

## Proctontological investigations

"Ontological bullshit requires proctontological interventions"

The sewage works have been clogged up by academic bullshit. Enough is enough!  
One person walked into Cambridge, a dividual crawled out (Part 2 - and the end!)

**(1)** Pissed-off by the bullshit from the States and the UK. First we take the ontologists down, then the miserablists, then the pseudo-lefties, and finally everyone who stood by and did nothing as academia disintegrated before their very eyes, and because of their mediocrity.

### **(2) Morten Pedersen's 'snake in the relational paradise'**

I am going to go through the following chapter:

"Islands of Nature: Insular Objects and Frozen Spirits in Northern Mongolia"

By Morten Axel Pedersen, published in "Anthropology and Nature." Book edited by Kirsten Hastrup. Pp.96-107.

Before I get into this piece, it is worth bearing in mind the word on the street is that Pedersen doesn't know Mongolian. I've had this verified by people who know Pedersen. I've asked him myself and he responded by mumbling into his beer: 'protensive intensivity ... Holbraad ... Rane ...Denmark'. As you'll see, that makes more sense than his 'Nature of Islands'.

Early on Pedersen threatens us with something out of the blue, totally unexpected; namely, an argument: 'the crux of my argument in the book is that the Darhad shamanic cosmos may best be conceived of as an emergent assemblage of relations, in which a given entity—human or non-human, animate or inanimate—can potentially change its form into another form as a result of occult intervention by shamans, spirits, and other agents of metamorphosis' (96). – Oh, how quickly the little baby Pedersen grew up into a toddler who still is yet to be potty-trained.

Pedersen is such a child genius he manages to derive a cosmos from '12 hours of narrative about wrathful game spirits and revengeful shamans' (ibid). How long to derive the Cambridge cosmos?

Before we move on, it is worth noting the tremendous work even Pedersen can pack into a few words, especially these: 'emergent assemblage of relations, in which a given entity—human or non-human, animate or inanimate'. If we break up the terms, you might get a clearer idea of what is going on:

Emergent – he wants to say 'becoming' so badly it hurts. He's heard Holbraad talk about 'becoming' and 'emergence', so he thinks, what the hell!

Assemblage – he's read the colouring in book version of intro to Deleuze.

Relations – he's a Cambridge boy through and through. Throw in 'relations' whenever you can, and even when you can't.

Human or non-human, animate or inanimate – de Castration Complex.

(Take a look at the bibliography of that piece if you think he isn't going round and ticking boxes of friends and Strathernograms he must cite.)

'Analogical identifications' – why can't they just admit that they're talking 'anal-logically' or 'procto-logically'?

'any perspective within 'the space between nature and society' may, in principle, be interchanged with another' (ibid) – this is gibberish worthy of Rane Willerslev.

In the first page and half de Castration Complex is cited three times. Is it really that Amerindian and Mongolian proctology is so similar, or is it that Strathern, Humphrey and de Castration Complex were all at Cambridge? Is reversible underwear and cosmologies the likelier thing, or that Pedersen just kept repeating what he was hearing at King's College? You decide dear reader.

'...there is a snake in the relational paradise. As closer inspection of the ethnography shows, not every single position in the Darhad cosmos is imbued with equal intensity of occult agency, and nor is this invisible potential for metamorphoses present in a given being at all times.' (ibid)

For a split moment I honestly thought the snake in the relational paradise was either some penis or other, or Pedersen himself. But, snakes are meant to be smart and cunning.

'Darhad hunters and pastoralists thus conceive of most of their landscape as an inanimate void, which is intersected by a multitude of paths (sam) and trajectories (güidel) along which human and non-human lives unfold in space and time (Pedersen 2007, 2009). This 'nomadic void', which may be imagined as comprised by all the holes that together 'is' the hollowness of a Swiss cheese, serves as an inanimate ground against which a multitude of animate worlds are made to appear, not unlike the uneven mass of residue left over when a portion of dough is cut by a cookie cutter. In this landscape, then, the shamanic cosmos is no longer a seamless whole comprising all that exists, but a multitude of parallel worlds, which, to borrow a term from the cognitive scientists (Sperber 1996), are mutually encapsulated.' (ibid).

Remember, we are still only on the second page!

The above raises a few questions: 1) the Swiss cheese invoked by Pedersen - is his brain the cheese with all the holes in it, or is his brain the hole in the cheese?; 2) 'not unlike the uneven mass of residue left over when a portion of dough is cut by a cookie cutter' – does anyone get the feeling Pedersen is writing these texts in his kitchen totally unencumbered by any ethnography or thinking ... X is like a cheese, Y is like cookie dough, Z is like scrambled eggs on toast; 3) why is Cambridge not ashamed of this guy? Does he have photos of Strathern and Willerslev getting it on, hence he's invited everywhere to keep him quiet? Has he threatened to pull on his 'snake in the relational paradise', or his balls, if he isn't invited? This guy is actually dumb. Who could disagree?

'...it is clear that the 'hollow' ontology of the Darhad nomadic landscape cannot adequately be conceptualized by familiar versions of this binary, such as the universalist dichotomy between one nature and one culture'

Is the 'hollow' referring back to the cheese, or dough cutting apparatus? Is it his brain which is 'hollow'?

I will continue working my way through the nine pages left in future blogs. I can't read anymore. I think my brain has become the Pedersenian 'Swiss cheese'.

### **(3) Miserablism's proctology**

There's an anthropologist going by the name of João Biehl - btw, his website cost over \$10,000. Some yanks think he's the Martin Holbraad (works on powder) or Danny Miller (works on blue jeans) of the anthropological cosmo-ontology. I find Biehl's work, and probably him - if I'd ever met him - utterly objectionable. Here's why:

His first book, 'Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment', which has won every prize his friends and colleagues have been on the panels of, was a slick, shiny, pretty book about a woman with serious mental health issues, with HIV/AIDS, caught in an asylum quite far from a major city - this alone constitutes a 'zone of social abandonment'. The woman in question, Vita, has truly suffered. To be clear, this post does not seek to minimise in anyway what she has been through. Indeed, what churned my insides about the book was that this woman had more than enough problems in her own life, then she gets this Biehl character dumped on her.

Heaven forbid you or a loved one was informed that you are carrying a serious disease, or have a terminal illness. What this genius Biehl does, if you're poor and with practically no one to stand up for you, is:

Picture

Here is my question: what do these pictures of people in poverty, with serious illnesses, add? Is there some joy, or insight, to be garnered?

The ecstasy Biehl and his former pals at Berkeley, and now his pals in Princeton, seem to derive from looking at sick poor people is something which is disquieting enough by itself. But then to have this book, and his subsequent one, 'Will to Live', be regarded as highly as they are, leaves me numb and incredulous.

Picture

Arthur Kleinman has written about his wife's descent into Alzheimers. His accounts are moving. Why has Biehl not showed up at Kleinman's house to take a picture of his wife? Why are middle class, educated people not submitted to this extraordinary humiliation ... oops, sorry! I mean, process of gaining insight into the suffering subject?

Picture

You would never treat your colleagues, friends, and family members the way Biehl has treated these people in Brazil. Shame on him, and shame on the elites who derive some prurient pleasure from reading that book, and looking at those awful and dehumanizing photos. Biehl's books are worse than anything the ontologists have ever done. At least the ontologists don't give a shit about humans, and are open about that.

If I was as big a scumbag as Biehl, I'd follow him for the next few years waiting for him to leave a hospital after he'd received some awful news, and then I'd snap some arty black and white photos. I wouldn't do it, of course, and you guys wouldn't quite enjoy the photos as much as those of the 'abandoned' of Brazil, why is that?

#### **(4) The politics of ontology**

I will suspend my fart jokes for this post - anal related humour will relationally be related after I have stopped cutting the network .... - what?

Regardless, here is as serious an engagement of Holbraad's and de Castration Complex's piece on the 'Ontology of Politics' that I can muster.

Their definitional work:

According to the two of them, "politics, as modern, democratic, multiculturalist citizens tend to understand it, is about debunking essences and affirming in their stead the world-making capacities of human collectives."

This is a big no-no, i.e. politics as 'debunking essences' and affirming creative 'capacities'. All that is nice, I don't deride it. But this is politics without the politics. I'll have the toasted chicken sandwich without the chicken and salad. - What?

Essentially, this means politics is citing Foucault a few times – and, if you're really feeling fresh, maybe a few Nietzsche quotes from the 'Genealogy'. This obsession with categories the pair has seems to have resulted in categories becoming coterminous with the world, politics, maybe even love and sexuality?

The sentence immediately after the one I cite above notes:

"Yet this notion of a social construction of reality itself"

– who said anything about 'social construction'? 'World-making' doesn't mean you 'construct' a world, that is absurd. It means that a world isn't something you are simply born into, that taking one's place in it, or 'them', is a work, is a 'making'. I think this is an important move the de Castrateds are making, just like the distinction the ontologists have set up between what us scumbags do – we're taking the cheap 'epistemological' approach – to what they do – the noble and political 'Ontological' approach. These jumps and categorizations are wild and don't seem to be based on very much, but they seem to take them as given, and then proceed from there. - Ontologists, come back and do some epistemology: i.e. give us an account of how you get to your definitions and then immediately jump to 'social construction'!

There is some good work done in the next few sentences, I concede that, and we finally arrive at the 'anthropological notion' of ontology: 'the anthropological concept of ontology as the multiplicity of forms of existence enacted in concrete practices, where politics becomes the non-skeptical elicitation of this manifold of potentials for how things could be.'

Two points:

1) I really have no problems with the above. Indeed, I can't as I think I've written sentences like the above in most of my work. Remind me once again, why do I need ontology? Isn't this what Marxists and Critical theorists have for decades described as the emancipatory potential latent within practice?

2) Who is being "sceptical"? I take this potential VERY SERIOUSLY. If I must cite Povinelli on 'the otherwise', then I will – has this changed anything? Anyone out there feeling emancipated? Hello??? Anyone???? Did I hear something? Hello? Mummy?

Maybe someone in the comments section can help later.

They then move on to ask how this 'otherwise' – i.e. 'emancipatory potential latent within practice' – be made manifest "ethnographically." Here is something like an answer:

"[E]thnographic descriptions, like all cultural translations, necessarily involve an element of transformation or even disfiguration. A given anthropological analysis, that is, amounts to a "controlled equivocation" (de Castration Complex 2004) that, far from transparently mapping one discrete social order or cultural whole onto another, depends on more or less deliberate and reflexive "productive misunderstandings" (Tsing 2005)..."

It turns out the above is important because:

"This, if anything, is what distinguishes the ontological turn from other methodological and theoretical orientations: not the dubious assumption that it enables one to take people and things "more seriously" than others are able or willing to, but the ambition, and ideally the

ability, to pass through what we study, rather as when an artist elicits a new form from the affordances her material allows her to set free, releasing shapes and forces that offer access to what may be called the dark side of things.”

Let me reconstitute this for you:

- a) “Ethnographic descriptions, like all cultural translations, necessarily involve an element of transformation or even disfiguration”
- b) Ethnography “depends on more or less deliberate and reflexive ‘productive misunderstandings’”
- c) It turns out this ‘misunderstanding’ “is what distinguishes the ontological turn from other methodological and theoretical orientations”.
- d) Ontological misunderstanding then is the “the ambition, and ideally the ability, to pass through what we study, rather as when an artist elicits a new form from the affordances her material allows her to set free, releasing shapes and forces that offer access to what may be called the dark side of things”

None of the above follows: ethnography is partial and always a translation, so you can make shit up (i.e. “more or less deliberate and reflexive ‘productive misunderstandings’”), and a voila! – freedom, or at least “releasing shapes” (hey! I do the anal and shit jokes around here!!!)?

The de Castrated say ontology “is really less interested in differences between things than within them: the politics of ontology is the question of how persons and things could alter from themselves.”

The next sentence, and the last one I will go through (you’ll see why):

“Ontology, as far as anthropology in our understanding is concerned, is the comparative, ethnographically-grounded transcendental deduction of Being (the oxymoron is deliberate) as that which differs from itself (ditto)—being-as-other as immanent to being-as-such. The anthropology of ontology is anthropology as ontology; not the comparison of ontologies, but comparison as ontology.”

Being as other, different, sameness, coming, going ... fishnet stockings, siberian monkeys, pre-ejaculating meerkats, all that is Being - and not (the morons are deliberately being morons). This is politics everyone. If you have any issues with your trade unions, your member of parliament, please contact the de Castrateds, I’m sure their being different sameness difference will be a great help - and lucky the poor sons of bitches who get them showing up to do their ‘fieldwork’!

I had planned to finish this blog much sooner. However, I was asked to take ontology seriously for a bit longer. Well, the above is my limit, and well beyond. This is how I wanted to end the blog many hundreds of words ago:

“This, if anything, is what distinguishes the ontological turn from other methodological and theoretical orientations: ... the ambition, and ideally the ability, to pass through what we study, rather as when an artist elicits a new form from the affordances her material allows her to set free, releasing shapes and forces that offer access to what may be called the dark side of things.”

Ok, Holbraad writes about powder, Candea about Meerkats, Pickles about pockets; are they setting up affordances for a new form of living, a new politics? Hey, I only read this shit to mock it on this blog. GET THESE NEW AFFORDANCES OFF OF ME!!!!!!

I’M POLITICALLY ONTOLOGICAL AND DON’T WANT TO BE!!!!!! HELP ME!!!!!! HELP ME!!!!!!

GET THIS CRAP OFF ME!!!! I'VE BEEN ONTOLOGIZED POLITICALLY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
AARRRRRRGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!

WHY AM I DEFECATING AND EJACULATING AT THE SAME TIME!!!! WHAT HAVE THEY DONE  
TO ME?????

CALL THE AMBULANCE ... TELL THEM I'M J R HARTLEY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## **(5) Ontological and de Castrated Complexes**

I was off the ontologists. I made an ontological decision to seek the difference in sameness in a different sameness – i.e. I was bothering someone else.

However, 'every time I'm out, they pull me back in!' (Holbraad 2007: XXXXXXXXIIIXXV).

I ask you all: who is the troll? The ontologists, or the protontologist?

The ontologists are having a great time, it seems. The below is culled from two facebook exchanges begun by Keith Hart and the hugely important Justin Shaffner – anyone know who he is?

Normally I make up some quotes. However, none of the below is anything but a copy and paste from a facebook exchange with my helpful comments placed outside the quote marks. The setup for the debate is someone dared to ask or suggest that applied anthropology and ontology were not obviously in sync with one another. Sari Wastell, btw, is one of the names Holbraad included as co-editors of his volume: 'Thinking through things'. So, let's enjoy this!

Sari Wastell "Really? Public engagement vs the ontological turn? As I always tell my first year students...anthropology is in the vanguard \*precisely\* because it does not come ready-packaged with easy answers, but asks the un-anticipated questions... Do we still move around these silly prejudices? This article suggests as much. To presume that public engagement and the ontological turn are self-evidently at odds is the only nonsense here."

Wait for the fun stuff. Not only is Holbraad's work on powder, Candea's on meerkats, and Pedersen's on reversible underwear/spirits in Mongolia, political, Wastell herself has SACRIFICED:

Sari Wastell "Obviously, the political economy of the academy right now is horrific. I think it will only get worse. But to the extent that we sacrificed our lives to be teachers, political activists, and THINKERS, we have to stand by those decisions."

Am I going nuts here? I am a relatively successful lecturer in anthropology, I have a full-teaching load, Ph.D. students, administrative responsibilities, and other things I must do as part of my job. Is it tough? Sometimes it is. Generally, however, I like my job and recognise that my pay is well above the national average. What is this nonsense of 'sacrifice'? It's a job, we are lucky to have one, especially as most of our postgrad students can't get jobs anywhere, let alone academic posts.

Sari Wastell is a political activist? I never heard anything about Sari standing up with us to defend the integrity of the University on any single issue. Does anyone out there in google world know of a single instance Sari has intervened in matters political? Citing Holbraad and de Castration Complex, btw, doesn't count as 'political', sorry!

The below is where we get an indication of what 'sacrifice' looks like for Wastell:

Sari Wastell "We are engaged and put our anthropological knowledge (ontological turn or whatever) into action in the little time we have in between everything else...and then we wait until the moment in which we give ourselves permission to retire to a run-down house with no plumbing on Hvar or in the Basque Country and write a great deal of poetry. I dream of that house and that time. But it is not going to happen just yet."

I'm not ready, just yet, to jump in and save Wastell from her 'sacrifice'.

De Castration Complex follows this up with:

Eduardo De Castration Complex "Ontology has been around for the last 14 billion years. Get over it."

Wastell's response:

Sari Wastell "Ha ha ha ha!!!! Eduardo has the last word!!!!"

Then comes de Castration Complex's first insult, in the thread, against Graeber – I only mention this because on Twitter (another ontology, I know!) the Complex claims the comment was made in jest:

Eduardo De Castration Complex "It's far older than debt, I mean. Come to think of it, it's the same thing, basically."

A few ramblings on, a Hans Steinmuller asks de Castration Complex referring to ontology in the last 14 billion years:

Hans Steinmuller to Eduardo De Castration Complex "but it hasn't changed much over the last 14 billion years, right?"

Now de Castration Complex is the go to guy of the nature of the last 14 billion years. What a complex!

Eduardo De Castration Complex "Oh yes it has, Hans Steinmuller." – Thus spake the Sage.

Sari couldn't be left out for too long:

Sari Wastell "For someone who didn't want to talk about the article, you really got stuck in! ;0) ... I just meant that the choice between an epistemological or ontological approach might have something to do with the questions you were asking (and/or looking for) and the kind of anthropology you wanted to practice, viz., where you want to go with it!"

These geniuses have setup an 'epistemological approach' – the majority of us seem to be carelessly and thoughtless slumbering in this space – and an 'ontological approach'. It's a bit like shopping at Sainsbury: you can buy the cheap Sainsbury's own brand 'epistemological' brand of truth, or you can have the Recursive, Truth in Motion, 'Ontological' approach.

Eduardo De Castration Complex "...The "ontological turn", at least as I understand it, is a way of trying to give anthropological work a more aggressive political edge, something, let us put it this way, a little less well meaning and a little more "relevant" than a Peace Corps type of personal-political engagement."

Where is this taking place you silly sausage? I read all the posts on Cultural Anthropology of your position pieces. My next blog will go through Holbraad's contribution. WHERE IS THERE ANY POLITICS IN YOUR SUPPOSED POLITICAL PROJECTS??????????????

In response to a story about Sahlins and Latour possibly having a contre temps, as reported by a Ph.D. student, here is what the rather arrogant de Castration Complex has to say:

Eduardo De Castration Complex "The non-initiated really have the most bizarre notions about life among the tribal elders..."

De Castration is the tribal elder, the guardian of the flute. Holbraad, Wastell, and others have kissed the flute and are now among the initiated. Are you prepared to kiss the flute?

If you don't kiss the flute, this is how you're spoken about:

Eduardo De Castration Complex "Too bad the resentful troll [i.e. the proctontologist] has gotten the support of a Hipster Celeb [Graeber], and is being broadcast by we do not know *hau* many people."

I've got more facebook threads to go through for you guys. These are the geniuses who can't quite workout why we probably won't be turning to them and their works for an ontology, or ontologies, of the last 14 billion years.

## **(6) Proctonological check-list**

I'm going to make this simple for everyone. I will be turning my back on Cambridge shortly, and taking on Engelke's corruption, Shankland's corrupt committees that support him, and the Americans as well. Before I do so, I want to set out some things you anthropologists can do to avoid being anal-ysed by me:

1) Don't ever write a bloody article on spores – yes, I'm talking to you, Anna Tsing! What is the matter with you? You actually wrote an article about spores to show "how a fungal spore might guide attention to more-than-human nature."

What are you talking about you silly sausage???

Do you know how embarrassing it is to have someone publish in a cultural studies journal a bloody article on spores? Just stop it! Stop playing silly buggers!

2) I should also add that meerkats, pockets, powder, Siberian reversible underwear, and anytime someone mentions how they 'want to go beyond the human', will get you bent over and anal-ysed. Jeans, spores, and a host of other nonsense will also require a special visit to my blog.

3) Corruption: if you invite your friends, or members of your network only, onto panels and to conferences, I will go in deep and hard. I promise you. Grow up. You're meant to be adults. Pick a serious issue to spend time on, invite people who you think will make interesting and important contributions to the debate. That is it. Holbraad doesn't need to have Pedersen sat next to him in every conference. Also, Holbraad shouldn't have his book reviewed by de Castration – Chicago Press, I'm onto you!

4) Do not spend time on trying to build a network. The truth is that you anthropologists just aren't that smart – I refer to the spore, meerkat, powder, and Siberian underwear articles that have been published in our discipline. Hence, spend more time on trying to become less stupid – start by putting down JR\*I and the Deleuze nonsense. Do not trust your intuitions: most of you are horrible people who have stood by as your colleagues and students have been screwed over. If you want to seek clarity on how to become an academic, or half-decent human being, email me at: [proctontologist@gmail.com](mailto:proctontologist@gmail.com).

5) Please leave the theory alone. Though this is related to the point I made at #4, it needs reasserting: many of you boneheads didn't realise this bit of Holbraadese is utter horseshit, "ontology is the ...ethnographically-grounded transcendental deduction of Being (the oxymoron is deliberate) as that which differs from itself (ditto)—being-as-other as immanent to being-as-such. The anthropology of ontology is anthropology as ontology; not the comparison of ontologies, but comparison as ontology."

I can't put up with you jumping from social constructivism, to cutting the network, to shapes and freedom emerging from anthropological ontology which is the being different sameness of difference. Comprehend?

Learn to give a shit about where you are working. If you can't do that, then pretend like all the applied anthropologists do. Then, find a problem relevant to the people where you are working. If pockets are a big deal in Tony Crook and Adam Reed world, who gives a fuck? Pockets are not things to be studied, as so wonderfully demonstrated in a recent article published by Engelke.

6) If you think something is bullshit, and you do nothing about it, I will analyse you too. As I keep saying, Holbraad and spore gal aren't the problem: it's you reviewers; it's you who sit through their talks and say nothing; it's you editors and those on boards ... It's all of you, I'm afraid.

## **(7) Ontology does have a politics**

Let us expand our frame of ridicule and incredulity beyond merely one wave of stupidity, to the waves and torrents of stupidity we have been enduring for many decades now. Postcolonial this, postfeminism that, posthumanism, postepistemology, and we are soon to be hit with postontology in the coming years – this will come from the ontologists themselves, unfortunately.

One of the things that has allowed all this silliness to take over the academy has been the unbearable politicking of the brats who now dominate not just anthropology, but all the social sciences and humanities. To steal the words of a good friend of mine, one of the defining features of these undereducated fools has been their 'sectarianism':

"All of their thinking and response patterns are performances of political manoeuvring. Ask about a concept - autonomy, freedom, whatever -, and they hear it in terms of alliances and oppositions within their academic world. When Rorty declared that the post-modern leftists of his time were not interested in seizing state power, but were trying to take over the English Department, he clearly uttered his most prescient words."

Speaking to 'posthumanists' and how they understood 'humanism', the chorus my friend heard back was: 'we understand it from within posthumanism'. How extraordinary a response.

Even better, we find out later in the bar that the 'posthumanists' carry pepper spray, or bats in their car, and have guns in their homes to 'protect them', I assume from the humans – or is it the humanists?

The ontology crowd, in the end, is right. There is a politics of ontology. It's anti-intellectual, it seeks power (their Meerkat is editor of the Journal of the ROYAL Anthropological Institute) in academic institutions only (Engelke is a master politicker and strategist), it promotes on the basis of allegiance to the clique, and it absolutely is against making any intervention in matters which might affect our students, colleagues who haven't been kissing flutes and rings, let alone the people they work with. These are not traits specific to the ontologists only, they are what mark anything which is able to get traction within our disciplines, departments and journals.

Indeed, you can go to Aberdeen and see the Ingoldian freashow, or Edinburgh to see the Janet Carsten and Jonathan Spencer double-act.

We lost the Academy many decades ago. Some of us are still mourning that loss in the face of the intellectual oblivion which so many seem to thrive in.

## **(8) Not the politics of ontology, but an ontological politics**

I have been asked on several occasions by friends why I will not be attending the Association of Social Anthropologists' meeting taking place in Edinburgh this year. Quite frankly, I have seen greater diversity in family paintings of the English aristocracy than in these meetings. As such, if I want to know what is being said at the ASA I simply need to consult The Guardian, which bits of Deleuze and Latour are being cited these days, and I'll have a general idea of the memes of the conference.

That is what happens when our discipline draws from such a tiny swamp of individuals. One is talking about home furniture, someone else about detached pockets, the ontological politics of Cuban powder, whether cosmology and ontology are irreconcilable, and so on. None of these topics matter. And they are meant not to matter. There is no price to pay for quoting Deleuze on powder, or Latour on Meerkats. However, there might very well be a price to be paid if someone's work or advocacy is pushing, even minimally, for greater gender, LGBT and racial equality in our discipline.

The below is a paraphrasing of a story an anthropologist told me a few years ago. I have had to change some of the details to protect the story teller. In almost their own words:

"The last time someone who happened to be black made it to the campus interview in our department was decades ago. I argued forcefully that we should hire this person on the basis of their work, which seemed to be at least as interesting and important as the other candidates we had invited; and on the basis that it was an embarrassment that we had only one female professor in the department, and the photo of the faculty could easily have been that of 'family and friends day' of a Klan rally.

The general consensus of my department seemed to be that I had crossed a line. Maybe it was because they thought of people with black skin as the object of our work. That some category error would take place by having black people be both the people we invent cosmologies and ontologies out of, and they themselves inventing ontologies and cosmologies on campuses in old Blightly.

I made a final push for the candidate during the open discussion. Maybe I was too honest, I was still young and naive back then, but I felt I had to set out what seemed rather clear and obvious, though which everyone refused to acknowledge. Namely, the candidate in question was producing work which was nonsense. As I said, their nonsense was no worse than any of the other candidates, so I asked my department: why can't we hire this person when we clearly do not have an issue with the nonsense of the other candidates?

The answer was quite simple: they were not attached to anyone. They were not 'one of us'. Not being 'one of us' has to be understood in several ways: they had shown themselves not susceptible to being co-opted, this is a red flag in academia, particularly when you take the pettiness of anthropologists into account; we were giving away a job and not getting anything in return, such as ingratiating ourselves to the owners and masters of the candidate, for they had none; it had not been done before in our department, which meant it probably did not need doing; people started to worry that if we have to consider people outside our tiny circles, maybe we would be next to miss out to someone who is not 'one of us'; and it was, of course, the most radical of radicals who could not countenance the idea of someone black getting the job – they kept repeating slogans they had acquired from Derrida and Foucault at me, this is what political radicalism looked like in those days.

The person we eventually hired was a simpleton. They moved up the chains of command in the UK and Europe. He has been an unmitigated disaster, by all accounts, in the professional associations he has attached himself to. His punishment for every one of his failures has been to be promoted every time. He is a weasel, and a particularly stupid one at that."

There is a lot to take from my dear friend's story. Maybe it is best to leave on this note: academics that are part of the Royal Anthropological Institute, the European Association of Social Anthropologists, the Association of Social Anthropologists, and a few others, are to be watched very carefully. These are the institutions where people who are not particularly bright are able to move up in our discipline, and ultimately crush it through their pedantry, insecurity, sheer malevolence, and desperation for the prestige they think they gain by being 'secretary' of this or that association. Of course, it is also a way for people to control who gets which grants, and which people get to sit on the plenaries (most of the time it is the committee members themselves on them). Lastly, and most disheartening of all, these associations tend to lavish hospitality on these pompus idiots, spending small fortunes on their hotel bills, the large lunches and dinners, and even expensive airfare – some of the associations make the conference account details available upon request, you should look at them to see where your membership fees go.

### **(9) Summoned to C\*ambridge**

I was summoned yesterday to somewhere within the borders of the University of C\*ambridge. I heard a knocking on the door of my flat, I opened it, and there were two meerkats, stood as erect as any man or women I've ever seen, holding a letter addressed to me. The letter read as follows [btw, the below is a goof on the new editor's latest word salad]:

Dear M\*rtin/Proctontologist,

Reading past statements by incoming editors of JR\*I, one finds two themes recurring with great regularity: one is the commitment to following the example of predecessors in upholding the continuity of the corruption of the discipline's oldest extant journal; the other is the introduction of a new cohort of C\*ambridge-ites who will freely publish in JR\*I just because they are at C\*ambridge (see the latest issue), which I will label as 'innovations of form and content'.

The implicit logic of these appeals to continuity, change, and my shafting the discipline, however, should not be misunderstood. No more than my predecessors am I invoking incremental change painstakingly wrested from the teeth of good taste, decency and intellectual honesty; or, on the contrary, a continuity strenuously retained despite, again, good taste, decency and intellectual honesty. Rather, the point lies in a paradox which will come as no surprise to you: replication of the sexual act with my Meerkat subordinates is the engine of difference; change is the stuff which comes out of the continuity of my penis in the Meerkats.

My main commitment will be to uphold the central purpose of JR\*I, namely publishing rigorous, empirically grounded articles with a broad theoretical purchase [i.e. expect more articles on Meerkats, pockets, relations, relationality, ontology, ontologicality, cosmologicality, de Castration complexes, infinations, etc].

It is because of this calling to invent relations that I must ultimately disentangle your relationality from your relations – that is, I must individualise your dividuality; or, de-infinite your infination; or, make the soul of your soul the dead body; or conceptualise you beyond conceptuality; or stick you in my pocket; or, cut your network; or... well, you get the point?

We must meet in virtuality, which can only mean in flesh. I summon thee to my fortress at Cambridge. Come unannounced for we are all waiting for you.

Insincerely,

King of all Meerkats

This letter rambled on about the distinction between being and having, Tarde vs Durkheim, and so on. Regardless, I will be making my way to Cambridge this week. This is the confrontation we have all been waiting for.

If I make it back unscathed I will still insult ontologicality. If they get me, however, you will see me with the King of all Meerkats at the next panel held on anthropology and politics – btw, has the Meerkat lover ever even been anything other than a moral and political corpse, supine on the floor, unless seeking promotion or its eventual return to C\*mbriage? Why is this person being consulted on politics? Is scheming for jobs and prestige 'politics' these days? Get Eng\*Ike on the panel, if that is the case.

Please email me if you have insights on the de Castration complexes dominating our discipline at: proctontology@gmail.com.

### **(10) One person walked into Cambridge, a dividual crawled out (Part 1)**

Picture

Outside Kings College, Cambridge, I could see the Meerkat king pacing up and down the green. Without even acknowledging me, he signalled to one of his Meerkats and turned and made his way into the college. Within moments a wave of meerkats were charging me. Numbering at least 20 or 30, they yelped high pitch screams. They were seconds away from me and I had come unarmed. I looked for cover but there was none. In a moment of madness, I too charged and directly at the largest of the meerkats. As they were in reach, I slid along the slick stone walkway and managed to knock several of them out like a bowling ball striking at the heart of the pins.

Without getting up, I grabbed the legs of one of the meerkats and began smiting the others away. I had not initially realised but after a few crushing blows the meerkat in my grasp had its skull smashed in. I threw him away and grabbed the next one. I was eating into these meerkats one by one – if there is a hell, these Meerkats are by now being forced to read about their ontology in several articles published in American Ethnologist and other such journals.

Not all the Meerkats were dead. However, it was a blood bath and they were clearly demoralised. In the distant I could see the Meerkat King gather several meerkats. Next to him someone was sowing some pocket obviators. I edged closer to the entrance of the college. Within 20 meters or so the first meerkat was launched at me. On its crash to terra firma it exploded creating a 2 meter radius crater. These meerkats are not only ontological, they're explosive as well!

More meerkats were launched at me. It was a hail of Meerkat grenades by the time I managed to find an open window to jump into. In the distance and down a long corridor I could see a mop of white hair peeking over defences made of mahogany tables and chairs. I could hear some rustling, and then: 'dividualise this, asshole! Fire at the proctontologist, powder boy!' And then, within an instant, I was shrouded in powder. Cuban ontological powder puff as I later found out. Powder that ontologises cosmologies, and comsologises ontologies.

I was in trouble at this stage. I was blinded and stuck in an ontological fug. Next, political shapes were being fired at me. All this while I could feel I was being encircled.

One of the dividualists getting nearer to me could not stop mentioning Quine. Another was talking of ethics. I could also hear something about 'the otherwise'.

In my blindness I decided to charge, once again, whoever, or whatever, was encircling me. With all the fury and rage I could muster, I exploded from my standing start and ran as hard as I could. Expecting to crash into something or someone, my charge, however, was almost

totally unencumbered. I heard in the distance: 'de Castrated!!!!'. 'What? What was I meant to do? All I can see are salmon!'

I was free, but not for long. I needed to clean my eyes, or get a view from nowhere. I began to finally realise that this was the day of reckoning. I never quite grasped how deep the misery went in that particular college. I was being disabused of any notion that the ontologists were just goofing around.

To be continued ...

## (11)

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I was blinded by the Cuban Ifa ontological anti-Latourian powder. I was safe for a while. I couldn't hear anything. They might be toying with me, they might be waiting for me to make my way back to them. I couldn't be sure. Whatever was taking place, I needed to clear my eyes. If there is one thing in the ontological One/Many World(s) of Kings College which could neutralise Ifa Holbraadese anti-Danny Miller powder it was surely the multiplicities of Anna Tsing's spores.

I crouched down on the ground and started punching into the wooden panelled walls. If I knew one thing it was that Kings College was rotten to its core. As I broke my way into the inner rottenness of the college I rubbed the fungus and asbestos which hid behind the thin wooden veneer. My eyes were exploding from the ontological multiplicities of Hobraadese, and the ontological multiplicities of Tsing-ese. Multiplicity against multiplicity produces ... well ... I better not say - there will be a conference organised on the topic by these ontologists any day now...

I could see. I could see clearer than the de Castrated Jaguar or salmon. I was seeing ontologicality through my ontological eyes in the abode of ontologicaese.

I gathered myself - affects and all. I turned to say one last word to the anthropology Gods, but they have long since been dead. Before I charged once more into the gang of idiots I saw a poster written by dissidents of the Student Union. They were talking of the politics of 'freeing shapes' and 'invention of categories'. It was clear the de Castrated and Holbraadese manifesto was born from idiocies long cultivated and nurtured within the rotten walls of this college.

This was it. The time of reckoning was up. I walked slowly and assuredly. Around the corner I could see them crouched around copies of 'Truth in Motion' and 'The Gender of the Gift' in some ritualistic practice that seems to date back to at least the launch of Holbraad's book. The King of all Meerkats had his book in hand hoping to slide it in to the centre and thus make it part of the ritual. I think it was the grated cheese man, the snake in the ontological paradise, who turned to the Meerkat King and said: 'Hey, we've forced our students to read that shit and pretend it isn't a joke. We've done more than enough for you.' The Meerkat King was not troubled by shame or embarrassment. The rebuke did not stop him.

I cleared my throat in the distance. Some of them looked up at me immediately, the more senior figures had been hard trained into pretending to be indifferent, and thus in their eyes seeming to be superior. Those who had not looked up at me, I said to them slowly: 'I am not one of your subjugated ethnographic subjects. Look up at me, you're not in your fieldsites now, arseholes!'

The white haired one asked how I thought these attacks were likely to end? I answered as straightforwardly as I could: 'Well, I imagine this is all very 'ethnographic' for you all. That is, it will be fodder for an article in a journal, and then a book...'

Enough was enough. They were done with words, and so was I. Rane Willerslev in one quick motion cited Holbraad and more senior Cambridge anthropologists, and bang ... there were witches in the sky attacking me. That is all it took for things to become real in this world: a few incoherent words and cite your friends.

As the first witch got close to me, I ducked her broom, and grabbed onto her underwear. I reversed them round to the right way and poof!!! ... she was dead!

The next witch attacked me and hit me hard. As she turned round to attack me I started to quote from an ethnography written decades before which made sense and mattered. The witch dissolved in mid-air amidst the coherency.

Morten Pedersen was scribbling away with crayons and drooling over his paper. A shaman spontaneously comes into being. This time I didn't wait for an attack. I charge the Siberian ontological shaman and wave a fire in front of his face. The shaman begins to melt and I have a fondu set ready to hand to dip some bread into it. Pedersen was right, ontologicality is a Swiss cheese with holes in it, just like his brain.

Next, ethical Buddhists monks combust into being. These guys bored the hell out of me. As they were meditating, I pick up a golden mace left behind by one of the less privileged students at Cambridge. I beat each monk's head as they chant. 'Ethicalise this you arseholes' I scream as I worked my way through each of the ethicists.

I had expended tremendous energy and we were only at the beginning of the epic battle against idiocy. Of idiocy so deep it could be mined by only the most repellent and contemptible. I said 'Stop'. I said it louder the next time. And even louder the third time. I had had enough. I was fighting the symptom, not the cause. The aetiologology of the proctontologist was all wrong.

The white haired one walked up to me and commended my warrior skills. I was offered to ask any question which they might answer if they felt it worthy of a response. I asked plainly and simply: 'what is a dividual?'. The answer was whispered gently and sweetly into my ear: 'It means absolutely fuck all.'

'I knew it', I whispered back.

This was the end. I had confronted the idiots, and their viciousness and pettiness was greater than I had ever imagined. They were destroying everything in the hope of gaining nothing. Conferences, panels, gatherings, and meetings in secret locations to discuss the future of anthropology which they see themselves as the custodians of. It was all for nothing. They could see that and it made no difference to them.

I told the Meerkat king in the silence which had overtaken the moment that it was befitting he was the editor of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, or the 'yellow one' as he called it in his comments in his first issue as editor. - A journal so tied to the 'yellow' and the cowardly that it had become avowedly associated with it.

Water off a Meerkat's arse. No response.

In the ponderous silence I knew something awful and terrible was about to take place. My greatest fear was of their reading some of their published work to me. However, something more awful was about to take place.

The white haired one told me to ready myself as they were about to reveal all before they finally dealt with me. They organised themselves in a row before me. They looked at one another, and in unison they began scratching and tearing away their faces: 'they're masks ...?' It was ghastly. They were pretending to be people they were not all these years. The masks had stuck to them tightly so the scene was extended in all its ghastliness.

The Meerkat king was the first to remove enough of his mask. I was expecting a Meerkat behind the convincing disguise. Instead, behind the mask was the exact same face and

features as on the mask. Each one went through this obscene and idiotic revelation. I was stunned. I didn't know what to say other than: 'Why?'

They laughed uproariously, and together chanted back at me: 'Who would ever think that we were concealing ourselves behind the concealment of our own faces!'

'But ... why?'

'Ontology is the transcendental deduction of being ... individuals ...' they kept going on through this terrible script they must have worked out years in advance. As they walked past me I could see not one of them could pass the Turing test. I mentioned this to them, and was met with: 'We've aspired to, and trained for years and decades to fail the Turing test. That is why we come to this place.'

Congratulations to all of them! They certainly met and exceeded their ambitions.

I fell to my knees disoriented and tired. Two of the Ph.D. students grabbed me and took me outside the grounds of the college. I felt ashamed and stupid. I had taken on the morons and saw just how stupid they, the discipline and academia has become. A life wasted on trivialities in the company of affluent idiots. Idiots too stupid to get into a real academic discipline. This is what anthropology has been turned into. The repository for the Verso pseudo-intellectual bullshit. Zizek this, Badiou that; Sloterdijk this, Agamben that. Or the worst of it is the home grown individualised, ontologised shit. We have become the bullshitters' bullshitters.

I was laid on the ground. The students started hacking away at my body in the hope of cutting my network, of individualising me. Of course, there is no more useless idiots in the world than PhD students - and then to have anthropology students, and Cambridge ones at that ... well, the morons had no chance.

I took the clevers they had to hand and chopped and sliced for them. Each time the blade went into me I felt tremendous relief: I was one slice closer to the freedom of oblivion. I looked around the world one last time, but all I saw was ontology, Cambridge, and across the horizon I could see the next brand of shit making its way.

On the last time I dug the blade into me, the PhD students spat on my face. They both insisted they were 'innocent bystanders' though. They walked away to leave my corpse on the street, like a dog ...

Picture