CURATION AS ONTOLOGY,
OR, CAN WE FOLD REALITY AS AN OBJECT?

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ABSTRACT: I propose to open a discussion on a realist philosophy of curation. To do so, I plot premises that will move *towards* such a philosophy. While I am neither introducing a new ontology nor contributing to metaphysics, I deal with metaphysical and ontological issues as these engage in the philosophy of curation and the philosophy of museums. In particular, I start with a *museological* or *curatorial realism* towards a discussion on meeting curation with the broadness of reality. There are three core premises. First, while reality is ontologically mind-independent, it is anti-realist for reality to be curation-dependent. Second, curation has to be folded (contrary to Deleuze's use of dynamic folding qua 'an origami cosmos') to address the anti-realist connotations of curation. To do this, I methodologically introduce the fold and state two-fold, three-fold, fourfold, and fifth-fold semantics of curation. While curatorial realism can be argued in a fourfold curation, the third premise is that the realist aspect lies in the fifth-folding of curation to match the extensivity of reality. This paper will attempt to introduce the philosophy of museums and the philosophy of curation with a bent on the realism/anti-realism debate. It will expose the inherit anti-realism of curation, and survey the need for objects in metaphysics and within contemporary forms of realism.

KEYWORDS: Curation, Ontology, Realism, Anti-Realism, Fold

> *'I exist.'* In thousands of agonies — *I exist.*
> I'm tormented on the rack — but *I exist!*
> Though I sit alone in a pillar — *I exist!*
> I see the sun, and if I don't see the sun, I know it's there.
> And *there's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there.*
>   –   Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

INTRODUCTION

Curation comes from the Latin *curare* or *cura*, which means to 'to oversee' or 'to take care.' This connotes an object, implying that to care is to care *for*.[1] Curated objects are then not isolated as they are necessarily associated with a caring subject or with the mind of a curator. This paper problematizes a philosophy of curation within the anti-realist vs realist debate *toward* a closer exposition of what may be called a 'realist philosophy of curation.' The whole trajectory of the paper will be to make sense of what this means. I propose three core premises that serve as a prolegomenon to a realist philosophy of curation. In formalized forms, these are:

First Premise

        Objects when curated become mind-dependent

        Mind-dependency is anti-realist

          Therefore, *curation is anti-realist*

Second Premise

        A folded curation is a unique 'screened possibility'

        Screened possibilities can be realist

          Therefore, *curation has to be folded to be realist*

Third Premise

        Ontological possibility is realist while semantic possibility is not.

        A fourfold philosophy of curation is a semantic possibility of reality

        and a fifth-fold philosophy of curation is an ontological possibility

          Therefore, *a fifth-fold philosophy of curation is realist*

Before going into the specificities of curated objects, the general backdrop of such premises is to establish an understanding of curation as an interdisciplinary concept that matches the broadness of reality. Curation and reality both encompass a broad set of specialized forms of disciplines. Curation alone covers various fields of objects and topics. For instance, Marcia Brennan's *Curating Consciousness* talks about the curatorial practices that engage mysticism and

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[1] Jan Gresil Kahambing "Curating and/or suffering: On palliative care and museums." *Palliative & supportive care* vol. 21,3 (2023): 565-566. doi:10.1017/S1478951523000263

secularism.[2] Curation is cross-disciplinary, provoking new inquiries in science and objecthood while taking inspiration from the arts.[3] Since curation has an extensive scope, I limit the take to the philosophical issues that underpin curation's notional operability or consider curation as a concept in the broad field of the philosophy of museums. It is vital to initially note that the use of the term 'curation' here will be different from curating, the activity of curation in museums, both of which will be explained further in the coming sections. What remains cross-disciplinary, nonetheless, is realism (since an object of study in any field sufficiently constitutes an account of what exists): in scientific realism, that scientific entities such as quarks, photons, and strings, exist; in mathematical realism, that numerical entities for example exist; in artistic realism, that there is a reality behind the representation of the work of art such as the plight of a certain class of people. The operational definition of realism here is that there is a reality *and* it is mind-independent.

At this point, it should be asked: why specifically take curation in a museological context rather than match the extensivity of taking realism as a study? An initial response is that while I am neither introducing a new ontology nor contributing to metaphysics, I deal with metaphysical and ontological issues as these engage in the philosophy of curation and the philosophy of museums. In particular, I argue for a local realism, which I will call museological or curatorial realism that has traction in further discussing the meeting of curation with the broadness of reality. The next question is: why is there a need to have a realist philosophy of curation? A direct or naïve realist coming into a curated exhibition might, in a Moorean sense, immediately claim that an object on a pedestal exists. Is not the object being curated always real?

FIRST PREMISE

To properly respond to the questions above, the first premise problematizes such a setup: *while reality is ontologically mind-independent, it is anti-realist for reality to be curation-dependent.* While not discrediting other forms of direct

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[2] Marcia Brennan, *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (The MIT Press, 2012).

[3] See Alistair Robinson and Edward Juler (eds), *Post-Specimen Encounters Between Art, Science and Curating: Rethinking Art Practice and Objecthood Through Scientific Collections* (United Kingdom: Intellect, 2020).

realism, the problematization stems from further probing the anti-realism of philosophies of curation in the museological context. Stated differently, curated reality is not ontologically-independent. In other words, museological curation is a distinct form of subjective perception of reality *as an object* and this has anti-realist tendencies. This will be expounded later. Here, I consider it a necessary step to engage the objectifying function rooted in museological curation rather than anything else: biological curation, for example, treats the reality of an organism in process terms rather than as objects.[4] The goal of a *realist* philosophy of curation is to proceed to an *expanded sense of curation* that deals with the extensivity of reality (including, later on, biological, animal, cyborg, hybrid, and even alien forms of curation). Doing so would need two more premises and the museological sense of curation will just be its jumping board or initial premise. Before proceeding to the next premise, I reiterate that I will propose a philosophy of curation that belongs within the broader philosophy of museums. Since this is a 'relatively new and growing discipline,'[5] allow me to discuss what is known yet.

PHILOSOPHY OF MUSEUMS

Museums date back to at least classical times. The museum's origins are typically traced back to the Ptolemaic *mouseion* in Alexandria, which was ('whatever else it may have been') first and foremost a study collection with a library attached, a reservoir of knowledge, a gathering place for scholars, philosophers, and historians.[6] A house of collections has undergone different sorts of names: the museum, *Wunderkammern, cabinets des curieux, studioli, Kunstkammern.* A philosophy of museum, says Beth Lord, is one where both museums and philosophy can support each other, suggesting that 'anything that operates as a space of representation in this philosophical sense ["of contesting the relation between concepts and things"] can be called a museum.'[7] Victoria Harrison and Philip

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[4] See for instance Sarah Odell, Gerard Lazo, Margaret Woodhouse, David Hane, and Taner Sen, 'The art of curation at a biological database: principles and application', *Current Plant Biology* 11 (2017), 2-11.

[5] Victoria Harrison and Philip Tonner, 'Philosophy of Museums', *Oxford Bibliographies* (2020). 10.1093/OBO/9780199766567-0241

[6] Peter Vergo, 'Introduction', in *The New Museology,* edited by Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 1.

[7] Beth Lord, 'Philosophy and the museum: An introduction to the special issue', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 21:2 (2006), 79-87.

Tonner provide a clear navigational path to the various aspects of this emerging field such as philosophical museology, historical philosophical museology, museum ethics, holocaust museums, museums and philosophical aesthetics, museum objects, philosophical approaches to religious objects in museums, the philosophy of museum practice, and museums and the philosophy of education.[8] The collection *Philosophy and Museums: Essays on the Philosophy of Museums,* edited by Victoria Harrison, Anna Bergqvist, and Gary Kemp, gathers some path-breaking studies on a variety of philosophical issues. These being, among others, paradoxes such as whether museums are epistemic or bearers of identity,[9] the implications of ontology in the significance of preserving and restoring objects,[10] the networks of meaning within artworks,[11] the experience of enjoyment in religious artifacts,[12] the educational value of replicas over original art,[13] and the joy of learning over wonder in philosophizing within museums.[14] Suffice it to say that the questions on the philosophy of curation within the field are also at the embryonic stage, however critical, since they focus on commonly applied contexts such as professional ethics: 'What is the appropriate relationship between curatorship and other domains of human thought, action, and concern, especially matters to do with gender, race, and community? What are the responsibilities of the curator? To whom are curators responsible? What is the boundary between professional display and promotion of some ideology?' In the collection, Anna Bergqvist forwards a strong disjunction that either visitors are creators of meaning

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[8] Victoria Harrison and Philip Tonner, 'Philosophy of Museums', *Oxford Bibliographies*, 2020. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0241.xml?rskey=nMZDWr&result=2&q=victoria+harrison#firstMatch

[9] Mark O'Neill, 'Museums and their Paradoxes,' in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 13-34.

[10] Graham Oddie, 'What Do We See in Museums?' in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 217-240.

[11] Alda Rodrigues, 'People and Things: Questions Museums Make Us Ask and Answer', in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 199-216.

[12] David Brown, 'Context and Experiencing the Sacred', in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 117-132.

[13] Constantine Sandis, 'An Honest Display of Fakery: Replicas and the Roles of Museums', in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 241-260.

[14] Beth Lord, "A Sudden Surprise of the Soul" Wonder in Museums and Early Modern Philosophy, in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums,* V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 95-116.

or curators are primarily responsible for determining the meaning of the objects in their displays and here the balance between the two relies on perspectival diagnoses.[15]

Aside from the visitor, the curator is an interesting locus of philosophical attention here, representing the paradox of being a subject and object. As Foucault observes, man 'appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows; enslaved sovereign, observed spectator.'[16] Despite new materialist and contemporary posthuman philosophies emerging, there is still no denying that elephants, microbes, and ants – though curating in their own way within their niche – cannot be curators in the modern museum. The question of artificial intelligence replacing curators is an interesting query on its own and will be reserved in the realist or expanded sense of curation in future work. For now, it is worth considering the notion of the curator and curation as agential in the museum and how philosophy can understand its domain not just ethically but ontologically.

PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION

When Rossen Ventzislavov wrote about the curator and philosophy, Sue Spaid announced that 'the gloves were off! The curator's role had seeped into the philosophy sphere.'[17] Two major works are important for the philosophy of curation: *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, edited by Jean-Paul Martinon,[18] and Spaid's work *The Philosophy of Curatorial Practice*. While Spaid announced that it was in 2014 that curation became a focused concern in philosophy, this does not mean that philosophers before have not engaged in curation. Jacques Derrida, for instance, curated the "Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins" at the Louvre in 1990.[19] Jean-François Lyotard curated the *Les*

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[15] Anna Bergqvist, 'Framing Effects in Museum Narratives: Objectivity in Interpretation Revisited', in *Philosophy and Museums: Essays in the Philosophy of Museums*, V. Harrison, A. Bergqvist, & G. Kemp, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2016), 295-318.

[16] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Travistock, 1970), 312.

[17] Sue Spaid, *The Philosophy of Curatorial Practice: Between Work and World* (Bloomsbury, 2020), xvi.

[18] Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

[19] Ivan Gaskell, 'Museums and Philosophy – Of Art, and Many Other Things: Part II', *Philosophy Compass* 7:2 (2012), 85-102.

Immatériaux exhibition at the Pompidou, Paris in 1985.[20] John Dewey and Bertrand Russell also collaborated with the American industrialist Alfred Barnes in the latter's application of his aesthetics 'directly to curating.'[21]

A philosophy of curation is prompted by the increasing function of curatorial agency in museums. This involves but is not limited to, ethical, epistemological, political, or ontological interventions. Is this just substituting old philosophical problems within an applied, in this case, museological, context? Initially yes, but ultimately not entirely, because when applications of philosophical problems to particular contexts create new nuances of the theoretical constructs being applied, the engagement of these problems to specific modalities can also generate new pathways that might retroactively or prospectively modify the theory within and even outside the museological context itself. In this sense, a philosophy of curation should be seen as an interdisciplinary field, involving issues of philosophy of mind, experimental philosophy, hermeneutics, but also heritage studies, anthropology, spectral studies, archaeology, and others. It can even be suggested that the philosophy of curation is not (contrary to what was said earlier) a subfield strictly of the philosophy of museums but is a sui generis philosophy in itself. A philosophy of curation is a *style* of philosophizing that has a distinctness. What can be advanced here is that curation can act as a folding. Folding is a conceptual metaphor that denotes different functions and meanings in terms of the objects curated. This will be the main line of argument in the second premise.

SECOND PREMISE

We have now come to the methodological second premise, which is that (2) *objects need to be folded to resolve the anti-realist connotations of curation.* As stated, folding is a metaphor that has vital conceptual currency in this paper. It acts as a method and thereby also a limitation by which I approach the anti-realist tendencies of curation. By using the terminology of the 'fold' as a method and limit, I do not necessarily subscribe to a Deleuzian sense invoking 'the motion

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[20] Stuart Jeffries and Nancy Groves, 'Hans Ulrich Obrist: the art of curation', *The Guardian*, March 23, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-art-curator
[21] Curtis Carter, 'Curating [Encyclopedia Entry], Philosophy Faculty Research and Publications, Marquette University, 2014, 561.

of infinite folding.'[22] It is true that, taking the Baroque as a case, Deleuze says that it 'does not refer to an essence, but rather to an operative function, to a characteristic' that 'endlessly creates folds' [...] 'fold upon fold, fold after fold.'[23] Likewise, the art historian and former Rector of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Else Marie Bukdahl succinctly points out that Deleuze's ontology is about continuity and flows: 'in the art world and in society as a whole, we are accustomed to focusing on the core, the central issues, and the essence. This is precisely what Deleuze does not do, because he is convinced that reality is a state of dynamic becoming, not of static being.'[24] Bukdahl then expresses how Deleuze utilizes even Leibniz's supposedly windowless monads as also folded, twice – matter and soul belonging to each other like a house – as *styles* of producing art.[25] As such, that objects need to be folded is a methodology since it makes for a style of philosophizing. What is a fold? A fold is a style of connection, a continuous flow of inflections, caverns, twists, and weavings creatively producing a consistent virtual or *becoming* ontology. I take the metaphorical fold as a method albeit in the sense of a possibility. However, it comes with a conditional that it is a bounded, finite, presentation. That is to say, it is a 'screened' possibility in which conceptual metaphors usually function. Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson, Victoria Harrison notes that metaphors draw 'our attention to certain features of things, while *simultaneously screening* certain aspects from our attention.'[26] That the fold is a method is one thing. That it is a limiting form of screening that enables limited and bounded features is a diversion from the orthodox reading of Deleuze's philosophy.

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[22] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), xvii.

[23] Gilles Deleuze and Jonathan Strauss, 'The Fold', *Yale French Studies* 80 (1991), 227-247.

[24] Else Marie Bukdahl, *The Recurrent Actuality of the Baroque* (Denmark: Controluce, 2017).

[25] I thank Else Marie for our in-person conversations on the French thinkers who happened to be her friends. Talking to her gave me a more 'in the flesh' sense of how, for example, Deleuze, Lyotard, and Baudrillard conceived their philosophies.

[26] Victoria Harrison, 'Metaphor, Religious Language, and Religious Experience', *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 46:2 (2007), 127-145.
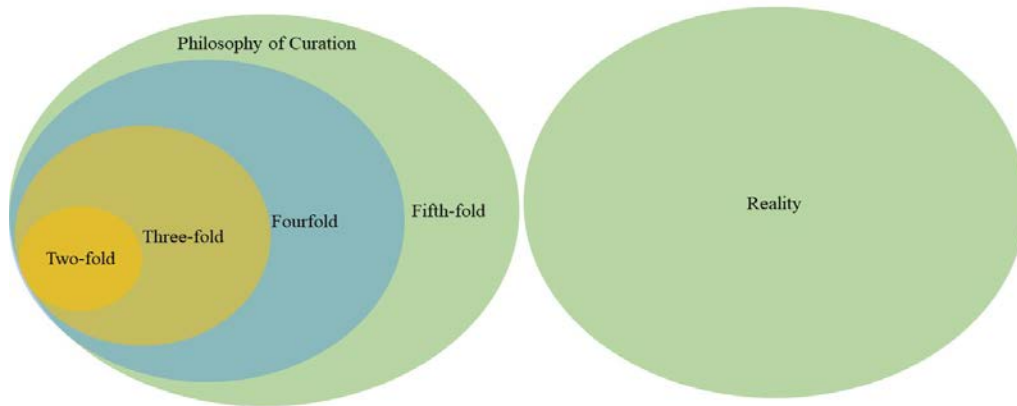
Figure 1. Folding a Philosophy of Curation to meet Reality

I situate the screening limitation to the idea of boundedness and finiteness. This boundedness works without the Leibnizian God who solely knows the inner workings of the house and Deleuze's infinite folding. But the ridding of Leibniz' God is not a subtraction but a mere sidelining for the content rather than the method. Moreover, while Deleuze does not take objects as universal since they are all subsumed in the process of infinite becoming and production, the concept of infinity is also sidelined, since to talk about objects is at least to talk about essence. Deleuze uses the metaphor of Leibniz's house as a simpler way of two-folding the subject in producing art than the more complicated idea of subjectivation (à la Foucault). For Deleuze, the production is complicated since it describes reality as a process akin to an origami complex folding. The house is just a miniature but the model of Leibniz's universe has folds in infinite surfaces of times and spaces. As Deleuze puts it, 'the model for the sciences of matter is the "origami", as the Japanese philosopher might say, or the art of folding paper.'[27] The origami exposes the fold as a *connection*, that is, with inexhaustive possibilities and infinite deferrals of specification in favor of flowing continuity. A spider-origami is a becoming-spider of the paper and could at the same time be

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[27] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, 6.

a becoming-scorpion without any specificity. The spider-origami and scorpion-origami are not specific spiders and scorpions in themselves but only refer to the same internal virtual space of infinite becoming as they make direct continuous contact with the paper's folding possibilities. Using the fold as a limitation, I digress with this long-standing interpretation of Deleuze's flowing ontology based on the account of objects that engender discontinuity. Even without delving into Foucault's logic of discontinuities or counter-discourses in practical theorizing,[28] I am not alone in this digression. In *Against Continuity*, Kleinherenbrink already exposes the inconsistencies of conceptualizing 'the infinite deferral of specification' in Deleuze since reality is 'first and foremost characterized by discontinuity.'[29] When the paper folds into the spider-origami, it becomes a unique fold and does not have direct contact with the spider-origami's becoming. The same indirect contact applies to the scorpion-origami and its becoming. There is a screening in this since as Kleinherenbrink puts it succinctly: 'I may perceive the Waal river and the Waal bridge as parts of a single landscape, but this depends on my capacities to do so. In no way does it mean that the river and bridge are somehow ontologically one.'[30] It is also in this sense that Bukdahl says that there are no similar folds in Deleuze. The fold is a haecceity,[31] or a philosophy of *this-ness*,[32] a unique essence irreducible to other origami folds.

Informed by this 'screening' possibility in metaphorically conceptualizing the fold in terms of boundedness, this premise presents the discussion with *two-fold, three-fold, fourfold, and fifth-fold* philosophies of curation, all aiming to expand the meaning of curation to meet with the extensivity of reality (see Figure 1). There

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[28] Mario Moussa and Ron Scapp, 'The Practical Theorizing of Michel Foucault: Politics and Counter-Discourse', *Cultural Critique* 33 (1996), 87-112.

[29] Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze's' Speculative Realism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 295-296; 292.

[30] Ibid., 292.

[31] Timothy S. Murphy, 'Quantum ontology: a virtual mechanics of becoming', in Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller, eds, *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 226.

[32] Harold Garfinkel takes 'haecceity' from John Duns Scotus' followers in place of 'quiddity,' which was used differently by Willard Van Orman Quine as playing with essence, subtle distinction and quibble. See Harold Garfinkel, 'Evidence for Locally Produced, Naturally Accountable Phenomena of Order, Logic, Reason, Meaning, Method, etc. in and as of the Essential Quiddity of Immortal Ordinary Society, (I of IV): An Announcement of Studies', *Sociological Theory* 6:1 (1988), 103-109. For Quine's usage, see W.V. Quine, *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: London, Belknap, 1987).

might be sixth and seventh folds out there but those are not within the remit of my capacity to think and the extent of my research. Hence, again, this sets a limitation. Two clarifications can also be stated. First, the folds are not in succession, however numerically they are lined up because there are overlaps. Second, they also do not present a five-tiered ontology where there are five layers of reality. The idea is that reality can be curated as a matter of extent in the folds. With the goal in mind of expanding curation, I forward the assumption that the higher the fold, the wider the sense of curation. Allow me to briefly sketch my versions of the *fold* in the philosophy of curation.

TWO-FOLD PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION

A two-fold philosophy of curation is concerned with pitching issues in a bidirectional context. Common divisions in the curatorial practice in this sense can be divided into two main camps albeit they could just be two sides of the same coin. Ivan Gaskell, cultural historian and curator at Harvard, notes the taxonomic capacity of curators on artworks. One example is to 'designate the medium, place and date of making, subject, and even supposed maker of a thing.'[33] Such categorization is also a philosophical move as curators can 'make knowledge claims about the specimens and artworks.' This epistemic capacity, Gaskell observes, has a two-fold problem.

The first problem is that assumptions about the nature of things are culturally specific, mostly Western as in the case of the universal museums. This is not to say that Asian contexts do not have assumptions. It could also be the other way around where Asian museums have occidental lenses. Gaskell observes that in the West, objects that have the sacral character for some indigenous epistemologies are, for instance, de-sacralized. The second problem is that the taxonomy curators tend to create is 'relatively inflexible and unadaptable' in terms of fixed uses and meaning. Here, because 'the epistemological structure of the bodies of knowledge produced by museums was and remains such that change occurs only by almost exclusively incremental means, and is a matter of refinement', objects, especially when they are curated on display, do 'not readily

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[33] Ivan Gaskell, 'Museums and Philosophy – Of Art, and Many Other Things: Part 1', *Philosophy Compass* 7:2 (2012), 74-84.

permit – let alone encourage – radical or fundamental alteration or even revision.'[34] The problem is that the taxonomic capacity of the curators, whichever context it may be, tends to stick to an assumption that is hardly mutable. Western and Eastern museological contexts might have varying degrees of disagreement in terms of their assumptions of one another. Although there are efforts to bridge the two, epistemic biases are still there in the curating activity.

Here, a two-folded philosophy of curation can mean any binary relation – opposing, conjoining, (de)paradoxicalizing,[35] disjoining, etc. – as applied to the curatorial practice. It is concerned with the conventional problems that compare and contrast two-pronged viewpoints. Consider for example Mark O'Neill's paradoxes of the museum: Are they agents *or* expressions of change? Do they liberate knowledge *or* demarcate rituals? Are they conservative *or* reformists? Do we need to repatriate objects back to their place of origin *or* let them be exhibited in "universal museums"?[36] It can be surmised that most issues that pervade the philosophy of curation are twofold, again interplaying binaries. In a wider sense, however, there are three ways of seeing this.

THREE-FOLD PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION

While a two-fold philosophy of curation is mostly concerned with curating, the museum's cultural or societal dealings, or the curatorial epistemic meanings running in dual contrapositions, a three-fold philosophy of curation properly distinguishes these as three different interrelated issues. These three-fold issues drive closer to home since they buttress anti-realist concerns. These issues conceive the object in ways that beg the question of their realism. In this wider context of the philosophy of curation, three interrelated problematizations

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[34] Ibid., 80.

[35] I use this term generally as the generation (or dissolution, in the case of deparadoxicalizing) of paradox, but also in applied resonance with both Erich Wulff's 'acts of paradoxicalization' where object-meaning ('*Bedeutung*') and subjective-meaning ('*Sinn*') are split albeit configured initially as a couple [see 'Zur Konstitution schizophrener Unverständlichkeit' in *Forum Kritische Psychologie* 30 (1992), 6-28] and its converse, de-paradoxication, in Niklas Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also Emilio González-Díaz, 'Paradox, Time, and De-Paradoxication in Luhmann', in *World Futures* 60 (2004), 15-27, and Hannes Wendler and Thomas Fuchs, 'Understanding incomprehensibility: Misgivings and potentials of the phenomenological psychopathology of schizophrenia', in *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023), 1-6.

[36] Mark O'Neill, 'Museums and their Paradoxes,' *loc.cit.*

emerge. First, for all curation issues where the object merely becomes a mirror of the curator's subjective interpretation, we will call the philosophical issue of *curating*, which we will take to be at least anti-realist and thus conceptually different from *curation* where we are salvaging as realist. Second, for all issues where curating in a general sense is taken, specifically pinned to the museum itself rather than the curator, we will call the philosophical issue of *meta-curating.*[37] Metacurating overlaps with issues of the philosophy of museums, more specifically the system of curation or museum management that provides the value of the objects. Even if a museum is an institution and not a subject like the curator, meta-curation is couched in anti-realist tenors. This includes non-museological contexts (e.g. heritage and other deterretorialized[38] spaces, language, communication mediums, the metaverse, and digital content) as curating from a 'meta' perspective. Third, for all epistemological issues when the exhibit curation assumes access to the object as an event of knowledge, we will call the philosophical issue of the *curatorial.* As can be deduced from here, these issues only allow, thus far, for the existence of the object but as the *curated*. They prompt philosophical avenues that shift the movement of return to the object itself.

FOURFOLD PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION[39]

A three-fold philosophy of curation exposes three visible antirealist issues. A wider sense of curation had to be realist when viewed in the fourfold as taken from Heidegger's terminology. To address the three anti-realist issues of three-fold curation, I juxtapose Jean-Paul Martinon and Graham Harman's repurposing of the fourfold through loosening the grip of the subject to the object. Heidegger's term for the object is *gegenstand,* which means 'standing opposite' to a knowing subject, viewing it as 'distanced,' or 'farfetched.'[40] Heidegger

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[37] Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'What is metacuration? Antifragile realism between simulacrum and spectrality.' *Inscriptions* 7, no. 1 (2024), 79-93. Also see Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Fourfolded objects, or toward a philosophy of object-oriented curation,' *Curator: The Museum Journal*, https://doi-org.libezproxy.um.edu.mo/10.1111/cura.12612 (2024).

[38] See Stephan Günzel, 'Immanence and Deterritorialization: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,' *The Paideia Archive: Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* 6 (1998): 137-143.

[39] Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Fourfolded objects'.

[40] See Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Healing as an Object: Curation, Sentience, and Slowness', *Oxford Public Philosophy,* (2024), turn four.

distinguishes this from the *thing* that mirrors the interactions of the fourfold (*das Geviert*) of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. Martinon's account treats objects as strife, allowing the possibility of detaching the curator from the picture. Through the polylogical strife of plural earths, skies, gods, and mortals, the mirroring of the fourfold does not put objectify the object but acknowledges its excesses.[41] Harman's quadruple object also acknowledges the tensions of the object that withdraws its reality. In this sense, whatever the curator exhibits as object is not the real object but the sensual one, the only version the visitors encounter.[42] And for Harman, objects relate insofar as they exist in a polypsychic rather than panpsychic way.[43] With the excesses of the strifed obejct via Martinon and the tensions of the quadruple object, curating the object as a realism with accessibility becomes possible but indirectly. This does not equate, however, with an apophatic ontology or an ontology of objects that point to something beyond like a religious dimension.[44] A fourfold philosophy of curation, however, has certain caveats that will enable me to proceed to the last premise, which relies on a fifth-fold.

FIFTH-FOLD PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION

The third and last premise is that 3) *to match with the extensivity of reality, an expanded sense of a philosophy of curation lies in a fifth-fold.* The generally accepted interpretation of art is that its meaning is contextual: it does not come solely from the artist, the visitor, or curator, but from the engagement in-between. This set up following the intended object, the intention of the painter, and the interpretation of the curator or visitor in between, would, albeit moderate and safe, only be threefold at this point, whereas a fourfolded philosophy of curation must focus on the realism of the object sans the grip of intentionality. A fourfold philosophy of curation can talk about all the ways in which the object escapes any subjective point of reference or intention.

A fifth-fold, however, relies on the argument that a fourfold curation of reality

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[41] Jean-Paul Martinon, *Curating as Ethics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

[42] Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Zero Books: 2011).

[43] Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'ChatGPT,'polypsychic'artificial intelligence, and psychiatry in museums,' *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 83 (2023): 103548-103548.

[44] Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenology of the Icon as an Apologia for Quiapo's Black Nazarene Traslación,' *Prajñā Vihāra: Journal of Philosophy and Religion 20*(2), 13-31.

rests on a certain logic of reality, but not reality itself. Here, I repurpose the argument of Graham Priest's exposition of the Buddhist logic of the *catuṣkoṭi,* or roughly, 'four alternatives', where a claim can merit four possibilities: a) true, b) false, c) both true and false, and d) neither true nor false.[45] We can assign values of truthfulness to disjunctive arguments of *a* and *b* in twofold and threefold curation (i.e. realist *or* anti-realist when the 'curator', or in the case of meta-curating, the 'museum' calls the shot for the object's exhibition), and their contradictory excesses in *c* and/or *d* in fourfold curation (i.e. Martinon and Harman argue that the fourfolded object is no longer *gegenstand*). But these semantic arguments that rely on the four possibilities, four *folds,* so to speak, are bound to speak about ontological claims but might not be about the actual state of affairs itself. Take the world as an infinite museum with multi-perspectival pathways of thinking, a kind of posthuman curation or '*musealization'* of the world replete with fourfold excesses and tensions. Is it *really* possible to curate this reality (including the unknown worlds in the universe we have yet to discover)? Thinking about it even for an ontological claim is not the same as the actual state of affairs of the world as the ultimate reality *yet.* As Graham Priest would have it, the *semantic catuṣkoṭi* only has four corners, whereas it is the *ontological catuṣkoṭi* that has five – plus an e) or ineffability itself.[46] The difference between *d* and *e* is that while *d* is neither *a* or *b*, *e* is none of *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* – empty – since if fifth-fold curating reality is ineffable, two-fold and three-fold curation are also ineffable; but if fourfold curating reality is neither twofold nor threefold, twofold or threefold curation may still be thinkable. Fourfold curation's 'neither-nor' excesses may point to an ineffability but it still counts as thinking of the ineffable and therefore *effable.*

Through the fifth-fold, it will be argued that an expanded sense of curation can take place but with the proviso that we cannot penetrate reality with it as it equates to a Buddhist silence in ineffability. That is to say, fifth-fold curation still hosts unanswerable problems: Is the posthuman museum eternal (in time)? Is the posthuman museum infinite (in space)? Is curation identical to embodiment and embeddedness? Can curation exist after it gets detached from embodiment

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45 Graham Priest, 'The Logic of the Catuṣkoṭi', *Comparative Philosophy* 1:2 (2010), 24–54.
46 Graham Priest, *The Fifth Corner of Four. An Essay on Buddhist Metaphysics and the Catuṣkoṭi* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

and embeddedness? Pushed to the extreme, these are metaphysical problems not meant to be solved in this paper. The paper will only show how curation can *meet* reality in this fifth-fold. This is why I will call it a venture, *towards* a realist philosophy of curation. In light of the foregoing, I proceed to the specifics of anti-realism and realism, objects and ontologies, and provide an overview of possible jumping-boards via contemporary realisms.

ANTI-REALISMS

We have noted that realism is the claim that there is something that exists *and* that it is mind-independent. Both the existence *and* independence commitments seem to be sufficient for realism. However, while it may be traceable to Descartes the idea that there might be no object that exists and that it is not mind-independent, Kant's transcendental idealism is unique here in that Kant could be the 'first anti-realist.'[47]

The idea is that what Descartes did was a form of radical scepticism though couched in idealist language (as skeptical idealism), since what he denies is the existence claim. Descartes says: 'I thereby concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature resides only in thinking, and which, in order to exist, has no need of a place and is not dependent on any material thing.'[48] What Berkeley also did was a form of ontological idealism (also called dogmatic idealism), which denies the independence claim. Berkeley's so-called 'master argument' is that 'surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and no body by to perceive them' but then he adds: 'do not you your self perceive or think of them all the while? […] When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas.'[49]

Kant's epistemological split of the things-in-themselves, the noumena to the phenomena, shifted the need for realists not just to argue that there are things that exist and are mind-independent. It is then vital to add a third commitment – *accessibility*. The accessibility commitment asks: how does one *know* a reality that

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[47] JTM Miller, *Metaphysical Realism and Anti-Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 13.

[48] René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, trans. Ian Maclean (Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

[49] George Berkeley, 'Of the Principles of Human Knowledge: Part 1', *Philosophical Works*, edited by M. Ayers (London: Dent, 1975), 22-23.

is outside the bounds of the transcendental? The engraved Flammarion design in *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (1888) is the illustration that shows how one cannot even peek outside our own transcendental apperception. Without the access claim, or if a realist will only say that there is reality outside our minds and 'it turns out that we cannot know or say anything about that mind-independent world, it would make realism unimportant and uninteresting.'[50] One could contend that truth or semantics are being accessed epistemologically, but which *truth* and which *semantics*? A hierarchical taxonomy is created if there is a 'privileged' access to truth or the right semantics to get at when describing reality, but who decides this and how can it be demonstrated? If everything is equal, 'there is no good reason to suppose that we are "accessing" or describing reality at all' and if there might be pluralism, without a privileged reality, then it appears to be a form of anti-realism (whatever one conceives as reality are many but each conception does not point to reality *per se*).[51]

Anti-realism seems to be highly visible in the history of philosophy. It is possible that from Kant's crucial transcendental argument, the philosophers in the continental tradition have already followed an idealist track of thought. In hindsight, this became an *evental* moment, in a sense of Badiou's splitting term,[52] that diverted continental philosophy into the German *idealist* trajectory, rather than a supposedly German *realist* trajectory. Harman, for example, says that had philosophers followed Leibniz than the neo-Kantian Fichte, German idealism would have been German realism. Phenomenologists such as Husserl have used the transcendental argument to carry on the idealist track. The Hegelians such as Žižek carried the subject and post-structuralists like Derrida carried language in constant dialectic or spielen with reality. The anti-realist track makes sense since such philosophies focus on the subjective, anthropological, conscious, aspect of reality but not reality itself. Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman then named phenomenology, post-structuralism, and postmodernism as the 'perfect exemplars of the anti-realist trend in continental philosophy.'[53] This being said, it

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[50] Ibid., 15.
[51] Ibid., 22.
[52] Alain Badiou, 'Who is Nietzsche?' *Pli* 11 (2001), 1-11.
[53] Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, 'Towards a Speculative Philosophy,' in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, edited by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Australia: Re.Press, 2011), 3.

also does not follow that the analytic tradition has not taken an anti-realist track.

But is the analytic tradition more realist? Anti-realism again is about the denial of accessibility but it seems that the analytic tradition also follows a path where we are just relying on our language games **à** la Wittgenstein, linguistic frameworks **à** la Carnap, or justificationism **à** la Dummett.[54] The later Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* is more surely anti-realist with its reference to language-games or accepted set of communal rules for meaning than the debatable anti-realism in the early Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* whose isomorphic or one-to-one correspondence of meaning picturing reality still speaks of state of affairs or objects forming the substance of the world.[55] Later Wittgenstein changed his mind about this isomorphism via the varying uses of meaning in the language-game, which also rejects St. Augustine's representationism that words *name* objects.[56] With Wittgenstein, the realist faces the difficulty of referring to a mind-independent reality. Likewise, in using language to speak 'objectivity' or a 'God's-Eye view of the world,'[57] Carnap's anti-realism also regards the realist question 'what exists?' as unsubstantial, since entities and their meaning varies depending on whatever linguistic framework it is used.[58] This means that outside any framework, there is only meaninglessness. With Carnap, the realist's language in speaking of a reality outside a linguistic framework only forms 'pseudo-statements.'[59] Dummett is also an anti-realist of the link between our language and a mind-independent reality in that meaning, content, or truth depends on the justification semantics being used, which thereby makes such content 'that of the thought.'[60]

If this thread could posit a realism, it seems that for Putnam such realism will only depend on the conceptual schemes that are internal, and not external since 'knowledge claims only need to be coherent within the conceptual schemes that

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[54] Insofar as JTM Miller leads us.

[55] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities Press), 2.021.

[56] See also Gerard Watson, 'St. Augustine's Theory of Language', *The Maynooth Review* 6:2 (1982), 4-20.

[57] JTM Miller, *Metaphysical Realism and Anti-Realism*, 39.

[58] Rudolf Carnap, 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4:11 (1950), 20-40.

[59] Rudolf Carnap, 'Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language', in A.J. Ayer (ed.) *Logical Positivism* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959), 69.

[60] Michael Dummett, 'The Justificationist's Response to the Realist', *Mind* 114:455 (2005), 673.

they are designed to apply within, and hence there is no need for any "external reality" or "way things-are-in-themselves" that limit possible knowledge claims.'[61] The realist is then 'incorrect' to posit 'unconceptualised reality' since they are 'indescribable', 'unfit for any purpose', and that the split itself between this external reality to the mind, language, and concepts, is *impossible.*

Are there just anti-realisms all the way down? If both continental and analytic philosophy have visible anti-realist trends, do we conclude that (to use another somewhat similar metaphor) there is only a rabbit hole of anti-realism in philosophy? In the talk of objects, Dummett argues for the notion of 'indefinite extensibility' akin to Russell's paradox of the set of all sets, whereby whatever we can think of as an object in an extensive way will be done in a principled process that will be repeated indefinitely without limits relative to a conceptual scheme. In this process, 'there seemingly cannot be an all-inclusive concept of "object" for the realist to rely on.'[62] As such, 'the realist has a problem in showing which restriction on the meaning of "object" is "better", metaphysically speaking. Going down this route, there is a danger that the problems of conceptual relativity will reimpose themselves.'[63]

Davidson, however, observes that conceptual relativism is a 'heady and exotic doctrine.'[64] It leads to another dualism – which he deems as a 'dogma' – the scheme-content dualism, that redefines the subject and object into language. Stated differently, it leads to the dualism of something that organizes *and* an empirical content. Davidson argues that the very idea of a conceptual scheme is incoherent since there is a failure of translation between different schemes. This also renders the idea of conceptual relativity incoherent.[65]

Kuhn and Feyerabend call the failure of inter-translatability 'incommensurable.' Incommensurability abandons the hope of 'finding a pure-sense datum language' – that is, some basic 'unproblematic' vocabulary that

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[61] JTM Miller, *Metaphysical Realism and Anti-Realism*, 54.

[62] Ibid., 45.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 47 (1973-1974), 5-20.

[65] George Wrisley, 'Davidson on the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone (eds), *Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011), 162-168.

matches, fits, or attaches to nature independent of theorizing – since 'no such vocabulary is available.'[66] Phenomenal experience may lead the way for an untranslatable reality since our conceptualizing is just keeping up with what is experienced, often at a loss of words. 'You will never be able to experience everything. So, please, do poetical justice to your soul and simply experience yourself' advises Camus in his notebooks. But even if we can experience everything, phenomenality could still not say or be intelligible for such reality to be proven true. Davidson writes: 'nothing, however, no *thing*, makes sentences and theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world.'[67] If beliefs, mental states, or attitudes are involved, as surely there are, we can consider a 'partial' failure of translatability. It is a partial failure since it accommodates the confidence that if our language and methods of interpretation get enlarged to accommodate belief, mental states, or attitudes, then some kind of 'neutral ground', 'a viable theory of belief and meaning', a 'general principle, or appeal to evidence' could take place. Nevertheless, Davidson says that 'no clear line between the cases can be made out' since there is no 'common coordinate system' and a 'common scheme and ontology.'[68]

With the 'dogma of a dualism of scheme and reality […] truth of sentences remains relative to language, but that is as objective as can be.'[69] Davidson, however, is neither a radical skepticist nor an idealist. Like Dummett, the justificationist is not about being a phenomenalist or a solipsist. Not everything is tantamount to one's own experience or that one's own experience is the sole criterion for objectivity. But the justificationist 'accepts that there is an external world, an environment common to himself and other human beings and to other animals, too.'[70] Davidson ultimately says that 'in giving up dependence on the concept of an *uninterpreted reality,* something outside all schemes and science, we do not relinquish the notion of objective truth', that is to say, 'in giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but reestablish

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[66] Thomas Kuhn, 'Reflection on my Critics', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1970), 266-267.

[67] Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', 16.

[68] Ibid., 18-20.

[69] Ibid., 20.

[70] Michael Dummett, 'The Justificationist's Response', 672.

unmediated touch with the familiar objects.'[71]

OBJECTS AND ONTOLOGIES

We can try to cover as much of the idea of 'object' more closely. Since curation is a curation *of objects*, we can attempt at least not to fall into the danger of imposing which is the 'better' object theory. At best, the goal is to salvage the object not apart from but within other existents or real entities and ontologies. Ontology, E.J. Lowe says, is at the heart of metaphysics since it studies the existence of categories of entities, metaphysical concepts, and their relations.[72] And, 'it is only if we can achieve a clear understanding of such fundamental metaphysical concepts and their interrelationships that we can hope to deploy them successfully in our attempts to articulate the fundamental structure of reality.'[73]

Why salvage objects? What are the metaphysical discussions around it? Without strictly applying Carnapian criteria, there is a broad spectrum of entities to respond to the question about *what* exists that is mind-independent. It could be processes, causes, laws of nature, relations, or properties. Since we are interested in curating reality as an object rather than anything, we look at some of the debates in other entities in metaphysical realism and how they still speak of objects. I say *some* to razor or avoid positing too many entities or turtles all the way down. For example, I exclude the metaphysics of truth-making[74] here as it is already somehow introduced in the previous section.

The metaphysics of the 'laws of nature' could be a start since it acknowledges scientific laws or regularities of things. The debate on laws of nature centers between Humeans claiming that 'nothing is ultimately responsible for its regularities' and Non-Humeans claiming that 'something imposes structure on it' like a god or primitives.[75] Be that as it may, mentioning this metaphysics is relevant since whichever side still agrees that laws are posited for the regularities or motions of *objects*. What about irregularities? Indeterminacy of the world is

[71] Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', 20. Italics mine.

[72] E.J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Jamin Asay, *Truthmaking* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

[75] Tyler Hildebrand, *Laws of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

another metaphysical entity that 'does not originate in the way we represent the world in mind or language.'[76] But indeterminacy equates neither to indefiniteness, which cannot be truth evaluated, nor vagueness, which is a consequence of language. If coherent, this metaphysics also posits *indeterminate objects* since 'the world is a totality of objects.' Such objects point to an identity that might be referentially indeterminate, 'coincidental' at best in a total world with different asymmetrical modalities. In other words, indeterminate objects are 'not disjunctive' – an impasse between determinate or indeterminate – albeit they modally need the notion of determinate object to function. A determinate object 'coincides with a determinate object at all worlds, or at none – in other words, it is an object that is not indeterminate' no matter that both are 'unanalyzable.'[77] Laws and indeterminacy point to another possible existent which is 'identity.' In terms of objects, however, there seem to be no criteria for object identity, which implies two terms or entities in an identity relation.[78] Aquinas, says Leibniz concerning the identity of indiscernibles, that no two angels are perfectly similar.[79] Both Russell and Wittgenstein are arguably skeptical of identity relation for either there is only one term (and relation requires there are two) *or* if there are two, they would not be identical.[80] Identity after all is about having sufficient or necessary conditions to share or have the same properties even when it has changed. This points to other metaphysical debates: properties, dispositions and powers, relations, time, persistence, and modality.

Properties are metaphysical entities that 'do not – at least not at first glance – qualify as what we call "objects" (whatever objects may be)' and they are properties such as shape, colors, and weights. Whether they univocally exist or not, however, is not apparently permitted by current metaphysical debates since the supposition *depends* on an ontology that urgently needs theoretically to posit the existence of such properties.[81] Moreover, *dispositions* and *powers* have their own

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[76] Alessandro Torza, *Indeterminacy in the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

[77] Ibid., 26. Italics mine.

[78] Erica Shumener, *Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[79] See Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles* (Oxford University Press, 2014) 17-18.

[80] See Bertrand Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics* (Allen & Unwin, 1903), 63; and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* 5.5301.

[81] Anna-Sofia Maurin, *Properties* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

metaphysical explanations. They are non-identical yet related properties *of objects* and they concern how objects are disposed to behave.[82] All these entities in some ways posit objects for their ontology to work. The metaphysics of relations, relational ontologies, or relational judgments are indispensable and they might relate to properties but 'relations differ from properties in holding, not *of*, but *between* or *among* whatever they relate, their *relata*. Relations differ among themselves as well.'[83] The talk of relations concerning whether they are real or not is debatable (i.e. they are not nothings but also not somethings either). But the debate is open to alternatives since current physics coincides with, and forces us in, asking the nature of relations within the question of a 'purely relational cosmos' e.g. in quantum physics. It suffices, nevertheless, to know here that relations 'stands between *objects*.'[84]

Time and persistence are vital entities debated to be objective or not. Positions about an independent nature of time are in tension with our experience of it. They either refer to a subjective-relative point of view (A-theory) – there is an objective present and dynamic quality – or a subjective-neutral tendency (B-theory) – there are no dynamic features albeit we only *seemingly* experience them. This is ultimately not a strong disjunction as 'the most fruitful way to proceed is to incorporate both philosophical tendencies in developing a scientifically informed metaphysical account of the nature of time.'[85] Persistence realism also talks about persistent objects, both as a semantic and ontological claim, while being careful not to conflate the two. The debate seems to show how solving the semantic question (there could be processions or persisting objects *proceeding* in our sentences) does not solve substantively the metaphysical question about 'the nature of actual processions.'[86]

Modality in philosophy generally refers to necessity, possibility, and contingency (and cognates) and it is also related to essence, disposition and power, and accident among others. But is there a metaphysical modality? As Roca-Reyes observes on one side of the question, 'it would be a plain mystery if we were able

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[82] Toby Friend and Samuel Kimpton-Nye, *Dispositions and Powers* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

[83] John Heil, *Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 3. Italics as is.

[84] Ibid., 2. Italics mine.

[85] Heather Dyke, *Time* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[86] Kristie Miller, *Persistence* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

to know at all metaphysical modality, construed mind-independently' since, citing Sidelle, 'the necessity is nothing beyond the analyticity.'[87] This exposes an epistemological problem: 'how could we possibly know of mind-independent modal facts' and a metaphysical problem 'what would modal facts be, in the first place?'[88] It is also contested if essence is a source of modality (following neo-Aristotelian frameworks). This is opposed to the idea that there is a modal property of essence, which faces a *petitio principii* whereby 'for a property to be essential to a given object is for it to be a necessary property of that object.'[89] Modality allows us then to ask about an entity's *nature,* that is, an entity's *identity* or essential properties: 'what is it *to be* a given object?'

The important debate to be made in objects akin to identity is that metaphysically it is talked of as essence or at least having essential properties. Usually, it goes around the notion that even kids utter nowadays, pending links to P4wC (Philosophy for/with Children) in the form of the phrase: 'it is what it is.' As Locke says: albeit unknown, 'the very being of anything, whereby it is what it is' is essence.[90] Fine argues that 'the nature of an object t is to specify what is essential to an object's being *identical* to t.'[91] Both Locke and Fine expose essence as a static primitive. Sartre could argue for a modal essence rooted in existence. His argument that 'existence precedes essence'[92] allows one to choose one's own essence, whatever that may be to fill the voiding question of life's meaning. But the potent kernel for pinning essence as static for a long time in the debate is the argument of origins or grounding, or interrogatively, what grounds the fact that there is essence or what originates it? Kripke expounds that when a certain table T furnished at Princeton on January 29, 1970 was factively made via a certain block of wood B, T could not have essentially originated in any other aside from B. This grounds the fact that T originated from B (barring B-variant discussions i.e. a small atomic shift could be argued that it is not really B). The same goes for

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[87] Sònia Roca-Royes, *Modality* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 55.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 48.

[90] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Penguin Classics, 1998), III.iii, 15. (Originally published: 1690).

[91] Kit Fine, 'Unified foundations for essence and ground', *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 1:2 (2015), 296-311.

[92] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

his example of Queen Elizabeth II as essentially originated from a certain egg E and a certain sperm S.[93] But current debates are open to claiming, at least non-decisively, that essence as 'how things are' is active[94] and is not necessarily static as viewed in contrast by process philosophers. How things *are* are not modal or 'how they might be, must be, were, will be, and so on' – and consequently 'not about origins (or about what grounds origins) – but that they are active depending on A or B-theories of time metaphysics.

Connected to essence is substance, which is metaphysically rooted in the independence claim or the idea that substance ontology constitutes fundamental entities and categories of reality. But substance ontology, says O'Conaill, is non-taxonomic as it does not list categories of stuff in the world (e.g. familiar objects like trees, tables, and apples) but it occupies a place where 'if there is any, they are all fundamental or metaphysically basic entities.'[95] There are five candidate criteria – though not necessarily taken together – for substance. First is ungroundedness or nothing grounds further i.e. fundamental. Second, it is explanatory independent whereby if x is a substance, x is not explanatorily dependent on y or any entity. The third to fifth are further criteria for substancehood. Third, substance is an ultimate subject i.e. it is not an adjectival entity e.g. property, relation, state, or event. The fourth criterion is simplicity whereby substance necessarily has no *substantial parts* or proper parts that are themselves in contrast with just non-substantial proper parts like spatial and temporal parts. The fifth criterion is unity where the proper parts or components are unified in a certain way e.g. hylomorphism. One view is substance dualism in Descartes where we have seen the split of a subject as a perceiving signifying substance and an object as a perceived, signified substance. As Žižek explains, '*this is the way substance becomes subject*: when, by means of an empty gesture, the subject takes upon himself the leftover which eludes his active intervention. This 'empty gesture' receives from Lacan its proper name: the signifier.'[96] I tried to situate this currently as SOO (subject-oriented ontology) represented by Žižek and OOO (object-oriented ontology) represented by Harman, though, with

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[93] Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Harvard University Press, 1980).

[94] Martin Glazier, *Essence* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[95] Donnchadh O'Conaill, *Substance* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1.

[96] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 251. Italics as is.

certain spectral groundings, no longer in a strict Cartesian dualistic way.[97]

Other ontologies that do not fall under substance ontology are composed mainly of complex ontologies.[98] There are 'thing' ontologies positing discrete or non-substance entities (n.b. different from OOO's substantial objects). There is trope ontology focused on particular properties e.g. particular redness). There is also universal property ontology i.e. the converse of trope ontology. There are process ontologies i.e. entities can be analyzed as *changings* or non-substance processes. There are not-thing or stuff ontologies focused on continuous matter inconsistent with current physics' composition of everything atoms and quarks. There are event ontologies albeit without 'fine-grained conceptions' because distinct events can occur at the same time and place while involving the same objects.' Then there are borderline ontologies e.g. storms or fires could be events – with starts and finishes – *and* objects i.e. they take up space or resize, etc. Arguably, some representatives here could be Alain Badiou as an event ontologist,[99] Rein Raud as a process ontologist[100] , and other representatives of the metaphysical entities discussed above could be Yuk Hui as a relational ontologist[101] and as O'Conaill acknowledges the possibility that organisms within ordinary objects, in general, are arguably best suited as 'processes rather than substances', consider in particular Audronė Žukauskaitė's new OOO (*Organism-Oriented Ontology*).[102] O'Conaill forwards four candidate substances (ordinary objects, simple particles, space-time, and the self) but we are particularly interested in the first one here since it is the kind of object that will be folded most in curation.

It is a default view that ordinary objects exist but the question is whether they are substances. They are 'ontologically reducible' to what composes them (failing the ungroundedness or explanatory independence criteria) but they may qualify

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[97] See Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Heidegger's Spectral Abyss: Grounding the (Strange) Return of the Subject and Object in the Žižek & Harman Duel/Duet', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2022): 302-330.

[98] Donnchadh O'Conaill, *Substance*, 52-55.

[99] See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (Continuum, 2006).

[100] See Rein Raud, *Being in Flux: A Post-Anthropocentric Ontology of the Self* (UK: Polity Press, 2021).

[101] See Yuk Hui, *On the Existence of Digital Objects* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 16ff.

[102] Audronė Žukauskaitė, *Organism-Oriented Ontology* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023). See also Jan Gresil Kahambing, 'Toward an organism-oriented ontology in organizing health, or recursive learning as resistance,' *Journal of Public Health* (2023): fdad251.

for the ultimate subject or unity criteria (they are a bundle of molecules).[103] In which case, one can either concede and say that they are indeed mereologically reducible to their parts, *or* argue that objects are emergent 'not determined by their parts' (e.g. hydrogen and oxygen are flammable and are gasses, but water is not flammable and liquid). The threat looming again is that composite objects like organisms could just be processes. But there are deeper challenges. Thomas Sattig addresses the metaphysics behind the existence of composite material objects and acknowledges the possible challenges to it like accepting mereological nihilism (no composite objects exist) or even ontological nihilism (reality is object-less).[104] Or perhaps, a realist might insist that there is only ontological indeterminacy (we cannot know for sure if an apple exists or not). *Or* a deflationist, possibly arguing against our initial Carnapian disclaimer, might eventually insist that any debate on the existence of objects will not have enough evidence, rendering all positions *at par* without advancing any degree of truth and making any metaphysical debate meaningless (*this paper is meaningless!*). To illustrate, objects could just be whatever 'carving' or form we can make use of in a formless reality, or a possible reality where objects are just illusions. But even if one succumbs to the 'madness of radical scepticism', betraying our default view that familiar or ordinary objects exist, decrying Descartes' *Deus deceptor* or nowadays, 'exotic computer-simulation possibilities', there is still a buffet of metaontological views available. Deflationists are then forced to go down into asymmetric philosophies, not at par with the various options of metaphysical realism. Any serious philosophical account of objects, simple or composite, will always involve the deeper debate of ontological realism and anti-realism. After all, the metaphysics of parts and wholes requires us to grapple and appeal to armchair *a priori* arguments that we are living in an odd universe with odd objects. For 'if we philosophers aren't allowed to occasionally appeal to *a priori* arguments for metaphysically robust conclusions, what else should we expect ourselves to be doing' except 'to reflect on some of the most fundamental ways we understand ourselves and the world'?[105]

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[103] Donnchadh O'Conaill, *Substance*, 57.
[104] Thomas Sattig, *Material Objects* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).
[105] Meg Wallace, *Parts and Wholes* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

What 'are' objects? The origins of *gegenstandstheorie* (object theory)[106] present carvings such as content and even impossibility in Brentano, Twardowski, and Meinong. Object theory was later adopted partly by Husserl and the phenomenology tradition. Brentano says that objects are directed by mental states intending them so that there is 'object-directedness' and 'intentionality.'[107] While espousing a dualism, Brentano is not a Cartesian dualist because he 'defines the mental in terms of the sort of relation which can hold between minds and other things.'[108] With implicit psychologism (desire) and idealism (thought contents), there is for Brentano a difference between an inexistent object and an *in-existent* object. The latter exists 'in' not as negation (non-existence) but insofar as it is 'immanently within the mental acts directed intentionally toward or upon them' or what he calls immanent objectivity.[109] Brentano later abandoned this paper without clear reasons. We can suppose that immanent objectivity is problematically antirealist and has issues of unnecessarily positing more entities, failing Ockham's razor. Immanent objectivity herein further splits the object into another object. Twardowski clarifies that the in-existent object is not an immanent object but immanent *content*. The only object is the one external or transcendent (different from the scholastics' use of transcendent and Kant's use of transcendental). Twardowski renounced immanent objectivity by salvaging the object from immanence: only the object is intended, freed from the idealism of closed-circle immanent ideas. This is said to be the origin of *gegenstandstheorie*. Objects herein are either *concreta* that exist in space and time, or *abstracta*[110] and even nonexistent.

Gegenstandstheorie opened pathways for thinking in Husserl and Meinong. Husserl takes on a more idealistic or subjectivist track that takes the transcendent precisely to mean Kant's transcendental as a precondition of the existence of the natural world. Through what he calls the transcendental *epoché* as 'suspension, bracketing, or disconnection of ontic commitment to or with respect to intended

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[106] Dale Jacquette, 'Origins of *Gegenstandstheorie*: Immanent and Transcendent Intended Objects in Brentano, Twardowski, and Meinong', in Dale Jacquette (ed), *Alexius Meinong, The Shepherd of Non-Being* (Springer, 2015).

[107] JM Howarth, 'Franz Brentano and Object-Directedness', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 11:3 (1980), 239-254.

[108] Ibid., 240.

[109] Dale Jacquette, 'Origins', 25.

[110] David Liggins, *Abstract Objects* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

objects' which is 'evidently an *activity* of philosophical thought, something that the *thinker does.*'[111] As Husserl says, 'the phenomenological *epoché* … completely bars me from using any judgement that concerns spatio-temporal existence.'[112] Meinong takes a different path. He is anathema to analytic philosophy, directly attacked in Ryle's statement that *gegenstandstheorie* itself is 'dead, buried and not going to be resurrected', and thus ridiculed in analytic discussions only as jumping board when talking about Frege, Russell, early Wittgenstein, and Quine's extensional theories. But Meinong is significant since he takes the opportunity to posit an intensional object theory that accommodates even beingless or nonexistent objects, neither processes nor abstractions, but is nonetheless intended and can be truly predicated. Richard Routley calls the taxonomical place where non-existent, fictional, or even impossible objects repose like unicorns, golden mountains, and round squares *Meinong's Jungle.* Dale Jacquette, in allusion to Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* sermon that the human should be a shepherd of being, names Meinong as the *shepherd of non-being*.

Brentano's later reism, in the sense that it is quite too late, clarified at the end that reist objects indeed are transcendent or external. If we are looking for a satisfactory and rigorous criterion, Brentano agrees with Twardowski and Meinong's clarification but does so very strictly that he immediately settles with 'a simple and rigorous' criteria for realism that 'nothing other than things can be objects':

> 'we have only things as objects […] the majority of things are also regarded as real […] negatives are not objects. Past and future tenses are not objects. Possibilities are not objects […] psychic correlates [loved, hated, presented] are not objects […] truth, error, good, bad […] names, signs are not objects.'[113]

This, however, is too austere to avoid the high cost of realism since it entirely rids and refutes the *irrealia* or non-existent objects of object theory. This also

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[111] Ibid., 74-75.

[112] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology,* trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1931), 100.

[113] Dale Jacquette, 'Origins', 37.

reflects the notion of 'blobjectivism' under the heading of what Horgan and Potrč call *austere realism* that excludes posits as much as possible in a minimally ontological way.[114] But we should at this point redefine a rigorous attempt at a realist track while not imposing too many austerity measures.

TOWARDS A REALIST PHILOSOPHY OF CURATION

I will conclude this paper with an initial conversation on curation tending towards an anti-realist gaze or perception. We can also plot a realist track or a survey of contemporary realisms. Apart from the survey of realisms, this conclusion does not intend to advance a fresh realism called curatorial realism but to clarify that the trajectory of this paper treats it as local realism. This does not, however, stop it from venturing toward global realist and metaontological discussions.

We can go back to the assertion that curation tends towards an anti-realist perception. Rein Raud rethinks the notion of 'gaze' as a metaphorical perception that visualizes 'all directed cognitive operations that have an effect on the consciousness on behalf of which they are performed.'[115] He continues that this gaze is not only directed to physical scales of characteristics but 'goes beyond' and thereby 'involves all the specifics, from the size and capacities of the viewpoint up to desires, repulsions, and ideological distortions that may enter into the relationship of two entities.'[116] Neutral gaze, he says, is 'impossible as such' since the observer is always embedded in a perspectival limitation – it is 'necessarily structured and thereby distorting, willfully or unwilfully.'[117] His crucial assertion is that just because reality is *ontologically* mind-independent, it does not follow that *epistemologically* it is gaze-independent.

The gaze 'perceives the world of 'things' as a structured whole consisting of autonomous parts, held together by certain laws and principles, a certain order [… The gaze] needs to see 'things' in a certain manner in order to relate.'[118] To think of reality as not gaze-dependent is to involve one's perception in the natural order of things, making it absolute, ridding itself of subjectivity in the pretense of

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[114] Terence Horgan and Matjaz Potrc, *Austere realism: Contextual semantics meets minimal ontology* (MIT Press, 2009).

[115] Rein Raud, *Being in Flux*, 52.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 53.

[118] Ibid., 42.

being objective. Here he makes the example of a time-triggered radio that plays on an isolated island and says that it not playing music because 'music' is only possible in a certain gaze. Such gaze, which in this case is a form of a receptive apparatus, is needed to be able to 'remember sounds', 'discern rhythmic and melodic patterns (or absence thereof)', and develop 'an emotionally tinged response to them.'[119] As such, the gaze makes sense of reality in its own way and relates to it in a directed form of embedded reception.

Our first premise is herein the rejoinder: *while reality is ontologically mind-independent, it is anti-realist for reality to be curation-dependent.* Curation takes from this notion of gaze in a rather vacuous way. When the object is within the museum, it is enclosed in a curated space and time. As Martinon says, 'through its series of rigid or flexible frameworks where time and space are isolated, placed in parenthesis, in other words, "aestheticised" by the curator, the museum attempts to make sense of the art or the objects it houses.'[120] In effect, curation determines the ontology of the object. The object's embeddedness is shrouded by curatorial perception, which may not necessarily correspond to the reality of the object. In this encapsulating way, the crucial assertion for curation is that reality may be ontologically mind-dependent but it *must be* curation-dependent. In the case of the curating apparatus, curation is needed to historically make sense of the object, trace cultural patterns informing of its ontology, and present it in a way that evokes visitor engagement. The museological context adds to it a certain domain in which the curating activity makes use of the subjective positionalities *idealizing* the reality of the object. This vacuous move, in this respect, is anti-realist since it voids the independence of the reality it tries to 'aesthecise.' While it is true that the non-neutral gaze may be embodied and not necessarily anti-realist, the additional claim here is that when such gaze alters the spatio-temporality of the object, it also follows that it alters its ontology or realist connotations. In other words, while the gaze is situated, curation tends towards subjectivization that reflects an idealistic framework, able even to alter the situatedness of the gaze. Anna Bergqvist and Robert Cowan discussed the ways in which evaluation as ubiquitous connotes justification of experiences, value theory, and whether values

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[119] Ibid., 52.
[120] Jean-Paul Martinon, 'Museum and Restlessness,' in Hugh H. Genoways, ed., Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century (Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2006), 59.

of the evaluated are undermined by the evaluative perceptual experience.[121] It can be surmised here that curation does this reifying move in an undermining way but also in an overarching way where objects are underrated or overrated upon evaluation. From this general idea, I then plot a *realist* track of a philosophy of curation.

A cursory look at contemporary realisms can initiate a redefinition of what is real. We have seen that Putnam's *internal realism* works on the impossibility of having external realism without conceptual schemes. We have also seen how Davidson argues that this scheme-reality has become a dogma that can be done away with without sacrificing the unconceptualized reality. Other realisms also are worth looking into with merits that we can deem rigorous and satisfactory.

Karen Barad's *agential realism* is one of the prominent philosophies of feminist new materialism and physics that speak of reality as agencies ontologically *intra*-acting. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she expounds that it is a relational ontology that rejects individual objects and argues for an entangled whole, calling into question 'the dualisms of object-subject, knower-known, nature-culture, and word-world.'[122] In this case, objects are emergent from the intra-actions formed by material-discursive practices not permitting inseparability. Entanglement 'is an effect peculiar to quantum mechanics whereby the state of two or more apparently distinct systems cannot be described by a combination of their respective individual states.'[123]

(Ram) Roy Bhaskar's *critical realism* (from transcendental realism and critical naturalism) or a realist philosophy of science insists on the reality of objective existence. – He distinguished his position from classical empiricism (i.e. modeling the regularities of nature) and Kantian transcendental idealism (i.e. imagining plausible generative mechanisms). He espouses what he calls a Kantian transcendental *realism* as *critical naturalism* because the 'reality of the mechanisms postulated are subjected to empirical scrutiny' as an invariance result rather than regularity and as testing the real rather than an imaginary.[124] His philosophy is

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[121] Anna Bergqvist and Robert Cowan (eds), *Evaluative Perception* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[122] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Duke University Press, 2007), 147, 262.

[123] Rasmus Jaksland. 'Decoherence, appearance, and reality in agential realism', *European Journal for Philosophy of Science* 13:2 (2023), 24.

[124] Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Philosophy of Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 4.

realist on the account that 'perception gives us access to things and experimental activity access to structures that exist independently of us.'[125]

Maurizio Ferraris and Markus Gabriel both explain the faces of what is called *new realism*, according to which the existence of an external world is given and is a proof of resource despite the resistance it poses to our conceptual schemes. Ferraris also takes what he calls transcendental realism from Kant in saying that ontology conditions the possibility of epistemology (a positive realism) and combines it with metaphysical realism since ontology is independent of epistemology (a negative realism).[126] Both *positive* and *negative* realisms form new realism. Gabriel's take is a kind of *neutral* realism that rejects the realist vs anti-realist debate, thus neutral 'with respect to any metaphysical commitment to the existence of some single totality of objects or facts, or to any unified all-encompassing domain that might be identified with nature.'[127] Acknowledging that there might be alignments of neo-Carnapian philosophy involved and what he calls 'metametaphysical nihilism' in post-Kantian philosophy (from Heidegger's take that what Kant was doing was a kind of 'metaphysics of metaphysics'),[128] Gabriel opines on the sloppiness of such words as 'reality' and 'the world' to refer to existence. As the title of his book illustrates, *Why the World Does Not Exist,* an all-inclusive being does not exist since the world itself is not found in the world, while unicorns wearing police uniforms on the moon exist with other objects.[129] In *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology,* he denies a single reality where all real things belong while accepting a combination of metametaphysical nihilism, a deflationary ontological pluralism, and ontological realism. Things are real but only in their respective fields of sense – not to be confused with language games, conceptual schemes, world-making, or Meinongianism – the domains where Fregean realist *senses* grasp things as such-and-so, mind-independent objects encountered in the field, but also intensionally

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[125] Ibid., xxx.

[126] Maurizio Ferraris, 'Transcendental Realism', *The Monist* 98:2 (2015), 215-232.

[127] Markus Gabriel, 'Neutral Realism', *The Monist* 98:2 (2015), 181-196.

[128] Markus Gabriel, 'Why the world does not exist but unicorns do' Interview by Richard Marshall, *3:AM Magazine,* October 16, 2015, https://web.archive.org/web/20181016151700/http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/why-the-world-does-not-exist-but-unicorns-do/

[129] Markus Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

individuated.[130] This field is not a processual field of spatio-temporal continuities like Raud's where all entities are dynamically existing, for as Gabriel says, 'I have never seen even a minimally convincing case to the effect that to exist is to be a spatio-temporal object. I believe the burden of proof is not on the ontological pluralist per se, but on the metaphysical monist'[131] and Raud's field is a 'commitment to a single-tiered ontology.'[132]

Quentin Meillassoux's *speculative realism* (shared with, although with variances, Harman, Brassier, Grant, Stengers, Tristan Garcia, Manuel DeLanda, Adrian Johnston, Alberto Toscano, etc.) tries to overcome the basic assumptions of Kant's philosophies of human finitude not being able to bypass our categories (recall the engraved Flammarion design). All we have, accordingly, is a philosophy of access that privileges anthropological lenses over others and what Meillassoux calls the dogma of correlationism where all we can access is the correlation between thinking and being (akin to Davidson's critique of the dogma of scheme-reality dualism).[133] For speculative realists, we *can* take a peek outside our transcendental categories where reality resides.

Lee Braver's *transgressive realism* relies on a continental thread of Kant, Hegel, and mainly Kierkegaard to argue that the real shatters our categories. These three steps allow for the enigmatic relation between ontological reality and epistemological reality.[134] As Braver says in 'A brief history of continental realism': Kierkegaard fashioned the position of transgressive realism by combining 'Hegel's insistence that we must have some kind of contact with anything we can call real (thus rejecting noumenal), with Kant's belief that reality fundamentally exceeds our understanding; human reason should not be the criterion of the real' out of which the outcome is that 'the idea that our most vivid encounters with reality come in experiences that shatter our categories.'[135]

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[130] Markus Gabriel, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015). The Sinn/Bedeuting debate is still ongoing. I follow the idea that 'senses are to be public and objective, as thoughts are for Frege' see Sinn/Bedeutung, *Oxford Reference*, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100508390

[131] Markus Gabriel, 'Why the world does not exist but unicorns do,' *loc. cit.*

[132] Rein Raud, *Being in Flux*, 104, 134.

[133] Quentin Meillasoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (Continuum: 2010), 5.

[134] Umit Akyol, 'Realism, Speculative Realism, and Transgressive Realism', Doctoral Paper: Doctor of Philosophy, University of Dundee (2023).

[135] Lee Braver, 'A brief history of continental realism', *Continental Philosophy Review* 45 (2012), 261-289.

There are other realisms of course like Simon Blackburn's *quasi-realism* and Lee Ross' *naïve realism*, both of which are more confined to the domains of ethics and psychology. For now, we may ask which realism we are going to apply in the discussion. If we mobilize curation as a kind of folding to rid anti-realist connotations, then we must argue first for a kind of *museological realism*, or more specifically, a *curatorial realism* of sorts that will guarantee a realism of objects in museological or curatorial contexts. This will be in the remit of a *local* realism, such that it is limited to the claim of curatorial objects only. Other local realisms are aesthetic realism (there are objective aesthetic properties from which we judge the beautiful) or moral realism (there are moral properties or facts). This does not mean, however, that to be a metaphysical realist means to be a summative *global* realist accepting all kinds of local realisms (all local *xs* exist). Instead, 'metaphysical realism is general or global in the sense that the metaphysical realist thinks (minimally, pending later extensions) that at least one entity exists and it is independent of us.'[136]

However, curatorial realism is not a new ontology. It is rather a starting point ('pending later extensions') for the discussion to move towards the matching of reality. For curatorial realism to work, we can build upon some arguments of contemporary realisms that are committed to some realist claims while finding some similar lines of critique with anti-realist elements. In the realisms surveyed, the dogma of the thought-world correlate seems to explain more the knot that ties curation with the curated object. It can be surmised here that the curation-dependency of objects falls to anti-realism contra accessibility, which is why a path against such a claim is seen more with speculative realism's assumptions.

Can we fold reality as an object? Curatorial realism as a local realism argues that we can know about curated objects as existent and mind-independent. Seeing that accessibility is a problem here, curatorial realism is more anchored on the fourfold philosophy of curation by juxtaposing the philosophies of Martinon and Harman. This could all be well and good in arguing that reality can be folded as an object semantically. But because this problem of access to the object in a local curatorial context may not be as clear as the access to an object in *any* context, given the anti-realist tendencies of thought, the venture does not

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[136] JTM Miller, Metaphysical Realism and Anti-Realism, 6.

stop at curated objects but has to entertain, rather than solve, metaontological problems as well. Again, this is why the fourfold, despite possibly detaching the gaze of the curator towards curated objects to *be* sans the dependency from such gaze, still would not be able to fully curate reality per se. While it is sufficiently realist, it cannot be the end of the line or the final fold. To use Haraway's words, a realist philosophy cannot fully meet reality but *half-way*. That is to say, it can be affirmed how an object can be fourfolded to be realist but folding reality will be a greater challenge. Delving into the fifth-fold can introduce the vast possibilities of the extent to which the discussion of curatorial realism can cover. There are, therefore, two tones here, one that aims for a localized realism in the fourfold and, in the fifthfold, one that attends to the possible pending extensions of such realism in a global sense. The first one focuses on the curated object (in the museum and beyond), and the second one on possibly curating (or at least meeting) the whole of reality as an object. This idea of folding is, of course, only one among many possible alternatives to open up a discussion on curating reality and the philosophy of curation as ontology.

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