

<http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html>

A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1

2014-01-15 09:00:37

By Judith Farquhar

Editor's note: In the wake of the [discussion about the 'ontological turn'](#) at this year's American Anthropological Association conference, we asked several scholars, "which texts or resources would you recommend to a student or colleague interested in the uses of 'ontology' as an analytical category in recent work in anthropology and science and technology studies?" This was the reading list we received from [Judith Farquhar](#), Max Palevsky Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Answers from a number of other scholars will appear as separate posts in the series.

In providing a reading list, I had lots of good "ontological" resources at hand, having just taught a seminar called "Ontological Politics." This list is pared down from the syllabus; and the syllabus itself was just a subset of the many useful philosophical, historical, and ethnographic readings that I had been devouring during the previous year, when I was on leave.

I really like all these pieces, though I don't actually "follow" all of them. This is a good thing, because the field — if it can be called that — tends to go in circles, with all the usual suspects citing all the usual suspects. In the end, as we worked our way through the course, I found the ethnographic work more exciting than most of the more theoretically inclined writing. At the other end of the spectrum, I feel quite transformed by having read Heidegger's "The Thing" — but I'm not sure why!

Philosophical and methodological works in anthropology and beyond:

Philippe Descola, 2013, [The Ecology of Others](#), Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

William Connolly, 2005, [Pluralism](#). Durham: Duke University Press. (Ch. 3,

"Pluralism and the Universe" [on William James], pp. 68-92.)

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 2004, "[Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation](#)," *Tipiti* 2 (1): 3-22.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 2012, "[Immanence and Fear: Stranger events and subjects in Amazonia](#)," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2 (1): 27-43.

Marisol de la Cadena, 2010, "[Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond 'politics'](#)," *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 334-370.

Bruno Latour, 2004, "[Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern](#)," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2): 225-248.

A dialogue from *Common Knowledge* 2004 (3): Ulrich Beck: "[The Truth of Others: A Cosmopolitan Approach](#)" (pp. 430-449) and Bruno Latour: "[Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck](#)" (pp. 450-462).

Graham Harman, 2009, [Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics](#). Melbourne: Re.Press. (OA)

Isabelle Stengers, 2005, "[The Cosmopolitical Proposal](#)," in Bruno Latour & Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, pp. 994-1003.

Martin Heidegger, 1971, "[The Thing](#)," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Tr. Albert Hofstadter). New York: Harper & Row, pp. 163-180

Graham Harman, 2010, "[Technology, Objects and Things in Heidegger](#)," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34: 17-25.

Jane Bennett and William Connolly, 2012, "The Crumpled Handkerchief," in Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., [Time and History in Deleuze and Serres](#). London & New York: Continuum, pp. 153-171.

Tim Ingold, 2004, "[A Circumpolar Night's Dream](#)," in John Clammer et al., eds., *Figured Worlds: Ontological Obstacles in Intercultural Relations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 25-57.

Annemarie Mol, 1999, "Ontological Politics: A Word and Some Questions," in John Law, and J. Hassard, ed., [Actor Network Theory and After](#). Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 74-89.

Terrific ethnographic studies very concerned with ontologies:

Mario Blaser, 2010, [Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond](#). Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Eduardo Kohn, 2013, [How Forests Think: Toward an anthropology beyond the human](#). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Helen Verran, 2011, "[On Assemblage: Indigenous Knowledge and Digital Media \(2003-2006\) and HMS Investigator \(1800-1805\)](#)." In Tony Bennet & Chris Healey, eds., *Assembling Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 163-176.

Morten Pedersen, 2011, [Not Quite Shamans: Spirit worlds and Political Lives in Northern Mongolia](#). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

John Law & Marianne Lien, 2013, "[Slippery: Field Notes in Empirical Ontology](#)," *Social Studies of Science* 43 (3): 363-378.

Stacey A. Langwick, 2011, [Bodies, Politics, and African Healing: The Matter of Maladies in Tanzania](#). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Judith Farquhar is Max Palevsky Professor of Anthropology and Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. Her research concerns traditional medicine, popular culture, and everyday life in contemporary China. She is the author of [Knowing Practice: The Clinical Encounter of Chinese Medicine](#) (Westview 1996), [Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China](#) (Duke 2002), and [Ten Thousand Things: Nurturing Life in Contemporary Beijing](#) (Zone 2012) (with Qicheng Zhang), and editor (with Margaret Lock) of [Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life](#) (Duke 2007).

AMA citation

Farquhar J. A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1. *Somatosphere*. 2014. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html>. Accessed July 7, 2016.

APA citation

Farquhar, Judith. (2014). *A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1*. Retrieved July 7, 2016, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html>

Chicago citation

Farquhar, Judith. 2014. A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html> (accessed July 7, 2016).

Harvard citation

Farquhar, J 2014, *A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1*, Somatosphere. Retrieved July 7, 2016, from <<http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html>>

MLA citation

Farquhar, Judith. "A reader's guide to the "ontological turn" – Part 1." 15 Jan. 2014. Somatosphere. Accessed 7 Jul. 2016.<<http://somatosphere.net/2014/01/a-readers-guide-to-the-ontology-turn-part-1.html>>