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About a Fruitful Misunderstanding: From Souriau's Modes of Existence to Latour's Ecologizing Inquiries

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Abstract. This article examines the particular way Souriau's concepts of instauration and modes of existence have been inherited by Bruno Latour in his *Inquiry into Modes of Existence*. It suggests that Bruno Latour has hacked some key-aspects of Souriau's general ontology in order to regionalize it and, by doing so, to give the Moderns an accurate depiction of the plurality of beings they hold dear. It then shows how Souriau's concept of instauration is crucial to Latour's project of rethinking and repopulating modern institutions, in a gesture aimed at making metaphysics a vital practice that has the power to make the world worth of worrying and caring for.

Keywords: Souriau, Latour, Ontology, Modernity, Modes of existence.

SOURIAU'S COMEBACK, THE HISTORY OF A MISUNDERSTANDING?

Since his death in 1979, Étienne Souriau has never been totally forgotten in French Academia. Most philosophy and arts students and professors know at least the *Vocabulaire d'esthétique* he codirected with his daughter (Souriau, Souriau [1990]) and academics working in the field of aesthetics may know his work, both institutional and philosophical, regarding aesthetics as a distinguished philosophical field, in itself and in its comparative endeavors. However, Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers were right when, in their presentation of the reedition of *The Different Modes of Existence*, they underlined that Souriau's «name and his work have disappeared from memory» (Latour, Stengers [2009]: 11-12; 1)¹. What they meant was that, while Souriau's name may still be quoted by

¹ Through this whole article, when a text has first been published in French, the first page number refers to the English translation and the second to the French original version.

aestheticians, his metaphysical work had fallen into oblivion.

If the 2009 French reedition of Souriau's *Different Modes of Existence*, first published in 1943, has allowed for a comeback of Souriau-as-a-metaphysician, one can only wonder about the extent and the nature of this comeback. Since the French reedition and its subsequent translation into English in 2015, no other metaphysical book written by Souriau has been reedited – even *L'Instauration philosophique* (1939), whose title promises an in-depth exploration of Souriau's key-concept of instauration, only exists as an old book in universities' libraries or as a scanned PDF emailed sporadically to a small community of Souriau enthusiasts.

The modesty of Souriau's comeback can be partly explained by a misunderstanding relatively to the context of *The Different Modes of Existence's* reedition. Not only does the 2009 book come with a long introduction by Latour and Stengers (two names largely more preeminent today than Souriau's name) but, in addition, Souriau's reedition has been quickly followed by the French publishing of one of Latour's most important books: *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence. An Anthropology of the Moderns* (2012). The resonance between Latour's title and Souriau's one is voluntary: Latour explicitly states that his work has been influenced by Souriau's own inquiry (see Latour [2006]). And yet the apparent congruence between Souriau's and Latour's respective approaches can only lead to misunderstandings: Souriau's theses are strictly metaphysical and lean towards a general (although quite idiosyncratic) ontology, while Latour's book, as its subtitle indicates, ambitions to be anthropological and, by focusing on an anthropology of the Moderns (this strange, elusive collectivity of Western and westernized people), claims that ontology is always regional (see Debaise [2022]). A reader wanting to understand Souriau through Latour, or Latour through Souriau, can only be confused: the first one writes about classical, metaphysical concepts such as phenomena, ontic beings, the virtual, and transcendence; the second about sciences, politics,

religion, and economy as they exist *today* amongst the Moderns.

Maybe the relatively modest comeback of Souriau as a metaphysician can be explained by this confusing editorial context, which can lead to the conclusion that Souriau's concept of modes of existence was simply an impetus for Latour's philosophical project – and, as Latour's project wants to address the pressing problem of global warming and the reorganization of the coordinates of Modern thought it imposes, his situated ontology seems to be more urgent to understand than the metaphysics that “only” served as its lexical background. The history of Souriau's contemporary reception through Latour's work is, truly, the history of a vast misunderstanding, a term I do not use lightly. There is obviously a misunderstanding regarding the different and sometimes opposite meanings that Souriau and Latour respectively give to the concept of modes of existence. But, in addition to this evident misinterpretation, I intend to demonstrate that there is a deeper and subtler misunderstanding: even when Latour's writing seems to be directly influenced by Souriau (through the concepts of pluralistic ontology or instauration, for instance), there is always a twist if not an abrupt reversal. Latour, I want to argue, inherits Souriau's thought in the manner of a hacker: he dives deeply into the system but to better crack the code and do something completely different with it.

There is nothing wrong with misunderstandings: historians, politicians, scientists, or psychoanalysts could all convincingly make the case that they are the very fabric of this world. Consequently, in this article, I will neither aim at setting the record straight by clearly assessing what belongs to Souriau and what belongs to Latour nor try to explain Souriau through Latour or the converse. I will rather consider that misunderstandings can be fruitful and creative once they are distinguished from confusion and I will thus focus on the contact zone between Souriau and Latour: what does Souriau's thought produce on Latour's inquiries? Which misunderstandings become points of convergence or divergence, allowing for Latou-

rian, contemporary reinstitutions of Souriau's ideas? And how does the metaphysics of someone who called for the «Accomplished Man, who has reached his sublime stage and become the master of the destinies of all the other beings in the world» (Souriau [1956]: 239; 216) become, once hacked by Latour, a tool for ecologizing thought?

DE-FLATTENING THE WORLD WITH THE TONES OF EXISTENCE

Before both Souriau and Latour begin to count and to describe the specific modes of existence encountered in their respective inquiries, they open their books with a similar concern: philosophy – or, in Latour's case, modern thought – could very well contribute to a flattening of the world and of the irreducible plurality of beings that inhabit it. In Souriau's words, those who manipulate concepts and shape knowledge are always faced with the questions: «Which beings will we take charge of in our minds? Will knowledge have to sacrifice entire populations of beings to Truth, stripping them of all their existential positivity; or, in order to admit them, will it have to divide the world into two, into three?» (Souriau [1943]: 103; 84). Those are key questions as they oblige us to seriously consider the possibility that a given ontology both sacrifices real beings into oblivion *and* is at risk of dividing one world of live hypotheses² into several worlds unable to communicate with one another and thus losing their live hypotheses or existential strengths (as Souriau underlines, if a young man has the making in himself to be either a Don Juan or a saint, it would be absurd to suggest the reality of a unification where he becomes both at the same

time [Ibid.: 203; 182]). Faced with the risk of losing the unifying power of reality grasped as one world, it seems, Souriau argues, that most philosophers have opted for the radical and yet common solution of positing only one mode of existence. Beings then only exist in one and the same way – real, ontological pluralism be damned. The apparent existential pluralism we encounter in many Western philosophy treatises, Souriau suggests, is not *modal* but only *categorical* and, worse, limited to the categories of knowledge. In other words, most forms of pluralistic ontology in classical philosophy refer to different ways of talking about beings rather than to different ways of being, which include knowledge without being limited to it (Latour, Stengers [2009]: 33-34; 22-23) – a critique that extends from Aristotle to Kant and beyond (Souriau [1943]: 103-105; 85-87).

Or, rather, it is Latour who sees in Souriau's metaphysics something Souriau only suggests by evoking «intensive modulations» (Ibid.: 114; 93) and «polyphonic voices of existence, which are its various modes» (Ibid.: 214; 193): *modes* of existence are not to be understood as ways of saying and knowing but must be construed in the musical sense of the term. They give the tone, or the clef, of specific ways of being with their irreducible voices (Latour [2006]: 309; 22). A phenomenon that manifests existence (through the green of the grass in the morning sun or a work of art) cannot be listen to and addressed in the same way we understand the persistence of the identity of a thing through time, or in the manner we assess that Jean Valjean is a *believable* fictional character (Souriau [1943]: 133-162; 113-142). Latour's musical interpretation of Souriau's inquiry has for tactical consequence to make the two thinkers come closer around the aim they pursue: de-flattening the world by affirming it is a polyphony made of distinct beings with their own music, their own voice, their own tone. If, for Souriau, this thickening of the world has mainly an ontological and existential purpose that remains confined to the field of philosophy (even if, as he underlines, «philosophy would not be worth one hour's exertion if it failed to equip us for life» [Ibid.: 212; 190]),

² I borrow the concept of *live hypothesis* from William James, who claims the importance of distinguishing *dead hypotheses* (which are trivial and do not appeal to our existential beliefs) from live, important, and existential ones. For instance, *believing in the Mahdi* is a dead hypothesis for Christians or atheist people but can be a live hypothesis of the uttermost importance for a Muslim (James [1897]: 2-3).

Latour quickly understands the ethical and political consequences of such a gesture. Souriau, he writes, is a philosopher of *manners* – manners of being and good manners to co-exist with other beings – who invents «the polite respectfulness of good manners in one’s conduct with others» (Latour [2006]: 308; 22).

The importance of articulating good manners with the polyphonic tones of beings proves itself central to the *Inquiry into Modes of Existence’s* project. The book begins with a diagnosis central to the whole of Latour’s work: the Moderns do not know how to properly talk about themselves or, in Latour’s own words, they have «forked tongues» (Latour [1991]: 37; 57) – they do not say what they believe and they do not believe what they say. The Moderns are the ones – wherever they stand on the globe – who claim that they have discovered pure objectivity (Nature or Facts), distinct from any system of beliefs or social constructs (Society or Values). However, *in practice*, outside of philosophy treatises, the Moderns never cease to trespass the supposedly sealed boundary they have established between facts and values – two years of an ongoing pandemic are more than enough to attest we cannot talk about and (try to) adapt to a virus without strange amalgams of medicine, biology, politics, hygiene and mental health policies, economy, ethics, and a whole array of societal reactions ranging from life-and-death fears to conspiracy theories. The dualism between (objective) facts and (subjective) values that the Moderns say they hold dear while practically always transgressing it results from what Latour calls, in his *Inquiry*, a «Modernization front» that seemed to inexorably advance from an archaic past of irrationality (confusion between facts and values) to a radiant future of progress with its crystal-clear clear distinction between objective Science and subjective values (Latour [2012]: 8; 20). *Modernized* were the ones who called themselves rational and said their Knowledge was expurgated from beliefs, values and subjectivity; *archaic* those who persisted in believing in diverse amalgams of facts and values. It is Latour who uses the past tense when writing about the Modernization front, recording the «end

of the modernist parenthesis» (Ibid.: 8; 20). With the Anthropocene, the «increased intermixing of humans and nonhumans» it brings forth (Ibid.: 9; 23), and the decaying modern institutions that will need to be thought and build anew if we want a chance of facing forthcoming ecological catastrophes with a modicum of dignity, everything indicates that we should place the process of modernization behind us and learn how to compose with a diversity of hybrid beings, mixes of facts and values, with each its own tune that the Modernization front had silenced. Composing with a diversity of beings and practices instead of modernizing through dualisms is what Latour calls *ecologizing*: «between modernizing and ecologizing, we have to choose» (Ibid.: 8; 20).

I use *composing* and *ecologizing* as synonymous in an echo both to Latour’s *Compositionist Manifesto* (2010) and to his musical interpretation of Souriau’s ontology. It is, indeed, Souriau’s concept of numerous modes of existence that allows the vast attempt at an ecological composition in the *Inquiry into Modes of Existence*: once you state, as Souriau did, that there is more than one or two ways of being, you escape not only the dualism of the Modernization Front (facts and values, objectivity and subjectivity) but also the temptation to reduce all ecological questions to the meta-dualism, introduced into modern philosophy by the linguistic turn, between the things of the world and their signs. As Latour writes:

It is precisely in order to give up the sign/thing distinction completely that I have chosen to speak of «mode of existence», a term introduced into philosophy in a masterful way by Étienne Souriau. We are going to be able to speak of commerce, crossings, misunderstandings, amalgams, hybrids, compromises between modes of existence [. . .], but we shall no longer have to use the trope of a distinction between world and language. What counts in this argument, moreover, is not so much the choice of terms we use on either side of the distinction as the fact of managing at last to *count beyond two*. Are we going to be able, in the course of the inquiry, to push ontology to take into account more than two genres, two modes of reality? (Latour [2012]: 146; 153)

We now better understand why Latour had to give a musical interpretation of Souriau's modes of existence. This gesture puts language games out of the picture once and for all to insist that we have to compose with beings and networks of beings and not with mere discourses about them. But, in addition, we begin to comprehend that, for each mode of existence we encounter, we will have to *push ontology* in order to attune to the specific requirements and conditions of felicity of each mode, outside of the too broad categories of object and subject, and amongst polyphonic networks of intermixed modes of existence, since counting beyond two implies successful convergences as well as risky reductions. At this point, a reader familiar with both Souriau and Latour realizes that there is more to Latour's gesture than a musical (re)interpretation of Souriau's metaphysics; there is also a *hacking trick* at stake. If both thinkers try to *count beyond two* and identify an arbitrary number of modes of existence that could still grow³, Souriau's system draws the lines of a general ontology that seems to be aiming at perfecting the modern project with a lexicon of conquest and development (see Souriau [1943]: 181; 160-161, for instance), while Latour's tonal push refutes any pretention to a general ontology and insists on the situated character of every mode of existence, intricately with other modes of existence the Moderns actually believed in but silenced at the same time. In other words, Latour radicalizes Souriau's pluralism to make patent that the general ontology the Moderns pretended to possess has always been, actually, a regional one. It is only by regionalizing ontology that a true ecologizing is possible.

HOW MODES OF EXISTENCE BECOME ECOLOGIZING TOOLS

If Souriau writes about conquering new modes of existence, Latour's inquiry, on the other hand, is born from a more terrible statement: the Mod-

erns have consciously depopulated their world; «they have become expert exterminators» (Latour [2012]: 176; 181). As Debaise (2022) notices, the Moderns (a term that includes the forcibly or willingly modernized) are characterized by a specific way of (not) inhabiting the Earth: while they pretend to have the one and only right, universal categories to know the world, those categories are in fact so broadly misconstrued and abstract that they depopulate the world of the beings other than modern and, even, of the practices and beliefs the Moderns themselves are attached to without being able to address them in the right manner. Consequently, the Earth of the Moderns, which is originally historically and geographically situated, has become an uninhabitable, off-ground, abstract place where a variety of modes of existence have been denied. Hence, Debaise continues, the political charge at the core of the *Inquiry into Modes of Existence*: learning at last how to count beyond two and attuning to different modes of existence is resisting the modern denegation, and making exist what had been denied. Latour writes that the aim of his *Inquiry* is to propose to the Moderns «a more *sustainable* habitat» (Latour [2012]: 22; 34).

It is at this level that Latour's hacking trick intervenes. If Souriau's undefine number of modes of existence is the pretext for conquering yet unknown domains of existence in general, Latour's pluralistic ontology is, on the contrary, a tool for humbling the Moderns, as this plurality of modes of existence situates and regionalizes their broad ideas from the inside. The different modes of existence are not to be searched for beyond what we think we already know, but in the very fabrication of the too-broad abstractions we take for univocal, granted institutions. I shall demonstrate this with two examples, which concentrate both the originality of Latour's thought and many criticisms it encounters: Science, and Capitalism.

If Latour is firstly known as a philosopher (or a sociologist) of sciences, readers of the *Inquiry into Modes of Existence* do not find in its pages a depiction of *Science* as a mode of existence – it is a too abstract, too broad, too off-ground con-

³ About the arbitrary character of the number of modes of existence they classify, see Souriau (1943): 181; 160-161 and Latour (2012): 479; 477.

cept which does not contribute to the building of a more sustainable habitat. Scientists, on a daily basis, do not work with Science, Latour argues, but with a variety of practices that should be understood through the connections of two modes of existence erased in statements such as «Science says» or «Science has established». Those modes of existence have the «musical» clefs «REF» and «REP»⁴, respectively for «reference» and «reproduction». The REF mode of existence is already analyzed in depth in *Pandora's Hope* (Latour [1999]: 24-79): it escapes the dualistic conception of knowledge as a mimetic correspondence between the knowing subject and the known thing to show us that what scientists *practically do* is constantly translating the item they study (a mountain to be mapped, for instance) into various documents (data tables, photographs, GPS coordinates, a map, and so far) along a chain of references in which what matters is not to lose the precise and situated connection between the different links (see Latour [2012]: 74-85; 84-95). The REF mode of existence has the capacity to describe the materiality of scientific practices and their strengths at establishing successful translations between various supports without mystifying knowledge as a monolithic, theoretical function that would simply copy the one and true inner essence of a thing. This means that scientists, in their practices, deal with other tones of beings, other modes of existence than objects that would let themselves be reduced to a knowable thing. Actually, what scientists work with alongside a chain of references are beings whose first purpose is not to be known but to, crucially, continue to exist – a mode of existence Latour calls REP, for reproduction: «Let us thus use [REP], for reproduction (stressing the “re” of re-production), as the name for the mode of existence through which any entity whatsoever crosses through the hiatus

of its repetition, thus defining from stage to stage a particular trajectory, with the whole obeying particularly demanding felicity conditions: to be or no longer to be!» (Ibid.: 91-92; 101). As Latour underlined during the *Où atterrir?* Summer school in July 2022, being attuned to the REP tone goes far beyond a disinterested knowledge of an entity, since wanting to persist in one's own being can be full of pathos and harshness for someone who, like he was himself, is fighting cancer, for instance.

Defining sciences at the crossing of the REF and REP modes of existence, stating that scientific knowledges are produced when the difficult attunement of these two tones is maintained, draws a more complicated picture of sciences than the reductionist understanding of Science as the objective mirror or reality. But only this difficult, ontological pluralism gives space to the Modern to honor what they truly value on a repopulated Earth: situated and successful translations only possible through a composition of various skills, celebration of the power of beings that persist in their beings despite perilous hiatuses... Those are modes of existence worth fighting for, that Latour's hacking of Souriau's ontology can foreground.

In a reverse way, this pluralization from within of the Modern's modes of existence can also allow to situate and humble an enemy that would otherwise seem too powerful, too big to fail, if it was only defined as a monolithic abstraction and not as a complicated crossing of different modes. I am thinking here of Capitalism, and of the numerous criticisms a part of the leftwing fringe of French academia has been addressing to Latour regarding the supposedly absent status of capitalism in his ecological thought. In an opinion column that circulated widely in the Fall of 2021, French philosopher Frédéric Lordon writes: «[Latour] has found an infallible method: capitalism does not exist. It is only a word. You can of course designate things with this word but they are so numerous and compose such a profuse and *complex* assemblage that in the end, you do not understand what you are saying. It is better not to talk about it» (Lordon [2021]; my translation). The attack is

⁴ What I call the clefs or tones of modes of existence throughout this article are also named «prepositions» by Latour, a coining he draws from William James on the basis of a brief allusion Souriau makes to the pragmatist philosopher (see Souriau [1943]: 174; 153-154 and Latour [2006]: 306; 20).

such a misconception of Latour's thinking and writing that it would not deserve a line of comment if it was not a perfect example of the exact opposite of the ecologizing gesture Latour deploys in his *Inquiry*⁵. Latour, indeed, refuses to recognize capitalism as one of the modes of existence characterizing the modern way of inhabiting the Earth; according to him, we can only understand capitalism at the crossing of three modes of existence ([ATT]achment; [ORG]anization, [MOR]ality). Stating that, for Latour, it is better not to talk about capitalism sounds as a bad joke as he devotes almost a hundred pages of the *Inquiry* to the intricate way these three modes and their crossings define what the Moderns call *economy* (see Latour [2012]: 381-474; 381-471). This pluralization of the modes of existence characterizing modern economy does not aim at an overcomplication that would inhibit any kind of action; on the contrary, this ontological pluralism wagers that it is because we give ourselves too massive and ill-described enemies that we make ourselves unable to even begin grasping how they could be fought (even the most suborned communist can acknowledge that the mere slogan *Let's abolish capitalism* has no power to change anything to our current conditions of life in a foreseeable future). Patiently describing the different, material instantiations through which we encounter capitalism in our daily lives; giving voices to modes of existence that are silenced by the magic word *capitalism*; weighting the conflicts of values we face when analyzing the complex ways in which modern economy works – all of these approaches brought forth by Latour's pluralistic ontology can give us a chance to distinguish precise and situated forms of modern institutions where our acts and choices can make a difference.

At this stage, hopefully, one can more clearly understand how Latour has hacked Souriau's plu-

ralistic ontology to make it a regionalized and political, ecological tool, humbling the Moderns from within while trying to give them a more sustainable habitat. However, the questions raised in the introduction to this article seem to remain exactly the same: if Latour analyzes modern economy, politics, and sciences while Souriau writes about phenomena, things, souls, and transcendence, shouldn't we conclude that the latter has only *nominally* influenced the former's pluralistic ontology? This conclusion would be totally justified if we did not pay attention to the necessary connection between Souriau's concept of modes of existence and what he calls *instauration* – a connection that is also vital to the way Latour inherits from Souriau, although in his hacker way.

THE INSTAURATION OF A WORLD AT LAST WORTH OF WORRY

There is, actually, one mode of existence Latour's *Inquiry* borrows directly as it is: the one of fictional characters. Fictional beings, Souriau writes, exist in their own particular, fragile way. Jean Valjean or Captain Ahab do not exist as things or bodies do, independently of whether we think of them or not; they need their creator and then their readers to *care* about them in order to deploy their full existence. They are «beings that are present and exist for us with an existence based in desire, concern, fear, or hope, or even fancy and diversion. We could say of those beings that they exist in proportion to the importance they hold for us» (Souriau [1943]: 153; 133). Fictional beings thus have what Latour, following Souriau, calls a *solicitudinary* existence – they need our solicitude, our care, our worries to exist, and they «come to us and require that we *prolong* them, but in their own way, which is never stated but simply indicated» (Latour [2012]: 242; 246).

It should not surprise us that the *solicitudinary* mode is the only mode of existence that Latour borrows from Souriau as it is. As Latour underlines, there are no guidelines, no fixed methods to establish the consistency of a fiction-

⁵ In 2021, Latour simply answered to Lordon's post by tweeting the link to the text of a 2014 conference he gave about the affects of capitalism: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/136-AFFECTS-OF-K-COPENHAGEN.pdf>.

al being, which makes their condition of felicity and veridiction particularly difficult. Sometimes, a fiction works out, sometimes not, according to the way a creator is able to let himself *be acted* by the characters developing through his writing. Through the making of fictions, we meet worlds that could fail and that need a specific attention to exist. This specific attention, this state of concern for beings and for a world whose accomplishment is not a given but could very well fail, is at the core of Souriau's whole philosophy and makes the originality of his key-concept of *instauration*. Instauration is akin to the more traditional concept of creation, but with a twist: while creation can be accomplished *ex nihilo* by an almighty maker who would generate existence by following a (teleological) project, instauration is what Souriau calls a «drama of three characters» (Souriau [1956]: 229; 205) that follows an uncertain journey implying the Man who creates, the still virtual work-to-be-done, and the concrete, material presence of the work as it is realized. If the work of art is Souriau's favorite example, everything that does not yet exist in its full potential can be the object of this instaurative journey, be it a philosophy book, a life, or even the world. What matters is the tension between the virtual work-to-be-done and its material realization, which could fail. Souriau's world is a world of worries, where nothing is granted, where we cannot create from nothing but are always called by more or less virtual existences that preexist and oblige us – hence Souriau's enigmatic formula of what he calls the sphinx of the work: «Guess, or thou shall be devoured»⁶ (Ibid.: 229). This formula is often quoted by Stengers and Latour, and Latour repeats it in his *Inquiry* (Latour [2012]: 245).

The risky and worried search for a pluralistic world that needs us to care for its variety of tones and that makes us dependent on its diversity of beings is probably the one trait of Souriau's thought Latour directly inherits – without a massive hack. Latour's regionalizing of ontology needs

a concept that escapes the traps of constructivism or criticism to acknowledge that we live on a damaged planet where modes of existence and beings have been silenced or misunderstood and where a continued sustainability requires that we attune to those beings, damaged as they are, rather than dreaming of a *tabula rasa* which always comes with too-abstract utopias. Latour writes as much in the first part of his *Inquiry*, which deals with the method his conceptual journey calls for: «the act of instauration has to provide *the opportunity to encounter beings capable of worrying you*. Beings whose ontological status is still open but that are nevertheless capable of *making you do something*, of unsettling you, insisting, obliging you to speak well of them» (Ibid.: 161; 167). The worry for a world that we depend on as much as it depends on us is thus common to Souriau and Latour, and it obliges us to consider metaphysics not as a gratuitous exercise but as a practice having the power of silencing or respecting modes of existence in their equal dignity. «Yet mind which reality you bear witness for [...], whether it be rich or poor, leading to the most real or to nothingness. For if you bear witness for that reality, it is judging you», Souriau writes (Souriau [1943]: 212).

Paradoxically, Latour's original «hacking trick» of regionalizing ontology while Souriau writes about «the Man» deepens and enlightens a crucial flexion that already inhabited Souriau's concept of instauration. As Lawlor (2011) notices, the word instauration is semantically close to the ideas of institution and instituting and, from its Latin roots, carries at the same time the idea of a recommencement of what had not been able to be (*Instaurativi ludi* were games celebrated in place of those that were interrupted – see Souriau [1939]: 73). Recommencement and institutions are crucial to Latour's reading of Souriau – Souriau, Latour writes with Stengers, «recognized that institutions are as fragile as a work of art» (Latour, Stengers [2009]: 86; 74). But the idea that institutions are fragile and need to be *re-made*, recommenced, is most importantly the crux of the *Inquiry into Modes of Existence*. Regionalizing a pluralistic ontology is vital to us who have been modern-

⁶ Translation modified to better suit the French *devine* (guess and not work it out).

ized in order to instaurate the beings we value «in institutions that might finally be designed for them» (Latour [2012]: 7; 19). The aim of Latour's *Inquiry* is to give the Moderns institutions at last pluralized, at last situated, at last ecologized, at last worth worrying and valuing, so that the Moderns have a sustainable way of inhabiting the Earth thanks to an instaurative process.

Latour's hacking of Souriau's thought thus proves itself to be very Sourialian: one can argue that Latour has instaurated Souriau, has recommenced his conceptual gesture but for the contemporary institutions the Moderns need in order to be able to inhabit a de-flattened world that is worthy of their care. In that sense, Latour's hack is nothing else than an inheritance, for «to inherit is to re-make» (Latour, Stengers [2009]: 87; 74). Since the question *how to inherit?* (from modernity, from Souriau) is now redoubled by Latour's death, I would like to end this article by suggesting there are still more hacking tricks, still more hiatuses to be found in the agitated contact zone between Souriau and Latour. Those hacks should not afraid us: they are the conditions of a generative imagination that worries and cares for the practical impacts it has on the (un)inhabitability of the Earth.

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