

## Angels Without Wings

### *A conversation between Bruno Latour and Anselm Franke*

Anselm Franke: Having your book *We Have Never Been Modern* in mind, I was wondering whether one could think of the institution of the museum, or the institution of the exhibition, within the diagram of the “modern constitution” you set up. I was trying to find a place for the museum and the exhibition within that diagram. Art institutions and museums of all kinds always had a license to officially represent hybrids, which is something that you otherwise describe as non-existent in the setting of the modern constitution. Hybrids are everywhere and above all, proliferating, but not represented. They appear as mere intermediaries, but not in their full right as mediators. I was wondering what happens, for example, with such an interesting hybrid, like a tractor, when it’s out of use? It either goes to the museum or to the dump, *chora*, where objects or things disintegrate. But what exactly happens when it goes to the museum?

Bruno Latour: Museums have never been modern, either. No one has ever been modern, so the museums have always maintained an extraordinary diversity of approach, always mixing art and science and antiquity in some way. There is a recent book on the invention of the Louvre. The Louvre has nothing modern about it; it is an extraordinary *Wunderkammer* that was built after the Revolution. And as for the scientific museum, a good example is the CNAM, the Conservatoire National des Arts et des Métiers, which is one of the most beautiful museums in Paris, despite its own “modernizing” discourse about progress. It’s a beautiful museum; the modernizing ideology remains, except where things stopped in the 70s or 60s with the computer. Everything there is like a beautiful art object, despite the fact that they once were steam engines and so on. Technical museums are very interesting places to show how little we have been modern, so to speak. Even though it’s not explicitly their message, it takes just a little twist to make different labels in the same museum. And there are actually a few technical museums that do that. CNAM is a good example, even though it is in France, which is a “modernist” country par excellence. It presents a very different narrative, which is more about drawings, than about aesthetics; it’s about dreams, especially compared to the Science Museum in London and the Munich Technical Museum, which remain very technical— a technically grounded technical museum. The defense of technical cultures is quite modern. Museums are a place where hybrids have lived. Where would hybrids *not* live?

AF: But what is the contract, the political conditions that allow them to do it officially? One of the main narratives of modern art since the

late nineteenth century has been the discontent with “art,” in the widest sense, being excluded from political consequentiality. So couldn’t one say, yes, hybrids were allowed to be represented in museums, but on the condition that they remained politically inconsequential—which, of course, they never quite did. But the basic contract around the autonomy and freedom of art is a “yes but”: You’re free to deal with hybrids and expose them, but you pay that price of being rendered inconsequential. Then all the avant-gardes immediately start contesting that border again. They want to reconcile across the registers of the grand dualisms, move into everyday life; become political agents. One of the main drives in modernist progressive art history is to undo that very border, that circle of exemption drawn around the museum, which allowed it to do what it does.

BL: Well, we touch upon some of what was in “Iconoclasm,” but this was actually Peter Weibel’s view in the last part of the *Iconoclasm* catalogue around what happened to modernist art history. But the constitution is not something you can live; it is an idea. It’s very easy to find counter examples of a distinction and, because the problem of being modern is that there’s no way you can live being modern, it would mean that you would distinguish precisely what your daily practice always mixed, so what you say is very true of the museum. Hybrids are everywhere, but the question is how do you tame them, or do you explicitly recognize their strengths, which is part of the animist power of objects? So it is true that there is a sort of boundary around the museum; there is a denigration of their political impact. Thus art historians have done for the museum what historians of science have done for science; that is, they have shown that of course it is impossible to do that, and that they always have political dimensions. And they have renewed the question of what it means to be political, not just having a political dimension, which was the old way of approaching the question.

AF: But when you say that the constitution can’t be lived, it nevertheless translates into border-making practice; that is, a political practice above all.

BL: Which is immediately covered and undermined—

AF: But I am thinking, for example, how the possibility to inscribe people into the continuum of nature has made their extinction possible, which is what happened to many so-called “animist” societies. And that was made possible with the help of a certain imaginary of animism, in which the “proper” distinctions that stem from the official constitution are conflated, and which regards the animation of objects, the treatment of non-humans as persons, as an epistemological mistake. In making an exhibition on animism, one encounters different registers whose relations are problematic; for example, the relation between the compensatory, symptomatic “animism” and animism as a practice that deals in particular ways with imagery. Recently, animism can be discussed again outside the specific twists and knots that the modern constitution produced, simply as a question of organizing associations.

BL: You cannot escape the official, officious distinction, because you can say, “Modernism is the mode of life that finds the soul with which matter would be endowed, the animation, shocking.” Except, of course, it doesn’t work very well, because it’s also where these most extraordinary features of the things, of the facts speaking by themselves, which is an extraordinary invention of the modern, are invented. So simultaneously, while you would say that the “official” version is that you should be shocked every time you have an “animistic” argument because it’s impossible for things to have souls, they have speech. And not only that, but they speak by themselves. So even to say—this is my dispute with Descola—what is modern or naturalist, to use his terms, is already an immense leap of imagination, because a naturalism that invents facts speaking by themselves looks to me a lot like a very, very intensely engaged definition of animism. So just by having speaking entities, which are nonetheless “devoided” of souls, we have already a hybrid, a fetish, a “factish” of such intensity. But it’s not impossible to analyze it very clearly by saying: Officially it is separated, yet it’s immediately denegated, and it’s crisscrossed in multiple ways, and made into something entirely different, which is the most bizarre relation between non-souls speaking matters of fact, which is an odd piece of animism.

AF: The crossing-out of the soul allows for a different kind of speaking object, in your understanding? Why does the soul have to be crossed-out in the first place?

BL: Just one example: Simon Schaffer has a beautiful paper in which he shows that the carrier of gravitational force for Newton had been angels for many, many years. So it’s first of all angels, which will transfer gravitational force at a distance, because acting at a distance was one of the avatars of animism in the seventeenth century; I don’t mean animism in the anthropological sense, but in the sense that things have agency. If animism is about things having agency, then one thing modernists have done has been to multiply the amount of agencies in the world to an extraordinary degree. But we have silenced it. As Schaffer shows in his paper, the angels that are behind gravitational waves or gravitational forces have no wings. The wings are not visible. It’s a very beautiful case. If you ask what it is to be modern, is it to have angels carrying gravity? Is it angels losing their wings so we now believe that gravity is a purely material force? And what would it mean if it were only a material force? It would be a really strange thing, indeed. What is it to have agency? Now take the scientists who believe that things have agency—and who doesn’t say that? Everybody says it. So the problem with this modernist argument about what modernism has been is that it never can withstand one minute of analysis or history because modernists have never been modern. They always lived in history. And the great puzzle is how they can believe that animism is a problem, as if they were living in a world where no one has it, no one speaks, no one has a soul, and suddenly there are these strange guys from far away, or these odd, who believe that things have agency. It is very odd, and very surprising! The whole scene where this is surprising is what has to be explained. So you see, it’s not the same question. Explaining why people are surprised by animism is not the same thing as saying... Well,

of course, in the official constitution, animism is not allowed, because, again, it is unsustainable.

AF: In this official version, with all the slippery ground it stands on, it is nevertheless a permanent transgression?

BL: Yes, that is part of being modern. What you describe is the opacity of being modern. You make a distinction, and immediately you erase it. That is what makes this an anthropological puzzle. And when they encounter animists, I mean in the anthropological sense, I mean people who build this sort of thing [*pointing to an African sculpture*], then they are completely twisted—they don’t know how to react. It’s not that they are not animists and the others are; it’s that they are animists to a denegated degree, and they see others who are animists.

AF: And you have described this as also a sort of fetishism of a second, higher order.

BL: Yes, that is a form of fetishism that has been very well worked out by Viveiros de Castro.

AF: One genealogy of animism would be found in insanity, in madness, where it is delegated to this fantasy space of the unreal, full of symptoms, desires, strange mirror effects.

BL: Right. Mad people, artists, Others—all of these guys might be animists, but not us. Except that we immediately begin to do all these sorts of things.

AF: So what you described with the “modern constitution” is a scenography that exists and is dismantled at the same time? It was never functional in the sense that it didn’t do what it said it did; but as a scenography it existed and produced realities. Was it a regime of justification?

BL: It is complicated to know what it was, I understand the question.

AF: The trace the question of animism left in the history of modern imagery and Western art history is very much implicated in that paradoxical scenography. There are the modern distinctions, the modern boundaries and dualisms, and art transgresses and simultaneously confirms them all the time. The drive to animate and mobilize; and the drive to conserve, to fix, and so forth, are mutually constitutive for modern imagery and media, from the idea of the museum to cinema; and they perform a strange dialectics. The problem one faces in making an exhibition is to find a way out of that logic, not to confirm that scenography of imaginary opposites, not to affirm the twisted logic—

BL: It is the same problem we had with “Iconoclasm”—how to do a non-iconoclastic exhibition on iconoclasm, and it was very difficult.

AF: And what was the solution that you found?

BL: Well, to do an *Iconoclasm*, and not an iconoclastic exhibition; and

very few people understood this, actually, because in part, the art world is completely sold on the idea of being iconoclastic—as a positive term. They call it critique, but it’s exactly the same thing. So the sudden idea that you could turn iconoclasm from a resource into a topic is difficult. If you want to turn animism from a resource into a topic, it’s probably similar. That is, it’s a resource that people use to say, “You are an animist, and I am” —what would you say?—“a positivist.” I believe in the distinction between souls and matter, let’s say. And you are mad, so it’s OK, because mad people or kids, mad people or artists, or savages; in those cases animism is a resource, a critical resource. Now, when you say, “I am making it a topic and not a resource. I’m not going to use animism as a resource, I’m going to use it as a topic”; what you see immediately arriving in the middle of your field of inquiry is agency. Now, you are anti-animist. Does that mean that there is no agency in the world? At all? Your interlocutor would say, yes, of course, there is agency. Atoms have agency, cells have agency, stars have agency, psyches have agency; and then you begin to look at the specificity and the specification of all these agencies, and you realize that you begin to jump from one field to the other, like Newton’s angels, shifting from the very, very odd and unorthodox angelology of Newton to physics—are we still there, with the angels without their wings? So we begin to have a whole series of transports, of agencies from one domain to the other. Biology would be full of it. The whole question of agencies in biology is the gene. What is the action of the gene? What does it do and where does it come from? So suddenly, when animism becomes a topic instead of a resource, you can no longer use it as a term of a metalanguage. I’m not talking about the anthropological question, which is the Descola/Viveiros De Castro question of perspectivism. You see, in all of this discussion in anthropology, the moderns are the ones who are supposed to be understood by the official philosophy. Now, when you study the others, the Amazonian people, the Chinese, and so forth, they never say, “Well, just let us look at their philosophy.” They look at their practices. So there is a complete disconnect when they deal with the modern, and only in this case do they deal with the official version. They deal with John Searle and they say, “I interviewed John Searle, and John Searle would say, ‘Yes of course [*pounding on the table*] this has no agency, and you have agency; or you don’t have agency, because you are full of little networks and genes and manipulators, and so you have no agency. This has no agency, agency is nothing.’” But, of course, just the same, no anthropologist should take John Searle’s idea as a description of the “modern” culture in which he lives. We have a proliferation of agencies with a very, very strange mixed and hybrid history. We’ll just jump. Do you see what I mean?

AF: I am thinking through some of your beautiful diagrams, and I am thinking of whether they have a common denominator, like exemplifying a particular operation that repeatedly occurs in most of them. It seems to be the paradox you have mentioned earlier: You erect a border and immediately undermine it; you cross out one thing to establish a short-cut, and on the blind spot you established, you make many other things possible.

BL: Yes, the fact that people believed they were modern had the same

effect as people believing they were revolutionary. But even the effect is difficult to describe, because it has negative and positive aspects. One of the negative effects is, if you believe the others are animists you are allowed more exploitations, because there is very little precaution to take, as we said at the beginning. In the idea of matter, in the idea of the non-animated, there is clearly license to go to much greater lengths in the same way as when you believe that animals are animal-machines you can be more cruel; and it’s true also of humans. And so, negatively, it certainly has an effect. And positively. It is very difficult to differentiate the two, because you are free to go much further in many activities. Viveiros de Castro has this beautiful argument that, in our society, the big problem is solipsism, and the big problem with “East Indians” is cannibalism. It is a great anxiety to meet someone’s own meat, if I can say it that way, whereas in “our” society (with even more of a quotation mark around “our”), solipsism is a bigger question, and you don’t know if you are going to reach an alterity of any sort. So it has an effect, but the description of the effect is very difficult. In the case of science, the biggest effect, in my experience, is the doubt it casts on the impossibility of thinking about your own activity as a constructive activity. I mean, the disappearance of efficacy, that is clearly something—you accuse the one of being animistic and then you deprive yourself of any sort of tools to act. You are constantly deprived of efficacy, of the ability to “*faire faire*” as we say in French, to “make do.” So you enter into a very strange, specifically modern madness about “making do,” which is the source, if we are right in our catalogue of “Iconoclasm,” of many of the iconoclastic adventures, because you are constantly trying to break your own tools to act, so to speak. So the modernist “avant-garde” history of art has been doing that for most of the twentieth century; I mean, constantly trying to destroy what makes you able to do. That’s why the twentieth century seems so far away, why it seems like it was the Middle Ages, because we can’t relate to it any more.

AF: There are several points where you describe this, also in the *Iconoclasm* introduction, where you literally speak of the double madness of the iconoclasts, a specific psychopathology of the moderns, shifting between omnipotence and the deprivation of any possibility to act. I wonder what this psychopathology does at that negotiating table to which the moderns, once the scenography of the constitution has disappeared, finally return, which you describe in *War of the Worlds: What about Peace?* as a second “first contact” of the moderns with everyone else.

BL: This is part of my discussion with Viveiros de Castro. He says no one from my people will ever want to be at your negotiating table. Descola says that, too. When I organized a meeting in Venice somewhere, Descola was very clear. He says, if any one of “our” Indians were sitting at the negotiating table, they would flee from it, because having a negotiating table is a typically modernist way of assembling. So this is our way of gathering—I mean, “our way” of gathering dissemblers. But the thing is slightly more complicated than that. There are lots of other ways of composing than the negotiating table. Isabelle Stengers uses the word “diplomacy,” which is slightly better, because it doesn’t even predetermine if there will be a negotiating table; so it’s

even more open. Will there be a negotiating table? Maybe, maybe not. If the moderns recover their “factischism,” when they first realize that they have never been modern, and then suddenly realize that the negotiation is slightly more complicated, and then realize that they have been the enemies themselves all along, except they had strange souls and attributed even stranger souls to the others, or so we are supposed to believe, then we will see what happens! Would it be a negotiating table? I don’t know, because we have very little idea about what the modernists will inherit when they abandon their idea of having been the bearer of rationality. We have very few inklings, and the reason why is that, in the meantime, which was unexpected when I wrote this book, all of the others are modernizing in the most blatantly modernist unrepentant way: the Chinese, the Indians, the Indonesians. So actually, it’s interesting that you are doing an exhibition on animism, because it’s the spirit of the time, the *Zeitgeist*. It’s like “Iconoclasm.” Suddenly, the Europeans realize that, wait a minute, maybe we made a big mistake in attributing animism to the others. What happens if we have been animists, and in what way were we? Since we have agencies everywhere, we mix the agencies, we made a whole series of transformations about the agent, we added wings, and we took the souls out, and sometimes the opposite. We did all sorts of very, very strange things, and we turned to the others, who are no longer others, and what did they do? Well they modernized without any worry.

AF: But if the moderns animated without knowing it, or they did magic all the time without knowing magic—

BL: Animation isn’t magic, it’s science. You cannot do magic.

AF: You cannot do magic?

BL: Magic is not magic. Magic is not magical. Magic is something else. But for agency and the transformation of agencies, you cannot do without it if you are a scientist. That’s why when people say Newton is simultaneously an alchemist and a physicist, it doesn’t mean much, because, on the contrary, he is doing good physics because he is doing alchemy. It’s not that he is divided; he is not a divided soul, half-modern and half-archaic. He is doing transformations of agencies, which is exactly what science is doing. And that’s what scientists have always done. Now, of course, you will say the official registration of that is something very different. Yes, and it makes a difference. It makes a difference in teaching, it makes a difference in exploitation, and it makes a difference in property, appropriation of matters, and so on. But then, when you ask what difference it makes, what effect it has, it’s much more complicated, because the effects are like the effects of all denegated concepts about what you do. It drifts. So even to describe the effects of the belief in “inanimates” is complicated. What has to be explained in my view is the belief in “inanimates”. It is an odd belief, because of course, again, it never worked. So it is this belief in the inanimate that is the big mystery—animism is very easy to explain, but inanimism is very strange. Especially when it’s inanimates speaking by themselves, so they are inanimated but speak, able to close an argument, because they are undisputable. So when you add up all these things that inani-

mate things do, they are quite full of interesting agencies and animation as well. Now, of course, to believe that this set of capacities is completely different from what animist people do is very important. And it has effects, but it doesn’t have effects that can be foreseen without being studied, because the effect might be very, very odd, and the effect might be madness. It might be a very strange hubris. Maybe the whole hubris argument is coming from that. You just become twisted in your head when you believe that the others are animist, and that you yourself are not, when you produce the most bizarre set of capacities out of your agencies. You see what I mean?

AF: I see what you mean. Do you have a hypothesis about the roots of this particular concept of the inanimate, the thing that has agency but no soul in this hubris condition?

BL: Well, the history of that has begun to be well known now, because there is a whole history that shows how matter has a very idealistic definition; the generation of it is complex. But for me, the locus is technical drawing; I think that’s where this very strange idea of technical drawing printed, in perspective, with shades, gets confused with *res extensa*. Or at least the place where you have a piece of machinery, which is usually very beautiful (which is why the Musée des Arts et des Métiers is such an interesting place), because there is nothing more beautiful than a technical drawing done in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century, with shades and colors—the assembly drawing, where the agency of the agents assembling has, of course, been taken away, and is nowhere in the drawing. If you say that, and you say you took the agency out completely, and then imagine that the world outside is made of that, you have an approximation of the “inanimate.” Except, of course, it is a highly skilled competence to draw technical drawings, and the whole piecing together of all these elements itself requires an agency.

AF: So you are saying that the conflation of *res extensa* into technical drawing, where the model and the supposed inanimate object are there and these two conflate, is what creates that disenchantment?

BL: I’d say more. I’d say that what we mean by *res extensa* is a technical drawing. It’s drawing on paper. *Res extensa* is the extension of drawing in the same way as the territory is an extension of the map. The power of those tools, of these visualizing technologies, has been so strong that the temptation to say “well, that’s what the world is really like” is very great, especially when your foreground is all of the engineering talents and engineering skills that are necessary to assemble. This is why I am so interested in the Columbia disaster. It was very clear during the Columbia disaster (you recall, this shuttle that was supposed to be assembled by nobody in particular, suddenly exploded). Then, suddenly, people go everywhere, and do inquiries and say that there must be lots of agencies there, first NASA as an agency in the legal sense, then a mistake made by this office and that office, and suddenly you have a population of people and of agencies that is supposed to gather all of these pieces together. This means that there always was—in the definition of agents and agencies and Columbia as an agency before it exploded—an animated entity. So Columbia was

an animated entity, and, of course, every engineer at NASA knew that beforehand, except this was only registered collectively after its explosion. And then forgotten immediately, because the agents inside the technique are never visible.

AF: They are enclosed in a “black box,” as you say.

BL: It’s black boxing. But more precisely, because black boxing is part of that, there is a very important possibility of moving one’s fingers in space without changing their properties, which is the quality of technical drawing (which is a great invention by another compatriot, by the way, Gaspard Monge, from the same city, Beaune, as Étienne-Jules Marey and myself), and this idea that you could make whatever moves in space without anyone moving it: from one drawing, you can imagine all its positions in space. So, if there is a native locus for “inanimate,” an origin—I don’t know what the history of art and perspective would say, but I have some proof of this, it’s not invented out of my head completely, but I don’t have it proved all the way—I think it will be there. Actually, it’s a contribution of art to the philosophy of science. Of that I am convinced; there is a connection in this way. I once said that the invention of *res extensa* was the result of Descartes and Locke being in Amsterdam for too long and seeing all of these beautiful mimetic paintings, *natures mortes*—Descartes and Locke saw too many of them. You see it when you look at Dutch painting, *natures mortes*—but of course, you forget the whole history of art and all the necessary skill, but you have decided that the space in which you see these things is the same in which you live, which of course exists only when you contemplate this very, very specific period of art history. In science, and at no other moment in art history, you never have that situation, except at the very brief moment, which is the *Wunderkammer*, the moment of exquisite drawing skills, inventories, all of these natural history moments, which are actually not framed as an “inanimate,” but as the extraordinary discovery by art of a multiplicity of agencies, and for a very long time of God’s power on Earth and the wonder of nature, and so on and so forth. So even that is not always framed as an “inanimate.” But then you have Descartes, and the *res extensa* argument, which is probably as close as you can get to the official constitution of “inanimate”—constantly denegated, constantly transformed. Even Leibniz, just a few years after, says that this *res extensa* argument is absolutely absurd, and reanimates the whole thing with monads. Westerners are quite interesting people!

AF: Is there a particular place for the mimetic in your theory? In *Iconoclasm*, you refer to Michael Taussig’s work. He is most known for his study of the economy of mimesis in colonial situations. Animism has also been brought into association with ways of mimetic knowing, a form of mental and bodily mimesis by which one enters into relations with the environment. Taussig speaks of mimesis as aping, as the ability to copy and to take over the powers of the model, departing from James Frazer’s description of sympathetic magic. These forms of mimesis are officially excluded from modern rationality. But if I think of Gabriel Tarde—

BL: Imitation is a word Tarde might use. I don’t think Tarde would say “aping,” actually. That’s a whole theme of art history that is quite interesting, the themes of apes in painting, because apes don’t ape. Apes do all sorts of things. I think of mimetic in a very simple sense, which is that, in one period of art history, there was the idea of a copy and a model. This was only for a very, very short period, which is basically the moment Svetlana Alpers describes in Dutch painting in Antwerp and elsewhere. In all other cases, there were many more than two (that is, more than a copy and model), which is the case of science, which is why I say that science is not mimetic, but not in the same sense; that it is precisely a long, long chain of transformations, none of them reasonable, and resemblance actually is the enemy, because if it resembles, then there is no longer any new information, so the whole series of scientific reference chains is precisely based on the non-resembling resemblance, because resemblance would be a sort of loss of information. Alternatively, you would play on the multiplicity of differences between the copy and the model, and that is basically what all art has done, except this very strange moment in *natures mortes*. It started long before with prehistoric art; and immediately after the Dutch, it started again. It would be difficult to say what mimetic is, but it is not in science, that much is sure. Taussig interested me for other reasons, on account of *Iconoclasm*, because he points out that it is very difficult to be iconoclastic. As for magic, I never believe anything I read about magic anyway, because magic is itself a term that is completely under the shadow of the idea that there would be something else which is not magic. Which would be what? No transformation of agency, no hybrid, no gestural engagement with the matters at hand? I mean, it would be very odd if there were something non-magical in that sense. So the difference must be somewhere else, but this is not my field.

AF: Can we talk about immaterial non-humans, and the question of belief and spirituality?

BL: Spirituality is a word I will not use—it is too loaded with the idea that the world would be material and we would be missing something important and that spirit should be added to the world. Because spirituality would be a word that already accepts the idea that there is somewhere in the history of the Western world where “inanimate” actually reigned, where there would have been a “realm” of “inanimate,” and people would get worried (actually, I have worked a lot on religion and precisely in a non-spirituality version). That’s why it’s like magic—it’s modes of existence, as I call them.

AF: The non-humans that are of that other kind, like angels let’s say—those that we previously put purely in the realm of the social representation—do they play a role in these modes?

BL: They have room in ontology, yes; not only those, but lots of other entities that were always there. It’s not that they are new; they are always there, with very, very different types of specifications. But the question you are asking is: “When the belief (which was never worked out practically in any case) in inanimate objects started, what other souls were silenced and why?” This is a very important question. Be-

cause, I now have this idea that the moderns never looked at the future; they always looked at the past that they were afraid of. Now the moderns are actually turned toward the future, always aware of what is behind them. They always have “ruptures” at their backs, and they are continuously moving forward. They flee backwards. So they flee from something that is in front of them, and the future is behind them. They don’t look at the future. And now the moderns are doing this [*indicating an about-face towards the future*] and they are horrified, and that’s why you are doing your exhibition. Because while you have your back to the future, you flee animism. And you turn around, and suddenly you realize that, first, you have destroyed the whole planet—I mean, this is cause for a little hesitation—and suddenly you realize that something else entirely different has happened. I think that the moderns are looking for the first time now at the future.

## Machinic Animism

### Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato

*There has been a sort of de-centering of subjectivity. Today, it seems interesting to me to go back to what I would call an animist conception of subjectivity, to rethink the Object, the Other as a potential bearer of dimensions of partial subjectivity, if need be through neurotic phenomena, religious rituals, or aesthetic phenomena, for example. I do not recommend a simple return to irrationalism. But it seems essential to understand how subjectivity can participate in the invariants of scale. In other words, how can it be simultaneously singular, singularizing an individual, a group of individuals, but also supported by the assemblages of space, architectural and plastic assemblages, and all other cosmic assemblages? How then does subjectivity locate itself both on the side of the subject and on the side of the object? It has always been this way, of course. But the conditions are different due to the exponential development of technico-scientific dimensions of the environment of the cosmos.*

*I am more inclined [...] to propose a model of the unconscious akin to that of a Mexican curandero or of a Bororo, starting with the idea that spirits populate things, landscapes, groups, and that there are all sorts of becomings, of haecceities everywhere and thus, a sort of objective subjectivity, if I may, which finds itself bundled together, broken apart, and shuffled at the whims of assemblages. The best unveiling among them would be found, obviously, in archaic thought.*

—Félix Guattari

*We do not know, we have no idea what a society without a state and against the state would be. Animism is an ontology of societies without a state and against the state.*

—Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Guattari brings about a de-centering of subjectivity in separating it simultaneously not only from the subject, from the person, but also from the human. His challenge is to escape from subject/object and nature/culture oppositions, which makes man the measure and the center of the universe, in making out of subjectivity and culture-specific diversions (differences) between man and animals, plants, rocks, but also machines and mechanics. Capitalist societies produce both a hypervalorization of the subject and a homogenization and impoverishing of the components of its subjectivity (parceled out into modular faculties such as Reason, Understanding, Will, Affectivity, governed by norms).