

# Of Technicity:

## Some reflections on sociomaterial becoming and performativity

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That *how* an actual entity becomes constitutes *what* that actual entity is... Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'. This is the principle of process.  
(Whitehead 1978 p. 23)

# Of Technicity...

- Originary technicity
- Bifurcated being ontology
- The becoming of technicity (Extension)
  - Ontological indeterminacy
  - Appropriational acts
  - Plagiaristic/borrowed agency
  - Performativity
- The past that never passes (Retention)

## Originary technicity

The paradox is to have to speak of exteriorization without a preceding interior: the interior is constituted in exteriorization.

[I]t is the tool, that is tekhnē, that invents the human, not the human who invents the technical. Or again: the human invents himself in the technical by inventing the tool—by becoming exteriorized technologically. But here the human is the interior: there is no exteriorization that does not point to a movement from interior to exterior. Nevertheless, the interior is inverted in this movement; it can therefore not precede it. Interior and exterior are consequently constituted in a movement that invents both one and the other: a moment in which they invent each other respectively, as if there were a technological maieutic of what is called humanity. The interior and the exterior are the same thing, the inside is the outside, since man (the interior) is essentially defined by the tool (the exterior). However, this double constitution is also that of an opposition between the interior and the exterior—or one that produces an illusion of succession. (Stiegler, T & T (1), p.141/2)

## Bifurcated being ontology

- Human / Non-human [anthropocentric]
- Are essentially what they are and then they become interconnected/entangled
- They can impact, condition or mediate each other, they can become interconnected, they can overlap, they can shape each other, they can become entangled, they can become imbricated, and so forth. However, in their interaction with each other they remain essentially what they are as 'technical' and 'social'
- More specifically, their interaction with each other is always **external** to their essential nature (that which they already are as such)
- But what about change? [primary / secondary qualities]

## The becoming of technicity (Extension)

- Ontological indeterminacy
- Appropriational acts [prehension, association, intra-action]
  - In their becoming actual occasions *appropriate* other actual occasions in pursuit of their own subjective immediacy
  - Phenomena’—“phenomena are constitutive of reality. Reality is not composed of things-in-themselves or things behind-phenomena but “things”-*in*-phenomena.” Barad (2003 p. 817)
  - Appropriation is always partial, that is, in terms of certain *aspects* (qualities) of the occasion appropriated. (in terms of what Heidegger (1962 p. 189) calls the ‘as-structure’)
  - All appropriating acts are ontologically constitutive; an occasion becomes through its appropriating relations and nothing besides [Latour/humans]
  - Becoming through appropriations means that all relations between actual occasions are *internal*—meaning, an occasion is never ‘complete’ so that this complete entity can then have relations with other entities (in such ‘completed’ terms) and which are then external to its constitutive becoming—becoming is not *between* but always *within* occasions.

As Latour (1999 p. 192) suggests, humans become the sort of beings we assume them to be (as purposeful and intentional) through their appropriational acts: “purposeful action and intentionality may not be properties of objects, but they are also not properties of humans either. They are properties of institutions [nexuses of actual occasions], apparatuses, or what Foucault called dispositifs.”

## The becoming of technicity (Extension)

- Every appropriational act enacts / performs an agential cut. “It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ [antecedent occasions] of phenomena become determinate...” (Barad 2003 p. 815)
- An appropriating relation is an act of a cause becoming an effect (Whitehead 1978). Latour (2005 p. 108) calls the act of a cause becoming an effect a ‘translation’; “a relation that does not transport causality but *induces* two mediators into coexisting.” -- BUT every translation is also a transformation
- What about agency?

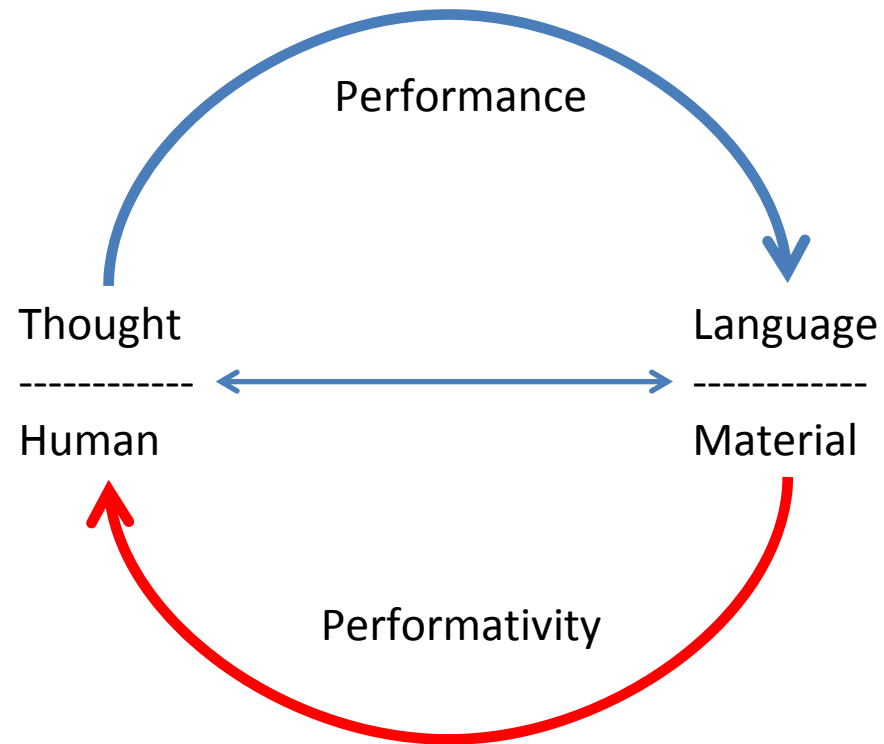
## The becoming of technicity (Extension)

All agency in sociomaterial becoming is the outcome of appropriations (intra-actions, associations, or prehensions) and nothing else. Thus, in a sense *all agency is borrowed (one might say plagiarised or parasitic)*.

Or, as Latour (1993 p. 81) would also say, all agency is mediated; but such mediators are not innocent and passive bystanders. They are not “some sycophantic eunuch fanning its masters with palm-leaves, *but always does new work of its own* to shape the translation of forces from one point of reality to the next” (Harman 2009 p. 15 emphasis added).

Becoming is never straightforward, every new appropriation may constitutively transform the occasions/actors in many unexpected ways; differently stated: no occasion is ever quite the master of their own becoming—performativity flows in many unexpected directions. A nexus is always a becoming in which all occasions in the nexus participates, but which none of them determine as such—agency belongs to everybody and nobody as such. [ We always overestimate the agency of all actors, especially those we call human]

# Performance & Performativity



*A performative act produces what such an act assumes.*

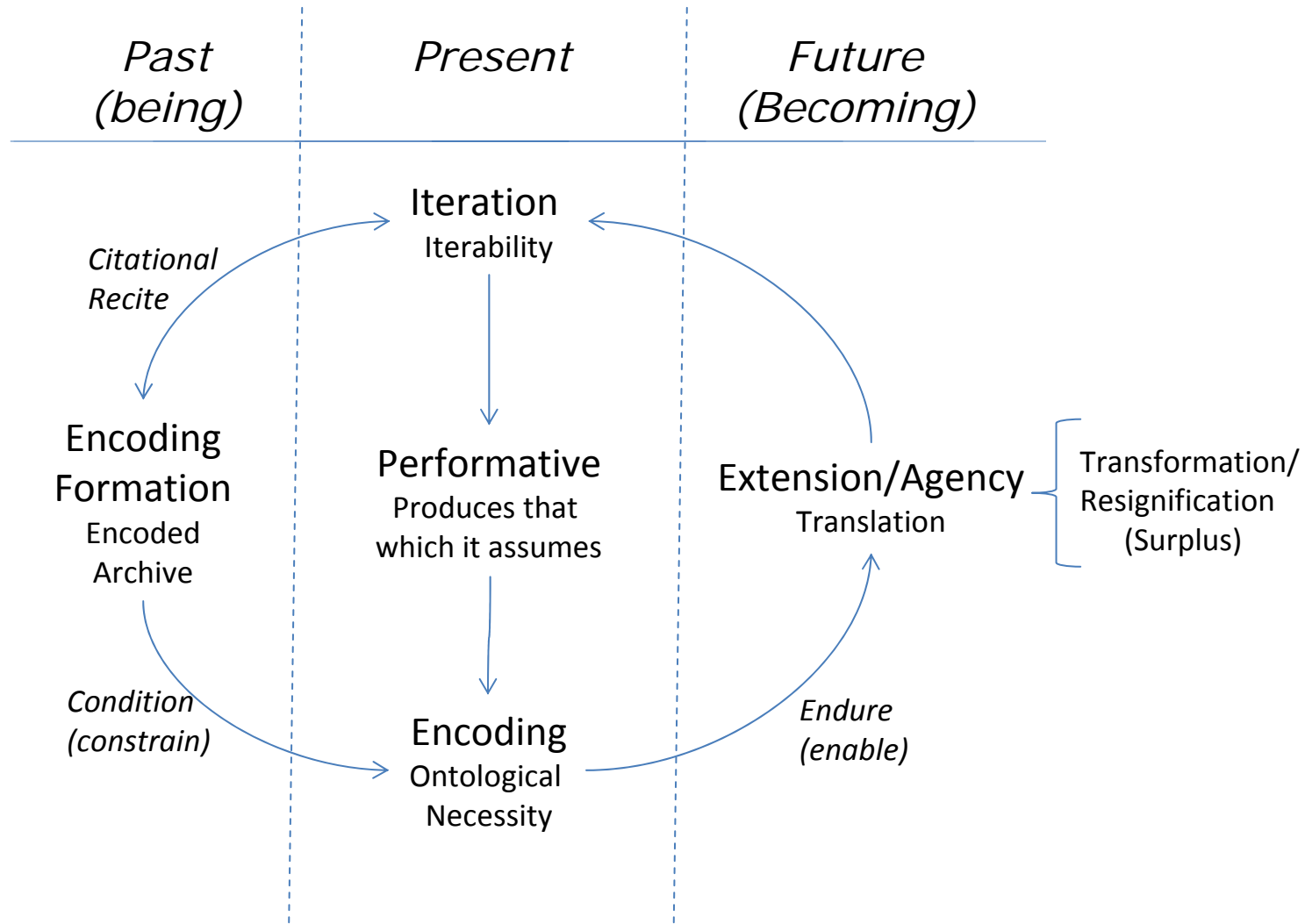
## Butler and performativity

Butler proposes that we should not take gender to be something essential, a set of free-floating attributes, which some entities in a sense already have, and which is then acted out. Rather, it should be taken as an appropriational act “gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity . . . gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (Butler 1990 p. 112).

In other words the ontological indeterminacy of the becoming occasion (the body, for example ) becomes gendered through the iterative appropriation of occasions which are already normatively governed as having the aspect of ‘male’ or ‘female’—such as a particular way of dressing, for example. In this manner the appropriations constitutively produces that which such appropriations already assumed as being essential—that is to say, gender in this case.

In the words of Nietzsche (1996 p. 29): “there “is no ‘being’ behind doing, acting, becoming; ‘the [pre-existing] doer’ is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing [becoming] itself is everything.

# An Account of Performativity



# The past that never passes (Retention)

