

Assemblages According to Manuel DeLanda

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FIRST POINT

DeLanda's Realism

Inspirations:

- Gilles Deleuze (“the virtual”)
- Roy Bhaskar (“the intransitive”)

Realism

Real Things Exist Not Just Apart From
Humans

But Also Apart from *Each Other*

Missing This Point is the *Basic Failure* of
post-Kantian Philosophy

Realism \neq Materialism

Reality Must Exist Apart From All Relations

But the Concept of Physical Matter is Purely
Relational

DeLanda's Weird Realism

Real Things Are Never Fully Actualized

SECOND POINT

Assemblages

- made of parts, but also more than those parts (emergence, not reductionism)
- autonomous from the relations into which they enter

DeLanda's Criteria for an Emergent Entity

1. Retroactive Effects on Its Parts
2. Redundant Causation
3. Causal Power on Its Own Level
4. Generates New Parts

The Most Important Criterion:

Redundant Causation

- An Entity is Independent of Its Parts
- An Entity has Autonomous Qualities
- An Entity is Independent of Its Relations

THIRD POINT

DeLanda's Critique of Essence

Unlike Most Realists, DeLanda *Hates*
Essence

What is DeLanda's Alternative to Essence?

1. An Entity is a Genetic-Dynamic History, Not a Fixed Essence
2. Reality is a Continuum, Not a Series of Discrete Chunks

In Defense of Essence

1. DeLanda's Redundant Causation
Renders Genetic-Dynamic History
Redundant
2. Reality Itself is Not a Continuum, But is
Quantized into Discrete Chunks

Unfashionable, Yet True

But Stranger Than it Sounds

Disturbing to Think of a World Made Of
Discrete Chunks, None of Them
Communicating with One Another

Causal Relation is a Mystery

FOURTH POINT

DeLanda vs. Linear Causation

Catalysis

- an entity only *catalyzes* an effect
- cigarettes do not automatically cause lung cancer, but merely act as catalysts for it

For DeLanda as for Bhaskar...

Multiple Causal Factors Supposedly End
Determinism

In Fact, They Merely Make Determining
Causes More Difficult for Humans to Know

The Question of Freedom and Determinism Must be Solved Elsewhere

Where Does Catalysis Occur?

On the *Inside* of an Object

But Catalysis Occurs Between Images, Not Real/Virtual/Intransitive Things

Therefore:

- causation occurs on the surface of the world
- the collision of images leads to changes in the real

Problems with Earlier Theories of Causation

- majority see no problem. One thing bumps into another and moves it.
- Islamic/French occasionalism. Relation between entities is a problem, but God is posited as the medium of all relations.
- Hume's skepticism. The mind is posited as the medium of all relations.

Bruno Latour

- Latour and ANT. The problem of relations is secularized and localized.
- God or human mind cannot be the sole solution.
- Every relation needs a mediator.
- However, nothing is left outside the relations. In Latour's works, DeLanda's "reality" disappears in favor of a global "actuality."

A Better Solution

Causal Relations are Produced By Contact
Between Real Objects and *Images* of
Other Objects

But Only Some Contacts Have
Consequences

Only When the Image is Severed
from Its Qualities

Beauty and Force
(or Humor and Force)

Aesthetics and Physics
(or Comedy and Physics)

All Human and Non-Human Forces Require Split
Between an Object and its Own Traits

Fourfold

Derived from:

Real vs. Actual

Objects vs. Their Traits

Aesthetics Digs to the Bottom of the World