari, 280] Again, movement has an essential relation to the imperceptible; movement, by nature, is imperceptible. Perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of a moving body. Movement is the process of absolute deterritorialization, thus becoming-imperceptible, becoming-world through the constant processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Referring back to the inevitable stage of

becoming-woman mentioned above raises another important question: “Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man?” [Deleuze & Guattari, 291] It is because all becomings are minoritarian, where Man is a majoritarian. “The majority in the universe assumes as pre-given the right and power of man. In this sense, women, children, animals, plants, molecules are minoritarian.... It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman. One reterritorializes, or allows oneself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state, but in becoming, one is deterritorialized. For example, Deleuze and Guattari mention that even blacks, as the Black Panthers said, must become-black, a process that certainly takes more than a state declared status. If blacks must become-black, Jews must become-Jewish etc., it is because it is only the minority that is capable of serving as the active medium for becoming, as it exists under a conditions that it ceases to be a part of the mass of the majority. The becoming that can take place only through a minoritarian implies two different simultaneous movements, one in which the subject is withdrawn from the majority (man) and another by which a term (black panthers, jewish etc) rises up from the minority, creating an assemblage. It is important to understand, however, that we are capable of being thrown into a becoming by anything at all, by the most unexpected, insignificant details. “Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future. Becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution, it passes between the two. Every becoming is a block of coexistence...there is no history, just minorities as defined in relation to the majority” [Deleuze & Guattari, 291]. Becoming-imperceptible is a line of becoming not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it.

Becoming-imperceptible does not come from the beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination, but passes between points, comes up through the middle. The line or block of becoming produces a shared deterritorialization; Becoming is an anti-memory. “There is no act of creation (becoming) that is not transhistorical.” [Deleuze & Guattari, 296] For example, when Mondrian paints a “landscape”, it is a pure and absolutely deterritorialized landscape. The aim of painting has always been the deterritorialization of faces and landscapes, a deterritorialization either by the revival of our perception of form, or by a liberation of lines or colors, or both at the same time. There are many becomings-animal, becomings-woman, becomings-child in painting. When a painter represents a bird, this is, in fact, a becoming – bird, a becoming that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else, i.e. a pure line or pure color. When a sculptor carves a figure from a stone, the becoming man of the stone is only possible as the man becomes a complex of angles and curves. Music is also



A school of camouflaged rivulated parrotfish (*Scarus rivulatus*) forage along the front reef slope. Courtesy of LTMP / AIMS

a deterritorialization of the voice as it becomes less and less tied to language. When a musician's trumpet resembles the wails of an elephant, this becoming causes the voice of the elephant to become a intricate combination of tone and volume. "The unhistorical is like an atmosphere within which alone life can germinate and with the destruction of which it must vanish...What deed would man be capable of if he had not first entered into that vaporous region of the unhistorical" [Deleuze & Guattari, 296] Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of the past and future, because becoming has no history. Any becoming has no memory in the fact that any block of becoming is a mutual co-existence. The concepts ability to transcend history is perhaps one of the most pivotal points in its contrast to any kind of organized modernist perceptions.

Naturally, this concept is very difficult to understand, and speaking and reading about it is even more difficult. Deleuze and Guattari's descriptions and comparisons are quite clear and helpful as they lay out in detail, with references, the mechanics of this unique concept, and as a tool to assist with the understanding of it, there have been visual articulation of how becoming functions, by the artist Marc Ngui. To me it is interesting that this complex idea of Becoming Animal can be illustrated to such a successful degree. Without the explanations to help, these images are very difficult to understand, but with the reading of *A Thousand Plateaus*, and seeing the images, it is much easier to understand the concepts. The artists and philosopher relationship here is instrumental in making this philosophy more widely understood. Creations of Becoming-Imperceptible are like mutant abstract lines that have detached themselves from the task of representing this knowable world, precisely because they assemble a new type of reality that history can only attempt to re-contain or relocate, re-territorialize into punctual, pure systems. But Becoming is the negation of the hierarchy, challenging the scientific, rationalist, structuralist perspectives of the Western world. Becoming has the potential to overturn structures of positivist modernity, including language, as it provides an entirely new philosophy for understanding correspondences between every facet of the universe. In summary, Becoming is a philosophy very much related to that of indigenous belief systems, with a perspective that is hybridic, horizontal and rhizomatic as opposed to the pure, vertical, tree like structure of modern societies. Becoming encourages humans to enter into correspondences with anything in their environment, and to recognize potential in a very different way, one that breaks down the boundaries of expectation and opens wide the doors of the inexplicable, with no fear at all.

## V. Artist as Anthropologist

“Today, it seems interesting to me to go back to what I would call an animist conception of subjectivity, if need be through neurotic phenomena, religious rituals, or aesthetic phenomena. How does subjectivity locate on the side of the subject and on the side of the object? How can it simultaneously singularize an individual, a group of individuals, and also be assembled to space, architecture and all other cosmic assemblages?” - Felix Guattari [Lazzarato & Melitopoulos]

### New New

Since the stone age, there has been evidence and knowledge of art having a role in culture of human-kind, and the role of art has gone through infinite transformations, initially serving as a tool for fertility, hunting, narration, ritual in indigenous and ancient cultures, to idealism, ideology, religion and explorations of beauty, balance and perfect proportions in classical time periods. Each of these movements lasted long periods of time, from 100 years to thousands of years, maintaining the same motives and values. It wasn't until Realism that the movements in the history of art began to change pace, becoming shorter in duration while also radically challenging the values of movements that came before. Modernism is a period of time in art that encompassed a succession of styles and movements, each rejecting the past as a model for the art of the present, characterized by constant innovation.

Boris Groys deconstructs the modern and contemporary methods of creative production in his book *Art Power*, beginning with the statement that “the first thing one learns by reading the majority of texts on modern and contemporary art is this: both modern and, even to a greater extent, contemporary art are radically pluralistic.”[Groys, 2008 (1) 1] From the beginning of modernism until now, any attempt by critics or art historians to formulate a theoretical definition of art in general has quite quickly provoked various attempts by artists of the time to produce an artwork that would challenge this definition. The nature of modern arts conception was founded in the goal of contradicting all other artworks in one way or another. An artwork was only considered relevant and recognized by the institution of art if it presented a contradictory position to what was understood to be art at that time. So actually, “the field of modern art is not a pluralistic field so much



as it is a field strictly structured according to the logic of contradiction. It is a field where every thesis is supposed to be confronted with its antithesis. In the ideal case, the representation of thesis and antithesis should be perfectly balanced so that they sum zero.”[Groys, 2008 (1) 9] Modernisms crossed-out-god meant that there was no longer an overarching power in the world that could be perceived as being infinitely more powerful than any other power. Instead, the atheistic, humanistic, enlightened, modern believes in the balance of power and modern art is simply a conscious or unconscious expression of this belief. This belief in the balance of power is inherently regulatory as it automatically favors anything that establishes or maintains this balance of power and excludes or tries to outweigh anything that distorts it by becoming too powerful. “If there is no image that could function as a representative of an infinite power, then all images are equal. And, indeed, contemporary art has the equality of all the images at its telos.”[Groys, 2008 (1) 10]

There are only differences as far as the eye can see. And because of this, participants must make a choice and be committed to their decision with an understanding that they will ultimately be contradicted or even being accused of merely advertising for one’s favorite artists in hopes of advancing whatever commercial success may come of it within the art market. There is a serious question of sincerity here. “Already Malevich said that he was struggling against the sincerity of the artist. And Broodthaers said, when he started to do art, that he wanted to do something insincere. To be insincere means in this context to make art beyond taste, even beyond one’s own taste.” [Groys, 2008 (1) 10 ] The pluralism of contemporary art is an excess of taste, an excess of creative democratic equality, which inevitably makes it an embodiment of paradox. Contradiction can be found in general in the art world, but also in an individual artists practice, down to individual artworks themselves. Individual artworks have become paradox objects, embodying both thesis and antithesis, as an experience of plurality which seems to provide the viewer with an infinite number of options on what to like and how to think. But, as Boris Groys states, this appearance of infinite interpretations and viewpoints is only an illusion. In fact, there is only one correct interpretation that the artists impose on the spectator, that as paradox-objects, the works require, in turn, a paradoxical and self-contradictory reaction from the viewer. “The only adequate interpretation of a paradox is a paradoxical interpretation.”[Groys, 2008 (1) 4] One of the deepest difficulties in dealing with modern art rests in our unwillingness to accept self-contradictions and paradoxical interpretations as sufficient. But this unwillingness must be overcome so that we can see modern and contemporary art for what it is, namely a paradoxical entity governing the balance of power. We are in the image and a critique of the image at the same time. The desire to get rid of any image can be realized only through a new image, the image of a critique of the image. “The alleged pluralism of modern and contemporary

art makes any discourse on it ultimately futile and frustrating. This fact alone is reason enough to put the dogma of pluralism in question”[Groys, 2008 (1) 1]

Perhaps the question that may be asked here is the one that is posed by post-modern psychology when reflecting on modernisms ‘truth’ bearing efforts; when considering arguments of post modern arts pragmatic, practical capacity, we ask: what does it accomplish in cultural life? What institutions does it represent? And what does it silence? The art of the contemporary modern world is just the offspring of the modern world in general; of course in a world proliferated with hybrids and images to contradict hybrids and images, this mentality will be translated to the values and ethics of art production. “The ‘post-mods’ are the end of history, and the most amusing part is that they really believe it. They are simply stuck in the impasse of all avant-gardes that have no more troops behind them. Let them sleep till the end of the millennium, as Baudriallard advocates, and let us move on to other things. Or rather, let us retrace our steps. Let us stop moving on” [Latour 1993 (2), 62] In a world where everyone is represented simultaneously, where all tastes are accepted, where difference is encouraged and there is an extreme balance of power, among images at least, it seems like a never-ending story, a hamster wheel. Art is now an entity that consists of numerous creative individuals doing their own thing, climbing their own ladder to reach the climate of their own career. Let us stop moving on? Even if we wanted to, I wonder if it’d be possible, as this would require a certain coagulation of power, which would be a sacrilege to this sacred democracy of pluralism. Art has become stuck incessantly inside the post-modern ouroboros.

In the last few decades, discourse on the impossibility of the new in art, due to the pluralistic tendencies of the time, has become especially widespread and influential, and strangely enough, the main characteristic of this discourse is a certain feeling of happiness, of positive excitement about the final relief from the need to be “new”. This “liberation from the obligation to be historically new seems to be a great victory of life over formerly predominant historical narratives which tended to subjugate, ideologize, and formalize reality.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] This positivity about the end of the new in art seems linked to another promise of bringing art back into life, reaching outside of the historical constructions and considerations and oppositions of old and new. Today, artists and theoreticians strive to be engaged politically and culturally in a social reality as a foundation on which to express their own cultural identity and desires. Artists want to be perceived as truly alive and real, as opposed to the dead that are continuously represented by the museum system and the art market. In his essay *On The New*, Boris Groys asks “When and under what conditions does art look as if it is alive and not as if it were dead?” [Groys, 2002 (2)] Modern art has a history of slander towards the museum, library or any institutional archive, in the name of “true” life. “In the texts of modern artists and theoreticians,

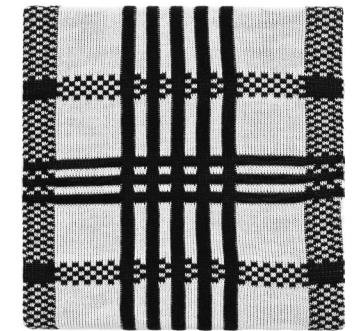
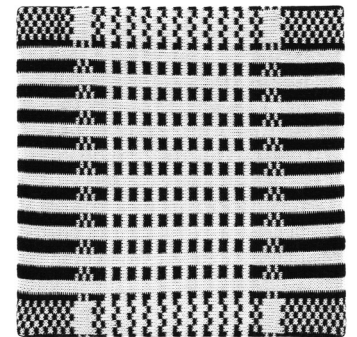
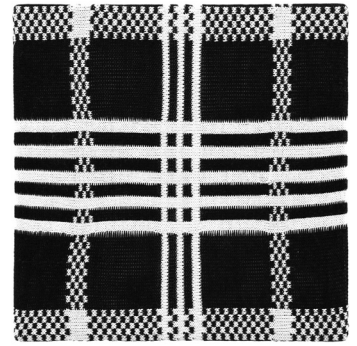
the museum is repeatedly described as a graveyard of art, and museum curators as gravediggers. If the museum dies, it is death itself that dies.” [Groys, 2002 (2)]

What does it mean for art to look as if it were alive? “Being alive” means to be “new”. Working within the realm of “high art” means that contemporary artists make decisions that they believe will lead to them eventually ending up in a museum’s collection. But, nowadays, the museum accepts only things that represent the life and time of culture that exists outside of its collections, art that is real and alive, in order to cannibalize them and turn them into dead products of the past. Anything presented in the museum is culturally understood to belong to the past, everything presented in the museum is dead. “Thus, the only possibility of being collected is by transcending the museum and entering life in the sense of making something different from that which has already been collected. The museum is, in this respect, like a church: you must first be a sinner to become a saint, otherwise you remain a plain, decent person with no chance of a career in the archives of God’s memory.”[Groys, 2002 (2)]

This is another paradox, one that lies in the relationship between artists and the museum; the more an artist wants to radically free themselves from the death of the museum, the more they are recognized and eventually become subjected in the most radical logic of museum collecting. This interpretation of the new, real and living contradicts a deep-rooted conviction within the history of art, one that is found in texts of the early modern avant-garde, which announces that “the way into life can be opened only by the destruction of the museum and by a radical, ecstatic deletion of the past, which stands between us and our present.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] An example presented here reflects on a time when the new Soviet government attempted to secure and save the collections of the old Russian museums out of fear that they would be destroyed by civil war and the general collapse of state institutions and the economy. Kazimir Malevich protested against these efforts, calling on the state not to intervene to protect the work of these museums. Malevich hated the monotonous museum collections and believed that their destruction could open the path to true, living art. He understood that a new, original, innovative art would be unacceptable for museum collections governed by the conventions of the past, because it is in the idea of historical representation that compels the museum system to collect. However, even up until now, this notion of historical representation has never been called into question by any theoretical movement, not even by post-modern writing, which claims to be on the path of the “historically new, truly contemporary and up-to-date”. As progressive as postmodern theorists like to think they are, they have ventured no further than the modern theorists or any previous movements for that matter, as long as they continue with the linear temporality of progress, and simply ask “who and what is new enough to represent our own time?”[Groys, 2002 (2)]

Strategies today could begin not with an attempt to break down walls to a greater freedom, but perhaps with the emerging of a new taboo, the “museum taboo”, which disallows the repetition of the old. The museum lays out a clear definition of what it means for art to look real, alive, present, by presenting what is not real, not alive and not present. In order to be collected, art cannot look like what has already been museographed. But today, Groys asserts that “to be really new, a new artwork should not repeat the old differences between art objects and ordinary things. By repeating these differences, it is possible only to create a different artwork, not a new artwork. A new artwork looks really new and alive only if it resembles, in a certain sense, every other ordinary, profane thing, or every other ordinary product of popular culture.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] Only in this case can the new artwork function as a representative for the world outside the museum walls and the new can be experienced only if it produces an effect of out-of-bounds infinity. An artwork that resembles the mundane to such an extent as Groys is proposing, depends on the clean and distinct space of the museum in order to achieve this effect of infinity. In the context of reality we would experience these “real”; “mundane objects” as finite because we ourselves are finite, but in the museum, they become infinite. The museum essentially lets us imagine what is outside the museum as infinite, with artworks that function as windows to the infinite outside.

But, of course, because of this pluralistic time of paradoxes and contradictions, new artworks can fulfill the function of this window only for a short period of time before being replaced by a new window into infinity. There is a need to replace the old new with the new new; it’s a battle of the news. It is only the clean and preserved space of the museum that allows a production and exhibition of new differences, that is, differences beyond differences, differences which are emerging here and now, all the time. In reality itself we are confronted only with dead differences. “It is when an artwork looks like a ‘normal thing’ that it will require the contextualization and protection of the museum. The strategies of the artistic avant-garde, understood as the elimination of visual difference between artwork and profane thing, thus lead directly to the building-up of museums, which secure this difference institutionally. In the museum, ordinary objects are promised the difference they do not enjoy in reality, the difference beyond difference.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] Similar to what Bruno Latour mentions in *We Have Never Been Modern* in regards to temporality, Groys asserts that “we have to dissociate the concept of the new from the concept of history, and the term innovation from its association with the linearity of historical time.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] Instead of artistic innovation thinking in terms of temporal linearity and the progress that has or has not come with that, he proposes a consideration instead of the spatial relationship between the museum space and its outside. “The production of the new is merely a shifting of the boundaries between collected items and the profane objects outside the collection, which is primarily



Rosemarie Trockel *Untitled*, 1986  
black and white wool on canvas.  
All images courtesy of the Rubell  
Family Collection. Examples of  
the new new; what makes these  
patterns “art” is their needs of the  
museum to draw attention to them  
as cultural objects. In the midst of  
everyday life outside of the muse-  
um, they would blend in and  
become invisible because of their  
likeness to other similar patterns.

a physical, material operation: some objects are brought into the museum system, while others are thrown out and land, let us say, in a garbage can.”[Groys, 2002 (2)] Such shifting produces again and again the effect of newness, openness, infinity, using signifiers that look different in respect to the musealized past and identical with mere things, popular cultural images circulating in the outside space.



Adrian van der Spelt, 1658  
Trompe-l'Oeil Still Life with a Flower Garland and Curtain, Courtesy of <http://www.artic.edu/>



Adrian van der Spelt, 1658  
Trompe-l'Oeil Still Life with a Flower Garland and Curtain, from a different angle. Courtesy of [http://i\\_hate\\_life.blogspot.ch/2011\\_06\\_01\\_archive.html](http://i_hate_life.blogspot.ch/2011_06_01_archive.html)

As the museum is not only searching everyday for the new new to replace the old new, it is also attempting to restore the newness and life to its old, dead objects. The status of the museum as the site of a permanent collection is gradually changing as the museum has started to become, time and time again, theatre for large-scale traveling exhibitions or one time installations organized by international curators and individual artists. Something very interesting here is that each exhibition or installation of this kind is made with the intention of “designing a new order of historical memories”, proposing a new criteria for collecting by re-constructing history. Contemporary art consists of creating a specific context which can make a certain form or thing look other, new and interesting, even if this form has been seen before. The innovation here lies in putting a new form, a new thing, in this stable context or putting already existing artworks into new contexts by changing the display of an artwork to bring difference to its reception, without having to change the artwork’s visual form at all. Contemporary art works with the museum on the level of context, framework, background, or new theoretical interpretations; no matter if it is the display of a new work, or a re-presenting of an old work, both share the goal to create a contrast between form and historical background, to make the form look other and new.

“The new functions here not as a re-presentation of the “other” or as a next step towards a progressive clarification of the obscure, but rather as a new reminder that the obscure remains obscure, that the difference between real and simulated remains ambiguous, that the longevity of things is always endangered, that infinite doubt about the inner nature of things is insurmountable. The museum was always, and still remains, the only place for possible innovation.” [Groys, 2002 (2)] Opposed to what one might think, Groys asserts that the museum is not just a secondary reflection of what happened in reality once upon a time, in fact it is the reality itself that is secondary in relation to the museum. We understand ourselves based on what is presented to us in the museum; our image of reality is dependent on our knowledge absorbed from the museum. This is a strange pill to swallow, but it also brings up the point that any change in the museum collection can bring about change in our perception of reality itself!

Artists examine and manipulate form and language through their own investigations of identity and beauty. The creative practice of an artist can be a practice of seeing and creating relations between previously unrelated things, working with and playing with the roles and personalities of each, considering its patterns of interaction within the world. The process of production can often involve the artist to enter into a state of floating between one narrative and the next, suspending meaning and expanding their capacity to engage with chance. The creative practice of Michael E. Smith is one of a unique approach to form and language, as it addresses perception through abstractions of the materiality of domestic environments. He creates symbolic hybrids of familiar objects who are culturally unfamiliar to each other, or at least not in the type of relationships that are presented.

Some of the forms are formatically totemic, with materials stacked vertically on top of one another. Other forms are presented singularly, with a very particular attention paid to its placement. Smith's methods of cannibalizing materials explore the language of specific cultural entities that floats between embracement and rejection. In his exhibition at Kunstverein Hannover, Smith presented a series of sculptures, installations and videos in a space where all of the "wall texts, directional signs showing how to navigate the building, and any other communications media has been removed" as a ridding disencumberment of



Michael E. Smith installation view  
Courtesy of Ladislav Zajac, KOW

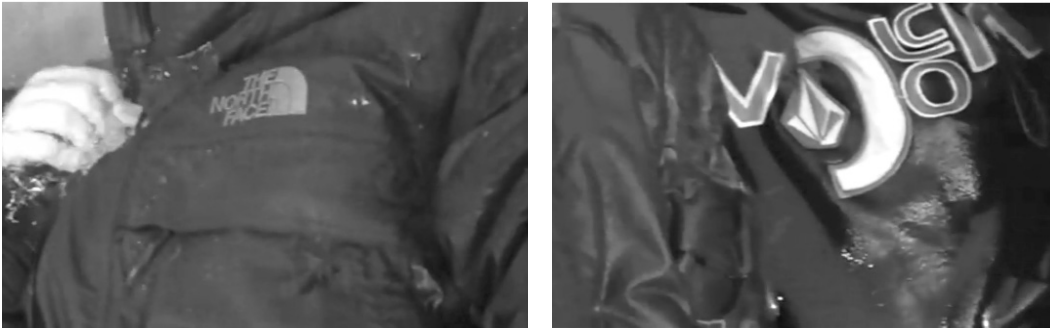


Michael E. Smith installation view Courtesy of Contemporary Art Daily

the space in order to “achieve a form of concentration, allowing the viewer to focus on what is essential”. [Contemporary Art Daily] Smith’s action of reducing any distracting elements within the exhibition space to a minimum is a significant and quite unique characteristic of his practice, one that is present in each of his exhibitions to date. There is a distinct importance placed on the hybridic autonomy of the combined elements, which is conditional to the cultural and personal language of the pure, molar entities, such as the blue and black wetsuits and the water heaters, in relation to each other and the surrounding spacial elements.

The constellation of works includes one assemblage of what looks like a wood door painted white, balanced impossibly on top of a spray paint can, which is placed precariously near the spaces entry way. Its vulnerability is reinforced by the adjacent black form hanging at shoulder height on the wall, which seems like a piece of a discarded car window frame, but also alludes to a discarded limb, an arm. In another room lays a large black sheet, flat on the ground with folds and imperfections highlighted by the mirroring skylight above. An acute contemplation of metaphor in semiotic and material language is evident not only in the sculptures and installations of the exhibition but also in the video work. Placed beneath a window of the gallery space is a monitor displaying a video of a fully clothed human, immersed in a fresh bathtub of water. The black and white Globes, The North Face, the Volcom, are completely engulfed in a state of relation between air and water that is manipulated by the wearers movement and prodding. The allusions presented, in this assemblage especially, provoke conversations that are particularly relevant in contemporary art disciplines, as well as economic, political, environmental and spiritual dialogues. Smith seems to have refined the art of the hybrid, which is a skill that allows for the viewer to be engaged and even mesmerized by form and space, while also being affected psychologically and/or emotionally by the language of their subtle and ambiguous yet evocative tendencies. His ability to adopt semiotics in such a way provides an opportunity for the viewer to contemplate the functions of things, but in a different way; to comfortably participate in an event of deterritorialization. His practice adopts the very real, and places it just on the edge of the table, teetering between stability and destruction in a place where imagination and mental wandering take the forefront; rational, linear thought is no longer





Michael E. Smith Video stills Courtesy of Contemporary Art Daily

the only applicable means to understand, describe or discuss. In this realm, systems and languages take on malleable roles as they are broken down into vulnerable new forms. The function and reasoning of the mind work in a similar way as animism, influenced by the unconscious or superstitions, in a realm that is immaterial, floating indeterminately outside of “provable” information or thought processes, guided and built on varying combinations of inner logic and objectivity. The aesthetics of the work tend to be non-excessive as the artist tries to have the movement that is present in the work hold a place between organism and machine, comfortably. The sense of floating between two states can be also symbolic for a sort of giving up of trying to understand, a safe space to give in to the imagination. No crisis.

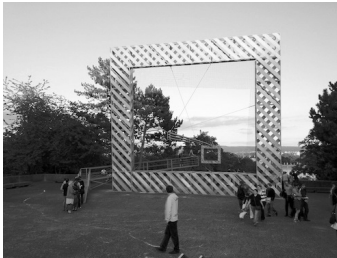
The *Animism Project*, led by curator Anselm Franke, is the result of a large scale collaborative effort between artists, writers, curators and institutions, which began to take shape in Antwerp, Belgium in 2006. The research and discourse that has been acquired since its initial conception is substantial, the project and its exhibition has travelled from institution to institution around the world, presenting to the public a unique look into the history of the term. “For most people who are still familiar with the term “animism” and hear it in the context of an exhibition, the word may bring to mind images of fetishes, totems, representations of a spirit-populated nature, tribal art, pre-modern rituals, and savagery. These images have forever left their imprint on the term. The expectations they trigger, however, are not what this project concerns. Animism doesn’t exhibit or discuss artifacts of cultural practices considered animist. Instead, it uses the term and its baggage as an optical device, a mirror in which the particular way modernity conceptualizes, implements, and transgresses boundaries can come into view.”[Franke, 2010 (2),11]

Animism recognizes the various boundaries set in place since the coining of the term by E.B Tylor in 1871, in an attempt to expose the roots, to interrogate the dividing lines that are still ever-present in contemporary modern societies. “The exhibition sees animism as a node, a knot that, that when untied, will help unpack the “riddle of modernity” in new ways, helping us to understand modernity as a mode of classifying and mapping the world by means of partitions, by a series of





*Less Savage than Others* is a public sculpture by Rosemarie Trockel which is made of two blocks of evergreen trees together next to a body of water, with a slim passage-way for visitors to pass through. Anselm Franks *Animism* project challenges the role of the museum and its influence on perspectives of reality, Rosemarie Trockel plays with the role of the museum both with her exhibitions presented in museum spaces, as well as her public installations. Does this piece need the museum? Perhaps it does not rely on the clean space of the museum, but it does still rely on the context of art to guarantee its cultural relevance, because its newness does not allow it to stand alone from any other lakeside shrub. Courtesy of skulptur-projekte.de



*Frame Construction* of Haus-Rucker-Co on Friedrichsplatz in Kassel is an outdoor public art installation that provides an emphasis of perspective. This piece serves as a window to the landscape of wherever it is installed. Like the *Animism* Project, it is questioning the role of the museum and its framing of nature and reality, providing just one viewpoint to see the world. Courtesy of anetteleenheer.wordpress.com



*Moonhouse* is a building by the artist Not Vital built in 2006 in Agadez, Niger. As this work is considered a work of art, it is also a building and a tool for viewing the movement of the moon. Courtesy of notvital.com

‘Great Divides.’” [Franke, 2010 (2),11] As opposed to investigating the spiritual and metaphysical effects of animation solely within the realm of aesthetics through a well organized and informative presentation of artifacts and artworks that exemplify different ways of addressing life or the life-like within the realm of the inanimate, as almost any museum exhibition in the past would have done when representing indigenous, pre modern cultures, the Animism exhibition targets this “unquestioned backdrop” against which this kind of discussion would normally take place. This backdrop is usually invisible, taken for granted or carefully kept at arms length, but the works in this exhibition seek to bring it front and center. One of the initial concerns of the Animism exhibition is addressed through a constellation of works that reveal the paradoxical position of the medium of “the exhibition”



Jimmy Durham *The Dangers of Petrification*, 1998–2007, stones, two knives, five ceramic plates, three wooden chopping boards and hand written papers. Courtesy of www.frieze.com/

itself and its relationship to the institution of the museum. “What is a museum if not a grand de-animating machine?” Whatever way an object may have been animated in its original context, this object, of course, will no longer play the same role when held within the confines of a museum and exhibition framework. This is by means of the process of dialectical reversal that is inscribed into these kinds of institutions, a dialectical reversal that de-animates the animates and animates the “dead”. In reflection to this, Animism attempts to actively imagine what a “quasi-anthropological” museum of the modern boundary practices might look like, one that does not necessarily follow the inlaid framework of the modern institution.

The linguistic and visual economy that makes up the Animism project is explicit and dynamic. Through the dedicated research of the curatorial team and

their collaborators, not only have they managed to gather a plethora of artworks and cultural artifacts into an exhibition that allows for a well rounded, critical, yet generous, visual narration of the history of animism and it's relation to the Western world, but they have also made great efforts to objectively provide a clear, comprehensive survey of the history of animism, through the release of various texts, press releases, lectures, etc. Anselm Franke and the team behind the *Animism project* have been highly instrumental in bringing to light the intricate workings of the modernist machine, inspiring critics, theorists and anthropologists to follow in the footsteps to the deconstruction of the modern world. "The various stages of the exhibition have shown the discourse of animism to be a crucial skeleton key for releasing the deadlocks formed by the repressed religious, teleological, and colonial foundations of modernity; the hysteria within its narrative that continues to shape the exhibition formats and sensibilities we are tethered to." [Franke, 2010 (3)]

## **The Creative Practices of the Machinic Assemblage**

In his book *Art Power*, Boris Groys touches on a crucial problem of pluralism that is defining the art of our postmodern world. We are working in a time where we are all equal, there is no hierarchy, among aesthetics at least, within the contemporary art discourse. All artists are given a fair shot to make it big. Although it seems we have become stopped in our tracks, perhaps it is more like we have transcended the modernist need for progress. Artists are happy with this pluralistic time, and the fact that there is no hierarchy, because they don't have to worry about being "new" anymore, well at least not in the same way that the historical movements of art used to need to be. There is a newly established equality, a democracy of tastes in the art world. The pluralism and absence of hierarchy of the art world seems quite parallel to the primary concerns of "new" animism, which are to establish a new equality between the modern and pre modern cultures, as well as human and non-human entities. When considering this parallel, I believe that we can apply these "new" animistic explorations of ensoulment and agency to the art experience, as a relatively new, or at least fresh, concept.

"With the affirmation of the inwardness of subjectivity, the individual steps out of the network of exchange relationships and exchange values, withdraws from the reality of bourgeois society, and enters another dimension of existence. Indeed, this escape from reality led it to an experience which could (and did) become a powerful force in invalidating the actually prevailing bourgeois values namely, by shifting the locus of the individuals realization from the domain of the performance

principle and the profit motive to that of the inner resources of the human being: passion, imagination, conscience. The radical qualities of art, that is to say, its indictment of the established reality and its invocation of the beautiful image of liberation, are grounded precisely in the dimension where art transcends its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse and behavior, while preserving its overwhelming presence...the world formed by art is recognized as a reality which is suppressed and distorted in the given reality”[Marcuse, 6]

There are two main components to consuming art; there is the objective consumption run by the material commodity of art, and there is the subjective consumption of the works essence. There is monetary value and then there is its invaluable contribution of experience. The art as commodity equates to nothing more than any other object of capitalism. Art from this perspective is used as an investment, decoration, entertainment, etc., serving as a backdrop within the sustaining proliferation of things. Monetary is limiting perceptually; it flattens the world to a world of fully conscious, objective consumption, a consumption that can even be quite violent, like factory farmed animals, made just to serve the industry, purchased, killed and eaten, just to become a part of its consumers body (of collected work).



Courtesy of [www.agra-auctions.com/](http://www.agra-auctions.com/)

With art as a commodity, the humans of the modern world are still in a safe space as the masters in control of the universe over the autonomy and agency of material. In this world, they are allowed to remain unchallenged within the comfort zones of the familiar, continuing to be governed by the only thing they know, capitalist value and commodity exchange. The influence of the market on any artists career is unavoidable, and this has spawned very interesting creative positions in its own right, but I find that it could be worth setting aside the status of the work as a commodity in order to investigate the potentials that lay within the experience of art subjectively. I believe that through investment and exploration into subjective contributions that occur through art production and consumption, art can be used to discover and reach new potentials as a device to challenge the hierarchical positions that man continues to maintain over material and nature, and act as a tool to further address the decolonization of thought in the Western world.

When considering arts relation to autonomy, “the quality or state of being self-governing” [Merriam-Webster (1)] and agency, “the power that is used for something to be achieved by a person or thing”[Merriam-Webster (1)] many theoreticians, philosophers and artists have contemplated the ability for art to have a self governing quality that can effect and be effected when presented to a consumer. Semiological or interpretive theories of art have always assumed that works of art are vehicles that actively present slightly obscure meaning through signs and symbols which the spectators decode on the basis of their familiarity with the semiological system used by the artist. Somehow, the responsibility is very often in the hands

of the artist or the artwork alone, to captivate, entertain, and speak with relatively rational coherence to the viewer. But, when considering arts relation to autonomy and agency, not many theoreticians, philosophers and artists have considered the autonomy that the consumer is equipped with when being confronted by an artwork. When viewing a work of art, what kind of responsibility does the consumer have? Is the effort put forth mutual between the consumer and the work? Or does the consumer simply assume a more passive role, taking it in, liking it or disliking it and then moving on to the next one on the wall? In contemplating the becomings of the machinic assemblage of Deleuze and Guattari and applying it to the experience of art, one can assert that in fact, the quality and type of experience that is generated through consuming a work of art, whether it be video, painting, sculpture, installation, performance, etc. is determined by the autonomy and agency of both the piece itself, as well as the consumer. When experiencing a work, the consumer of the work enters into a reciprocal relationship, a machinic assemblage, where they are part of something in which each component, the consumer, the painting, the wall, the surrounding space, etc. are all contributors. In this case, the autonomous consumer is responsible for his or her knowledge, taste and attitude that they bring forth, just as much as the autonomous work of art standing before him or her is responsible for its knowledge, taste and attitude. This perspective already resists any separation that may be caused by the hierarchical status of man over material, which ultimately always comes to a dead end in it's objectification and commodification anyways.

This perspective recognizes the work of art as animate matter, with autonomy and agency of its own, capable of reciprocal communication that in some cases can be gentle and quiet, and in other cases can be quite loud and in your face, demanding respect and attention. The viewer is consuming at the same time he or she is being consumed, as they participate in the conversation and animation of the



In the movie *Vertigo* by Alfred Hitchcock, Madeleine becomes transfixed by the painting of Carlotta in the museum, Madeleine's bouquet is the same as Carlotta's in the painting and her hair is worn in the same style. It seems as though her relation to the paintings, or the image in the painting causes Madeleine to enter into a form of unnatural participation, which leads her to attempt suicide by jumping into the river. Courtesy of reelsf.com/reelsf/vertigo



Of all the scandals of the history of art, none is so scandalous as the one that took place in 1913 in Paris at the premiere of Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*. The music was as startling as the strange jerky movements of the choreography, causing an uproar in the audience of the bourgeois class. Courtesy of <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22691267>

material. If we were to look at Deleuze and Guattari's model of the machinic assemblage in relation to the consumption of art, then it is essentially the interaction between the various components that make up the experience, and without each of these, the machinic assemblage becomes a different machinic assemblage, with new influential factors. For instance, say you see a sculpture at its original site in Egypt and then, a few years later, see the same sculpture in the British Museum; the sculpture may be the same, but the two experiences of seeing the sculpture are very different. Many things come into play here, the object itself, the history behind the object, the location that it is currently in versus its original home, and your conscious knowledge of what is behind what you are looking at. Perhaps you are excited to have this object be placed within the Western narrative of Egyptian history, or perhaps you feel that you are experiencing the result of a kidnapping. Another example; take the experience of seeing a painting in real life versus seeing an image of the painting in a book. Regardless of it being the same image, dreamed up and created by the same artist, representing the same time period, most of the time, one would typically assume that seeing the work in real life is a more enriching experience. The texture of the brush strokes, the size of the canvas, the acute silence and precise lighting of the museum, the singularity of the object, realizing that the object before you is not reproducible, are all live components which are absent when seeing a picture of the painting in a book. Reproductions of artworks in books can, however, also present interesting experiences of course, depending on the various components surrounding that particular image at the particular time you are seeing it. In the machinic assemblage, the work is not the sculpture that you are looking at, the work is the experience generated by you and the rest of the varying components that make up that specific experience, that specific event. It is important to reiterate that with every change that breaks the continuity of the active machinic assemblage, a new one immediately begins.

I have touched briefly on the machinic assemblages that are generated by the interaction between the consumer and the work of art, but it is not only the consumer who benefits from the art experience in this way. Of course, there are also the machinic assemblages that happen between the artist and the artwork during the various stages, from concept to production to exhibition. Every machinic assemblage creates a becoming which is contagious and involuntary. Being swept up in a becoming can take hold of any consumer of a work of art in varying degrees depending on the other contributing factors, however it does differ significantly from the becoming of the artist, the creator, the one that imbues the work with its initial form of life. I reflect back on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the writer: "if the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc. Many suicides by writers are explained by these unnatural participations, these unnatural nuptials." [Deleuze &

Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining's* character, writer Jack Torrance, whose sanity becomes compromised initially through the process of writing. Courtesy of Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.



Guattari, 141] They mention Virginia Woolf, who “experiences herself as a troop of monkeys, a school of fish, according to her variable relations of becoming with the people she approaches”[Deleuze & Guattari, 139] In order for Virginia Woolf or any other writer or artist to become through production, in order for the viewer to become through consumption, there must first be an act of deterritorialization, a severance of oneself from their native values, ethics, prejudices and practices, in order to make room for whatever new thing is created during the block of becoming. “There are only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage: packs as masses and masses as packs...how could lines of deterritorialization be assignable outside of circuits of territoriality? Where else but in wide expanses, and in major upheavals in those expanses, could a tiny rivulet of new intensity suddenly start to flow? What do you not have to do in order to produce a new sound?”[Deleuze & Guattari, 3] The aim of art has always been that of deterritorialization either by the revival of our perception of form, or by a liberation of form, or even both simultaneously. When a painter represents a bird, it is not only a deterritorialization of the bird and the paint, but also a deterritorialization of the artist, as they need to suspend the idea of this bird as a living thing with functioning organs, and take up the idea of this bird as a series of forms and colors of which he must copy to the canvas using tools and the same colors. When a viewer sees a painting of a bird and says “what a beautiful bird”, of course what they are really looking at is a series of forms of colors that have been put in place precisely enough to represent a living creature endowed with functioning organs. In this case, although the viewer/consumer understands, based on their preconceived knowledge, that this is really just paint on canvas, the viewer becomes deterritorialized, suspending what they know in reality in order to open up room to believe, in order to manipulate reality and see things differently, even for just a moment. When one becomes deterritorialized, when one is suspended in a becoming between the established values of their origin and whatever values will be reconstituted / affected by the block of becoming after, there is no history. Any real block of becoming is an anti-memory with also no distinct vision of the future.

The contingent event is a concept developed by Elie Ayache in his essay *In the Middle of the Middle of the Event*, which addresses the processes of working with, and/or modeling of, the unpredictable. “On the ‘metaphysical framework’, in order to model the unpredictable, first of all you have to identify the different scenarios that may take place...to me, it seems more natural to define it by the impact, rather than in terms of probability”[Ayache, 4] Ayache states that probability is self-defeating, and that it is more relevant to gauge the impact of the event after it takes place, as it would provide a better definition of what actually happened than any prior prediction you could have assigned to it anyway. He uses the example of

The Fable of Pygmalion and Galatea, Pygmalion being the gifted sculptor who resolves from women to devote life to his passion, sculpting, only to fall in love with a beautiful sculpture of a woman. Courtesy of [genius.com/Ovid-the-metamorphoses-of-ovid-book-x-fable-7-annotated](https://genius.com/Ovid-the-metamorphoses-of-ovid-book-x-fable-7-annotated)



the unexpected bestseller *The Black Swan*, whose author Nassim Nicholas Taleb did not expect to sell two and a half million copies of. He asserts that with unexpected circumstances like the sudden fame of Taleb “we are really dealing with a contingent event, a pure contingent event of such a kind that, beforehand, we don’t know what it’s going to look like.”[Ayache, 4] Inspired by the story of *The Black Swan*, Ayache wrote and released *The Blank Swan: The End of Probability*, a book in which he questions what takes place beyond probability, beyond the methods of planning and prediction that the moderns have developed in order to again avoid, escape or control any unknown realms. When suspending the need for prediction and control, the event becomes the creator of its own causes, but it’s only after the event that you know the causes, the contributors that made the event what it became. In this sense, the event is a ‘backward narrative’ requiring participants to adopt a new type of movement into the future, because instead of going in ready with a sure plan on what you believe will happen, it is now necessary to go in without expectation; only afterwards can you go back in time and trace out the chain of reasons that has led to its effects or affects. “It’s something where the writer can really throw himself into a process of writing, blindly so to speak, and one of my favorite expressions is that he is then ‘traversed by contingency,’ so he almost surprises himself with what he is writing...I think that the true spark of writing comes when you find yourself surprised by what you have written; and I would even claim that there are thoughts that you can only have through the material process of writing.”[Ayache, 7] Slavoj Zizek continues with the concept of the event in his book *Philosophy in Transit*, asking “does everything that exists have to be grounded in sufficient reason? Or can there be things that somehow happen out of nowhere?”[Zizek, 4] The event has no ontologically fixed point. Unlike all the rest of societies structured or well-founded entities, the event belongs to no pre-existent set. If the terms of Modernity depend on things existing as moral entities, then where does the event fit in? “Is an event a change in the way reality appears to us, or is it a shattering transformation of reality itself?”[Zizek 3] If an event is actually another word for becoming, and becoming effects all of the components of itself to varying degrees, leaving no participant unchanged, then the answer is #2, an event is a shattering transformation of reality itself. Every becoming is a contingent event of deterritorialization that transforms the reality of its parts, and the decolonization of thought requires this deterritorialization.

## Okay

So, how to be okay with ...

Being okay deals with the idea of comfort outside of the usual comfort zone and the methods of engagement with the unfamiliar territory. This thesis begins with two situations which present states of not being okay within the modernist frameworks: the modernist avant-garde and their refusal to accept oppressive control over the soul and imagination, and Bruno Latours *We Have Never Been Modern*, which identifies the post-modern paradoxes, explaining the unsustainability of our contemporary modern condition. There has been a collective angst that feels the need to transcend the boundaries of the great divide, and this angst is no longer being ignored. In order to transcend these boundaries, one must first identify that they even exist. One must then begin to recognize, in a meaningful way, that the world we live in is a construction of enlightenment thought, and that there is a vast field of non modern knowledge out there that we have no idea how to even fathom, let alone understand. To transcend these boundaries, one must enter into an event of deterritorialization that plucks you out of your conscious modern situation and sends you off to the periphery, in order to become a satellite, with a birds eye view of your own culture. Suddenly deconstruction happens, and you begin to see things that have forever been invisible through your modern lens. The question here is about autonomy. How much autonomy do you have in order to even go through with this process of deterritorialization, and enter into unknown realms? And once you are in these realms, what do you encounter and how do you become engaged?

“Every experience of another culture offers us an occasion to engage in experimentation with our own”[Castro 48] Modes of engagement begin with perspective. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro understands this as he develops and pursues a new direction of anthropology which he calls The Decolonization of Thought. Its name alone clearly assumes the position to break down our established western perspectives and open up room for new perspectives to enter. He is not alone either; along with other anthropologists like Philippe Descola and Nurit Bird-David, he is reconsidering the ways in which we engage when we venture out into the “other” world, outside of our comfort zones, to study the world-views and lifestyles of the indigenous, with a deep concern for the honesty and ethics that constitutes how we understand them. It is beginning to be understood that in order to deal with the collective



angst among us, we must go from “our” to “other”, meaning, in order to gain new perspectives in a meaningful and functional way, we must begin to study cultures who function under different perspectives. To bring this to light, I review Viveiros de Castro’s notion of perspectivism and Nurit Bird-Davids concepts of the “dividual” and relational epistemology, which have great potential as tools to reshape how we see ourselves in relation to each other, other species, material and environment. To adopt these points of view and apply them to the functioning of our western culture would allow us to understand and deal with the mysterious phenomena brought about by new developments in science and technology, that has also, maybe accidentally, begun to break down our notions of what it means to be “living” and “non-living”, “animate” and “inanimate” and really altering how we see “things”. It is a very interesting time that we live in, where, due to science, technology, labor and consumption, we ourselves are reconstituting our position among the material world; as Hito Steyerl says “Why not be a thing? An object without a subject? A thing among other things?”[Deiderichsen] To understand oneself as just one thing among other things directly addresses the concept of personhood that deals with the ability to occupy a point of view, as well as the Nayaka’s notion of the *devaru*, which sees movement and rest as constituting measures of communication. In order to understand this, one must rid themselves of the idea of any hierarchy that deems men or anything above anything else. Suddenly, here we have the potential to truly be a thing among other things. Now, perhaps we can use this new perspective to refine our “ambient vision”, and to be able to pick up on the subtleties among us, to become un-desensitized.

To refine the ambient vision, Gibson talks about “aids to perceiving”. To pursue ambient vision, one must engage in exercises of ambiguity that can lead to events of deterritorialization, to see outside of the box and adopt new perspectives. And definitely, as with any practice, one’s ability to be comfortable with the unknown realm becomes increasingly easier. Perhaps this is why generally artists are more quick to understand and accept another’s view, because we are constantly being given opportunities for deterritorialization through the exercises of ambiguity that are ever-present in art. That is basically what the idea of art is made up of; it is a world of exercises of ambiguity that explore modes of function and communication that transcend the establishment of the modern regime.

As we continue to pursue the decolonization of thought, there is a growing concern for how to deal with language. How do we deliver and distribute this information, but in a way that does not allow the modern world to simply adopt as its own? We need to understand the relationship between language and temporality, which is discussed at great length by many, including Bruno Latour and Harry Garuba. As long as we assume that everything is living under the same notions of time, then we are never able to connect with the essence of anything that does not

share our same pace. For instance, in *The Secret Life of Plants*, because of our ability to manipulate time through film, we can finally see the actual movements and animation of what used to be considered “inanimate”. Temporality affects language in many ways, but the primary component, when considering how to represent these new developments in thinking, deals with progress. As long as we are always seeing ourselves between the past and the future, with a break from the past, then our language will also be developed in the same way. For instance, we went from Modernism (past) to Post-Modernism (present) and because of these new developments, do we now have the potential to bring us out of post-modernism and into something new? If we think about it like that, we are only continuing the historical make-up, and this is the concern for language. Only by loosening our grips of temporality can new conceptions of language be possible. We need to create new ways to talk about our new “new” animist discoveries, in ways that best serve the purpose overall.

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of Becoming-Animal, to me, is the perfect tool for achieving new notions of temporality as well as understanding new communicative potentials that take place between movement and form. As Deleuze and Guattari lay out this concept in detail, they reveal a new mechanics, a new map, that takes into account not the separate individual, purely moving around, unchanged indefinitely, but establishes an idea that we are in fact constantly moving from one machinic assemblage to another, entering into transformational relationships of form and movement that leaves none of its parts unchanged. I am very interested in the concept of becoming as a foundational proposition that offers a whole new way of moving throughout the world, one that can be applied easily to the modern world, because it does not involve customs, values or anything new to adopt besides a new perspective.

To be OKAY is to accept the formlessness of our constantly transitional existence and learn to deal with this in a comfortable and productive way. To achieve comfort within the states of flux will allow us to recognize the potentials that lie in this new, seemingly unsecured realm, potentials that can refresh our spirit and reveal possibilities that we could have never even dreamed of before. And for this, deterritorialization is the only way, a suspension of the tastes that constitute who you purely are in order to prepare you for what’s to come. As Bruce Lee said “Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water in a bottle it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow, or it can crash. Be water my friend.”



## Bibliography

Archaeology Magazine. Historic Graves Unearthed in St. Augustine, Florid.

Archaeology Magazine. [Http://archaeology.org](http://archaeology.org), 28 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

Ayache, Elie. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE EVENT.

BoTSL(2015): n. page. Print.

Beaudry, Mary C. Ethical Issues in Historical Archaeology.

International Handbook of Historical Archaeology (2009): 17-29. Web.

Bilsel, S. M. Zeus in Exile: Archaeological Restitution as Politics of Memory. Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University (2000): n. page. Print.

Bird-David, Nurit. Animism Revisited. *Current Anthropology* 40.S1 (1999): n. page. Web.

Borck, Cornelius. Animism in the Sciences Then and Now. *E-flux*. *E-flux*, 2012. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

Breton, Andre. SURREALIST MANIFESTO. Advocate of Peace through Justice 88.12 (1926): 661-63. [Www.tcf.ua.edu](http://www.tcf.ua.edu). Web. 23 Jan. 2016.

Bristow, Tim. Berlin's Pergamon Museum Loses Pergamon. *The Local*. [TheLocal.de](http://thelocal.de), 25 Sept. 2014. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

Brown, Mark. Sunken Treasures from Ancient Egypt Heading to British Museum. *The Guardian*. *Guardian News and Media*, 30 Nov. 2015. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

Castle, Stephen. Archaeologists in England Tackle Mystery of Prehistoric Village's Rapid Demise. *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 27 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

Castro, Eduardo Batalha Viveiros De, and Peter Skafish. *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-structural Anthropology*. Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014. Print.

Contemporary Art Daily. Michael E. Smith at Kunstverein Hannover. N.p., 18 Jan. 2016. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P., 1994. Print

Diederichsen, Diedrich. Animation, De-reification, and the New Charm of the Inanimate. *E-flux*, 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2015.

Encyclopedia Britannica. Gordian Knot | Proverbial Term. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2016.

Encyclopedia Britannica, Surrealism | Art and Literature.

Encyclopedia Britannica Online. n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2016

Franke, Anselm. Animism. Berlin: Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, 2012. Print.

Franke, Anselm. Animism Vol. I. Berlin: Sternberg, 2010. Print.

Franke, Anselm. Introduction-Animism E-flux, 2012. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

Franke, Anselm. Animism: Notes on an Exhibition. E-flux.com. E-flux, 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2015.

Garuba, Harry. On Animism, Modernity/ Colonialism, and the African Order of Knowledge: Provisional Reflections. E-flux, 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2015

Gergen, Kenneth J. Psychological Science in a Postmodern Context. The American Psychologist. [Http://www.swarthmore.edu/.American Psychological Association](http://www.swarthmore.edu/.American%20Psychological%20Association), 2001. Web. 12 Feb. 2016.

Groys, Boris. Art Power. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. Print.

Groys, Boris. On the New. UOC.edu Art Nodes (2002): n. page. Print.

Grubin, David. Degenerate Art - 1993, The Nazis vs. Expressionism YouTube, 1993. Web. 24 Feb. 2016.

Haekel, Josef. Totemism | Religion. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

Holert, Tom. A Live Monster That Is Fruitful and Multiplies:

Capitalism as Poisoned Rat?" E-flux.com. E-flux, 2012. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

Jensen, Casper Bruun. Techno-animism in Japan: Shinto Cosmograms, Actor-network Theory, and the Enabling Powers of Non-human Agencies. Theory Culture and Society. Sage Journals. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

Kosuth, Joseph. Artist as Anthropologist 1975 (extracts) reprinted in The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 2008. Print.

Latour, Bruno. War of the Worlds: What about Peace? Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2002. Print.

Latour, Bruno. We Have Never Been Modern. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Lawlor, Leonard. Henri Bergson. Stanford

University. Stanford University, 18 May 2004. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

Lazzarato, Maurizio, and Angela Melitopoulos. Assemblages: Félix Guattari and Machinic Animism. E-flux.com. E-flux, 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2015.

Mackris, A. Greek Treasures in Berlin's Pergamon Museum. Greek Reporter Europe.

Eu.greekreporter.com, 26 Dec. 2012. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

Marcuse, Herbert, Erica Sherover, and Herbert Marcuse. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. London: Macmillan, 1979. Print.

Memorial Hall. "Native Americans Praying." Digital Collection - Memorial Hall, n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2016.

Merriam-Webster. *Autonomy* Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

Merriam-Webster. *Archaeology* Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

OttOmOI0tOv *The ABC's of DADA (1 of 3)*. YouTube, n.d. Web. 24 Jan. 2016

Park, George Kerlin. *Animism*. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

Research Report. *Native American Religious and Cultural Freedom: an Introductory Essay* The Pluralism Project. Harvard University, 2005. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

Strauss, Mark. *Archaeologists Begin Excavation of Honduran*. National Geographic. National Geographic Society, 12 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Jan. 2016

Tzara, Tristan. *Dada Manifesto 1918*. *Dada Surrealism* (n.d.): n. page. Mariabuszek.com. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.

Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. London: J. Murray, 1871. Print.

Wikipedia. "American Indian Boarding School." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2016.

Young, Arthur M. *Fear of the Unknown*. Arthur M. Young: Essays. Anodos Foundation, 1996. Web. 14 May 2015.

Žižek, Slavoj. "All Aboard - Event in Transit." Introduction. *Event: Philosophy in Transit*. UK: Penguin, 2014. 1-6. Print.



