



Kent Academic Repository

Turner, Ben (2021) *The limits of culture in political theory: A critique of multiculturalism from the perspective of anthropology's ontological turn.* European Journal of Political Theory, 20 (2). pp. 252-271. ISSN 1474-8851.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/63721/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885117738117>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Ben Turner
Lecturer in Political Theory
School of Politics and International Relations
University of Kent
b.turner@kent.ac.uk

The limits of culture in political theory: A critique of multiculturalism from the perspective of anthropology's ontological turn

Author Accepted Manuscript. Forthcoming in *European Journal of Political Theory*.

Abstract

Political theorists have developed and refined the concept of culture through much critical discussion with anthropology. This article will deepen this engagement by claiming that political theory has glossed over a crucial aspect of the role of the concept of culture, rather than defined it incorrectly. It will be argued that culture represents one way of accounting for the variety of human groups by drawing on the recent 'ontological turn' in anthropology. This rests on an understanding of ontology as a system of classifying entities anterior to social relations rather than a philosophical position. The article will argue against culture's status as a neutral and universal method of understanding human diversity by situating it within a pluralist approach to ontology, that posits multiple ontological schemas which form different social systems, each with their own understanding of human difference. Through an investigation of the implicit ontological

commitments of multiculturalism it will be claimed claim that all political positions rest on a set of ontological presuppositions, and that these classifications place restrictions on the politics that they can express. Thus, political theorists should be vigilant of implicit ontological biases, represented here by culture, if they are to positively accommodate human difference.

Key words; Culture; Multiculturalism; Political Ontology; Anthropology; Ontological Turn; Philippe Descola; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.

Word Count 9,708.

The limits of culture in political theory: A critique of multiculturalism from the perspective of anthropology's ontological turn

Political theorists have developed and refined the concept of culture through much critical discussion with anthropology. Debates within political theory and with this anthropological exterior have largely been focused on the essentialising character of the concept of culture used by political theorists of a liberal multiculturalist persuasion.¹ Rather than intervene in this struggle over definition, this article will claim that political theory has glossed over a crucial aspect of the role of the concept of culture, rather than

defined it incorrectly. It will be argued that culture's role in understanding human difference is distinct to one particular way of accounting for the variety of human groups. By drawing on the recent 'ontological turn' in anthropology this claim will rest on the classification of culture as an essential part of the ontology of naturalism, where it is understood as a counterpart to nature.ⁱⁱ This will involve a reconsideration of the character of ontology drawn from the work of Philippe Descola, Bruno Latour, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. For these thinkers ontology is not simply a philosophical position, but rather a system of classifying entities that is anterior to social relations. In understanding ontology as such, culture's status as a neutral and universal method of understanding human diversity is challenged. Culture will be situated within a pluralist approach to ontology, where there are multiple ontological schemas that form different social systems, each with their own understanding of human difference.

It will be claimed that political theory can be furthered by adopting the ontological pluralism that underlies this critique of the status of culture. The lesson that this article seeks to draw from anthropology's ontological turn is that ontological presuppositions are unavoidable in political theory, and their biases must be unearthed if we are to pursue any pluralist political project that accommodates human differences. Multiculturalism will be taken as a case that demonstrates the relevance of this point for two reasons. First, multiculturalism has been the centre of debates regarding culture in the discipline. These

discussions, however, have focused mainly upon the *character* of culture rather than the *status* or *role* of the concept itself. Second, and more importantly, the ontological status of culture plays a pivotal role in establishing the politics of multiculturalism. Turning to anthropology's ontological turn allows one to unearth the implicit ontological biases of multiculturalism, that differences between 'cultures' are only conceivable on the basis of the prior ontological assumptions of naturalism. This shift to ontology will be seen to alter three questions fundamental to multiculturalism: what is the source of human difference? How is one to understand and study these differences? What are the political ramifications of this understanding of difference? By shifting the answer to these questions from culture to prior ontological systems of classification, it will be seen that multiculturalism, based within just one of these possible ontologies, is not adequate for understanding the diversity of other human collectives. In what follows, this critique of the implicit ontological presuppositions of multiculturalism will be used to show the reach of the consequences of the ontological turn in anthropology for political theorists: that all political positions rest on a set of ontological presuppositions, and that these classifications place restrictions on the politics that they can express.

To begin, the concerns of the ontological turn in anthropology will be contextualised within several key moments in the history of anthropological theory, which will then be distinguished from those of the parallel turn to ontology within political theory. This brief

excursion will generate three questions that orient the concerns of the thinkers of the ontological turn, and which will be used to explore the ontological presuppositions of multiculturalism in the remainder of the article. How are differences between groups generated? How does one understand and study these differences? What form of politics does this understanding lead to? Multiculturalism's implicit ontological biases will be explored through a characterisation of its responses to these questions. After showing that these answers rest on the naturalist distinction between nature and culture, by way of a preamble to the concerns of the thinkers of the ontological turn it will be shown how culture has been critiqued from within political theory. This will allow the distinct contribution of the ontological turn in anthropology to be specified in terms of its different responses to the above three questions, in a manner critical towards those given by the multiculturalist. This will focus on ontological classifications as the source of difference rather than culture, that a comparative ontology reveals there is no neutral standpoint from which these differences can be understood, and that any political response to differences between human groups must not take its conceptual references points for granted. In conclusion the critical limitations of this work will be discussed in the context of the lessons political theory may learn from the position of ontological pluralism.

Contextualising the Claims of Anthropology's Turn to Ontology

An all encompassing account of the significance of the ontological turn is beyond our purposes, but it is instructive to situate it as a response to several moments in anthropological theory's history. The first is the development of the cultural-personality school of anthropology which rejected early understandings of culture as a single, linear progression. Franz Boas argued that the reduction of culture to a single process of evolution was misguided, and that anthropology should analyse the variety of cultures and how they shape individual behavior (Boas, 1932: 613). Propagated by students of Boas such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, this led to the now common view that culture shapes individual personality traits rather than biology, and thus that culture is central to explaining the differences between various human groups. While this understanding of culture underpins much social anthropology, it is not the only attempt to decode human variation. In particular, the cultural personality school's eschewal of physical and biological determinism in the realm of culture was challenged by materialist approaches to human behaviour. Pre-empted by British functionalism's integration of apparently irrational cultural practices such as witchcraft into 'consistent' logical systems (Evans-Pritchard, 1976: 222), some American anthropologists questioned the separation of such cultural consistency from material causes. These thinkers argued that cultural forms are not divorced from biological needs but are in fact various expressions of the need to fulfil them (Harris, 1979: 58). In contrast to the Boasian divorce of strict correlation between culture and material causes, cultural materialism sought to deepen

their relationship to the extent to which culture became subordinated to the natural needs it expressed.

These two cases represent two opposing tendencies in anthropological theory: a focus on culture as the basis of anthropological investigation and an attempt to integrate culture within a system of natural needs. A third development that brings us closer to the concerns of the ontological turn challenges both of these assumptions. Post-modern anthropology highlighted how power, authorship, and the culture of anthropologists play an unavoidable role in shaping narratives of other cultures. Due to the situated nature of the ethnographer as investigator, these accounts would always be ‘inherently partial—committed and incomplete’ (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 7). This single claim has ramifications for Boasian anthropology insofar as the possibility of a truly impartial account of cultural variation becomes impossible, and for cultural materialists insofar as the matching of cultural structures with natural needs understands behaviour from the subject position of the anthropologist. Post-modern critiques of anthropology, therefore, emphasise the way in which the very presence of the anthropologist destabilises the possibility of any neutrality in the understanding of cultures.

This brief history of several key moments in anthropological theory provides enough detail to contextualise how the ontological turn responds to Boasian, cultural materialist,

and post-modern forms of anthropological inquiry. First, it seeks to revive the radicalism of Boasian anthropology in a move which also eradicates the basic premise of cultural materialism. By claiming that the possibility of the concept of culture rests on its opposition to nature within naturalism, thinkers of this turn question the universality of this binary by making naturalism one of a number of possible ontologies. Boasian anthropology is confronted insofar as culture cannot be seen to be universal, and cultural materialism is challenged in that natural needs cannot be seen to be the source of varied cultural solutions to their problems (Descola, 2012: 43). However, the Boasian project is radicalised insofar as cultural relativism is taken a step further into ontological pluralism. Naturalism, as the *ground* of the cultural understanding of human diversity, is made subject to comparison in the same way as the *content* of cultures. Central to the ontological turn, therefore, is ‘an attempt to force the prior backdrop of comparison back into the space of the comparable (Charbonnier, Salmon and Skafish, 2017: 5). Culture is rehabilitated, after its integration with materialism, but also situated within a more radical pluralist project than Boasian cultural relativism.

Second, while the ontological turn shares similar concerns with its post-modern counterpart, it both deepens and rejects aspects of its challenge to the neutrality of the anthropologist. The question of how power and authorship frames anthropological narrative is furthered by asking how ontological perspectives define in advance what the

anthropologist perceives and what relations are deemed to be possible. At the same time, this challenges the framework of cultural situatedness that cloaked ‘the liberal subject going incognito’ in post-modernism (Charbonnier, Salmon and Skafish, 2017: 6). Once the very basis of comparison itself becomes subject to comparison, the notion of being situated in a *culture* loses its neutral character. In Descola’s words: ‘the project of understanding the relations that human beings establish between one another and with nonhumans cannot be based upon a cosmology and an ontology that are as closely bound as ours to one particular context’ (Descola, 2013: xviii). By pushing the focus on local influences upon ethnographic investigation a step deeper than cultural influence, the ontological turn challenges the neutrality of culture and its ability to deal with contemporary anthropological and political problems. Where the post-modern turn sought to politicise the tools of ethnography, the ontological turn pushes this even further by questioning the grounds of this politicisation.

It is worth noting that this position draws on and furthers critiques of the concept of culture made by Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern (Descola, 2013: 81; Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 45).ⁱⁱⁱ Wagner challenges culture as an analytical category in his understanding of symbolic activity as a process of constant re-invention. All instances of human thought and action actively partake in continually inventing the symbolic system in which they

take place. This applies to individual cultures, but also to the abstract notion of culture that the anthropologist works with. Not only is a culture constantly being invented by the peoples to whom it is attributed, it is invented both in the analytical re-constitution of the ethnographer, and invented in the abstract concept of culture used to organise various practices and symbols (Wagner, 1981: 10). Similarly, in her work on gender and gift relations in Melanesia, Strathern questions the applicability of the concept of ‘society’ to Melanesian life, arguing that the need to use particular categories to make sense of ethnographic data derives not from their representative efficacy regarding the groups being studied but from our own methodological needs and prejudices (Strathern, 1988: 3–17). By shoehorning the practices and customs of those studied into concepts like ‘culture’, ‘nature’, and ‘society’, anthropologists produce inaccurate descriptions of these peoples due to the absence of analogical concepts in their own logical lexicon. Utilising the distinction between nature and culture to understand the differences between human groups projects a certain conception of how these differences operate onto any understanding of these groups.

The challenge Wagner and Strathern pose is that of overcoming the imposition of culture and nature upon the problems and lives of those being studied. For Descola, Latour and Viveiros de Castro this is not an epistemological but an ontological quandary. Naturalism and its division between nature and culture is taken to be just one way of forming these

problems in the terms of the ontological division it institutes. Of course, what Descola, Latour and Viveiros de Castro each have in mind when they refer to ontology here is different. Descola understands ontology as a form of ‘prepredicative experience’ (Descola, 2013: 115), Latour claims that it defines regional modes of existence and their distinct understandings of truth (Latour, 2013: 147), while Viveiros de Castro regards it as a way of establishing ‘partitions’ between various entities and relations (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 1). These varying positions all hold that ontology is less a purely philosophical position, and instead a mode of cognising and ordering entities that makes certain forms of social and political relations possible. A simple way to summarise this position is that each ontological mode of classification rests on different presuppositions as to what is given and what is non-given, or what is taken to be self-evident and what is the result of the agency of individuals (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 53–4). Not only do the differences between groups derive from various ways of parsing the given and the non-given, but each group’s understanding of these differences rests on the understanding of variation that stems from each ontological distribution. Hence the necessity of the central claim of the ontological turn: anthropology must take on a mode of analysis where one particular ontology does not hold sway over the others precisely because these ontologies vary, and that these lead to distinct understandings of what is possible in social life (Descola, 2017: 34).

This focus on variation is precisely what separates the ontological turn in anthropology from a parallel turn to ontology in political theory. The ‘ubiquitous’ (Bosteels, 2009: 235) character of this turn can be called into question, but it can be broadly characterised as a response to what Chantal Mouffe has articulated as a lack of engagement with the ontological by political theory (Mouffe, 2005: 9). The plurality of political categories is only possible because of a prior questioning of the stakes of being by humanity. What ontology in political theory tends towards, however, is grounding politics within a *single ontology*. While ontological investigation should not be jettisoned from the study of the political, ontology itself implies a context and principle of selection that forms the limits of the conception of politics produced by any ontological position (Oksala, 2012: 6–16). Political ontology relies heavily on ontological postulates to underpin its analysis, whereas the ontological turn in anthropology seeks to pluralise these ontological grounds. The ‘new materialist’ variant of this turn in political theory highlights this difference clearly. Authors within this movement explicitly reject the binary between nature and culture as it obscures the hybrid relationships and entanglements between human and non-human entities and the distributed sense of agency formed within them. Summarising this work, Diana Coole refers to this as the formulation of a ‘flat ontology’ which supports the ‘ontological rejection of philosophical dualism’ (Coole, 2013: 454). It is the formulation of a replacement ontology that distinguishes the thinkers of the ontological turn in anthropology from new materialists insofar as the former do not replace naturalist

ontology with another philosophy more apt for thinking human agency. Instead, they seek to pluralise and understand the variety of ontological assumptions regarding the given and the non-given that prescribe relations within human groups. The binary between nature and culture must be *relativised* rather than *replaced* with another ontological position.

This contrast highlights the importance which Descola, Latour and Viveiros de Castro attribute to the plural character of ontology. Their relationship to the history of anthropological theory gives rise to three questions that orient their work, which will now be addressed to multicultural theorists in order demonstrate their implicit reliance on naturalist ontological presuppositions. The first question is how are differences between human groups generated? The ontological turn raises this by challenging the emphasis upon culture given by Boasian anthropology and raising the possibility of ontological variation. Following this, the second question that arises is how one studies this form of variation? Cultural relativists and cultural materialists place emphasis on cultural traits and natural needs respectively, both acting as the ground for comparing different groups. In contrast, the thinkers of the ontological turn force us to reconsider this ground in the light of ontological pluralism, and suggest a method of ontological comparison. Lastly, the third question that arises with respect to the post-modern turn and the work of Strathern and Wagner is how these categories of comparison lead to particular political positions. While post-modernists focus on the politics of cultural differentiation, restricting

ethnographic influence on accounts of groups to cultural differences, the ontological turn's furthering of the work of Strathern and Wagner suggests that it is politically prudent to challenge culture as the basis of this comparison as it does not exist in the lexicon of all human groups, and thus acts as an imposition upon those groups self-determination. Ontology thus becomes an issue of political representation insofar as particular systems of thought are silenced by the apparent universality of culture. The discussion below will draw out the following consequence for political theory from these questions: *all philosophical and political positions are possessed of implicit or explicit ontological biases that can be made the basis of comparative analysis*. Crucially, for us this means that we should unearth how these biases shape our perception of the possible in politics if we are to pursue any pluralist political project. This is the position that will underpin our discussion of multiculturalism below.

The Ontological Basis of Multiculturalism

The analysis of multi-culturalism that follows will draw upon this relativisation of the concept of culture, characterising it through a set of implicit ontological biases regarding the given and the non-given. Defining these ontological assumptions as implicit is a crucial methodological stance for two reasons. First, because multiculturalist thinkers rarely make extensive use of the language of ontology to define their positions. It is

central, therefore, to adopt the wager of the ontological turn that all points of view are rooted in assumptions about the character of being. Second, these ontological commitments can only be made apparent through comparative analysis with other modes of thought, rather than through isolated analysis (Skafish, 2016: 66). It must be noted that we will be taking advantage of, rather than taking part in producing, the fruits of this comparative labour. The analysis of multiculturalism and its use of culture in what follows will draw on the characterisation of naturalism produced by this project of comparison. As such, what is important is not the *explicit* character of the individual arguments made by multiculturalist thinkers, but a general and *implicit* constellation of ideas that will be brought into focus by situating naturalism with respect to other ontological distributions of relations. While there is not space here for an all-encompassing review of the diversity of views that characterise multiculturalism and the internal and external critiques it has been subject to, this is not our aim.^{iv} Instead, what will be presented is a general characterisation of how multiculturalism responds to the three questions posed above, in terms of specific ontological commitments.

The first question is how are differences between groups generated? The basic answer is that humans are unique in that while they are natural beings, they possess the capacity for expressing cultural variations that determine how this biological substratum is actualised. Before it is considered in all its diversity, culture is a natural characteristic of human

existence. A simple form of this ontological claim can be found in the work of Bhiku Parekh: ‘Human beings share a common nature, common conditions of existence, life experiences, predicament, and so on. They also, however, conceptualize and respond to these in quite different ways and give rise to different cultures’ (Parekh, 2006: 123–24). Culture is listed here in the same capacity as the commonality of human nature and the conditions of human existence, a seemingly banal remark that integrates the capacity for culture within human nature. The natural form of the human is to be found in its capacity to express itself culturally. This basic ontological commitment can be fleshed out by exploring two variations that assert the same basic principle from opposing positions.

The first can be seen in the work of Chandran Kukathas, who argues that the capacity for culture is rooted in an unchanging human nature:

Difference is not essential but circumstantial; and when circumstances are similar, people will act and choose similarly, driven by the same motives which have marked human conduct over the millennia. And because culture and the particular historical forms that human life has taken are ephemeral, they are of no value in themselves. What matters is man, who creates culture, and whom culture serves (Kukathas, 2003: 42).

In this view, an individualist conception of the subject takes priority over its cultural variations. Culture is prioritised only as a *faculty* of the individual subject; it is created

and manipulated by humanity, and ‘serves’ it as a biological being, acting as the means to the end of individual autonomy.^v Contrastingly, the communitarian understanding of culture, most famously represented by the work of Charles Taylor, emphasises the power of culture to shape its natural, biological bedrock. Against ‘monological’ conceptions of human subjects, Taylor claims that the ‘crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression’ (Taylor, 1994: 32). Taylor’s claim is the inverse of Kukathas: culture is not a faculty or capacity exercised by individual subjects, but a characteristic of human nature that makes it impossible to separate the formation of individuals from a cultural horizon of meaning.

However, both thinkers belabour the same ontological point from opposing perspectives. By asserting the ephemerality of culture, Kukathas both *negates* and *affirms* it. On the one hand, he rejects the ‘social ontology’ of communitarianism that sees cultural traits as formative of individuals in favour of a liberal, individualist conception of the subject as severable from the cultural attachments peculiar to it (Kukathas, 2003: 210). This expresses a positive and explicit ontological commitment to a particular understanding of human nature which tends towards isolated individuals as the basis of human life. On the other hand, this simultaneously affirms the importance of culture in that it is integral to

the character of humanity, exercised by the natural capacities of individual subjects. Taylor's position inverts these moves. Where Kukathas negates the foundational role of community in identity, Taylor affirms it, and where Kukathas affirms the priority of the individual capable of expressing itself through culture, Taylor negates any priority of the individual over its dialogical relations. For both, culture is an essential ontological characteristic of humanity and distinguishes it from all other entities, either because it is a capacity exercised by the individual subject or a central part in forming these subjects. Whether we see culture as integral or superfluous to the formation of individual subjects, it is *necessary* for understanding differences between groups because of this connection to human nature.

If the source of human variation is found in this capacity for culture, then the question that follows is how one understands and studies these differences. It is claimed that individual lives are given meaning within the boundaries of a specific culture, which forms, according to Ayelet Shachar, a 'normative universe in which law and cultural narrative are inseparably related' (Shachar, 2001: 2). This has led to an emphasis on the context of values and principles as the basis of multicultural political theory, rather than *a priori* normative universals (Laegaard, 2015: 270). Building on the response to the first question, this focus on contextual variation – in which values, laws, and individual behaviours are sutured – assumes that culture is a neutral form through which the analysis of these

differences can take place. Crucially, the contexts that cultures provide are not homogenous units, identical over time (Kompridis, 2005). This ‘faulty epistemology’ assumes that cultures are isolated wholes with clearly defined populations and narratives (Benhabib, 2002: 4). Instead, cultures are constantly evolving due to both the plurality of relations and narratives that connect those within them, and their interaction with other cultures external to this shifting interior (Song, 2007: 31–32). Multiculturalism demands that political theorists pay attention to the practices that *produce* these cultures in particular periods of time rather than reifying them as cultural wholes. This critique of cultural essentialism is close to the gesture of the post-modern turn in ethnography: culture is retained as the central unit of analysis, but it should be contextualised within the modifications made by individuals (Benhabib, 2002: 66). Analysis of the cultural production of human difference takes place in a case by case analysis of the constantly transforming cultural conditions of particular political claims. Cultures may be understood to be non-essentialised and constantly changing, but they remain the locus for the analysis of human groups.

The third question asks how one shifts from this philosophical definition to political prescription. There is no single answer to this question, but debates revolve around the issue of cultural rights, and the recognition and toleration of cultural practices (Parekh, 2006: 340–44). If we are to follow the ontological presuppositions alluded to above, then

these issues arise as a result of the condition of existing as a cultural being. The key political assumption is that culture is the vehicle for identifying differences that must be positively accommodated (Modood, 2013: 56). While the anti-essentialist approach to culture would suggest a weakening of this view, it enhances the strength of culture as way of orienting politics by retaining the need to focus on how demands are articulated through cultural practices. Multiculturalism focuses upon how political claims are formed from within the orbit of particular cultures. Hence, as Sarah Song suggests, '[t]he question is not whether cultures should be preserved on the basis of inherent features they possess but whether the particular claim made in the name of culture should be accommodated' (Song, 2007: 39). What should be noted here is the retention of the concept of culture as a key political tool despite an acknowledgement of its weakness in capturing the fluid character of human relations, and thus a tacit acceptance of its ontological centrality.

Implied in the above is that one of the major stumbling blocks for multiculturalism has been its basis in liberalism. It is a liberal political theory before it is a theory regarding the diversity of cultures, situated within the particular public spaces characteristic of liberal societies (Modood, 2013: 23) and organised by assumptions about what it means to be a subject (Butler, 2009: 31–2), neither of which can be assumed to be culturally neutral.^{vi} The insight being developed here is that it is not just liberal culture but the very notion of culture itself that is not value free. More fundamentally, the claim is that the

ontological commitment to culture as a natural characteristic of human nature is representative of the ontological frame of naturalism that distinguishes between cultural and natural beings. Having characterised multiculturalism in terms of its adherence to this fundamental ontological distinction, it is possible to see how differences between human groups can be explored in terms of a comparative analysis of ontologies. By shifting the focus from cultures to ontologies, it is possible to see how this comparative project can enrich political theory's understanding of human difference.

Re-thinking Culture through Ontological Pluralism

Before exploring the alternative answers to the three questions which formed our presentation of multiculturalism using resources drawn from anthropology, it is worth noting two allied considerations of culture from political theory. The first is found in the work of Anne Phillips who criticises 'strong' notions of culture that impinge on individual autonomy (Phillips, 2007: 8–9). Phillips' criticism is intended to defend multiculturalism against the obscuring of individual choice by the notion of culture (Phillips, 2007: 12–13). Instead of using the term culture, Phillips suggests developing an understanding of the relationship between coercion and choice that characterises the actions of individuals in such a way that does not assume a catch all answer (Phillips, 2007: 176–80).^{vii} The one size fits all position she rejects is that the locus of political negotiation needs to be

‘culture’, and that it would be pragmatic to find alternatives in order to bolster the efficacy of the politics of multiculturalism. Where Phillips takes issue with images of culture as strongly bounded entities which restrict individual choice, David Scott finds fault with the uncritical use of culture within liberalism that presents it as an ideologically neutral term without a specific disciplinary history (Scott, 2003: 97). Scott highlights that cultural relativism was a perspective honed within the context of Cold War antagonism, and as a result it partook in the project of ‘making the world safe for differences’ in a way that ‘depended upon the reinscription of a cultural hierarchy that assigned tacit priority to American values’ (Scott, 2003: 110). Even within views that put culture forward as something which is constantly transformed, the acceptance of culture in the abstract as uncontested and detached from its conditions of emergence as a term of political discourse is a post-Cold War ideological victory as much as a conceptual discovery or advance.

Taken together, these critiques pose an epistemological and a political concern; how can we come to know differentiation between groups in a manner not uncritically tied to one particular concept, and how can these alternatives produce forms of politics more desirable than those that we already have? These are central considerations of the ontological turn, but its proponents move us beyond their iteration in political theory insofar as they deploy them within a reconception of the ontological status of culture

itself. Thus, the advantage of the thinkers involved in the ontological turn is found in shifting the answers to the three questions posed to multiculturalism above to a comparative ontological backdrop upon which various social and political relations can be understood. Our focus will be redirected from how different cultures articulate competing representations of the same objects within a single ontology, to how different ontological assumptions produce varying distributions of relations prior to the separation between cultural representations and natural objects (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell, 2007: 10–12). By demonstrating how the anthropologists of the ontological turn respond to the three questions used to summarise the multicultural approach to human diversity, the general philosophical commitments of multiculturalism will be shown to be based in the naturalist categories of nature and culture.

The first question posed to multiculturalism concerned the source of the difference between human groups. Rather than culture being the source of this variation, the authors of the ontological turn argue that this separation is an expression of one particular ontological organisation of the given and the non-given. These ontological assumptions about the character of entities and the relations humans can establish between them forms the limits of the thinkable in particular contexts, but also the basis of what social and political relations are possible. Descola provides a clear summary of this position:

Depending on what characteristics humans discern in existing beings, judging on the basis of their idea of the physical and spiritual properties of their own persons, continuities and discontinuities of varying proportions are established between the entities of the world, classifications based on identity and similarity come to seem self-evident, and frontiers emerge, consigning different categories of beings to separate regimes of existence (Descola, 2013: 232).

This categorisation expands the meaning of ontology beyond a mere philosophical position or argument, to a form of cognition anterior to conscious experience and social relations. Descola, Latour and Viveiros de Castro make this point in different ways, but for all three it means that naturalism, the ontology at the root of the binary between nature and culture, is merely one ontology among a plurality of others (Descola, 2013: 30–1; Latour, 2013: 21; Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 43). As such, the answer that multiculturalism provides to the question of the source of human diversity is in fact *one* particular expression of this plurality.

Two complementary examples from Descola and Viveiros de Castro demonstrate the situated character of naturalism well. Descola develops a division between what he sees as four basic forms of ontological classification that provide the structural basis for distinguishing between entities: naturalism, animism, totemism and analogism (Descola,

2013: 240–44). He claims that the difference between them is found in the way in which they ascribe various forms of interiority and exteriority to entities. Of particular interest here is the relationship between naturalism and animism.^{viii} Naturalism posits one form of exteriority, a single, homogenous material nature, and differentiated interior mental capacities, associating the mental capacity for cultural interaction with humans only. As seen above, multiculturalism rests on precisely this distinction, reducing the natural world to a single datum from which cultural variation occurs as a capacity of human nature. Contrastingly, animism inverts this distribution, and posits the existence of many different physicalities, or natures, which share a single form of interiority, or what is referred to as culture within naturalism. Crucially, within animist ontology humans share culture, or the capacity for social interaction, with non-human entities. The universality of naturalism's basic assumption, that humans are cultural beings situated within a single nature is inverted, and thus challenged, by the way in which animism distributes relations between physical and interior characteristics.

Viveiros de Castro's work builds upon this contrast between naturalism and animism.^{ix} He argues that the forms of animism he studied during his fieldwork with Amerindian communities, what he terms perspectivism, do not amount to an 'anodyne' cultural difference but a radically different perspective on the distribution of given and non-given qualities (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 62–3). For perspectivism what is given is not a set of

natural qualities understood in differing ways by various human cultures but a single culture that is taken as given, and differentiated across various, non-given bodily natures. Non-human entities partake in the same cultural conventions as humans and are understood to be persons, but the expression of this personhood is transformed by these various natures (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 57). What distinguishes humans from other animals is the manner in which a single set of cultural objects (beer, ceremonial temples, blood) is actualised within different worlds. A common example given by Viveiros de Castro is the difference between humans and jaguars. Both drink manioc beer, but what the Jaguar understands as beer is perceived as blood by humans. What is at stake in this difference is not two competing linguistic representations of the same object, but a single human culture actualised in two competing ways from two different perspectives (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 72). This is precisely why Jaguars are seen to be humans in a non-human form, for a perspective is not merely a representation of a single natural world in different ways but the embodiment of the same culture in many different natures. Hence, Jaguars only appear as humans to *other* Jaguars. Perspective is of extreme importance to Amerindian thought, therefore, because, in Viveiros de Castro's words: '[w]hat these persons see and thus are as persons...constitutes the very philosophical problem posed by and for indigenous thought' (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 56).

Descola and Viveiros de Castro's aim is not to reify these particular ontological presuppositions, but to use them as a foil to make a claim about the naturalist presuppositions that underpin culture. If the form that human collectives take is determined by these ontological categorisations, then the variation between particular social systems cannot occur because of the construction of various cultural forms resting on a given, natural cultural capacity (Descola, 2013: 247). Rather, it is because of a prior division of entities that delineates what social relations it is possible to express within that particular ontology. Sociality is not so much a condition of being human as an attribute that is distributed among beings by particular ontological classifications. In Descola's words: 'sociality is not an explanation but, rather, what needs to be explained' (Descola, 2013: 248). Put otherwise, culture cannot exhaustively explain the sources of the difference between human groups, as it is a product of *one* of these ontological schemas, either within Descola's table of ontologies or Viveiros de Castro's pluralisation of perspectives. Thus, the origin of human differences cannot be culture, but a variety of ontological schemas which make social relations possible.

The multiculturalist response to this restatement of the first question would be that we then run into difficulties at the level of the second; how can one conceptualise the difference between groups on the basis of an approach that puts fundamentally different conceptions of the world first? Without a concept by which to organise these differences,

how can we begin to compare, assess and negotiate between them? A response can be found in a repositioning of the site of comparison from presuming a form of equivalence (culture), to producing a *new* form of equivalence that puts both positions under scrutiny (Descola, 2013: 282). Naturalism cannot understand other groups if it presumes that they organise the world according to the same distinction it makes between natural and cultural beings, as this neutralises the possibilities of other ontologies in advance. What is needed is an approach to comparison that does not take its starting point for granted. Before unpacking one potential alternative to cultural comparison, it is worth expanding on how this neutralising capacity of naturalism operates by subordinating cultural variation to a natural, given ground. Where above multiculturalism was seen to move towards a non-essentialist and fluid conception of culture, the basis of this form of culture in naturalism enforces restraints upon the possible understandings of entities and social relations.

How naturalism neutralises other ways of studying human differences can be summarised with three key traits drawn from across the three thinkers being discussed here. First, for Descola naturalism perpetuates itself through an appeal to objectivity and ‘spontaneous self-evidence’ (Descola, 2013: 199). Natural knowledge is distinguished from cultural knowledge in that it provides a neutral backdrop upon which the latter is founded. We might disagree as to the meaning of an object, or have different ways of representing it linguistically, but the object itself is not altered or exhausted by these debates. Second,

Latour emphasises that this recourse to natural objectivity leads to a de-potentialising of political pluralism (Latour, 1993: 97–100). In polemic and strategic language with regards to multiculturalism, he designates this as ‘mononaturalism’: the positing of a great outside which scientists and social scientists investigate, in order to return to society with insights into the correct organisation of political life (Latour, 2004: 245). Once investigated according to the rules of scientific objectivity, natural objects are seen as epistemically risk free and their construction by the researcher is obscured in order to assert a *certainty* regarding the relation between people and things. This appeal to nature attempts to rigorously define how it impinges upon human life ‘*by resorting decisively to an incontestable transcendence*’ (Latour, 2004: 38). This image of nature as the great outside that provides incontestable evidence is shared by both Descola and Viveiros de Castro, and marks a key critical battleground of the ontological turn (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 6; Descola, 2012: 22).

The third trait is the insight that all human existence is the result of cultural variations within the limits of this single natural ground. For Latour, multiculturalism is the counterpart of a single image of the natural world (Latour, 2004: 48). According to this view, humanity is ‘a tiny portion of being [that] was detached as a fixed point’ from which the rules of variation within this realm could be deduced (Descola, 2013: 69). Humans are capable of investigating nature, but on the basis of their non-natural, cultural variation

also being subject to investigation. The limits of both human physiology and cultural variation become the subject of analysis, as a particular form of nature capable of understanding nature at large (Descola, 2013: 63–88).^x Culture is shored up through its simultaneous continuity with, and separation from, nature. Not only is this the basis of the claim made with regard to multiculturalism's response to the first question posed above, but it also directly impacts the response to the second. If naturalism creates a division between non-given cultural differentiation that is integrated within a given nature that grounds it, then the only option for studying human variation is culture. Contrastingly, the ontological turn forces us to investigate how this division between nature and culture is in fact characteristic of one particular ontology rather than all understandings of human variation.

What this description of naturalism demonstrates is that it is difficult to mount a critique of its categories that is not easily reducible to yet another representation of reality. Thus to respond fully to the second question – how one understands and studies these differences – in a way that sidesteps the multiculturalist assumption of representation requires formulating an alternative to the presupposition of culture as the only way of decoding equivalent representations of the same objects across different contexts. What must be given up is the presumption of 'a diversity of partial, subjective representations bearing on an external nature, unitary and whole, that itself is indifferent to

representation' (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 72). This naturalist division must be inserted within a comparative 'ontography' that charts how different ontological presuppositions form different social relations and different understandings of the world (Holbraad, 2009). One path that leads from this ontography, taken by Viveiros de Castro, puts emphasis upon the replacement of equivalence within the doctrine of representation with disjunction, or what he calls equivocation. The difference between equivalence and equivocation is that where the former seeks to reduce the difference between cultural representations to a single mediating term, the latter finds the possibility for the production of new concepts in the differences between two or more terms (Viveiros de Castro, 2016: 63). Rather than neutralising differing ontological perspectives by establishing equivalence through culture, what equivocation demands is a continual translation of concepts between diverging views that puts the terms of both up for transformation, rather than fitting one into the constraints of the other (Viveiros de Castro, 2016: 64–5). Instead of responding to the question of how one studies differences by emphasising the applicability of culture, a comparative ontological project demands the reconsideration of how communication is established between varying ontological classifications.

This means that the third question – what form of politics arises from this conception of human difference – cannot have a clearly defined answer. There can be no immediate

recourse to culture as the locus of political action precisely because this derives directly from the naturalist postulation of a transcendental human subject who would be the bearer of such privileges (Descola, 2013: 192). If ontological pluralism implores us to ‘determine what kind of a subject is produced by each mode of identification’ (Descola, 2013: 282), then what political theory must take from this is that the categories by which one negotiates between difference must attempt to accommodate these gaps and ruptures between ontological schemas. This does not amount to throwing the baby out with the bath water. The thinkers of the ontological turn would not deny that culture can be useful for articulating political claims. Instead, their argument is that one particular ontology, naturalism, has become overbearing with regard to our attempt to conceptualise other ways of schematising the world, and as a result, politically impotent when seen as the only way to conceive of these differences.

Criticisms and Consequences for Political Theory

Viewed through this comparative approach to ontology, culture cannot be seen as neutral concept for understanding of the differences between human groups as it an expression of *one* particular ontological schema. Multiculturalism, as analysed above, provides a useful case for unpacking this claim precisely because it rests on three points that can be challenged from the perspective of ontological pluralism. First, the implicit assumption

that culture is a natural capacity of the human is in fact the product of one particular ontological characterisation of entities, demonstrated by the contrast between naturalism and animism and perspectivism. Second, whether it is seen as static or constantly changing and transforming, culture assumes the need to establish an equivalence between differing understandings of a neutral, natural world, whereas the ontological turn argues that this task is impossible, and that a comparative ontography should chart the differences in perspective produced by these ontological classifications. Third, where multiculturalism sees culture as a critical concept for the articulation of political claims, in the light of ontological pluralism this restricts claims to one particular understanding of the character of reality, and thus confines our understandings of what forms politics can take.

To conclude with the ramifications of these three claims, a consideration of two criticisms made of this turn to ontology in anthropology can help clarify the contributions it can make to both multiculturalism and political theory more widely. The first criticism centres on the problem of essentialism. Translating ethnological data into fundamental structures, particularly in the work of Descola, runs the risk of reifying and essentialising the particularity of ontologies (Vigh and Sausdal, 2014; Aspens, 2015; Graeber, 2015). Critics of the ontological turn argue that this severely limits the possibility for transformation of the character of collectives across time, and repeats the colonial gesture of solidifying the

definition of indigeneity as fundamentally ‘other’ to ourselves (Todd, 2016). Consequently, the focus on ontology perpetuates the cloaking of cultural superiority within cultural relativism that it is meant to solve, by merely displacing the site at which this relativism persists. The second criticism is that by focusing upon the ontological classifications that are specific to particular collectives, the real conditions of political struggle are occluded (Bessire and Bond, 2014: 449). Rather than focusing on the real struggles of indigenous peoples, and the potential of these individuals as subjects caught within these processes, the concept of ontology forces a focus upon the cosmological import of their particular world. This is to the expense of engagement in and with the political and economic processes within which they are caught. Critique is deferred in favour of academic wrangling over what constitutes a world.

These two critiques can be responded to in a manner which highlights the contributions which the ontological turn can make to political theory. The first focuses on the reification of otherness by restricting it to a limited set of essentialised ontological variants. What the thinkers of the ontological turn have been careful to do, however, is emphasise that the ontologies they study are not timeless, and only come into being in particular social systems (Descola, 2013: 403–4; Latour, 2013: 226; Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 197–98). While this claim requires a degree of instrumentalisation of particular ontologies to be made, this is done in order to posit a project of ‘ontological self-determination’ by which

discussion between forms of existence can be based (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 43). Thus the first key contribution at stake is a challenge to the multiculturalist presumption of the universality of naturalism as the basis of diversity. Positing the basis of social relations in differing ontological schemes, even if it involves reifying these worlds to some extent, highlights this dimension of difference beyond culture. Cultural variation is just one method of understanding the difference between the given and the non-given, and our understandings of human diversity must go beyond the multicultural model of representing difference exclusively in terms of these cultural representations.

The second criticism cannot miss its target, to a certain extent, when remaining within the ontological perspective of naturalism where theoretical enterprises are engaged within a process of abstraction from the 'real' conditions of individuals.^{xi} Because of this ontological situatedness this criticism loses any veracity as a *specific* point about the ontological turn, and becomes one about the status of theory in relation to politics in general. To what extent is any theory, within the naturalist assumption of representation, not at a degree of abstraction from what it attempts to think? This is precisely why the thinkers of the ontological turn attempt to do away with representation, in order to think anthropological, and political, categories *on the terms* of the other, rather than applying the pre-existing category of competing cultural representations within a single reality. This does not eliminate the nub of the critique, and it cannot be denied that this theoretical

enterprise is at a remove from the political struggles of those under ethnographic or anthropological investigation. Nevertheless, it is pursued in the name of those in question, and grants a form of ‘intellectual authority...to peoples whose proper names are usually not even known, let alone imagined to be synonymous with theoretical ideas’ (Skafish, 2016: 73). In this light, the second contribution that the ontological turn in anthropology can make to political theory, beyond a critique of multiculturalism’s basis in naturalism, is a consideration of how ontological presuppositions underpin all understandings of politics. Confrontations with other ways of schematising the world, and the forms of politics they lead to, should not be responded to with a reduction of these alter viewpoints to a single, apparently neutral position. Instead, these differences should be highlighted and negotiated between, using a comparative approach to ontology which draws out the often implicit character of ontological presuppositions, as demonstrated by multiculturalism.

These are, on the face of it, two modest contributions. The first, found in the challenge to the universality of culture, is tempered with the claim that it should not be jettisoned for good by situating it within the second, where a comparative approach to ontology within political theory is suggested. The consequence of these contributions is much greater than it first appears, however. If we follow the comparative methodology to its full conclusion, then all political concepts, whether they are explicitly or implicitly ontological, reach

their limits when attempting to come to terms with conceptual systems that do not carve the world up into the same fundamental categories. For the ontological turn in anthropology, there is no neutral standpoint for this negotiation to take place. This should not be taken as a demand to abandon the principles of naturalism, but an invitation to participate in the continual reconstruction of political concepts with a fuller, and more inclusive approach to the ontologies through which collectives construct the world. The challenge that political theory should take from anthropology's ontological turn, therefore, is not to circumvent and eliminate the differences between ontological perspectives, but to continually alter its conceptual commitments in a comparative approach to ontology that eliminates any neutral standpoint.

ⁱ Throughout this article I refer to the concept of culture rather than the policy implications of multiculturalism. This is close to criticisms of essentialism within the form of culture deployed by political theory (Turner, 1993; Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001; Cowan, 2006) which have been taken up at various points by political theorists (Tully, 1995; Benhabib, 2002).

ⁱⁱ For exemplary overviews of this turn, see the work of Pierre Charbonnier and Gildas Salmon (2014), Eduardo Kohn (2015) and the collection edited by Charbonnier, Salmon and Peter Skafish (2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ Both pre-empted the concerns of the ontological turn using a different conceptual vocabulary (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell, 2007: 7–8).

^{iv} For summaries of historical and recent debates in multiculturalism, see the work of Ruth Abbey (2012), Tariq Modood (2013) and Phil Parvin (2009).

^v This privileging of the autonomy of the individual as the goal of multicultural policy is most clear in Will Kymlicka's explicitly liberal variant of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2001: 53–5).

^{vi} Both in terms of the institutions that facilitate multiculturalism and the abstract notion of rights itself (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001: 11–13).

^{vii} Kwame Anthony Appiah makes a similar critique of culture within multiculturalism, claiming that the defense of culture is incompatible with the liberal principle of autonomy (Appiah, 2005: 114–154).

^{viii} For a detailed discussion of the table of ontologies, see the work of Marshall Sahlins (2014).

^{ix} Descola's animism and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism are not perfectly aligned, and they give respective versions of the difference between their views (Descola, 2013: 139–143; Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 77–84)

^x Descola owes much here to Michel Foucault's analysis of the twin emergence of the natural and the human sciences (Foucault, 2002: 344–46).

^{xi} Descola is more susceptible to this critique due to his adoption of a structuralist method of taxonomy, as noted by both Latour and Viveiros de Castro (Latour, 2009; Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 78). Peter Skafish provides a measured consideration of both the criticism and the benefits of Descola's taxonomic method (2016: 68–75).

References

- Abbey R (2012) Liberalism, pluralism, multiculturalism: contemporary debates. In: Bevir M (ed.) *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates Since 1880*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Appiah K A (2005) *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Aspers P (2015) Performing ontology. *Social Studies of Science* 45(3): 449–453.
- Benhabib S (2002) *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bessire L and Bond D (2014) Ontological anthropology and the deferral of critique. *American Ethnologist* 41(3): 440–456.
- Boas F (1932) The Aims of Anthropological Research. *Science* 76: 605–613.
- Bosteels B (2009) Thinking, Being Acting; or, on the Uses and Disadvantages of Ontology for Politics. In: Strathausen C (ed.) *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Butler J (2009) *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.
- Charbonnier P, Salmon G and Skafish P (eds.) (2017) *Comparative Metaphysics: Ontology After*

Anthropology. London: Rowman and Littlefield International.

Clifford J and Marcus G E (eds.) (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Coole D (2013) Agentic Capacities and Capacious Historical Materialism: Thinking with New Materialisms in the Political Sciences. *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 41(3): 451–469.

Cowan J K (2006) Culture and Rights after “Culture and Rights”. *American Anthropologist* 108(1): 9–24.

Cowan J K, Dembour M-B and Wilson R A (eds.) (2001) *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Descola P (2012) *The Ecology of Others: Anthropology and the Question of Nature*. Godbout G and Luley B P (trans.). Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Descola P (2013) *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Lloyd J (trans.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Descola P (2017) Varieties of Ontological Pluralism. In: Charbonnier P, Salmon G, and Skafish P (eds.) *Comparative Metaphysics: Ontology after Anthropology*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International.

Evans-Pritchard E E (1976) *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Foucault M (2002) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge.

Graeber D (2015) Radical Alterity is Just Another Way of Saying “Reality”: A Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5(2): 1–41.

Harris M (1979) *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for the Science of Culture*. New York: Random House.

Henare A, Holbraad M, and Wastell S (eds.) (2007) *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically*. London: Routledge.

- Holbraad M (2009) Ontology, Ethnography, Archaeology: an Afterword on the Ontography of Things. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19(3): 431–41.
- Kohn E (2015) Anthropology of Ontologies. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44: 311–27.
- Kompridis N (2005) Normativizing Hybridity/Neutralizing Culture. *Political Theory* 33(3): 318–343.
- Kukathas C (2003) *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka W (2001) *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laegaard S (2015) Multiculturalism and Contextualism: How is Context Relevant for Political Theory? *European Journal of Political Theory* 14(3): 259–276.
- Latour B (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Porter C (trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Latour B (2004) *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Porter C. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Latour B (2009) Perspectivism: “Type” or “bomb”? *Anthropology Today* 25(2): 1–2.
- Latour B (2013) *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Porter C (trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Modood T (2013) *Multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Mouffe C (2005) *On The Political*. London: Routledge.
- Oksala J (2012) *Foucault, Politics, and Violence*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Parekh B (2006) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Parvin P (2009) Integration and Identity in an International Context: Problems and Ambiguities in the New Politics of Multi-Culturalism. *Political Studies Review* 7(3): 351–363.
- Phillips A (2007) *Multiculturalism without Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Sahlins M (2014) On the ontological scheme of Beyond nature and culture. *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(1): 281–290.
- Salmon G and Charbonnier P (2014) The Two Ontological Pluralisms of Contemporary French Anthropology. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20: 567–73.
- Scott D (2003) Culture in Political Theory. *Political Theory* 31(1): 92–115.
- Shachar A (2001) *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skafish P (2016) The Descola Variations: The Ontological Geography of Beyond Nature and Culture. *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities & Social Sciences* 25(1–2): 65–93.
- Song S (2007) *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern M (1988) *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Taylor C (1994) *Multi-Culturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Todd Z (2016) An Indigenous Feminist's Take On the Ontological Turn: "Ontology" Is Just Another Word For Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29(1): 4–22.
- Tully J (1995) *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner T (1993) Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of it? *Cultural Anthropology* 8(4): 411–429.
- Vigh H E and Sausdal D B (2014) From Essence back to Existence: Anthropology beyond the Ontological Turn. *Anthropological Theory* 14: 49–73.
- Viveiros de Castro E (1998) Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism. *The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 4(3): 469–488.

Viveiros de Castro E (2014) *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*. Skafish P (trans.). Minneapolis: Univocal.

Viveiros de Castro E (2016) *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigineous Conceptual Worlds*. Chicago: Hau Books.

Wagner R (1981) *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.