

Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: STEWARDSHIPS

ANIMISM: Your world is populated by objects that become animated.

Much has been written about animism in recent years. A growing and eclectic literature addresses the so-called animistic turn at the intersection of anthropology (Hornborg 2006, Ingold 2006) and archaeology (Holbraad 2009), and highlights animism as the blind spot of modernity (Latour 2010), or as a deep-seated conceptual framework that needs reclaiming (Stengers 2012). It is on animism that a new relational ontology is predicated (Bird-David 1999), one that would underpin those “respectful relationships with other persons” eloquently described by Graham Harvey (2005) for whom animists are “people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others” (2005, xi). Harvey maintains that animism is “all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons. Persons are beings, rather than objects, who are animated and social towards others (even if they are not always sociable). Animism is more accurately understood as being concerned with learning how to be a good person in respectful relationships with other persons” (Harvey 2005, xi). It is quite correct to suggest that animism is an archipelago of multifaceted figurations that keep on morphing to accommodate a variety of theoretical requirements. But the question remains: what is it about animism that invites so many different interpretations? Clearly animism is far from exhausted. On the contrary, it has turned into a mirror upon which different notions are projected (and reflected by), a sort of optical device through which to observe the “particular way modernity conceptualizes, implements, and transgresses boundaries” (Franke 2010). Beyond the rhetoric of the lens, however, with its postulate of seer and seen, animism should be taken as the signpost for fluctuating significations: a yielding, slippery and yet remarkably thick notion affording novel, wide-ranging and even surprising conceptual agglutinations. What can be called hybrid animism - to signal the hybridity of the encounter of the human with nonhuman, sensible and increasingly sentient, animated matter - is deployed to explore the emergence of responsive surfaces in urban contexts that are increasingly shaped by computational infrastructures, digital connectivity and in-real-time indexicality. Animism can be seen as the conduit for expanded notions of personhood - the world seen as a community of persons most of whom are not human with its too-easy slip into the anthropocentrism it claims to oppose. It is useful therefore to think at how animism can be used to think about the animation of matter, and matter’s propensity to morph and appear ‘alive’ in the process. Can animism be proposed as a way to creatively conceptualize the immanent force that permeates everything?

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DECOLONIZATION: your world can be delinked from hierarchies of power.

Decolonization involves an examination of what constitutes knowledge and ways of knowing. It contests embedded hierarchies of knowledge rooted in legacies of colonialism, to prioritise instead the critical examination of multiple perspectives. Decolonization does not mean exchanging European knowledge with knowledge produced in other places; it does not mean the valorisation of one particular culture over another; it is not a metaphor to easily adopt for fashionable ‘washings’. While decolonization is first about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life, here we refer mostly to conceptual decolonization and its impact on critical methodologies that can de-center eurocentric perspectives in order to recognize and delink ways of thinking that belong to the broadly intended colonial legacy. While in historical terms decolonization concerns the process of dissolution of the empire as a political form in the mid-xx century, it is worth noting that for Indigenous people worldwide colonization happens in the present and it is a struggle for social justice - not for inclusivity.

A broad decolonization of knowledge especially in academic culture concerns a radical shift of existing epistemological frameworks. The aim is to recognize the Eurocentric genealogy which has been formative of what counts (still) for knowledge and to acknowledge its discursive-ideological connotations of colonial domination. The naturalization of canons of epistemic hierarchy - that establishes whose voice counts more - must be stripped to reveal that what seems inevitable (e.g. the primacy of enlightenment) cannot be disjoined from the planetary exploitation that is the core of extractive capitalism - labour, life, human and nonhuman resources, across mines, factories, plantations.

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HACKING: Your world can be re-made by mutual intervention.

Hacking, across its different manifestations, can be seen as a site where craft and craftiness converge. Like espionage or everyday stratagems, hacking is based on creativity, ingenuity and deception. It uses various techniques to disrupt online systems usually with the aim to provoke mischief or creative destruction, all the while redirecting attention, blurring identities and evading detection. It could be perpetrated by individuals and groups, but State-sponsored and corporate hacking is also a reality which may involve coordinated campaigns for instance to discredit rivals and to gain political and economic advantage. Hacking can be defined as a series of alterations made, without legal permission, to the confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility of given networks and data. According to the law these actions warrant prosecution as they are formal unauthorized trespass. Hacks exploit 'attack vectors' - technical vulnerabilities that provide entry points in trusted systems e.g. phishing, malware attacks, and password hacking. Hacking is multi-pronged practice, which can signify cultural disturbance, tactical resistance, digital crime or matter of cyber-security. It can stand for a mode of agonistic counter-exercise around issues of control, power distribution and justice, but it could also be deployed for economic gains, material advantages, or to destabilise targeted institutions through malicious intent. The literature on 'hacker ethos' emphasises playful innovation, creative disruption and huge dose of ingenuity and curiosity in learning about and improving highly complex systems. More broadly, if we take hacking as an attitude toward established packages and systems of knowledge, then it becomes easier to understand the widespread usage of this term and how it came to be associated with an ever-growing assortment of activities: life hacking, iPhone jailbreaking, and IKEA hacking, among others. Each of these activities, contain a core of the hacker ethos: the use of playful creation to enrich knowledge of complex systems, and here it may be noted the affiliations to the Situationist concept of detournement, or bricolage, or DIY countercultural tactical practices.

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PLURIVERSE: Your world is only one of many and each of them produces ways of seeing and thinking.

The pluriverse is not just about a plurality of views about the world. The pluriverse is the co-existing of many worlds and of many ontologies - where the plural ontologies signal the different ways of inhabiting the richness of multiple worlds. Pluriverse means to recognise that these multiple ontologies coexist in time and space in ways that are ontologically non-hierarchical. Acknowledging this is the first step at uncovering and repairing how the pluriverse has been violently colonized by the project of modernity. The pluriverse speaks of worlds that are constantly in the making, and whose plurality means "divergences that communicate, but partially, always partially" (Stengers 2019, 189). This is what interests me most: How do we work out in practice the encounter of a plurality of ontologies? How do we foster the formation and propagation of 'connective tissue'? How do we facilitate connections without enforcing blueprinted grooves? How do we create encounters?

It may be useful here to remember that creating encounters is an art. As Deleuze writes in his book on Spinoza (1988), creating encounters is the very art of the Ethics itself, an art that requires experimentation, adventure and the willingness to leap into the unknown. In this sense every encounter is the encounter of different affective horizons. Every encounter is an event that creates and sustains a relation among different standpoints, each situated in its own way. It is precisely this 'situatedness' of each standpoint that enables the pluriverse. To participate in the pluriverse we must enter the encounter with the awareness that "each standpoint in situating itself becomes able to assert the legitimacy of other diverging standpoints" (Stengers 2019, 189). It is with this process of creating encounters that lies the hope for relations that catalyse deep questioning, mobilize invention and build capacity against homogeneity, against the capture of lifeworlds and against the eradication of divergences. This is ultimately a project of building resisting and resistant relations. It matters

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greatly, then, how we imagine these relations, how we conceptualize them and how we 'figure them out' in practice. One of the many possible ways of doing this 'figuring out the pluriverse' is by thinking through symbiosis, and the production of symbiotic events.

Viveiros de Castro writes: "the language of ontology is important for one specific and, let's say, tactical reason. It acts as a counter-measure to a derealizing trick frequently played against the native's thinking, which turns this thought into a kind of sustained phantasy, by reducing it to the dimensions of a form of knowledge or representation, that is, to an 'epistemology' or a 'worldview'. As if whatever there is to know or view was already decided beforehand- and decided, of course, in favour of our ontology. So the notion of ontology isn't evoked here to suggest that all thought, be it Greek, Melanesian, African or Amazonian, expresses a metaphysics of Being, but to underline the fact that all thought is inseparable from a reality which corresponds to its exterior.

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