Ontology Across the Disciplines: Orientations…
Some Mappings (of an Infinity of Possible Mappings)
02. 19. 2015

**Philosophy**
Analytic (…?)
Continental
(Heidegger, Deleuze, Serres, Badiou, et al.);
Anglo-Amer. (Peirce, James, Whitehead)

**Sci & Tech Studies**
Latour, Haraway, Stengers, Oyama, Mol,
Pickering, Law, Verran, Barad

**Anthropology**
(& archaeology)
Strathern, Wagner, Viveiros de Castro,
Descola, Escobar, Povinelli, Blaser,
Kohn, et al.

**Geography**
Massey, Braun, Castree, Thrift,
Whatmore, Hinchliffe, et al.

**Cultural/Media studies, et al.**
Kitler, Connolly, Bennett, Hansen,
Parikka, et al.

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<tr>
<th>Feminists</th>
<th>Haraway, Barad…</th>
<th>Braidotti, Grosz</th>
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<th>Colebrook, Massumi, DeLanda</th>
<th>Deleuzians</th>
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<td>Posthumanists</td>
<td>Haraway, Wolfe …</td>
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<td>New materialists</td>
<td>Bennett, Connolly …</td>
<td>Shaviro, Bryant, Harman, Meillassoux</td>
<td>Speculative realists</td>
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**Common critical access points?**
- Beyond previous ‘turns’ (linguistic/social/discursive turn, reflexive turn, practice/performative turn, affective turn, posthuman turn, et al.) – but esp. beyond social constructionism
- Critique of ‘correlationism’ (Meillassoux)
- Critique of transcendence → preference for immanence, ‘flat ontologies’ (Harman, DeLanda)
- Critique of ‘mononaturalism’ (& multiculturalism couplet, i.e. nature-culture binary) (de Castro, Latour, et al)

**Common affirmative access points?**
- Reality as multiple & dynamic, enactive & performative, always in the making
- Agency as relational & heterogeneous (incl. humans & nonhumans, posthuman actants, assemblages)
- Openness to sciences (chaos/complex systems, self-organization, ecology/animal studies, Anthropocene)

**Holbraad, Pedersen, Viveiros de Castro position paper** -- 3 senses of “ontology”:
1) **Realist**: “How things are” (its politics: the “injunction to discover and disseminate” it)
2) **Anti-essentialist/deconstructivist/social-constructionist/‘critical’: critique** of ‘how-things-are’s
3) **Performative/enactive/‘worlding’**:
   - Plural (and hybrid) ontologies; “multiplicity of forms of existence enacted in concrete practices,” whose “politics” concerns how things could be otherwise; Being as that which differs from itself
   - Ontology as a “technology of description” [=ontology? cf. M. Lynch]
   - Politics: V. de Castro’s “permanent decolonization of thought”

**Discussion**
- Is ontology just a formalization of other ‘turns’ (affective, material, et al.)?
- Are some of the disagreements over style rather than substance? E.g., ‘diffraction’ (e.g., Haraway, Barad, Fortun, et al.) vs. synoptic systematization (Descola, Latour)
- For philosophers, ontology = claims about the world + a conceptual tool-kit of categories, etc. These can apply to comparative cultural projects. Is ontology what’s not socially constructed? Or not? Philosophers disagree.
- Immanence/transcendence duality: Is kinship ontological, a network of shared being? Can God be ‘ontologically black’? (Black Liberation theology)
- What does it do for us to take the ontological turn? Does it mean to take X (e.g., the things, the spirits) seriously in & of themselves, rather than just through their (human, discursive) interlocutors? E.g., Povinelli on intimacy, carnality, “the spirit mounts you”; Ochoa on the “society of the dead”
- Is the ontological turn a hyper-reflexive turn? A critique of culturalism, i.e., of the ‘mereness’ of culture?
- To what extent is the ‘onto-turn’ something promoted by secondary scholars to forward their careers by ‘packaging’ the work others have done?
- What are the risks of suggesting that a certain politics is inherent to a given ontology?