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Asking, "Who is a Political Agent?"

The occasion for this review of neo-materialist debates on political agency is the recent publication of *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. There, Coole, Frost, and a host of well-known voices in the new materialist movement, help lay out the foundations for a materialism that takes seriously the idea of things as agents along *with* humans. Though this rethinking of agency runs counter to the norm, it should be very welcomed.

It has for a long time been the case that political agency was thought to fall only under the purview of the human subject. Debates in political theory and normative philosophy directed their concerns to the parameters of *who* the political agent was, examining the various facets of agents' psychological structures, social behaviors, and political activities.[1] Voting, balloting, debating, deliberating… all activities of the rational and self-interested political subject, were emblematic and reflective of human beings as political agents. Fair enough.

Yet such privileging of the individual human's subject-identity as the recourse to their own agency has recently proven too problematic, especially when confronted with those political problems that seem tied to and around the subject's very identity. It turns out that how I answer *who* I am need not be identical with how I answer questions about *what* it is I do – assuming I *can* (am conscious enough to) clearly answer at all.[2] The complexities of ideational relations tied to agents' subjective stances in the world – via gender, age, race, ethnicity, amongst other identities to which subjects subscribe or have ascribed to them – present increasingly difficult political problems for those who would maintain such a 'humanist' view.[3] What should cause theorists' alarm are how divisions between the human and the world – between subject and object – have had the anathema result of allowing for the destruction of the actual (which is to say ecological) world. The subject, it seems, has come to care too much for itself.

What is so problematic here is that there remain serious political costs to this subjective ambivalence for the objective world. Indeed, such costs are keenly felt in the midst of those political failures to satisfy needs. States unable to provide and protect sufficient natural resources will likely remain states no longer. Politicians who ignore constituents' needs are usually forced from office. Not enough clean drinking water or affordable and healthy food, or resources for energy, or livable or farmable land, or… each produce their own unique and insurmountable failures. The Aristotelian notion that someone having freedom from need characterizes their capacity to be political remains an important characterization of the political realm. Matter and materiality, seen clearly (perhaps too clearly) in moments of need, highlight precisely the problem: For all the value that necessities hold for having and maintaining stable political power, materiality and its significance for political constitution remain underexplored. Need is still seen as *our* need, with the consequence that poverty, hunger, starvation, famine, and the inability to face scarcity of natural resources continue to plague. Perhaps this is the problem?

A recent turn by theorists and philosophers towards materialism attempts to address precisely this lacuna. The concern that motivates this turn regards the exceptionalism that has been too long attributed to humanities' agency. Rather than single-out humans as those alone capable of agentic force in the world, these thinkers (from a host a backgrounds and disciplines) have begun to focus on humanity as embedded within contexts from which they cannot and should not be distinguished. These material networks contain both the human and the non-human, organic and inorganic materials that work together on and within the world. It is not just that 'I' am a political agent, but so too is all that 'I' am wedded too, including the food I eat, the water I drink, the garbage I produce, and the land where I exchange food and water for waste.[4] Indeed, the demands of global environmentalism perhaps best illustrate this phenomena – our irresponsibility with regards to *our* environment have drastic effects on more than just 'us' (affecting those humans and non-humans who are in the world as well). Such neo-materialist webs of agency extend to issues of poverty (the lack of – or inability to meet – material needs), our bodies (our material identity), and even of life itself (biopolitics). From this view, disregarding materiality and material capacity for agency leaves humanity enduring its own myth of exceptionalism, with the political costs of the continued purveyance of economic, gendered, racial, and further ideational inequalities.

This review critically follows the trajectory of Coole and Frost's *New Materialisms* along three distinct pathways: First, I explore recent reorientations to 'things' as new political problems; next I examine how such reorientation to things is permitted by advents in scientific thinking that parallel and condition advents in political thinking; I then conclude with

some objections that seem to still need accounting for (and I hope may further the new materialist project). Throughout, I situate Coole and Frost *et al* between the new materialism of speculative realists such as Quentin Meillassoux[5] and the democratic anxieties of critics such as Sharon Krause.[6] In the end, I aim to show how Coole and Frost *et al* allow for a much needed reemphasis on why materiality stands as a fundamental problem for contemporary politics, and how theorists can begin to productively reorient themselves to such matters.

Things Capable of Agency

Subject-centered models of political agency situate the experience of agency within the frame of the agent being capable of rationally reflecting on possible actions and the completion of such actions pursued. Such a model has internal limits (whether there is some basic norm of rationality by which humanity is delineated – and by which children or the mentally ill may not partake, for instance). But neo-materialists introduce an important external limit to these models. Are there not 'things' that also evince agency – and especially political agency – things that affect the structure of political life such that it – and we – are called to its attention?[7] Such 'things' would have 'thing-power.' As Jane Bennett explains, "Thing-power is a force exercised on that which is not specifically human (or even organic) upon humans."[8] In humans' experience of the world it is often the case that some "objects appear more vividly as things, that is, as entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics."[9] These things – no longer mere objects – require an accounting when we notice them. And yet it is not our noticing them that gives them agentive force in the world (as classical phenomenology might suggest). Rather, these things are assembled within a web that itself allows for the 'noticing' to occur. This webbed network is not empowered by our noticing it, but rather empowers those within its frame. As Bennett explains, "matter has an inclination to make connections and form networks of relations with varying degrees of stability."[10] This is true of human and non-human matter alike.

Yet is it reasonable to regard such a webbed-structure, or the things within it, as having agency? What would it mean for such agency to affect the world? One such view is that neither the network, nor the things (non-human) within it are rightly called 'agents,' but are better thought as 'causes.'[11] Even while some things may call our attention and stand out as 'things' which need attending, this 'need' may not necessitate their being actual agents. They are, by this view, better referred to as 'causes,' as they highlight problematic phenomena for us 'agents' to see. Indeed, at least when centered on the subject, the common sense view of a dualism between subject and object is perpetuated by such sense perceptions of causes in the

world and our own self-consciousness of us as those perceiving such causes. But such dualism between active, instantiating selves capable of acting on and in the world, and objects that remain passive and constitutive of that world in their passivity, may rely too much on human centrality.

By the neo-materialists' view, such psychic dualism translates to moral and political dualism via the experience of the transcendental subject. Our rationality is conditioned on this very practice. The moral and political consciousness of this rationality are of that imperative we tell ourselves to act with regards to other rational agents such that we imagine ourselves as them.[12] This Kantian categorical imperative is extended to those who also share in it as a duty (and not those – such as things or animals – incapable of having duty). Such an agentic dualism is perpetuated by a psychological dualism. Kant divides the world into things-in-themselves and things-as-they-appear: There is the noumenon, "a thing which is not top be thought as object of the senses but as a thing in itself, solely through a pure understanding;"[13] this is compared to "Appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories" which are called phenomena.[14] The dualism of subject and object is complicated by the dualism of things, whereby some things are in the world, and thus *for* us having appearances, while others are things *in* and *for* themselves, and thus cannot appear to us. Kant's revolution here was, famously, the reorientation of the mind's relationship to the world, whereby now it was the objects of the world as they appeared which, in their appearance, choreographed with the rational mind (as opposed to the mind trying to conform to objects in the world). The consequence of this reorientation was that now both mind and world were capable of interaction, despite there being a place for things-in-themselves which remained independent and unknown to the conscious self. The problem for such a transcendental subject – as Kant's critics claim – is that even as it tries not too, this system still abstracts the human from the realities of lived experience in the very division of subject and object.

What Coole and Frost *et al.* hope for is a clearing of these psychic and political costs that we endure in maintaining such exception for the human subject. Following the Deleuezian inversion of Kant's transcendental idealism, many of the essays in this volume point to the opportunity and potency made real in the agentive matter of the world, independent from human agents' sensibilities.[15] The ideational difference of subject and object need not privilege the exception of the subject in the power of that equation. The Deleuezian strain that runs through this book highlights the power of things to engender subjectivity, especially at those moments when subjectivity would be futile, when the subject itself perceives themselves as dissolving into the novelty of the reality of 'this' thing (e.g. the matter of the world). As Coole puts it, "Is it not possible to imagine matter quite differently: as perhaps a lively materiality that is self-transformative and

already saturated with the agent capacities and existential significance that are typically located in a separate, ideal, and subjectivist realm?"[16]

Breaking with the view of the human as the exception to 'thing-ness', the authors collectively argue for a reconstitution of agency wherever the dynamism of matter presents itself. This is the constitution of the 'thing' as agent, at least insofar as the matter which constitutes the thing has within it a dynamic quality to which other things (and humans) must contend. The authors argue that it is not just humanity that purports agentive characteristics, but things too. Humanity is not external to nature, but now again will reside within it.[17]

From the humanist perspective, the human agent is exceptional because they are capable of initiating and taking responsibility for actions in the world. Such action is elicited by a self-regarding entity capable of propagating it. As Sharon Krause explains, "What inanimate objects lack is the reflexive sense of self required for the affirmation of one's subjective existence through concrete action in the world… (The) capacity to stand in reflexive relationship to oneself does seem to be at the heart of the – very reasonable – distinction between an agent and a mere cause."[18] Such self-regarding stature is at the heart of Kant's conceptualization of the moral cause of rational agents. From Kant's perspective, the division is between those affected by mere inclination and the capacity to follow duty (even despite inclination).

This division – from a materialist perspective – is too stark, in part because of its totalizing, self-dominating strategy. As Coole and Frost explain, new materialist strategies understand "materiality in relational, emergent sense as contingent materialization – a process within which more or less enduring structures and assemblages sediment and congeal, sometimes as a result of their internal inertia but also as a manifestation of the powerful interests invested therein."[19] Matter and materiality need not be excluded from that which we regard as having agentive capacity (anymore than – pace Kant – angels should be from the categorization of rational being). Making clear that things in the world, as well as the materiality of things (more that their substance) affect what constitutes the world is necessary to account for what the world actually is, no matter the anxiety it may provoke. (I say 'anxiety' because it seems that one of the advantages of the subject-centered model – however misplaced such an impulse may be – is that it, in confirming that *this* subject is capable of committing actions in the world, re-confirms itself through such actions and thus relieves anxieties of being.)

Nowhere is this problematic division between human and world better evinced than in Quentin Meillassoux's recent rethinking of materialism, wherein he theorizes the consequences of a historical world without humans.[20] Meillassoux's efforts to show how the problem of materiality

elicited by the division of subject and object derives from our always imaging it to be the case that some human-as-human-subject is capable of perceiving the object that is 'there' to be perceived. Of course, recent scientific efforts belies the impossibility of this reality, and it is here where Meillassoux observes that there are great epistemological costs endured if/when fantastical-empirical realities are all that can substantiate our experience of the world. This is most apparent, from his view, in the concept and use of the idea of the fossil, which we imbue as an object-as-record with the presence of a reality that we (humans) admit to have far preceded humanity itself. As Meillassoux argues, 'fossil-matter' is itself "not just materials indicating the traces of past life according to the familiar sense of the term 'fossil,' but materials indicating the existence of an ancestral reality or event; one that is anterior to terrestrial life. An 'arche-fossil' thus designates the material support on the basis of which the experiments that yield estimates of ancestral phenomena proceed – for example, an isotope whose rate of radioactive decay we know, or the luminous emission of a star that informs us as to the date of its formation."[21] Here, through the idea of the fossil, Meillassoux highlights how such a stark division between human and world determined by a strict Kantian transcendental subject, even as it attempts to deny the absolute, admits it, at least insofar as it closes the world in on the parameters set by the authoritative power of the subjective agent's experience of their subjectivity. The fossil is – by our admission of the concept as it is normally used – a vehicle of those vestiges of a world that was always already unknown to humans-as-humans. Meillassoux provides ground here for a philosophical retort to the humanist concern, while at the same time expanding the range on which Coole and Frost can travel.[22] The fossil, as the thing-before-human is neither merely a thing-in-itself, nor a thing-as-it-appears. Rather, it is a 'thing' which in its very 'thing-ness' asks us to admit that it is prior to us humans.

Engaged with Things

In *our* experience of 'things' – from fossils to trash, and everything between – Meillassoux calls our attention to the fundamental problem of, not simply that 'things' may have agentic qualities, but how it is that humanity relates to such things in the midst of these qualities. What is the web and how does that web-network operate on us humans? It is especially here – in diagnosing this network of agentic things (human and non-human) – where recent materialist philosophies differ from their predecessors (both historical materialism and 'corporeal' materialism).[23]

Modern theories of materialism – whatever the form – have served as a direct opposition to philosophies of idealism. As Pheng Cheah's essay "Non-Dialectical Materialism" demonstrates, historical materialism developed directly out of its concern for the failures of an idealist consciousness that

denied the political and economic ramifications of humanity being a social species-being.[24] This review of the historical emergence of neo-materialism highlights the parameters of the new movement (which, by Cheah's view, goes beyond corporeality, towards force and other non-material materialisms). The institution of Marx's historical materialism was directly tied to the fact of humanity's social being determining consciousness.[25] As Cheah shows, the institution of neo-materialism is a vitalism present in all forces of life itself (and not mere social-being).

The break with historical materialism that neo-materialists follow is a direct inheritance of Althusser's assertion that materiality is as much present in practice as in matter itself.[26] Rey Chow's "The Elusive Material" continues Cheah's historical genealogy in highlighting precisely why this break is so central.[27] The binding of economic rationality to materiality in historical materialism which was crucial for Marx's project had the perverse effect of redirecting focus away form the social constructs that had seemed to originally provoke Marx in his reorientation to consciousness. The politicization of materiality, if it is to account for the power of things, needs a more profound theory, Chow argues, than simple 'naïve-matter.'

But that all materialism need be related to matter does not imply that all matter need be conceptualized materially. Sara Ahmed discussions of 'orientations' highlight precisely this point.[28] Following on the pathway set out in historical and corporeal materialism, Ahmed uncovers the essential linkages in all materialist philosophies in their attempt to theorize the agentic qualities of things, and in so doing, orient the world around them. This orientation would itself be impossible, so Ahmed argues, without 'things,' in that we receive not mere cause from them, but (contra Krause) a ground on which to perceive cause. There are some things whose 'thing-ness' – and their capacity to affect the world – is not so dependent on their matter. Consider here Heidegger's example of the jug: "When we fill a jug, the pouring that fills it flows into the empty jug. The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel's holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as the holding vessel… The vessel's thing-ness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that holds."[29] Here the void is part of its thing-ness, even though it is not material. 'Things' may be more important than we have given them credit for (that is, more than mere matter). This aligns with Bennett's thesis that vital materialism – regarding the non-human as agentive rather than as merely instrumental or as object – opens pathways for action outside of and beyond the human.[30]

Such a break stands as a direct response to the humanism-as-oppression and reification of those who reside outside the 'human.'[31] Whether in ideational or epistemological terms, recent trends in liberal political theory have tended to rely too heavily on the individuated subject as the center of political agency. The new materialist arguments stand in direct contrast to

this human-centrism, aiming at positioning the human within the web of life itself (human and non-human).[32]

Part of this struggle has been the place of science in the human-subjective view of the world. Much of the humanist view depends on apprehending the 'all' of reality. Such a view of life offers a 'stillness' or a 'freeze,' so that it can be perceived in its 'all' in the moment. Yet such a 'stillness' is in conflict with experiences of reality – at least in as much as we are not currently able to know all of the material reality when we engage it. As Zizek explains, "Materialism means that the reality I see is never 'whole'—not because a large part of it eludes me, but be- cause it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it."[33] Too much of our sensing of the world seems to depend on our being the ones who do the sensing. Because of the 'me' doing the sensing, the world itself finds form in that particularity of the 'me-ness' imposed (by me) on the thing sensed.

How is this 'stillness' connected to such form-giving 'me-ness' – the two qualities usually related to the modern 'scientific' view? Science divides itself between the two, such that me-ness is always already that which is to be overcome in the 'stillness' of the thing – removing the thing-ness of the thing and thus returning it to its state as object (rather than thing). The problem is what constitutes reality here is not itself the same as reality as such. Science, as a way of sensing the world, often confronts its own inability to actually sense what it claims it can. As Arendt reminds us, "The Progress of modern science has demonstrated very forcefully to what an extent (the) observed universe, the infinitely small no less than the infinity large, escapes not only the coarseness of human sense perception but even the enormously ingenious instruments that have been built for its refinement."[34] It is the very techniques of seeing (the microscope, the telescope, the camera etc.) which, even as they have improved their focus, have made clear precisely how it is mathematic hypotheses that point the way to reality, not things actually.[35]

This contemporary 'science' that hypothesizes things (strings, matter, anti-matter, electrons, etc.) changes the very thinking of what 'matter' is. Zizek's recent evocation of Lenin reminds us that our own experience of materialism is always variable: "Every great scientific breakthrough changes the very definition of materialism…Materialism has nothing to do with the assertion of the inert density of matter; it is, on the contrary, a position which accepts the ultimate Void of reality—the consequence of its central thesis on the primordial multiplicity is that there is no 'substantial reality', that the only 'substance' of the multiplicity is Void."[36] This Void, by Zizek's view, is that by which the materiality of the world becomes what it is as it is becoming – as materiality is both what is there to be regarded as a thing and that which is the means of our conceiving its thing-ness. (It is the frame, as it were, by which we acknowledge the parameters of knowing thing-ness now.) The world is always not-All of what it is becoming. In order for such a

movement to occur, and for its apprehension to be possible, there must be some Void by which and through which the materiality of the world can operate. This realism is not always meant as a permanence.[37] But it is meant to aggressively assert that the world of becoming is the world as we now understand it to materially be (it is just that materiality, and the matter under its purview, are both subject to a novel variability).

The Limits of Neo-Materialism

While I hope to have shown the centrality of these new materialisms, let me conclude with three problematics that remain haunted by agenctic 'things.'

The first has to do with a kind of 'blackmail' new materialism seems to play on. While it is certainly the case that the world is plagued by problems requisite to materiality, and that real humans and non-humans both suffer from need and ecological imbalances, that such need should prove the basis for politics may prove too limiting. Just as the humanist subject assuages the anxieties of the conscious self that hopes it can be unified into a stable whole again, materialism preys on those same self-anxieties, highlighting their significance for the instability the self finds itself within. So much talk of 'Chaos' and 'Voids' builds in an emptiness to politics that seem to speak against the very act of problematization that materialism depends on.[38] Without attending enough to the political consequences raised in these new materialisms, the ideas discussed here weaken these attendant theories, being too speculative (as Krause contends).[39]

My second concern has to do with the aesthetics of materialism (or rather, the relationship between aesthetics and materialism). It is unclear yet and how neo-materialists regard the question of whether there remains an aesthetic dimension to 'things' – meaning that we, as those who perceive the aesthetic, are thereby always doing work on the world, even without laboring on it? Another way of asking this is whether the work of art may prove a necessary limiting factor to the materiality thesis, even in its own materiality? So much emphasis on what is agentive and how it remains independent of us seems to hold at bay the world, which is agentive because of (or along with) us. Creation, especially human creation-of-things, seems to need some accounting for (and whether or not creation and assembly will become identical).[40]

Lastly, it is worth raising questions of the democratic qualities (or lack there of) resultant form neo-materialism: Do 'we' want politics to be more than human? What happens to our ethics of if it does? Is neo-materialism calling our attention to political problems or to a new politics? If we want to account for those things beyond the human – what could or should stop us from extending agency indefinitely?

New materialisms offer democratic theory an important opportunity to regard its own parameters and function – what can be hoped for and why. And Coole and Frost's volume offers a new view of the human (and the thing) that are well worth regarding: "Conceiving matter as possessing its own modes of self-transformation, self-organization, and directedness, and thus no-longer as simply passive or inert, disturbs the conventional sense that agents are exclusively humans who possess the cognitive abilities, intentionality, and freedom to make autonomous decisions and the corollary presumption that humans have the right or ability to master nature."[41] The disruptions of such prejudices prove the greatest advantage to neo-materialism. It is the openness to that which lies beyond the bounds of its disturbances to which we must now be attuned. We should hope for such things.

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[1] For a recent overview of this logic, see Christine Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency: Essays on Practical Reason and Moral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For the most recent defense of this view agency in democratic politics, see Sharon Krause, "Bodies in Action: Corporeal Agency and Democratic Politics," *Political Theory* 39, no. 3 (2011).

[2] An excellent accounting of this problematic logic in one's own identity/agency is discussed in Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Arche, and Democracy" in *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (February 2006).

[3] The costs of this changing politics, even given its necessity in contemporary contexts, is addressed in debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. (New York: Verso, 2003).

[4] On the idea of this networking of things, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to actor-network-theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

[5] For an overview of speculative realism and the problems of materialism, see Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. (Re.Press, 2011). On object oriented philosophy and what this turn means for a new metaphysics, see Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*. (Chicago: Open Court, 2005). On the rethinking of the 'thing' as opposed to the 'thing-in-itself,' the text that seems to have become a focus for these debates (amongst speculative realists) is Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier. (London: Continuum 2008).

[6] For a recent critique of the possible dangers posed by new materialists to democratic politics, see Sharon Krause, "Bodies in Action: Corporeal Agency and Democratic Politics," *Political Theory* 39, no. 3(2011).

[7] On the problem of thinking about 'things' see Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001).

[8] From Jane Bennett's "The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (2004): 351.

[9] Ibid, 351.

[10] Ibid, 354.

[11] See Krause, "Bodies in Action," 307.

[12] See, famously, Kant's *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, 1999). For how Kant's metaphysics of morals connects up with our experience of agency, again see Korsgaard's *The Constitution of Agency*.

[13] See *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Smith (St. Martin's Press, 1969), p. B 310.

[14] *Ibid*, p. A 249.

[15]See Gilles Deleueze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (1980 Les Editions de Minuit, Paris).

[16] See Diana Coole's "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh," in Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds.), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Duke, 2010), P. 92.

[17] *Ibid*, p. 113.

[18] See Krause (2011), p. 310.

[19] Coole and Frost "Introducing the New Materialisms," in Coole and Frost (2010), p. 29.

[20] See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (Continuum 2008).

[21] *Ibid*, p. 10.

[22] It is an unfortunate limitation of their volume that Coole and Frost ignore the theories and concepts that Meillassoux and other recent inheritors of Alain Badiou's materialist project seem to add to their investigations. Again, for an overview of recent trends towards materialism in continental thought, see Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Re.Press, 2011).

[23] On Historical Materialism, see Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The founders, the golden age, the breakdown (*Norton, 2005); On classical theories of corporeal materialism, see Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Volume 1 (Vintage Books, 1978), and Judith Butler, *Bodies Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Routledge, 1996).

[24] See Pheng Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism" (esp. pp. 72-81) in Coole and Frost (2010).

[25] Famously explained in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (Norton, 1975).

[26] See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Brewster (Monthly Review Press, 2001).

[27] See Rey Chow's "The Elusive Material" in Coole and Frost (2010).

[28] See Sara Ahmed, "Orientations Matter," in Coole and Frost (2010).

[29] From Martin Heidegger "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper Row, 1971), p. 169.

[30] See Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke 2009); "The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory* (2004, 32:347); and in Coole and Frost (2010), "A Vitalist Stopover."

[31] This is addressed by Sonia Kruks in "Simone De Beauvoir: Engaging Discrepant Materialisms," in Coole and Frost (2010). See esp. pp. 260-2.

[32] This is the subject of Rosi Braidotti's excellent "The Politics of Life Itself," in Coole and Frost (2010).

[33] Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Re.Press, 2011), p. 12.

[34] See Hannah Arendt, "The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man," *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society* (Fall, 2007), p. 44.

[35] Which is precisely Meillassoux's point.

[36] See Slavoj Žižek and Ben Woodward, "Interview" in Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Re.Press, 2011), p. 406.

[37] Connolly persuasively argues this point in his essay "The Materiality of Experience" in Coole and Frost (2010), see esp. pp. 190-91.

[38] Indeed, Jason Edwards defensive rethinking of historical materialism in "The Materialism of Historical Materialism" asks this very question, with an eye to the virtues that historical materialism might lend to the neo-materialist alarm. In Coole and Frost (2010), see esp. p. 297.

[39] Again, see Krause (2011).

[40] Melissa Orlie – in her essay "Impersonal Matter" – attempts to account for creation as a kind of 'ordering' of *physis*. And, while this is a welcome start, her view needs expanding into how that ordering accounts for the vicissitudes of aesthetic creation. (In Coole and Frost (2010), see pp. 131-132.) Elizabeth Grosz points in a similar direction by which the freedom of the body is the invention-as-freedom. See Grosz's "Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom," in Coole and Frost (2010), esp. p. 152.

[41] See Coole and Frost (2010), "Introducing the New Materialisms," p. 10.