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It is widely theorized that the advent of the "Anthropocene Age" (under this or any other name) is bringing one form of human temporality to an end while it initiates another (Simon 2021). Because human activity threatens the duration and well-being of the planetary biosphere, the new age that this activity is bringing on—though it is proving to be extremely difficult to define—does present specific onto-epistemological and moral challenges behind its political and social problems. The most prominent and perhaps the core of these challenges is the demand to shed anthropocentrism in human culture, a change that would deeply alter our personal and social ethics through ontology and temporality. The campaign for dis-anthropocentrization thus calls for a moral, scientific, social, and political challenge based on a change in ontology that affects our conceptions of knowledge, reality, and the relations of humankind to nature and of human beings to one another. I use the term rigid or thoroughgoing dis-anthropocentrization for the purest form of rigorous anti-anthropocentrism based philosophical analysis of the fundamental ontology of history and society.

The ontology that has been most used in developing the connection between anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene Age is speculative realism. In this paper I will show that speculative realism uses an ontology that cannot explain human social and historical relations and that therefore must fail to account for any new configuration of social temporality. This failure becomes evident when we examine the philosophy of history that speculative realism has no other resource than to adopt when it looks at human relations. And yet a viable sense of history and temporality is necessary for improving the balance between humankind and nature (Thomas 2014). I make a few basic suggestions for better ways of doing this at the end of this paper.

Speculative realisms, having broadly rejected reductionisms, hold instead that the universe comprises forces, processes, and objects, strictly physical and not mind-dependent, that we had failed to comprehend through reductionist materialist ontologies until recent science gave us the knowledge with which to do so. Under this view, the anthropocentric perspective is both false in its claims and perilous in its

consequences. The real being of the universe, as speculative realisms take it to be, is not circumscribed by the contents of human intentional consciousness but rather is all its objects and events, with all resulting physical and emergent properties and their weird causalities. The human career is determinatively subject to these processes, and explaining them on their own terms is the true account of reality that is ontologically fundamental. They claim that full realism of the correct sort, although its proponents generally reject the correspondence theory of truth, will produce forms of culture that are empirically accurate in a way they cannot be under anthropocentrism.

For the speculative realist claim is not just that nature is out of our control or "disenchanted" or that our role in the cosmos is small. Rather, it is also the claim that these facts, which must drive us to recognize that renouncing a veridical view of things solely from our perspective, as proponents say modern science requires will have greater consequences than commonly recognized hitherto, especially in Western thought. We may generalize these consequences by the term "flat ontology." Sometimes this term broadly, perhaps blandly, signals merely a lay rejection of anthropocentrism. But its origin is as a strong and specific doctrine of fundamental philosophy developed in the 1990s by the creators of object-oriented ontology, which is a doctrinal form of speculative realism.[1] Flat ontology means that reality is truly and thoroughly not mind-dependent, neither governed by ideas nor directed by conceptual forces or conscious intention nor subject to any divinity specifically committed to human well-being (Harman 2016: 28–29). It means, furthermore, that each and every existent has exactly the same kind, and level, and quality of being, and has equally a history. It intends to draw out the consequences of the fact that the real universe includes all the things of which we cannot have knowledge with an active reality equal to that of the domain of the intelligible

Its first theorist, Graham Harman, says that flat ontology is only "a good starting-point" to improving realism (Harman 2016a: 54). This is true in so far as it is the beginning of the system-building: it is a platform from which one can develop consequences in various direc-

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1. Quick summaries of its leading ideas will be found in Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*: *: a New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican 2018): 8–9; and in Stephen Umbrello's review of this book in *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2018): 184–186.

tions. But flat ontology rests on a particular argument, which empowers its broad use in ambitious speculative realist theorization. In order to support other systematic thinking, it must necessarily rely on an underlying argument that structures or extends through its conceptual development. Flat ontology includes an exhortation to dis-anthropcentrization, but we must look at the logic behind it unless it is to be merely a signal-flare of polemical approval or disapproval.

The general thrust of speculative realism as a whole is, as I have said, to develop a realist ontology so thoroughly purged of mind-dependence and intentional consciousness that every one of the limitations that human cognition imposes, or seems to impose, on grasping the possibilities of the real existence of entities, and the activities thereof, is regarded as distorting the real. We experience and express only a tiny part of universal reality (Harman 2016a: 6–7, 26). In particular, our intelligence is so utterly finite that even our conception of finitude is a merely human addition to reality itself. The way to "speculation" is thus opened within realism by arguing that our limitations cannot validate empirical knowledge, including our best understandings of causality, matter, force, or change, for example, as truths. So much the less ought we to tolerate any sort of reductionism, Harman and others argue, since we are parts of a pluriverse with no privileged access to or knowledge of any other parts (Bryant and Srnicek et al. 2011). This leads to the intense dis-anthropocentrizing work of all forms of speculative realisms, even those that tend toward panpsychism or toward vitalism. Speculative realism seeks to be a balance-point calibrated to yield a seemingly warm and poetic non-idealist ontology that maintains due regard for empiricism as tempered by its famous flat ontology.

In pursuit of complete rejection of anthropocentrism, object-oriented ontology dismisses all mind-dependence, whether in knowledge or in being. It is concerned with explaining real being rather than explaining our knowledge of reality. Mind-dependence, and therefore the centrality of ideas in the sense of the artifacts of human mental conception, is the part of idealism that drives object-oriented ontology by reaction into realism. Since matter is a human conception applied to many existent objects, it is to be rejected. This is the basis of what Haman calls immaterialism (that is, an immaterialist realism) in object-oriented

ontology.[2] Whereas George Berkeley, holding that the notion of matter necessarily leads to both scepticism and to existential nihilism, denied matter in order to establish sure relations among conscious beings, well-founded human knowledge, and the certainty of our existence upon it, object-oriented ontology denies matter in order to demolish such firm conclusions, at least as they are conventionally understood. This ontology proceeds to replacing forces, things, and events as we customarily understand them—the whole temporal and historical shape of reality, in fact, as available to the human point of view—with "objects" defined as including much more than bounded three-dimensional things (Harman 2018: 38ff., 52–54). "Objects" are things and processes, together, innumerable and always coming-into-existence and passing-away, sometimes instantaneously and sometimes over great spans of time—both the extremely short and the extremely long being deeply different from temporality as anthropocentrically apprehended.

Because object-oriented ontology holds that humans are not ontologically different from any other "object," it also holds that our knowledge does not connect us to what is in fact the incomprehensible and irreducibly vast majority of being—all of that which, lying in imperceptible time and space beyond the sensuous, must remain hidden from us. Thus, true reality—true by its vast majority vote, as it were, as against our infinitesimally small caucus—is "withdrawn" (Harman 2015). Neither by reduction into elements or indivisibles nor by abstraction into universals can we humans know the reality of "objects" (Harman 2016a: 7–13; Harman 2018: 41–52). This is true for all non-human entities as well. Smart and conscious as we seem to be or wholly dumb and inert as many things in the universe seem to us to be, we cannot know their reality in all the richness it might contain. Neither they nor we can truly directly relate its or our understanding to the reality of another "object." The reality of one "object" is always surplus to the reality of it to the others and is never knowable by them. Under this view, the "real" nature of the world is not truthfully understood when we account for it from the "human" perspective, which it takes as constrained by anthropocentric desires and fears and their

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2. In my view, what Harman calls his immaterialism is probably better named non-materialism in order to distinguish it from Berkeleian immaterialism; and I will occasionally use this term below.

expression as metaphysics. We see that here object-oriented ontology takes a path quite far from that taken by vitalist or panpsychic-inflected speculative realisms because it centralizes separation rather than commonality, connection, or interdependence. For it, the notions of life and soul cannot take human understanding into the reality of the rest of the universe any more than matter can. If we are natural rather than humanly non-natural and therefore not special, then we are part of a universe in which consciousness and knowledge are other than what they seem to be from the anthropocentric perspective. In fact, they must be opposite.

The concept that requires opposition and that this picture, which drives all thoroughgoing rejection of anthropecentrism in understanding human temporality, history, and society, requires is *antitupia*—the resistance of an entity to impacts from other entities or forces.[3] Leibniz used it as the scaffolding of the architectonic of monads, which co-ordinates their histories without their having to penetrate one another; but here it necessitates the "withdrawnness" of all objects from all penetration, compression, or alteration, whether physical or not.[4] For Leibniz, every entity has a point of view upon all other entities by which God co-ordinates all things. For Harman, every "object" has a view of itself by which it resists all other "objects." Existence as it really is, is resistance.

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3. The earliest reference to this concept by the name *antitupia* (ἀντιτυπία) that I have found is a statement attributed to the atomist Democritus by Aëtius (*Placita* 1.26.2) that antitupia, locomotion, and the collision of matter together constitute (what the editors interpolate as) necessity. See André Laks and Glen Most, et al., eds., *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), vol. 7, pt. 2, p. 139 (*Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers*), chapter 22 (Atomists), D75 (= Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 68 A66). Although in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* the word appears only in Christian writers of the fifth century CE and after, with the one exception of a text by Aelian c. 200 CE—roughly contemporary with Aëtius—the scholarship takes Aelius' text as a quote from Democritus; thus it is a "D" fragment in Laks and Most and an "A" fragment in Diels-Kranz

4. In *Specimen Dynamicum* (1695) Leibniz establishes antitupia as the resistance of bodies that became the impossibility of a monad's having any physical influence upon "the inner being of another" in the "Monadologia" (1714), in *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), sec. 51. "Antitypy" was used by Henry More, Boyle, and Locke; and although out of use now I have adopted it here as the most precise term available.

Object-oriented ontology requires antitypy in order to conceive that resistance of "objects" not only to us but also to one another on which its principal notions of withdrawnness is based (Harman 2018: 66–88, 189–191). Withdrawal may well be endogenous and without concern for, or connection to, true knowledge of that from which an "object" withdraws; but its premise is the native capacity to maintain ontological and epistemological resistance. From resistance follows withdrawal, and ontological flatness requires this grip that every "object" exercises upon its being. The argument of object-oriented ontology is that if you require flatness you must require the hard disconnection of antitypy.

Now, antitypy is a lesson we all learn in childhood. As you crawl out of the crib and bump into the chest of drawers, you push and test it a while to find that, unlike the little ball on the floor, it will not move. Your decision to crawl around it germinates many decisions in your life to act so as to move around objects that you can't move or that won't move themselves or at times to move away from objects that endanger you. Knowledge of antitypy is meaningful and consequential on many levels because we use it as a basic affirmative fact.

The logic of object-oriented ontology totalizes the notion of antitypy so that it structures all reality, both known and unknowable, and in particular all time and all diachronesis—all history—and all relationships—all sociality. The logic of this totalized ontology leads to startling results. The more fully real an object is, the more it is antitypical. The flourishing of its antitypy is its flourishing; but also objecthood itself is sufficiently and necessarily a state of having antitypy, whether the resistance to relations is in good repair, being well withdrawn, or in poor repair, due to over-exposure. When an "object's" power of antitypy weakens, the "object" passes away. Thus, because withdrawnness is necessary to objecthood, and because we cannot know most of reality due to its withdrawnness, this ontology fundamentalizes antitypy in both our knowledge and in being. Antitypy itself is little more than the logic of self-identity: an object is what it is and is not other than itself. But object-oriented ontology is the logic of self-identity totalized over all quantity, quality, relations, and modes—over all properties and processes. When all understanding is required to submit to the logic of self-identity, all other structure is deflated and can ultimately be invalidated or negated. The finale of this is ontology weaponized like

a battle-star against any diachronic possibility of a non-self-identical state of persistent being. It will therefore not be surprising to find that pursuing anti-anthropocentrism in this way leaves us with no viable account of social relations and of the temporalities in which they take place.

The proponent of object-oriented ontology is surely puzzled by these conclusions, for her project is to justify thoroughgoingly non-reductive ontological pluralism. But what justifies her pluralism here is the inner character she ascribes to the plural entities, which is anti-typical self-identity and which will subvert pluralism. I do not claim that object-oriented ontology has fallen into reductionism, in so far as no substance or process or specific class of entities is regarded as ontologically prior to all other being. Nor is the totalized antitypy a sort of universalization or abstraction that crushes the pluriverse. It does crush the pluriverse, but by a means subtly different from both reduction and abstraction. For the instrument that the logical operation of absolutizing self-identity that I have described uses to reject relational, intentional, and perspectival views of reality is in fact moral, as it has severe moral consequences; and this moral instrument requires theories of sociality and of history. As logic, antitypy can be reductive or abstractive or some of both, despite the desires of the object-oriented ontologist. What really counts here, what truly is at work, is the overthrow of the accumulating power of the history of our common social and moral life and of the history of thinking and conception in favor of the power of value-free logic—even though our proponent rejects such objectivity as viciously anthropocentric—sharpened as the subjection of ethics to ontology.

Because object-oriented ontology re-natures the manifold of human life with its ontology, it must generate a theory of human behavior congruent to the ontology. The theory it comes up with shows us why these anti-constructivist speculative realisms must support a thoroughgoing dis-anthropocentrizing if they are to be consistent and why such a doctrine will not survive analysis. We will see, just as we already know, that it is dynamics and dialectics, change and challenge, and desire and loss, each of these at a different level of understanding, that disrupt the smooth smothering of thought by logic.

The best, if not the sole, theory of historical change and, more broadly, of sociality in general available to object-oriented ontology is

Graham Harman's historiographic theory of symbioses.[5] By looking at his historiography we can see how and why antitypy in object-oriented ontology poses a severe problem for speculative materialisms as well as speculative realisms, even though object-oriented ontology is a non-materialist realism, through a problem in its social ontology.

I am aware of just two efforts by speculative realists besides Graham Harman's to address historical change. The first is by the object-oriented ontologist Levi Bryant. In my view its bases are the same as those of Harman's theory, and it employs much the same conceptual mechanics (Bryant 2014: 157–174). The other is by Tristan Garcia, a friend of object-oriented ontology but rather in a class by himself (Garcia 2014). His theory centers on the metaphysics, particularly the analytic metaphysics, of time. Investigating time can be fruitful for the social philosophy of history, but it is a foggy and mucky job, which Garcia has not taken on as extensively as it requires. More basically, we want the particular dense plurality and rich instability of historical change to guide us in chief in thinking about change in human society, rather than taking our start from the very difficult and tautology-ridden field of the philosophy of time. In his actor-network theory Bruno Latour has taken on sociality quite more fully than object-oriented ontology has, with better moral and political implications; but these are also the points at which Harman separates object-oriented ontology from actor-network theory (Harman 2016b). So far as I know, Harman's theory of symbioses has not been examined in the context of philosophy of history nor as social or interpersonal theory.[6]

It is from the strapped-in totalized self-identity that Graham Harman squeezes out object-oriented ontology's understanding of change. But theories of historical change require, nearly by definition, closely intertwined connections among actions and events in some kind of temporal dimension. They follow the relations among human beings

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5. Harman 2018: 114–134, uses the Civil War, which is a personal passion of his as it is for so many, as an historiographic topic; but his onto-historical and onto-social theory is more extensively developed, using the history of the Dutch East India Company, in his *Immaterialism*, especially 1–34 and 107–126.

6. Most of the published comments on it are to be found deep in often admiring expositions of Harman's notions. These take his historical theory as a fresh and striking example of the power of his ideas and wholly lack reference to the entire literature of social ontology or historical theory.

and between them and the natural world. Sometimes chronological succession dominates the perspective, as in the innumerable versions of progressivism laid into the cornerstone of modern historiography by Hegel and others, and in their opposite—theories of decline, whether from the era of de Volney and Gibbon or from the era of Spengler and Toynbee. At other times, part-to-whole relationships dominate, as in the "covering laws" theory of Carl Hempel—ruthlessly kicked about in a long intramural polemic—or in chronosophies built around redemption, both Augustinian and Benjaminian. Historical change can be taken to have the directionality of narrative, such as the ironic or the tragic plot-line (White 1973). Still other philosophies of history or of social change understand historical change through the histories of emotions or of technology, and through such metaphors of the generation of difference in language, or in socio-economic phenomena themselves, or in ideas. Some recent theory understands historical change, even when it appears gentle, as radical chasms over which entities leap into fundamental alterations (Simon 2019).

In place of such schemata and causes, Harman's doctrinal development of this ontology leads its approach to change into the realm of sociality where something is required if his ontology is not to gutter out by failing to face history. He supplies this as a theory of historical change and of sociality, developed through substantial heavily theorized research inquiries into two historical events. Note that the theory uses an unquestioned concept of additive and progressive time—yet another problem for it that I will not address here.

In object-oriented ontology, the continual formation of speculative "objects," each more than the sum of its parts and never exhausted by the other "objects" around it or fully penetrated by human or any other cognition, is the quasi-noumenal, or quasi-essential, activity in the withdrawn real reality of objects (Harman 2018: 149–161). Based on the claim that most of the real reality of everything that exists is typically withdrawn from us, Harman names what our insufficient access to it through the sensuous reveals to us, or at least to him, by the word "symbiosis," or bunches of symbioses. This is a way to describe historical change in the true objecthood of events under this theory, without using any familiar or conventional sorts of relationality. Harman argues that real knowledge of historical "objects" concerns what they turn away from: their "proximate failures" and the symbioses

that consolidate their monadic autonomy because "the death of an objects comes from the excessive strength of its ties" (Harman 2016: 116–119, 124). In the two historical accounts that he has published, Harman uses the symbioses he details as drivers of the coming-into-being and the passing-away of the topics he researched. Under such a theory, these symbioses strengthen an "object" as itself, in its inner and non-relational objecthood; it can thereafter become most fully and really itself when its reality is most withdrawn from other "objects"; and finally those symbioses invade and de-nature it, miscegenating it with some alien "objects," until it melts away across imperceptible and infinitesimal subtractions.

Recall that reality in flat ontology is wholly non-intentional. This is why things and processes, together called "objects," are separated from interconnection and constituted as withdrawn. As a result, even if Harman's historiographic accounts are merely a way to explore the theory, he describes an American Civil War in which death and fear and hope and moral vision play no evident part. The same is true of his account of the Dutch East India Company (known by its Dutch initials as the V.O.C.), from which greed, cruelty, and curiosity are absent. Intention and emotion are not the only factors to be deflated in consequentiality. We find nothing of the "reciprocal recognition" and "remembered rationality," in Robert Brandom's words, that structure Hegel's and most subsequent accounts of human historical change (Brandom 2021). Indeed, the theory makes no account of the role of interpretation of memories, texts, and other historical evidence by actors and by historians. Harman's ontology also limits the truth-value of realist science and physical causality, for which symbiosis is the substitution. But Harman (and Bryant as well) does turn to the physical forces that empirical inquiry discovers, endeavoring to find a way through object-oriented ontology to give a different account of historical operations.[7] If, then, historical explanation by symbioses or by machinic activity employs neither intentionality nor causality, these theories propose "symbioses" as a whole other approach to historical change.

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7. Bryant's history also is passionless: for example, in *Democracy of Objects,* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2011), 201–203, "objective" factors are more historical causes than verbal thinking, which he says is not adequate to the brutality of events.

To use the physical world but without relationality, Harman has his symbioses comprise sequences that are neither bio-organic, nor causal, nor biographical, nor logically entailed, nor mereological. They are, instead, the "events" in the self-organizing agency of "objects," which, as I have mentioned, includes institutions, forces, and processes, as well as bodies. The study of them is not foundationally historiographic, or political, or sociological, or a matter of the physical or life sciences. Instead, the knowledge that application of this theory is supposed to provide is supposed holistic at the extreme though also simultaneously within the thoroughgoingly "other" level for which object-oriented ontology claims to account. There is the "objectively" real, but the really real is very much vaster and is "really" knowable only outside of our sensuous cognition or intellection (at least, as understood by both idealism and traditional realism and materialism) and only in the dimmest way at that (Harman 2018: 82–85, 180–181, 189–191). The result is that Harman sheds the entire range of human temporalities.

Harman's aim is to enter the gates of reality by ducking in between the two hounds guarding them, one howling materialist reduction and the other howling idealism. Although the sentiment is by no means unprecedented, his middle way is indeed neither of these but a third thing, spurred into place by his discontent with the

> ..."human-world duopoly," a dual monarchy of human and world, a "Habsburg metaphysics" forever incapable of considering humans as "just one kind of entity among trillions of others," and equally incapable of considering what things do when there's no humans around. (Peters 2015: 167–168)

This approach can also allow reality for "objects out there that are simply never activated...," including historical counterfactuals (Peters 2015: 198–199). The theory of symbioses is configured so as to fit into this precise spot, where the new realist philosopher explains historical change without objectively real interactions, social or subjective constructions, or the centralization of human perception and intentionality. As to whether a description of a symbiosis or bunch of symbioses objectively refers us to reality or is a mediated representation of reality, it seems that object-oriented ontology wants to maintain the availability of part of reality to empirical verifiability, denying any constructivist critique of representation, and at the same

time to emphasize the unavailability of most of reality to any mode of human understanding.

Harman must dis-anthropocentricize history and the social world because his ontology dis-anthropocentrizes change in its fundamental concept of being. The part of reality that is overlooked because it is outside the human subject's center and is unintelligible to us, the part Harman aims to account for by symbioses, is change, including all the events of natural history and all the acts of human history. He holds that under any other ontology change and therefore history are inexplicable; to explain it we have to put its mysteriousness at the center of our account.

> Whereas for me the object is that which is robust to such changes in both directions; the object is that which maintains an identity to some extent. (Peters 2015: 178)

But change is inexplicable precisely (and perhaps only) when one defends antitypy. Antitypy is fundamentally anti-temporal; that is, it is a matter of propositions rather than of any dynamic and concrete reality. Finding that change punctures antitypy, Harman converts antitypy into mystery, the unknown, the endless, into everything that is outside of the human perspective. To explain change, he combines resistance to changes that don't occur (counterfactuals) with affordances of changes that do occur into the antitypy of objects; and then history can be re-written on this account of change. But under this ontology, the changeability of an object, which we call its historical relationships, resides, so to speak, in its own identity, which fully exists only in so far as it is immutable, for even potentiality could not explain change because it resides within human comprehension and therefore outside the real and full identity of objects. Because the anthropocentric social-historical perspective breaks antitypy, object-oriented ontology elevates antitypy above any other feature of reality (Peters 2015: 191). Such is the motivation to explain change without limiting it to any paradigm of human observation that governs the theory of symbioses.

But antitypy does not resolve the complex puzzles of change and of our perceptions of change merely by standing outside of the human subject. Harman says that "objects," being in reality withdrawn, have

no relations (Peters 2015: 171).[8] Here a "relation" is the impress or effect of one thing on another in the absence of antitypy. But Harman's symbioses actually are relations among real objects just because coming-into-being and the passing-away of real objects are related to or impacted by the histories of other real objects. So the theory maintains some definition of relations, or connections, as explanatory, historical truths while dismissing relationality. It announces non-relationality on its marquee while the show inside the hall is actually an account of relations.[9] This onto-historiographic show—historical change understood as symbioses—either describes change by using what we ordinarily and comprehensively understand as relationships or it has no content at all and therefore explains nothing. The theory of symbioses is a device for jumbling both realistic factuality and an extreme, rigid, and also quasi-poetic, mysteriousness of the world in our understanding. It describes a kind of relation in real being that it holds to be non-relational. Failing adoption of a notion of divinity or of practices to attain empty consciousness, object-oriented ontology cannot position any understanding outside of our perspective, except by inventing a name. And this name, symbiosis, is a strongly inapt term for object-oriented ontology since in its etymology it designates the full interdependence of two or more living beings.

Harman's historical theory is a very focused attempt to fill out the view of sociality that speculative realisms generate. As Maurizio Ferraris puts it,

> Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that social objects, which depend on subjects (though they are not subjective), are also things in themselves and not phenomena. This may seem complicated at first because, if social objects depend on conceptual schemes, then it should obviously follow that they are phenomena. But it is not so. In order to be a phenomenon, it is not enough to depend on conceptual schemes. A phenomenon must also be in contrast with things in themselves. (Ferraris 2015: 158)

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8. Cf. Harman 2002: 223–224 for varying expressions as o whether and how much an object "translates" another object that affects it into itself.

9. Harman confines the influence of objects on one another to their "sensuous" reality, in which "indirect relations" obtain (Harman 2018: 149–193). But the entire elaborately expounded theory of "indirect relations" serves only to patch or to hide the problem to which absolutized antitypy leads.

We see here that social relations are framed as objects and that they are puzzling to the speculative realist. Of course, they have been ontological oddities for a great many important thinkers since at least the nineteenth century, and there are today numerous theories about the relations that we experience in sociality.

Harman's specification of rigid dis-anthropecentrism by his historiographic theory of symbioses should be generously viewed, along with the work of other speculative realists, as parts of an effort common to all good philosophers to appreciate how much we do not know and as part of the anti-scientist effort to show that there are many kinds of knowledge. There might even be a need for counterfactuals as entities in these wider endeavors. And certainly there is very good reason for the liberty of both theory and practice to explore the counter-intuitive, the imaginary, and the seemingly impossible. The theory of symbioses, however, does show a flaw in object-oriented ontology and in all speculative realisms to varying degrees because it tests philosophy upon historiography and fails that test. Despite the agonism between narrativity and positivity, historical accounts of human society, as well as any knowing, writing, and just thinking about human events all rely, no matter upon what theory conducted, on facts that, though always qualified in some respect and never objective in every respect, are of all the synchronic and diachronic sorts that phenomenally present themselves. The eliminative logic of antitypical self-identity leads naturally to a passionless suppression of the social and the moral as well as vitiating the power of facts. These two things are precisely what any philosophical account of the temporality of society should not do.

Object-oriented ontology generates, as its principles entailed it to do, the historical theory I just described and criticized. While this ontology is "immaterialist," its historical theory shows how all speculative realisms must require rigid dis-anthropocentrism in order to give a consistently realistic account of the universe. As a result, speculative realisms fail to account for what we know about human actions and behaviors and therefore fall short of what we need theory, especially as philosophical anthropology and as morally-grounded understanding of human life, to do for us. There can be quite a few reasons to dismiss hard realisms in favor of neo-idealism and versions of constructivism—for example, the fact that quantum reality does not have the emergent features of phenomenal reality or that the persuasive power of ideas

can change behavior throughout a society—but here the matter of concern is what do we do with neo-realist and neo-materialist forms of the prescription to dis-anthropocentrize.

Object-oriented ontology does in fact accurately pursue the dis-anthropocentrizing impulse of the logic of the speculative realisms to its completion: if the nature of reality is fully not mind-dependent and thereby is not governed or structured in any way by ideas, then our conceptions of matter, including the most scientific materialism, are detached from true being. At most they might describe some small bits of reality by coincidence, so to speak; but neither none of them nor all of them can possibly account for reality. And if all objects are ontologically equal, we are as adrift in understanding human behavior and history as in understanding, say, dark matter or far stars. Flat ontology, so cheerfully adopted by many writers, must yield non-materialism of Harman's sort ("immaterialism") if it is to be consistent; and it also cannot be defended without non-materialism. Since non-materialism proves that what I have called the totalized logic of antitypical self-identity is necessary for rigid dis-anthropocentrization, materialist realisms must therefore accept this logic in order to forward a project of rigid anti-anthropocentrism. But then they must cease to be materialist. If they rejects this logic, the new materialists among speculative realists really just go back to the old materialism.[10] They can affirm non-rigid non-anthropocentrism only by taking both horns: denying the totalized logic of self-identity and ceasing to be materialism. Some speculative realists, such as Jon Cogburn, do proceed in the direction of dialethism (Cogburn 2017: 56–57). In allowing for hermeneutics, this approach seems to admit some measure of constructivism and some use of intention in understanding human activity. In searching for a way around metastasized *ratio*, it is of little moment whether we call this speculative non-materialist path neo-realist or neo-idealist. For the moral point of view, this is *de minimis*.

Just as strong anthropocentrism requires totally subsuming human experience under our conscious and intentional perspective, so total, rigid, thorough-going anti-anthropocentrism necessarily relies on the

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10.   Timothy J. Lecain's *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), a synoptic argument for "new materialism," ends up as the old materialism for just this reason.

object-oriented ontological argument that the whole of all of our experience and resulting knowledge, even verifiable empirical knowledge, are not merely limited, as anyone will agree, but are also founded upon anthropocentric conceptions and therewith incompatible with a thoroughgoing revolution in our understanding of the universe. Speculative materialist realisms seek to brighten, free, and renovate our accounts of causality, agency, and events. But they can logically do this whilst not returning to old and crudely reductive realisms if and only if they base their approach on rejection of the notion of matter. This disables their materialism.

Object-oriented ontology is right about this, and speculative realisms are stuck all the way down the line with this fact in considering their congruence with speculative materialisms. If they propose a profound alteration in epistemology, they are in need of this ontology—unless they consent to finding a way to maintain the connections of the human and the world while maintaining substantial distinctions between the one and the other. What remains is the claim by analogy that antitypy explains historical change without causality and human relationships without temporality. A symbiosis is a connection though not a "real relation." If this connection is our ordinary experience of antitypy, then it is a part of ordinary relationality. If symbiosis is not antitypy, then the concept explains nothing, because neither symbiosis nor the withdrawn can serve as the other term in the analogy from antitypy, since they are not supposed to be anything like it. This is a happy outcome for those of us concerned with the meaningfulness in the human material, social, psychic, and spiritual world, which requires reflection on and re-mediation of historical experience.

If the theory of symbioses fails to satisfy our desire to understand temporality, social development, and the history of human affairs, so also does any new materialism that relies on ordinary causality, which must go the way of old-fashioned matter when the logic of self-identity is imposed as an absolute in order to prove the otherness of all objects (ours no less than that of other species), all kinds of things, and all existents in the world. The failure of antitypy to explain history, sociality, and our imbrication with nature is the measure (and in another sense the actual cause) of the impossibility, revealed by the historical-theoretic perspective, of completely rejecting anthropocentrism on the basis of a logic of ontology, which is driven by just those passions,

needs, and a measure of narcissism that a sustainable relation with the natural world must avoid.

If the epistemology of speculative realisms requires an ontology with the vitiating reliance on antitypy, is there any way out of this dead end by which speculative realisms can contribute to the common project of advancing human understanding, especially in the crucial domain of exploring temporality and human social and historical relationships? Their abandoning materialisms would help. Because it is not possible to be materialist by halves, materialisms of any sort will either become non-materialist speculative realisms or deflate speculative realism into materialism. In effect, there can be no neo-materialism just on its own foundation. But this is only a guardrail against collapse and gives us nothing new to affirm.

The speculative realist will be, I am confident, frustrated by the *mise en abîme* I argued that antitypy presents it. They start by wanting to argue for why change is possible and does happen, not for why it is impossible to conceive. Why should a line of philosophy profoundly committed to a pluralistic reality be tripped up just when humankind approaches the possibility of the most magnified knowledge of the universe it has ever glimpsed and also right when the life-or-death problems of its survival in that universe are more fearfully difficult than ever? No one benefits by choking off what now seems impossible or unknowable. Speculative realism itself has not been the last word on the matter from speculative realism, which even in the last two decades grows in new directions. Speculative realism as a whole even presents itself as not only a way to think that can advance us but as the ground of the possibility of advancing thought beyond a certain historical stage situated (roughly speaking) in Occidental epistemology and ontology prior to and up through Heidegger. So if its understanding of change as temporality and history, as philosophical anthropology, as cultural theory, and as the accumulated existential situation of humankind at this point must be the test for speculative realisms, as I hold, the case for speculative realisms deserves further exploration. Is there a way to enable it, to click it on, as social thought and as philosophy of history?

The case for a speculative realist understanding of change broader than that which I presented above is well put by Maurizio Ferraris:

> ...reality does not only manifest itself as resistance and negativity: every negation entails a determination and a possibility. The world exerts an *affordance* through the objects and the environment, that qualifies as a *positive realism.* Strong, independent and stubborn, the world of objects that surround us (including the subjects we interact with, which are another kind of objects) does not merely say no: it does not only resist us, as if to say "here I am, I am here." It is also the greatest ontological positivity, because its very resistance, opacity and refusal to come to terms with concepts and thought are what assures us that the world of objects we deal with is not a dream it is this very positivity that allows us to dwell in the world despite the fact that our notions are rarely clear and distinct. (Ferraris 2015: 153–154; text emphasized [originally bolded] by Ferraris)

The word "affordance," borrowed from anthropology, works too hard here. It is intended to affirm that the critical claim of speculative realism is about what does really happen rather than about a point of logic. If it means that objects change even though they have no relations with one another and never can affect one another, it is no more than an atropaic to expel the threat of antitypy. One cannot perform magic by a prosopoeia, through which objects say something contradictory, enacting thereby a role that makes sense for humans but not for the world not humanly understood. That the way to understand this positivity seems to be to render it into most emotional terms about human relationships undercuts speculative realism. If, on the other hand, it is not an amulet and instead has meaning, it means that change exists through the interaction of things and processes, then it describes relations among them. There must be alteration due to relations among objects over time and space, and thus an interdependent and social history, or the only action of objects is to recede and to withdraw.

Speculative realism argues that reality must include a vast domain not at all related to the human because we know that things existed long before human observers and unsurpassably beyond our range of observation. This is a direct and obvious truth. Unaided, we cannot even see the ultraviolet light or detect the electromagnetic fields that always surrounds us. But it is also an equally direct and obvious truth that we cannot observe or think from a position outside our consciousness and, in particular, without extensive reliance on language—although experience itself does not require language. The world suffuses us into itself through the vastness of our verbal discourse, and the conceptions

belonging to discourse are the ineliminable and principal non-mystical way we swirl ourselves into the rest of reality. Neither position is a new thought. And so it seems that both realism and idealism will have to live together. For their part speculative realisms, whenever they insist on ontology founded on antitypy, face either surrender to reductive materialisms or accept human interpersonal normative self-constitution

The speculative realist counter-argument, as explained here, is that speculative realism conceives of change in terms of affordances (and constraints) because these describe world-processes not dependent on the anthropocentric perspective. But this does not deflate the central impact of the concept of antitypical self-identity I have highlighted in the speculative realist account of change. It leads either to materialism limited by human conception or to linguistic or social or another form of constructivism—all roundly rejected by Harman and speculative realism as a whole. To the question whether speculative realism can de-center the human?, the answer, then, is no, it cannot. It must accept cohabitation with idealism of some form. But by seeing this we can see more constructive possibilities.

The way out for theorizing a new social ontology of temporality is not to insist on antitypy. Without antitypy the possibilities of new paths for thinking about social ontology, including the problem of anthropocentrism, in both new realist and neo-idealist ways and in combinations of these impulses, is wide. Indeed, it might just be that the binary thinking manifested in antitypy and in many parts of logic and metaphysics is the one of the causes of the weakening of traditional ontology. Another way to put this is: new realisms (and neo-idealism as well) must abandon ontology in this mode as well as in the "traditional" mode if it is to de-center the human because rigid and through dis-anthropocentrization requires a concept (antitypy) that makes accounting for change impossible and therefore makes the project impossible. A good philosophical anthropology needs some account of change in nature and in the human in community with one another.

Under this view, there are two requirements from our existential experience of all that is both near to us and withdrawn from us that suggest ways can de-center the human through a balanced ontological view of historical and social processes. First, we must describe the

interdependence of existents, that is, it must account for a relational and social universe, the universe as a community. Second, we must provide for the moral weight of persons, things, actions, and events.

A modest anthropocentrism that, requiring a different ontology, enriches connections and moral force actualizes our personal, collective, multi-structural, intra-species, polychronic, and existential moral address to all the existence in the world in a community made as universal as ever we possibly can over the course of time. The ground of this possibility is the fulminating effect on the existential situation that both materialist and non-materialist speculative realisms are guilty of undervaluing: our mortality, out of which the dead we have been and the dead we will become give responsibility to us the living through an ontology that can envision the moral effects of historical temporalities. Our sociality with the past and the future is based upon this; totalizing logic cannot take it in. Of it, immaterialist ontology makes bloodless social reflection and historiography, displacing the impact of life, joy, death and loss on us into a void. Materialist historiography, having a simpler and less distracting ontology, either elides its own naturalism in order to express the principles of justice its proponents hold or drowns it under the endless contingency of the material universe. Human consciousness, though it often rots upon its vanity, nonetheless has the sole possibility we know of, and certainly all the responsibility we can bear, for passionately addressing loss and suffering for improving our rucktious history.

We need not totalize. Though most people feel that they are connected to other lives and to non-human existence and so would naturally choose the path of relationality, one might nevertheless feel, under the force of speculative realism, that feelings betray truth and are inadequate to the asperous necessity of the way of disconnection. We can look at the path of disconnection, which admits of no mixture, and choose instead the path of connection, relationality, and similarity, along which knowledge and experience are actually formed into the actualizing of novelties that contain the new and the old, like and unlike, infinite and finite, admiring this as Plato did when he said that seeking the good requires a skilled wisdom like the art of mixing the

water and the wine in the *krater* to make the most healthful drink.[11] We can overcome the dueling extremes of all-anthropocentrism and null-anthropocentrism to which logic or habits of allegiance and fear leads us.

And if perhaps mind-dependence is part of the interdependence of all life—that is to say, truly "symbiotic" in the etymological sense of the word as "living-together"—then there is an ontology for pilosophical anthropology that understands the biosphere as a society and a philosophical understanding of the history of this society that preserves humane values.

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