

PATRICE MANIGLIER, *A Latourian Glossary: Modernity/Modernism, Relativism, Non-Humans, and Politics*

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MODERNITY AND MODERNISM

Alexandru Matei: You have previously addressed the concept of 'modernity' in the Latourian interpretation within your farewell message to Latour, published in the review AOC.¹ Here is the quote: "Modernity is characterised by its extraordinary capacity to give itself a mystified image." Let me reformulate my inquiry as follows: how can we establish a correlation between this critique of modernity and its three prevalent manifestations, notably those that have garnered recognition in Eastern Europe? (1) Firstly, there is a dialogical, rational, Habermasian modernity; (2) Then, we encounter a concept of modernity, defined as modernization, which can be described in terms of its temporal framework as 'acceleration' (in line with Hartmut

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¹ Patrice Maniglier, “Bruno Latour : une mort à contre-temps, une œuvre pour l’avenir”, published on 11/10/2022, accessible here : <https://aoc.media/opinion/2022/10/10/bruno-latour-une-mort-a-contre-temps-une-oeuvre-pour-lavenir/>.

Rosa's perspective). It can also be viewed from moral angles, such as the 'new man' concept in communism, or examined strictly from a materialistic standpoint, considering capitalist acceleration; (3) Finally, there is 'modernism' as an aesthetic turning point. This is perhaps the foundation of the avant-gardes that emerged and developed in France, Italy and Russia/the USSR, in particular. This perspective could be regarded as a means of symbolizing, conveying, and envisioning the transformative impact of acceleration on life and the world.

Patrice Maniglier: I think that the difficulty in understanding Latour's proposals on the notion of Modernity lies in the fact that Modernity, which, it should be noted, is an autonym, in other words a term by which a group designates itself, both asserts itself as a particularity (with a date and place of birth, a progressive history and an epic trajectory), and, at the same time, rejects itself as such (since it is nothing other than the realization of the universal, that is to say of the aspirations inscribed in human nature). Now, 'we have never been modern' does not simply mean that nothing has happened, that Modernity does not exist, but that it is certainly a peculiarity, but not an exception: Modernity does not tear itself away from what Latour calls, in his 1991 book, the 'anthropological matrix'. From this point of view, and despite what he himself said about it, Latour is very close to Lévi-Strauss: the 'moderns' are savages of a certain kind, to be characterized by difference from others – just as Lévi-Strauss said of domesticated thought that it was a variant of savage thought, and that we can only understand both of them in the system that constitutes them as variants of each other, in other words in a group of transformations, endowed with what Lévi-Strauss notoriously called (*horresco referens*) a structure. For this reason, we can also say that Modernity is defined by the way it stands in the way of anthropology, even though anthropology is a modern discipline - always this characteristic double game. To symmetrize anthropology, as Latour proposes in all his work, in other words to make the anthropology of the Moderns exactly the same as that of the non-moderns, is therefore to break with Modernity from the outset. The Moderns are those who can only do the anthropology of others. But, in inventing anthropology, they are, in a way, digging a hole in their own destitution, because anthropology functions through relativization, so it was inevitable that an anthropology of Modernity should appear, at the same time as Modernity itself was dissipating, at least as a concept of a certain self-understanding...

Having said that, I think that something did happen in the course of Latour's life on this subject: it became clear that there was something not just particular, but exceptional in spite of the modern event. Except that this exceptional element was not to be found in the 'anthropological' traits of the Moderns: as if Modernity could be characterized simply by looking at the so-called 'moderns', by which I mean their practices, what we might call the cultural traits of this practice in contrast to what we can observe elsewhere, in other human peoples. You had to look at the Earth, the Earth System. Here we can see that something quite exceptional has happened, and the emergence of discussions around the notion of the Anthropocene is just one indication of this. However, from this point of view too, we can see that Modernity is self-mystifying: we can't easily perceive what it means from the point of view of planetary history, because it keeps cutting its link with the terrestrial chains within which it

is embedded and on which it relies, while at the same time upsetting them, mistreating them and neglecting them. This is the theme of the 'bilocality' of modern life, on which I lay particular stress in my book *The Philosopher, the Earth and the Virus*, the disjunction that Latour speaks of (borrowing the expression from Pierre Charbonnier) between 'the world we live in' and 'the world we live in', a disjunction that is also inseparable from a certain form of coloniality intrinsic to modernity, on which a whole Marxist tradition from Rosa Luxembourg to David Harvey had also insisted.

From this point of view, the three notions of Modernity that you mention (there could be many others) can be evaluated fairly accurately. Habermasian rationality does not seem to pass the test very well, because it is clear that Modernity completely failed to pass itself off as a practical rationalisation: it understood precisely nothing of what it was doing itself, of what it was from the geocentric point of view. Of course, we can always say, and rightly so, that the Anthropocene is a scientific concept, that the current debates on 'transition', 'bifurcation', etc., can only take place thanks to the spaces of democratic discussion, but we cannot shake off the feeling that the self-satisfaction that seems to be expressed in the Habermasian definition has been an obstacle to the very understanding of what it was.

The Acceleration definition is better, but it is still far too anthropocentric. We need to be able to show that, when means of transport accelerate, it is not just the mobiles that move faster, but the very space 'on' which they are supposed to move that itself changes. We need to give an image of the face of the Earth that takes shape at the end of any accelerated journey: I drive from my home to my workplace, but at the end of the road, there's not just a car park where I park my car, there's another Earth with all its landscapes modified in 30, 50, 1000 years' time. We need to grasp all this not from the point of view of accelerated motions (of whatever kind - I have only used the example of means of transport for convenience), but from the shifted perspective of the Earth itself. For my part, I think that the term "Great Acceleration" is a poor one for characterising the event that constitutes the geocritical truth of Modernity. I prefer to speak of 'Great Contraction', to designate the shrinking of the space that separates us, as terraforming agents, from the limits of the planet.

As for the third meaning of Modernity that you mention, in relation to modernism in the aesthetic sense, there are two aspects that refer back to Modernity in the sense that it is a geohistorical event: its exaltation, indeed, of rupture, its conviction of cutting history in two (to use Nietzsche's word), but also its quest for the autonomy not only of Art in general in relation to moral or political demands (I'm thinking of Art for Art's sake, of Baudelaire, Bataille, etc.), but also of each medium in its own right and in relation to other media (I'm thinking of Greenberg's definition of Modernity): there's something like a thesis of separation in aesthetic modernism, as if the arts had to cut themselves off from the threads that run through them and make them mediations for histories that are much longer than they are, as if above all the ideal were a kind of self-carrying, as if an aesthetic work consisted of a self-carried vehicle, which is to some extent the ideal of Modernity in its relationship to the Earth: to separate oneself from it, to internalise in the Metropolis all the elements one needs, to create an artificial world that supports itself. As if the ideal were the space shuttle, which is self-sufficient

and can thus leave without return in the starry night. In truth, the world of the Metropolis is terribly dependent on external resources, just as the world of space shuttles depends on the infrastructures that attach them to the Earth: this world of the Metropolis externalizes part of its waste and puts terrestrial interactions at its service without taking care of its regeneration conditions, for example by relying on the recycling capacities of terrestrial and marine ecosystems to get rid of its waste. As I see it, even this aesthetic modernism refers back to the fundamentally colonial structure of Modernity, this separation between the world we live in and the world we live off. On this point, I draw on Jeanne Etelain's recent work on the regime of spatiality specific to the terrestrial condition, and her insistence on the type of spatialization specific to Modernity, with its logic of zone proliferation that enables it to replicate the spatial division within a closed planetary space. Perhaps it is not for nothing that one of the great texts of literary modernism is precisely entitled "Zone", by Apollinaire. In any case, there is a fascinating field of research to be explored here.

RELATIVISM

AM: Another misunderstanding concerns the idea of relativism, which some scientists saw as a kind of sceptical libertarianism that allowed them to say anything about the phenomena studied by science with impunity. In the early 1990s, at the time of the Sokal-Bricmont quarrel, Latour was quickly thrown into the camp of the 'postmodernists', precisely because of the 'constructivism' he supposedly professed, and from which he continuously distanced himself afterwards. Later, however, the same Latour was to be associated with the thought of 'speculative realism', which is precisely anti-relativist and, like the new realisms, anti-postmodern. How can we approach the subject of relativism from a 'Latourian' perspective, distancing ourselves from both postmodern relativism and rationalist foundationalism/essentialism? Moreover, how does Latour's realism, which grants ontological significance to entities such as fiction on par with technology, religion, or politics, reinvigorate a commitment to broadening the scope of reality, akin to the artistic modernity of the early twentieth century?

PM: For me, this war against relativism is truly symptomatic of the obscurantism that is typically modernist. Latour himself found it hard to resist the violent discrediting of the very word "relativism". That is why he spoke of relationism to explain what he was trying to do. To bring some order to these confused debates, we need to introduce a few conceptual distinctions.

We need to distinguish between what we might call negative or reactive relativism, which consists in limiting the field of legitimacy of a descriptive or normative statement by relating it to what we then call a context, and a relativism that I call positive or active, which consists in using the relativization procedure as a procedure of knowledge (or self-transformation in a more general sense, which goes beyond purely theoretical experience), a procedure that enables us to better understand the very nature of this statement thanks to its

relativization, to relate to it more precisely, more intensely, more truthfully, more justly in the double sense of justice and rightness.

We Latourians (dare I say it) are only interested in the latter. We want to learn something more through relativization, not take something away from anyone. Relativization enriches the world, not impoverishes it. And if we sometimes have to limit certain claims that might be called dogmatic, this is never the goal as such; the goal is always an increase in knowledge, perception, precision in general, in short, an intensification of life. Therefore, relativism is not an anti-ontological, critical or deconstructive thesis, but an ontological one: being is relative, and relativity is the very way of existing (not non-existing). This relativism calls for metaphysical work to construct a relativist ontology. Hence, Latour's association with "speculative realism", in other words, with what I myself have called the return of metaphysics. However, we must also distinguish between two types of active relativism. The first, which we might call flat relativism or monological relativism, corresponds to Latour's period known as "network actor theory". It is the idea that a statement (and indeed any entity, for Latour has a semiological ontology, for which to exist is to be said, but let us skip over this difficult point), a statement, therefore, exists only on condition that it integrates a very large number of relations that make up its identity. A statement on its own is neither true nor false, neither real nor illusory. And this isn't just because there needs to be a "theoretical" context that stabilizes the meaning of this statement (as epistemology has been saying for a long time, from Bachelard to Quine); the relations that give it its identity are both material relations and semantic relations - all of which need to be "flattened out". For example, Newton's laws of motion do not just apply to the fall of a body: you have to construct a great many mediations to relate these statements to the movement of an airplane. Without these concrete relations, it is rigorously irrational to say that Newton's laws have any part in the production of a phenomenon like an apple falling from a tree. Similarly, the sequencing of a virus is not "true" in a frontal relationship between "representation", on the one hand, and "reality", on the other; it involves an enormous number of material and immaterial mediations. If I tell you that you have Covid, but that I cannot relate a sample of your body to a chemical reaction device in a laboratory, itself linked to a huge number of scientific and political institutions, I may be right, but what I am saying is not "scientific", and that changes the identity of my statement. Better still, saying that someone has Covid is not the same as detecting SARS-Cov-2 in a test: Covid is a vernacular notion, designating a disease, and it is clear that the scientific statement "translates" this experience, and vice versa.

The thesis of what we might call the "first Latour" was simply that entities should not be separated from all those mediations that give them their very being by "translating" them, that they should not, in short, be "absolutized", also in the etymological sense of the word, which implies the notion of isolation, solitude, separation. This is not to say that there are no "universal" statements, but that such statements presuppose a certain relational, and even spatial, regime, which Latour thought he could describe as centred networks. I refer you in particular to his book *Science in Action* (1987). So, through this relativism, we're talking about a tool for understanding how things work, how science, technology and "modern" societies

work, a tool for enriching our characterization of what things are, and not a critique of anything. Latour had sometimes given up calling it relativism, because of the misunderstandings the term gave rise to. He called it relationalism. Personally, I would like to keep the term stigmatized, precisely because it has been stigmatized foolishly - and, as Nietzsche would say, one must harm foolishness...

That said, there is another sense of positive relativism, which uses not the idea of network, but the idea of variant, and which we could call polylogical or kaleidoscopic relativism. This is, in effect, the idea that we can better understand statements that at first glance appear to us as immediately universalizable, if we are attentive to what is lost in their translation into statements that look identical, but ultimately turn out to be merely equivocal. For we can then in turn re-characterize these comparative frames themselves as variants of other comparative frames, each redefined by its position in a system of variants, what Lévi-Strauss called a "group of transformations". For example, we may believe that kinship is a universal condition, but if we try to translate it by comparing different kinship systems, we realize that the very notion of kinship does not hold: for example, there are many populations where it is not separated from political, religious or economic relations; there is no specific domain of kinship. The same applies to literature: comparative literature should not be the comparison of different literatures, which are assumed to leave the type invariant by proposing different contents, but rather the relativization of the very notion of literature, which is thus redefined by contrast with what appears to be literature but is also something else, with these variations in turn enabling "literature" to be characterized by the differential axes through which it constitutes itself as such. This comparative relativism does not relativize in relation to contexts, but in relation to other variants, by contrast, with the particularity, in relation to standard versions of comparatism, that the variants enable us to displace the type that subsumes all the variants: the anthropology of kinship realizes that we should no longer compare mechanisms for reproducing lineages (the first, ethnocentric type), but mechanisms for exchanging women (the second, allocentric type). This relativism is in fact structuralism, if we remember that a structure in Lévi-Strauss's sense is a group of transformations. The model behind this concept of relativism is that of the plurality of languages, and hence of translation, but also of philological comparatism, which cultural anthropology extended to all the phenomena it was interested in. Latour has always been interested in this kind of relativism, too, but it was not until his *Enquête sur les modes d'existence* that this question came to the fore. And it was then that I began to understand that his work concerned me, as someone who was interested in the legacy of structuralism and the epistemology of anthropology as conceived by Lévi-Strauss, thanks in particular to the mediation of Viveiros de Castro and his great book, *Métaphysiques Cannibales* (Paris, PUF, 2009). In this book, Latour explains that there is not just one form of reality, and not just one discourse of truth, that of the sciences, but several, each of which must be defined contrastively in relation to the other. To understand the sciences, we need to grasp their kind of reality, in contrast to legal realities, for example, but also fictional ones, and so on. To make a work of fiction stand up requires a great deal of effort, many networks, just as complex and original as making a scientific object

stand up. Latour gives us an example of endo-comparatism, which uses the different strata of experience in a regime of reality production such as that of modern societies - what Max Weber would have called value systems - to relativize them in relation to one another. Moreover, as you can see, it is not a question of diminishing their charge of reality, but rather of better characterizing it. This relativism is therefore a realism, but a pluralist realism, a plurealism. It is an ontology of what I would call (with Viveiros de Castro) equivocations, i.e., entities that never stop moving towards several modes of existence. In this way, my body can become a scientific object if it is submitted to laboratories for analysis, an artistic object if I give a performance in a theatre, a psychic object if it supports those bodily alterations that psychoanalysts call symptoms (e.g. paralysis of the leg with no somatic cause), a legal object if my labour power is sold, and so on.

NON-HUMAINS

AM: Bruno Latour is relatively unknown in Romania, primarily because science studies are practically absent and it is challenging to ground his theoretical discourse. Nevertheless, in his 1991 work *We Have Never Been Modern*, he reflects upon and scrutinizes the haste with which the triumph of capitalism over communism was hailed in 1990. Can we attribute this hurry to an omission, not of human existence, but rather of the inclusion of 'non-human' elements that constitute it, including 'nature'? As you say in your latest book, *Le Philosophe, la Terre et le virus. Bruno Latour expliqué par l'actualité* (2021), "putting humans and non-humans on the same level of reality" was Latour's first ontological gesture. What is the contemporary significance of this omission, and how does it differentiate the anthropological critique of modernity from the more widely recognized postmodern critiques? What implications arise for aesthetics and politics when non-human entities play an active role in shaping our world?"

PM: Yes, this is a striking point: *We have never been modern*, as early as 1990, notes that at the very moment when capitalism believed it had broken the barrier of the communist bloc, it realised, on the occasion of the first climate conferences, that, in fact, it did not have the space for its own extension. And yet, globalisation was unleashed: the ideology of triumph over communism only exacerbated this blindness. And now here we are, trapped by fossilised capitalist regimes that don't quite know how to get out of the impasse they've got themselves into. You are right: it is the neglect of the agentivity of non-living beings that is partly responsible for this intellectual blindness. We only saw politics among ourselves.

But Latour's idea is quite simple: other-than-humans also have a capacity for action, and conversely, human actions do not fall under the regime that we like to attribute to them, that of voluntary action. Basically, this is the symmetrical position of Spinoza: he said that humans were not an empire within an empire, but a thing among things, and Latour said that these things are not inert beings relaying a force from elsewhere, but agents associating with other agents. What does acting actually mean? To have initiative, to be unable to be completely predictable, to set our own conditions. Even the wheel of a watch will only transmit

the exact movement you want it to transmit if you put it in the right conditions, which as you know is extremely difficult. The same applies to the Earth: it reacts to our actions, through the cascading effects caused by the disruption of planetary biogeochemical cycles. In this sense, it has a capacity for initiative, it is an agent.

This means that acting on something always means acting with something – Latour says: making an alliance. Pasteur made an alliance with these entities that he called microbes by respecting their conditions, even inventing sophisticated devices to define these conditions as precisely as possible, i.e., their repertoire of actions (completely sealed laboratory test tubes to ensure that we stuck to their actions), and by forming an alliance with the farmers, who also had an interest in the project (but they too had to be convinced, just as the microbes had to be convinced), and with the medical officers of health, whose interests also had to be 'translated' to bring them into the alliance with the microbes, and so on. Seeing all this 'flat out' means that we can no longer distinguish along a single barrier between what comes under human initiative on the one hand, and what comes under the response of things on the other. Not to say that there is no difference, but to say that the difference is not between 'us' and 'the rest of the world'. Humans may have a particular way of acting (although I think we need to be very careful with this kind of universalising statement), but it is just one of many, and one that we will understand all the better if we don't hypostatise it. When faced with an oil spill, you might want to separate the action of the socio-technical system that led to the spill (the ship, the controls, its financing, etc.) from the action of the socio-technical system that led to the spill (the ship, the controls, its financing, etc.), on the other the marine ecosystem destroyed by this oil spill, but in reality there are mixtures everywhere and on every scale: the hull of the ship is made up of non-humans, the storm is a non-human, there is a human gifted with particular skills who is supposed to make the decision, but it depends on meteorological machines, the consequences on marine ecosystems also include fishermen and even after all the ecologists who would like to make this difference... In short, we have assemblages of humans and non-humans rather than two separate domains.

This gesture frees up a lot of things. First of all, it avoids a form of ethnocentrism that is all the more embarrassing at a time when all we swear by is the need to "decolonise our knowledge". For it so happens that there are many 'colonised' populations who do not share this Summa Division. This ties in with the work of contemporary anthropology, to which Philippe Descola has given a formidable echo in France today. Secondly, it avoids all those mysteries surrounding 'will', 'consciousness' and 'representation' that no one has ever managed to solve. If human beings really were agents endowed with a consciousness that enabled them to make free decisions by anticipating their consequences so that they could retroact on this decision a priori... we would know, would we not? Well, it makes it possible to describe things in more detail. Typically, in the case of a pandemic, to speak of a "reaction of societies to a natural event" is to run the risk of forgetting too quickly that this event is itself an effect of these "societies". It is well known that SARS-CoV-2 reached human beings either via bats displaced by deforestation, or by being artificially created in a laboratory: in both cases, it is a kind of artefact. Similarly, it would not have travelled around the world if it were not for

the networks of "globalisation". Conversely, it differs enormously from one population to another, and this is due to both social and biological conditions: if Europe is more affected by the virus, it is both because it is more connected and because it seems that a gene from the Neanderthal strain weakens immunity to this virus... Under such conditions, what is the point of talking about humans as such on the one hand, compared with things of nature in general on the other? We can better understand the issues we are dealing with if we look at things more locally: how a particular strain of the virus associates with a particular type of tissue, caught up in a particular type of technical network, with or without a vaccine, and so on.

It is the same for art. I believe, for example, that we have to stop believing that the value that emanates from art objects is a simple effect of our projection of our own interests onto these objects. These objects take hold of us, in one way or another. They mobilise us. The value of a thing results from the fact that its internal mobility, its own agitation, gives rise to another agitation, which makes us go towards it or do things in connection with the emergence of the thing. Describing things in this way greatly enriches our world.

POLITICS

AM: At the beginning of his career, Bruno Latour's ties to a Catholic commitment were well-documented, but he gradually transitioned into a more 'politically-oriented' stance. However, initially, his writings encountered challenges in being acknowledged within the realm of "political science". In my opinion, these writings are what might be called a 'critique of freedom' in the metaphysical sense. "We need to find the right dependencies," says Latour, "and put an end to the Promethean idea of a human being freed from all ties to 'others'." So, how can we characterize politics as the politics of life, encompassing not only humans but not limited to them, and what purpose does this characterization serve?

PM: Latour's thinking has always been political. First of all, I sense in his work a very strong and very early Nietzschean lineage, which consists in seeing relationships of force (or, as he puts it, of weakness) everywhere: not only in social relationships, but also in relationships with other-than-human beings. In short, he refuses to separate politics from science or technology, at least in this way. But not to depoliticise social relations: to politicise everything else!

Moreover, I believe that his policies are more concerned with the colonial question than with the class frontier (although he does not ignore it). You only have to read his 1974 report, written during his cooperation in Côte d'Ivoire, on "the ideologies of competence in the industrial environment of Abidjan," to see that what preoccupies him is colonisation and racism: he explains how the very way in which the idea of "modernisation" is constructed produces the inability of those who are supposed to be "modernised" to be so, by naturalising their supposed incompetence. In particular, he points out that treating competence as a cognitive property instead of reinscribing it in the set of material networks in which people live has the effect of actually incapacitating agents. For example, the fact that Abidjan's vocational high school students who come from the villages to train the 'Ivorianised' staff of companies

do not understand the industrial drawings presented to them, unlike the others, is also because they have not been socialised with machines since their earliest childhood. The very idea of a 'scientific mind', which epistemology has attached great importance to, as if it could characterise the kind of subjectivity appropriate to scientific practices, in the same way as others would apply to technocratic practices or industrial processes, is therefore linked to a neglect of material networks. This is where he got the idea of reconstructing the material networks of the most typically 'modern' practices, namely scientific practices, and so he decided to go and do some anthropology in an ultra-modern laboratory in California, in what he called a symmetrical anthropology. As you can see, this is a truly 'decolonial' gesture. Simply because he refused from the outset to reduce it all to the class struggle, he was classed as apolitical. It's really the same story as that of Lévi-Strauss, who was thought to be apolitical when in fact he was posing the two great political questions of our time: the colonial question and the ecological question - and that it posed them in original terms, whereas Marxism wanted to reduce them to an already constituted, but therefore ethnocentric grammar, that of the class struggle, as if this were the truth not only of all human societies, but also of all terrestrial deployment.

For Latour, this way of giving absolute ontological primacy to the class struggle is part of the sociocentrism typical of modern societies, which fail to understand the extent to which human and other-than-human agents are intertwined with each other. And this is where we come into line with what you say, which I think is very fair, about the critique of freedom. We need to know what kind of free agent we are, what kind of capacity for action we have, and to do that we need to stop believing that this capacity for action is at any point "purely social", defined by our interactions with other humans. Even the fact of being able to isolate a human interaction from other interactions presupposes these dependencies on non-humans. To be able to discuss among ourselves the construction of a political party that will oppose other parties, we need architecture, walls, microphones perhaps, a press, railways, etc. And all these things weigh down on our ability to interact. As I was saying, they are more or less willing allies, with whom we also have a power relationship. Here again, the pandemic should have set us straight. We cannot interact with humans without forming part of a wide variety of multispecific alliances. To believe that our capacity for action can be understood by separating 'social relations' on the one hand and 'relations with nature' on the other, or as the Marxists used to say, relations of production and productive forces, is to confuse things from the outset. I think that one of the reasons for the disagreement with Marxism is this. The ecomarxists have changed the terms of the debate a little recently, by trying to free Marxism from its productivism, but their rage against Latour is not a very good sign. It gives the impression of a theoretical and political arrogance that really is not very justified. It is not as if they have proved that they always get everything right, either politically or theoretically...

Be that as it may, Latour's latest work on the question of terrestriality is particularly interesting from the point of view of what you call a 'critique of freedom': it's about saying that the Earth is not a kind of given setting for human actions, but something that we act on and that reacts to our actions. We are terraformers. Yet, we lack the sensors that enable us to be

sensitive to the kind of terrestrial agents that we are, at different scales, individual (like the legal person that I am) or collective (as a company, as a State, as a class, etc.), depending on the diversity of existences that are ours. So a farmer helps to define the face of the Earth, but he has very few tools for knowing how, in what direction, which Earth. At best, he knows roughly, but he does not know precisely. Today we have some very frustrating tools: typically the 'carbon footprint' and that sort of thing, but they are far from enabling us to relate certain of our actions (the opening of a factory somewhere, the decision to favour this or that transport infrastructure network, the fact of being or not being an individual vegetarian, and so on.), with their global consequences (the disappearance of such and such a forest, the submergence of such and such an island, the fall in agricultural productivity in such and such a region but the rise in such and such another, the emergence of such and such new forms of exploitation, etc.). Latour wanted to help develop such tools to characterise our freedom. Hence his proposal to create devices to determine the 'terrestrial territories' of different agents. These are his 'Where to land' workshops, which still exist and are run by his daughter Chloë Latour. I think initiatives like these are very important. If you want to be free, you need to have tools for imputation and therefore for representing the effects of a certain action that you are going to carry out when you could perhaps carry out another. You can see from this example that freedom is not an abstract notion, or even a moral one: it is political and technical. It is a matter of perception, of framing, of delimiting the different units of action. To say that such thinking is not political is to have an extremely limited conception of politics. . It's believing that we know in advance what is political and what is not. And that, precisely, I don't think is very political. For politics is precisely the capacity of plurality to constantly reopen the field of the political. It's about time the people who criticize Latour started doing politics again

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