

Delanda - A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity

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Intro [1]

I) Realist Ontology

a: def: "there is an existence is independent of human apprehension"

b: modify, because human apprehension does influence that existence

i- Ian Hacking (making people and looping effect) [2]

ii- non-phenomological, so therefore not "social construction" (esp because these (post)-phenom approaches mean construction metaphorically) [3]

II) assemblages (via Deleuze) [3]

a: wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts

b: 'historical'

c: methodological concern -- assemblages = dispersed in D's work, reconstructed by DL

III) Reductionism (in 3 forms) [4]

a: micro-reductionism

-atomist

b: macro-reductionism

-'individuals are a mere product of society'

c: meso-reductionism

-an 'intermediate level' between the two: Giddens

Chapter 1 - Assemblages against Totalities

I) Organismic Metaphor

a: analogy of the human body: the stupidest form

b: "resemblance"

c: targets: h spencer, t parsons

II) Relations of Interiority: the 'higher form' of the organismic metaphor [9]

a: part/whole relations

b: target: a giddens (dialectical agent/structure synthesis)

c: defenders of interiority

i- interiority key to emergence

ii- DL: separate 1) properties of entity and 2) capacities to interact

iii- 1) = given, closed list, 2) = open list

III) Assemblages [10]

a: relations of exteriority

i- detachable parts

ii- autonomy of relations (relations change without a change of terms) [11]

iii- properties of parts don't explain relations of whole (assemblage is not a result of aggregation 'sum of its parts')

b: example - wasp/orchid

c: totalities

i- totality: logically necessary synthesis of parts

ii- assemblage: contingently obligatory, 1) empirical question, 2)

heterogeneity

d: Two Axes of an Assemblage [12] ('dimensions of assemblages') [adds a third dimension ('axis') on pg 19, specialized forms of expression]

i: material/expressive

"the variable roles which components parts may play, from a purely material role to a purely expressive one, as well as mixtures of the two" ((18))

-ex - social assemblage of a community -- material flows, both linguistic and non-linguistic expression (bodies communicating, institution's legitimacy, etc). [12]

ii: (processes of) terr/de-terr

"processes in which these components are involved: processes which stabilize or destabilize the identity of the assemblage" ((19))

-terr = "processes that define or sharpen that spatial boundaries of actual territories." and "non-spatial processes which increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage" [13]

"any process which either destabilizes spatial boundaries or increases internal heterogeneity is considered deterr"

IV) synthesis [14]

a: terr = synthetic

b: first synthetic process,

expressive threshold: expression of identity

-ex: genes, words (and the expression of the identity of elements v/v radiation and astrophysics)

i- first, genetic code

ii- second, language ("temporal linearity that endows its information patterns with an even greater autonomy from their material carrier") [15]

c: second key synthetic process: coding ("second articulation")

i- consolidates the effects of the first (expressing identity) and further stabilizing the identity of assemblages

ii- resist temptation of organismic metaphor - both biological organism and social institutions are doubly articulated, but social assemblages operate differently

iii- decoding (which organismic metaphor would deny)

d: interiority, again [15]

- no deep interior, just entering into addition relations of exteriority

V) two additional process: recurrence (which implies) populations

a: recurrence & population

-the repeated occurrence of the same assembly process, means a production of a collective of assemblages

b: dynamic

as assemblages within the interact, their capacities interact, producing properties

c: produces emergent properties and scalar phenomena [17]

d: example: "The Market" via Braudel

-actual places

-160/170km local markets --> 1500/1700 regional --> 10x bigger --> national markets [18]

VI) Third Axis: Specialized Expressive Media ('third dimension') [19]

-"processes which consolidated and rigidify the identity of the assemblage or, on the contrary, allow the assemblage a certain latitude for more flexible operation while benefitting from genetic or linguistic resources (processes of coding and decoding)"

- fn on how this disagreed with D&G, who don't have 3D assemblages, but assemblages and strata, and absolute deterr which is the limit of actual (really?)

VII) Causality

a: non-social assemblages are causal, but non-linear causality

i: -traditional alternative to linear causality:

"[i] the postulation of a world as a seamless web of reciprocal action, or

[ii] as an integrated totality of functional interdependencies, or

[iii] as a block of unlimited universal interconnections"

-assemblage alternative: synthesis of emergent properties

ii: linear causality / cause-effect rx

-('If C, then E necessarily') [20]

-former implies the latter

b - Assemblage Alternative: Production(!) [*]

-one event produces another event

-non-atomistic, accommodates for mechanical causality but improves on it

iii: non-linear causality

a -Thresholds

[i]-internal organization of an assemblage will determine the how an external cause will affect it ("threshold") [**]

[ii]- ex: external cause of large intensity will produce low-intensity effect

-or, external cause of small intensity will produce high-intensity effect (small cause, big effect)

[iii]- trigger or catalysis:

-2 reasons catalysis violates linearity

1- different causes can produce the same effect

2- causes can produce different effects depending on what part of the whole they interact with (hormone applied to tip vs root of plant: stimulate or inhibit growth)

b -Probability

[i] linear causality, if A then always b

[ii] non-linear: statistical probability [21]

-one repeated event will not necessarily produce the subsequent event

[iii] ex; "smoking causes cancer"

-interference, tendencies, etc

c -matter vs expression [22]

[i] matter is usually causal while expression is usually catalysis

[ii] ex: territorial marking 'act only as trigger for behavioural responses in both rivals and potential mates, both of which must possess complex nervous systems to be capable of being affected this way'

-other ex - genes and language

[iii] the internal organization is only partially explained by material causes (nervous system), also includes reasons/motives

VIII) Social Assemblages

a: Weber - about significance (ie importance) not signification (against Geertz and others)

b: reasons, motives, choice... belief and desire [23]

c: not about rationality (especially since actions more likely to follow from goal-end criterion are labeled 'rational' not ones that involve the most reflection, etc) [24]

-there are many collective unintentional effects of intentional action

Chapter 2: Assemblages against Essences [26]

general arg (pg 40):

The ontological status of any assemblage, inorganic, organic or social, is that of a unique, singular, historically contingent, individual.

(individual not as individual person, ie: a species is often an individual large-scale entities in which particular organisms are component parts, or a church or a nation-state)

-affirms an objective ("realist") existence of entities without essence or reified generalities

-why non-essential wholes?

:: autonomy of whole rx to its parts:

-can casually affect parts in both limiting/enabling way

-can interact w/ each other in a way not reducible to its parts

-actual/virtual potential

I) essentialism

a: realists sometimes unintentionally essentialist

b: process is usually by reifying general categories

i- aka 'taxonomic essentialism'

ii-: Aristotelean roots: create a hierarchal branching of a thing until we

can't find any necessary differences (living things-> plants, animal-> two-, four-legged -> etc) --> "natural kinds"

c: evolutionary biology

i- rejection of Aristotle, differences are contingent [27]

ii- play btwn differentiation of species and 'reproductive isolation'

making ID fuzzy in long run

d: no natural kinds

i- speciation is historically marking "becoming-necessary" of a contingent event, not a universal necessity

ii- chemical species also have a history (nucleosynthesis in individual stars)

"The lesson from these two examples is that taxonomic essentialism relies on a very specific approach to yield its reified generalities: it starts with finished products (different chemical or biological species), discovers through logical analysis the enduring properties that characterize the products, and then makes these sets of properties into a defining essence (or a set of necessary and sufficient conditions to belong to a natural kind). To avoid reification we must instead focus on the historical processes that produce those products, with the terms 'historical' referring to cosmological and evolutionary history in addition to human history. Assemblage theory, as outlined in the previous chapter, avoids taxonomic essentialism through this manoeuvre. The identity of any assemblage at any level of scale is always the produce of a process (territorialization and in some cases, coding) and it is always precarious, since other processes (deterritorialization and decoding) can destabilize it. For this reason, the ontological status of assemblages, large or small, is always that of unique singular individuals. In other words, unlike taxonomic essentialism which genus, species, and individual are separate ontological categories, the ontology of assemblages is flat since it contains nothing but differently scaled _individual singularities_ (or _haccities_). As far as social ontology is concerned, this implies that persons are not the only individual entities involved in social processes, but also individual communities, individual organizations, individual cities and individual nation-states." [28]

II) Topology [29]

a: phylum = abstract body-plan

i- can't be metric relations (length, volume, etc), doesn't hold up for all of phyla

ii- topological to describe connectivity

b: space of possibilities ('phase space')

i- (reminder:) properties given, capacities not

ii- attractors - topological invariants

iii- degrees of freedom - dimensions of the relevant ways of changing

III): new terms

a: topological invariants (attractors) = 'universal singularities' = genera (genera of Aristotle)

b: individual singularities = species (of Aristotle)

c: connection between univ and indiv sing = "historical differentiation"

d: diagram = body-plan, 'a set of universal singularities', structure the space of possibilities associated w/ an assemblage [30]

-DL: each social assemblage has its own diagram (differs from DG on this point, see fn7) (-fn6 on diagrams, fn7 on molar/molecular)

-ex of Markets again.

e: ideal types: from Weber. universal singularities which are 'extreme forms' within a space of possibilities, outlining its degrees of freedom

IV) analysis

a: analysis of actual mechanisms [31]

i- v/v 'taxonomic essentialism' sees self as purely logic

ii- assem theory = "causal interventions in reality"

-ex: lesions made an organ w/in an organism or the poisoning of enzymes w/ in a cell

iii- b/c the causal parts might be non-linear, can only tell thru actual intervention

iv- task is to find the actual mechanisms

b: analysis of diagram

i- requires diff analysis than actual mechanisms

ii- diagram = virtual and mechanism-independent, topological

iii- constraints on space of poss = quasi-causal

iv- math of phase space = one way

V) revising scale & other method questions

a: get rid of "two scale" individual/society [32]

- "bottom up" approach

- critique of traditional "bottom up" approaches like micro-econ

i- start from reified generalities, atomized "rational individual", assem = people exist by virtue of populations

ii- 'emergent subjectivity'- subpersonal component makeup someone's identity

iii- subjectivity increases in complexity when interact w/ larger assemblages ('resonance') [but not russian doll]

b: different assemblage and different scalar phenom simultaneously limiting and enabling [33-5]

c: "strength of weak links" vs strength of strong links

d: political alliances [36]

e: redundant causality

f: many equivalent explanations [37]

VI) three qualifications to emergence:

a: origins

-historical dimension of emergence shouldn't prioritize origins

b: populate via cross-fertilization

-after the first assemblage emerges, other assemblage will likely emerge via parts of the first assemblage

-single moment of production, different process of re-production

c: most phenom = multiscalar

-multiple autonomous processes operating at diff scales (Napoleonic Revolution in warfare = multi-scalar)

VII) two more clarifications

a: temporal scale

b: is change quick or slow? v/v intentional/unintentional [41]

-for deliberate planning, always a case of mobilizing internal resources, both material/expressive (\$/energy, legitimacy) [42]

-time lag, etc [43]

c: relative endurance of change

-some correlation, not for others

d: replicators are transversal [44]

e: warning against dangers of 'social constructivism' [45]

Chapter 3 on Persons and Networks

Hume:

sensation

break of habit

de-territorialization = increase ability to affect/be affected

*hume is important empiricist from deleuze -- very sophisticated understanding of how the mind can generate an understanding of reality outside of difference.

-what interests deleuze, is the ability to draw inferences from observations

-what D finds attractive in H rather than Kant is, by resituating the consistency of relations in the mind, K is a proto-phenomenologist (thing in itself is vacated) -- it's the mind that produces these relations (the syntheses). H doesn't attribute all of this to the mind. the consistency depends on the world depending this way. it's an empiricism rather than an idealism -- it's 'transcendental' (in a strange use of the term) b/c it's a set of relations produced in our mind by the world -- the conditions of real experience not possible experience (pssbl is Kant - he has the rx of exp in the mind). because it's the world that produces it in our mind, then the transcendental is exploring the mind.

-merges into the ontology, because a thing is due to the conditions that produce it. part of it is the sensation of the relation in our brains -- so the brain becomes (in WIP and chaosmosis) one expression of the

relationality of the real world.

bergson = breaking the habit. if we were creatures of habit, then we would be limited to a set of ideas deriving directly from our experiences of the world. but we don't have a direct connection - we have a mental space. bergson calls it "the interruption of the sensory-motor schema". ticks don't think, smells sweat and drops. humans do - we have imagination, develop possible relations that don't exist in the world. also means that we can reflect actual relations in the world. gives us immensely greater degrees of freedom. habits are important (for hume) because the world has habit, we become conscious to the extent that we become aware of them. we have thought - can create false ways, and we judge according to true/false -- what deleuze wants instead of judgment = experimentation.

break habits because habits are the limited empirical component of possible worlds - always greater than the real world. b/c we're a productive species - we can create the worlds we imagine.

not solely creatures of habit, and can expand on world and our relation to it.

Goffman:

interaction between two people

--> networks

-deindividualizing

Networks:

terr/de-terr

social movements [58-62]

-diff between problematics and axiomatics. plato = axiomatics.

problematics seeks for a milieu.

deleuze = jurisprudence...

Bourdieu:

classes as "assemblages of impersonal networks and institutional organizations" etc etc

Chapter 4 on Organizations and Governments

Weber:

authority-based org forms: rational-legal, traditional, charismatic
success of authority = 'daily following of commands'

foucault:

primary matter of authority = bodies

- space
- time
- inspection
- registration

Terr:

- jurisdiction, routinization

Lang:

- logistic, belief

Resources:

- process of acquisition
- rx of dependence (econ of agglom)
- importance of resource: magnitude, criticality
- control (oligopoly, directorates)
- substitutability
- implementation

Gov:

- dont say st8 [85]

- 1) -implementation

- 2) -sep btwn pltx/admin

- 3) gov exists w/in pop of other orgs (both internal and external rx therefore important)

- 4) gov usually stable form that creates episodic assemblages that fade in/out (like IDs of ppl)

- procedures (fairness) and authority (violence)

- terr: professionalization and esprit de corps

- de-terr: coups and constitutional crises

- linguistic: law

- war and nationhood

Chapter 5: Cities and Nations

Giddens:

Materiality of cities: loadbearing structures, connectivity

Express: social status

Fashion

congregation/segregation of neighborhoods

deterr:

- mobility and rent (/land-succession)

projections:

rural inhabitants->town: synoecism

town->rural area: dioecism

(rural implosion, urban explosion...)

-self-stimulating dynamics

Residence Practices

Central-place City

Gateway City

Forming of States (via national markets)

short remarks on ID, then "world-systems" and conclusion