

Tim Ingold and Object-Oriented Anthropology



Thiago Pinho¹ 

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Abstract

Tim Ingold, while extending the radical undertaking of vitalism, with its Nietzschean matrix, puts the decentering undertaken by this philosophical tradition on a more solid foundation, opening up a new space of interobjective relations. Instead of an epistemic plunge into human categories, the goal is to move towards a broader ontological space, including other sites of meaning, such as chairs, spirits, animals, baskets, and many others. Unlike more classical anthropology, with its well-delimited *Anthropos* as an inevitable transcendental horizon, Ingold suggests a world where humans are not protagonists, but rather provisional negotiators within a large mesh of subjectless experiences. The model proposed in this essay distances itself from the plane of (neo)-Kantian speculation, converting its contours into something less orthodox by making room for a possible Object-Oriented Anthropology (O.O.A).

Keywords Interobjectivity · Tim Ingold · Object-Oriented Anthropology · Ontology · Graham Harman

✉ Thiago Pinho
pinho.thiago@hotmail.com

¹ University Senai Cimatec, Salvador, Brazil

“Is it not clear as water, then, comrades, that all the evils of our existence have their origin in the tyranny of human beings?” (Orwell 2000).

Introduction/Methods

The British anthropologist Timothy Ingold is a professor at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and has published numerous books over the years, including *Being Alive*, *Imagining for Real*, and several others. Incorporating thinkers such as Heidegger and Deleuze, his approach brings a fresh perspective to the field, offering new interpretations of the relationship between anthropologists and the world around them. While continuing the radical undertaking of vitalism, with its Spinozian background, Ingold puts the discourse and decentering performed by this philosophical tradition on a more stable footing, opening up a new space of relations that goes beyond the intersubjective limits of anthropology, heading towards a wide universe of interobjectivities. This means that “various non-humans contribute, in specific environments, not only to their own growth and development, but also to that of humans” (Ingold 2011). Animals and objects are not simply there in the world waiting for me, but also pursue their own trajectories, often at odds with our theoretical or practical agendas, i.e., imploding at the same time every epistemic and phenomenological registers. Alongside the connection with Spinoza and Nietzsche, acknowledged by Ingold himself, I perceive another potential link on the horizon. In a certain sense, he also continues the tradition initiated by Graham Harman and his Object-Oriented Ontology (O.O.O), as I will attempt to suggest in the following.

Regarding the critique of Kantianism and its epistemic and transcendental categories, Ingold’s answer is irreducible to a distanced, formal horizon, such as an epistemology of knowledge with its implied categories, tending instead towards an ontology of a more Heideggerian bent. Like a good anthropologist, his concepts are always produced amidst a lot of dirt and mud, launched along a trajectory that goes beyond the limits of pure form, if not deconstructing its existence, at least decentering its Kantian prerogatives. Thus, if it is necessary to speak of borders or structures, at least keep in mind some pragmatic foundation, or a way to transform the autonomy of these matrices, and their consequent apriorism, into provisional, *a posteriori* instruments. Unlike classical anthropology, with its well-delimited *Anthropos* as an inevitable transcendental, Ingold disagrees that “the goal of anthropology is the enlargement of human discourse” (Geertz 1973). Rather than an epistemic plunge into human categories and their exhaustive centrality, the goal is to pursue a more ontological path by moving beyond what Meillassoux (2008) has called *correlationism*. This ontology proposed by Ingold takes itself both from the hylomorphic plane of ideas, in which subject and object are opposed and distant, as well as from the plane of the phenomenological *epoché*¹, in which subject

¹ Undoubtedly, Ingold had a phenomenological moment early in his career, influenced by Heidegger and his concept of dwelling, although later he migrated to vitalism and its Deleuzian influences, especially with the concept of *mesh* and *line*. Regardless, even today it remains possible to perceive the influence of phenomenology in his works, however critical he has become in the last ten years.

and object are indistinguishably and inescapably intertwined. The aim, therefore, is to outline a kind of middle ground, avoiding the two extremes mentioned, that is, the complete separation of the positivists and the persistent ambivalence of the phenomenologists. Given this, it is necessary to reconsider the anthropological project according to a kind of principle potentiating the real and all experience (without subject²) present in the world, opening possibilities instead of stiffening expectations. “To do anthropology, I venture, is to dream like the Ojibwe³. As in a dream, it is continually opening up the world rather than seeking closure” (Ingold 2011).

Discussion

Nihilistic language and the mesh of life

According to Nietzsche, nihilism is a decadent effect, the outcome of stunting a continuous dynamic that runs through the world from top to bottom, thereby limiting its virtuality. This tragic inclination of the human to deny life itself, the present, and experience through the imposition of a redemptive or transcendental horizon, is replaced by what Nietzsche (2006) calls *amor fati*. Unfortunately, the nihilistic attitude takes on several faces or dimensions over time, invading Social Theory under another, much more sophisticated name, although it presents the same degree of danger: CORRELATIONISM. The correlationist attitude in the Social Sciences, like its philosophical predecessor, rejects the world in the name of some transcendental arrangement (power, *language*, culture, experience, etc.). In Ingold, by contrast, reality as autonomous space possessing its own rhythm, refuses any convenient *a priori*, any (neo)-Kantian maneuvering behind the scenes. Instead of denying the world in the name of some hidden and pretentious arrangement, such as the human itself as the inevitable source of signification, *amor fati* seeks to call forth a post-humanist space, full of contingencies and accidents. Along this Spinozian and Nietzschean path, Ingold develops a curious kind of Object-Oriented Anthropology (O.O.A). When Spinoza says “I consider human affects and their properties in the same way as other natural things” (Spinoza 2009) he essentially establishes a *flat ontology* (Delanda 2006), as a field of equivalences. While Harman notes that “modern philosophy (from Descartes in the 1600s through Badiou and Žižek today) is emphatically *not* flat, since it assumes a strict division between human thought on one side and everything else on the other” (Harman 2017), a flat ontology would

² The concept of “subjectless experience” was proposed by Savransky (2021) by reinterpreting the notion of “pure experience” in William James, as well as suggesting a critique of phenomenological *epoché*. This means that experience (human or any other) is no longer a stifling transcendental that summarizes the complexity of things. “Subjectless experience”, therefore, is always fragile, constantly being overflowed by an autonomous, realist world. This sphere, therefore, “[...] needs no phenomenological subject, no human agent and no cultural set, to already be there (where?), doing the work of feeling” (Savransky 2021).

³ Traditional community located in southern Canada.

presuppose that all relations are on “*the same footing*” (Harman 2007), i.e., there is no ontological privilege for humans.

The concept of life, consequently, loses its correlational, transcendental profile, going beyond a humanist philosophy of the subject. “Life” is no longer defined as the property of one or another entity, but rather, runs through all forms of existence, both “living” and inanimate. From a simple stone to a complex organism like the human, all are within the same vitalist *network* of mutual affections, in a field that is no longer defined in epistemological terms, but in aesthetic ones. Every centimeter of reality carries an impulse, an energy, whether human or not. We are talking about everything that “prepares [the] body to be affected in many ways, or makes it capable of affecting external bodies in many ways” (Spinoza 2009). Even “life”, Bergson insisted, “is not contained in things. It is the very movement in which each organism emerges as a typical disturbance that interrupts the linear flow, linking it to the forms we see” (Ingold 2011). The surprises that arise from this tangle of encounters, according to this English anthropologist, are always taken in themselves, valued according to their potential for involvement in a reality in strict immanence. Instances outside the world (transcendent) or hidden behind the scenes (transcendental) are abandoned, as a direct result of a posteriori connections, thereby foregrounding rather than simplifying encounters. Any deity, in this case, is taken in the best Spinozian style, a god of *surplus* and excess, of that which overflows, as with the Koyukon in Alaska (Ingold 2011). He is nothing more than an anti-Kantian character totally averse to forms and structures, although he has to tolerate them from time to time for pragmatic or even phenomenological reasons. “Dionysus, the demigod who radically redeems from the curse of identity, who annuls the principle of individuation and enforces the polymorph against the unity of the transcendent god, anomie against regulation” (Habermas 1985, p. 136). The order of established things is not defined based on a set of cold analytic structures, whether objective or subjective, but rather thanks to a movement, a trajectory: the order is seen in all its *implication* (Ingold 2011).

Because of what it carries inside, the world overflows, as Deleuze would say, and is no longer limited to some frame drawn by devices or even by a transcendental subject, in a phenomenological fashion⁴ (Deleuze 1991), capable of replacing the becoming of things by some pre-reflexive totality, such as the *Body* or *Language*, for example. The *ecological analysis* that Ingold proposes as an alternative ends up revealing a more modest, tolerant subject. The flow of life, within this new mode of existence, is faced with the fact, unthinkable for a phenomenologist, that the world is an autonomous, creative, and strange bundle of circumstances, never a simple extension of any subject or of some convenient and integrated corporeality. Although phenomenologists argue that “[...] we cannot leave ourselves behind” (Sokolowski 2000), which makes the human an inevitable transcendental, a substance dissolved in everything around, it is possible (and even necessary) to challenge this reasoning,

⁴ According to Deleuze (1991), phenomenology considers “the immanence of the lived for a transcendental subject”, never immanence in itself, that is, never as a realistic and autonomous feature of the world itself.

thereby circumventing this phenomenological pact. In other words, the world resists the Husserlian *Epoché*, resists all kinds of phenomenological integration (and mixture), highlighting a kind of realism that has long disappeared from the halls of Social Theory.

This scenario suggested by Ingold tends to extrapolate the limits established by phenomenology itself, presenting in its fissures a more autonomous and richer reality, losing, consequently, that old and insistent transcendentalism, a remnant of Kant and his dangerous lineage. The everyday *identity*, result of a pre-reflexive integration with the surrounding world, starts to be replaced by an acid *difference*, eroding everything around it, invading even pragmatic and phenomenological pacts, what Harman (2017), ironically, labeled “relationism”. According to Ingold, and his own Object-Oriented Anthropology⁵ (O.O.A), the alternative that should replace the epistemic insistence of the positivist, and their obsession with representations and hylomorphic and descriptive schemes, is not phenomenological embodiment. The escape from the rigidity of structural and systematic theories, or from any positivism of some sort or another, is not to be found in an infra-linguistic, corporeal space, or in an “interpretive method” (Alexander 1987), much less in some kind of synthesis, but rather in another scheme of play.

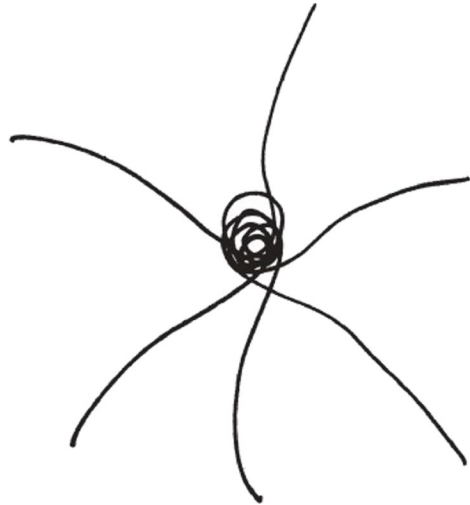
No more individuals or societies... now we have *lines*, *meshes*, and a whole strange repertoire that penetrates the Kantian walls of anthropologists. Instead of transcendental structures conveniently installed behind the stage of the world, organizing the most insignificant details, we have the following path of a decentered mesh Fig. 1:

By combining structural and phenomenological approaches, the solutions of classical Social Theory only expand the limits of Kantianism, since both ultimately participate in the same tradition of thought. Although combining structure with the *Body* (experience) can produce interesting results, as can be seen in Giddens, Bourdieu, and Habermas, as well as an explosion of research objects and methodological approaches, it still traps us in the Copernican lands that have for so long surrounded us. According to O.O.A, on the contrary, neither theories, nor practices have any ontological privilege. Therefore, when the subject matter is reality and its most fundamental status, we should not turn to the enlightened theoretician, much less to the everyday guy (as I like to call him “John the Baker”), but to Charles, the artist, the poet. This is why the aesthetic sphere takes precedence over the others in Ingold’s project, much more so than epistemic or ethical criteria. “As I have already mentioned, there is much in common between the practices of anthropology and art” (Ingold 2011).

No doubt all this implodes self-evident and obvious structures, messing up their borders or laughing at them in the style of Bataille, but mainly it gives us the perfect conditions for an unprecedented kind of ontology, pregnant with implications that are contingent and risky. As a result, the human, together with its structural and systemic products (language, power, culture, experience, discourse, etc.) ceases to be

⁵ A clear reference to Graham Harman and his Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman 2011).

Fig. 1 “Representation of the mesh” (Ingold 2011)



"Representation of the mesh" (Ingold 2011).

a transcendental, by turning itself into a constant negotiator, nothing more than an element in a game that surpasses it. An excellent verb that sums up this new, humbler profile of the human, which Ingold himself frequently uses, is *cultivate*. “Let me suggest an analogy with farming. Farmers don’t create the crops, they cultivate them. Through their labors in the fields, they establish the environmental conditions for the healthy development of the plants” (Ingold 2003).

The concept of *cultivation* in Ingold invades the stage as a protagonist, offering an escape route from a double epistemological imprisonment, wherein sometimes we have a distanced subject, conferring objectivity and firmness to the world, and sometimes a transcendental subject, merged with things in a complete and inescapable correlation. The stakes for Ingold, being beyond the phenomenological link between subject (*Body*) and world, presents the contours of a reality that escapes, challenges, and frustrates, at the same time that it surprises, creates and revolutionizes. Of course, there is a trace of *relationism* in Ingold as well, but these relations never exhaust the objects and animals involved, only being a singular dimension of a much broader and more complex phenomenon. In other words, objects and animals are simply emergent properties that arise from the vital flow of relations. This means that although Latour bets on the idea of *network*, and Ingold bets on the notion of *mesh* and Deleuze on the *rhizome*, none of them reduces reality to any kind of relationism⁶, much less a *humanistic relationalism*, since the character of “resistance” (recalcitrance) of the world always prevails, especially as emergent elements that

⁶ Relationists can even escape from correlationism, entering the realist universe of interobject relations, but are still unable to propose anything but relations, even when they talk about non-human bonds. In this sense, I disagree with Harman (2009) when he presents the Latourian project as a pure relationism, since in Latour the object can also resist any relational structure, as it is possible to realize with the concept of “recalcitrance” (Latour 1979).

have their own autonomy. As Ingold himself argues (2011), “the world waits for no one, least of all the artist or the anthropologist, and the latter’s description, like the former’s description, can do no more than catch a fleeting moment in an endless process”. Despite the importance of pragmatic and phenomenological pacts, what matters in O.O.A is precisely the instant in which these pacts break, fail, and rupture, revealing a rich and creative, though dangerous, field of possibilities, what Graham Harman calls *Allure*. According to him, “[...] allure is a special, intermittent experience in which the intimate connection between the unity of a thing and its plurality of [specific qualities] somehow partially disintegrates” (Harman 2011). In other words, *allure* is the instant in which experience, and its transcendental background expectation, is broken.

Tim Ingold’s analyses, therefore, surpass certain phenomenological arguments, at least their basic, Kantian, structure, although it does not remove their most important contributions. As in Hegel, there is an overcoming, although the traces of what is overcome continue to constitute and nourish the final product, the synthesis. This means that phenomenological, pragmatic, and even structural (systemic) approaches are very important and necessary when we go into the world, but they are all insufficient when it comes to *interobjectivity*. That is, no doubt animals and objects collaborate and participate in human structures, systems and relations, as well as many other transcendental arrangements, but not always... not always they are willing to enter into an *Epoché* or a structural totality, since all of them are emergent entities with their own features. Therefore, it is possible to extract from Ingold what I have called on another occasion⁷ a *Theory of Recalcitrance*.

Space, time, and material

Going a little deeper into Ingold’s theory, leaving aside the generic introduction and fearlessly entering its territory, it is necessary to consider some concepts, if not deconstructed by his theory, at least reformulated by his vitalist (immanent) approach, one of them being that of *materiality*. According to Ingold, this concept must be questioned, imploded and decentered. It is necessary to get away from the traditional positivist way of looking at it, that is, as a simple primary property waiting to be uncovered. Instead of an external, well-defined characteristic, as if it were a mere fixed and stable substance awaiting discovery, it emerges as a diverse space of encounters and vital connections, in a *network* of differences rather than identities. Thus, “the surface of materiality, in short, is an illusion. We cannot touch it because it is not there. Like all other creatures, human beings do not exist on the ‘other side’ of materiality, but swim in an ocean of materials” (Ingold 2003). This also means that the author avoids falling into some kind of subjectivism, much less transcendentalism, when applying the concept of *matter*. This means that the very Kantian theory of the forms of sensibility, discussed in his famous chapter “transcendental aesthetics” in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, would be discarded by Ingold

⁷ My lecture on LAB404: “Latour, Graham Harman and the Object-Oriented Social Theory” (O.O.S.T).

due to the almost total lack of consideration of any “practical” or sensible dimension, except as a support or secondary element. Even if they are formal categories (space and time as epistemological delineators), the Kantian discussion supposes, before any engagement with the world, a set of *a priori* structuring experience, an attitude that has recently been rescued by neo-Darwinism and cognitive psychology. In Ingold, to the contrary, what is concluded from this link with materials is that “[...] there is nothing to be known about these objects except an infinitely vast and indefinitely expandable web of relations that they maintain with other objects” (Rorty 2000), that is, a pure differential *mesh of encounters* with emergent properties popping up on its surface, nothing more than an anthropologized Spinozian project.

Within this vitalist immanent conception, the role of defining materiality is not restricted to an *a priori* epistemic structure, nor is it defined according to a phenomenological or pragmatic agreement, but rather it suggests a world that not only cooperates, interacts, intertwines, but also frustrates and breaks, subverting all kinds of expectations, whether theoretical or practical. This means that in Ingold the concept of *experience* goes beyond a philosophy of the subject, beyond a human implicated and dissolved in reality, thus invading a space of interobjective relations, a scenario unthinkable for a phenomenologist. The dualism between subject and object is broken, no doubt, as it happens in phenomenology and the implications of an insistent *Epoché*. The difference is the reason for this rupture, the reasons that justify the abandonment of such an abyss. For a phenomenologist, the boundary between those two epistemological poles disappears because there is already an implicated (human) subject all the time, an inescapable transcendental structure mixed with the core of reality itself. On the other hand, for partisans of Object-Oriented Ontology (O.O.O), such as Tim Ingold, the boundary disappears because the subject does too, returning only at occasional, non-obligatory moments. In other words, only objects exist (Harman 2011), including here the human itself. Following an example given by Harman, in Ingold it is possible to speak of the contact between fire and cotton, while for a phenomenologist this link asks for a certain transcendentalist element, some kind of “body”, “perception”, “consciousness”, “*Dasein*”, “language”, that is, some remnant of a philosophy of the subject that justifies the world being what it is.

Likewise, the concepts of *space* and *time* are also swept up in this theoretical revolution undertaken by Ingold and his resumption of an alternative Spinozian project, embracing a vitalism that invaded the depths of Social Theory. Both concepts, once considered as simple transcendental carcasses, now operate within what Ingold called a *dwelling perspective* (Ingold 1993). This means realizing a kind of conversion, shifting the terms from *a priori* epistemological categories to *a posteriori* ontological categories and beyond the transcendental boundaries of a philosophy of the subject. This means that the *dwelling perspective* is not only a *human perspective*, but also, and primarily, a *stone perspective*, a *flower perspective*, an *animal perspective*, a *sky perspective*, etc. It is only through concrete involvement in (and with) the world that any boundary can be considered and any object can come to be *grasped* (Whitehead 1978). There is no more immediate access to *space* or *time* that does not traverse *pure experience*, that is, that experience without an insistent and implicated transcendental subject all the time. Space, for example, “[...] is constituted as an enduring record - and testimony - of the lives and works of past generations who

have inhabited it, and who, in so doing, have left something of themselves there” (Ingold 1993). Considering that the notion of space has been expanded beyond the limits of a philosophy of the subject, it is necessary to create a new vocabulary that accommodates this new ontological arrangement, throwing a new card on the table, turning the game over and even changing the rules. We need a vocabulary that can bring with it the lightness and importance of a simple non-human trajectory, while at the same time moving away from any rigid and indifferent trace of our transcendental terms (power, *Language*, class, *Body*, consciousness, perception, etc.). On this, Ingold states: “For this purpose, I shall adopt the term ‘task’, defined as any practical operation performed by a skilled agent in an environment as part of his normal life negotiation. In other words, tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling” (Ingold 1993). As we can clearly see, humans are not transcendental beings hidden behind the curtains, organizing every detail of reality, but simple negotiators in a world that surpasses them.

Space, with its object-oriented rhythm, henceforth ceases to be a container independent of relations (Newton), just as it surpasses phenomenological correlationism and its philosophy of the subject, by becoming more attuned to the real movement of things. In other words, this *alternative space* proposed by Ingold is neither an externality indifferent to humans, nor is it a necessary extension of them. This *alternative space* is a (tense) trajectory of negotiations, in which humans are an important ingredient, perhaps even necessary at certain moments, but not as an inescapable transcendental. It does not follow a set course, an implicit logic or any determination. In this process, the classical notion of *space*, whether Newtonian (objective) or phenomenological (correlationist), becomes a flexible and decentered *taskscape*⁸. According to Ingold, “a world that is occupied but not inhabited, that is full of things existing and not woven from the threads of the becoming of their existence, is a world of [classical] space” (Ingold 2011).

Time, in the same way, loses its Newtonian or Kantian features, as its limits collapse in the face of a post-humanistic *becoming*. The famous Augustinian temporality, an objective time⁹, well defined, created from an absolute being outside any earthly mediation, does not seem to satisfy Ingold’s appetite. Some authors, in turn, despite “worldifying” this category, bringing it down to earth and trimming its wings, insisted on framing its presence within a cinematic framework, frame by frame, and not within a *continuum*, of a “becoming” that is present in each and every trajectory. In this way, Hegel is an emblematic figure who made the conception of time, whose molds had remained without much novelty throughout the centuries, more supple. His dialectics, although they overcame the (epistemic) distinction between subject and object, by breaking with Kantian solipsism, as well as betting on change and movement as the main engines of history (Habermas 1985),

⁸ A union of “task” and “landscape”.

⁹ The discussions of St. Augustine (2008), in book eleven of the Confessions, despite pointing to a subject within a relative and personal temporality, also leaves implicit the image of an objective, absolute time, determined by the only being able to experience time in its entirety, in this case God.

end up slipping into a kind of cinematic vision drowned in thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. According to our English anthropologist, “[...] can we move from one present to the next without having to break through any chronological barrier that pretends to separate each present from the next in line?” (Ingold 1993). It is interesting how this way of apprehending time and space leads us to conclude as Nietzsche did, that “Heraclitus will be eternally right” (Nietzsche 2006), especially because the flux of reality is taken here as the one and only decisive “essence” that invades the world, at the same time decentering the human and its Kantian pretension. This means that nothing remains, everything is transformed, and once one has entered the Heraclitean river, one is ever-changing.

The new face of transcendentalism

Going back to Kant’s discussion of the *a priori* forms of understanding and sensibility, it is curious that these metaphysical categories have taken on a very materialist incarnation nowadays. Kant himself, if he had lived a little longer, going beyond the imposing castles of Königsberg, would be amazed at the attempts of modern science to explain everything in physiological and evolutionary terms, giving an unusual materiality to his transcendental categories. Neuroscience is a typical case of this materialist colonization of the academic universe, a new way to experiment with old tools. Although Ingold does not argue directly with neuroscientists, he observes in neo-Darwinism and its defense of an interaction between genes and environment, and in cognitive psychology itself, a new contemporary face of Kant and his transcendentalist arrangements. Defining life from previous models, be they epistemological and/or practical, does not seem to be the best of choices, given that it reduces the plurality and richness of events to a set of convenient schemes. It is common, in turn, to believe that “some kind of cognitive processing apparatus must already be installed in brains [...]” (Ingold 2009). Even in the anthropological universe this Kantianism is not strange, as it is visible in Lévi-strauss himself with his search for a certain transcendental matrix behind the scenes of human cultures. According to him, “perhaps one day we will discover that the same logic is produced in mythical thought and in scientific thought, and that man has always thought in the same way” (Lévi-strauss 1985).

In this approach, as a result of a process of natural selection, some characteristics useful for the maintenance of the species could be transmitted to new generations, ensuring them the necessary capacities for pragmatic adjustment. Most of these characteristics, as stated by neo-Darwinism and cognitive psychology (Pinker 2002), are forms coupled in our *psyche*, responsible for ensuring, even before any bond with the world, a convenient, harmonious and adapted contact with surrounding circumstances. In this way, culture, for example, would be limited to be a mere “[...] parasite of the universal structures of cognition [...]” (Ingold 2009), a simple support that expresses more fundamental contents (or better, forms). Ingold proposes, contrary to this new Kantian model, an *education of attention*, giving a higher priority to *experience (without subject)* and to everything that springs from its space of encounters and mismatches. This, on the other hand, does not mean that Ingold

excludes from his writings natural selection or the genotypic inheritances that cross species. “What I deny”, he says, “is that the DNA sequence in the genome writes in code a design of context-independent specifications, and with that, the idea of natural selection as a design agent” (Ingold 2009). Of course, there are evolutionary gains; there is no doubt about the importance of their contributions in structuring the conduct of a certain animal, however the behavior of an organism cannot be deduced from a well-ordered set of amino acid chains. For this reason, those characteristics that ensured the survival of a certain species millions of years ago contribute little to the modern challenges that present themselves daily, therefore a kind of empirical, or experiential, fulfillment is indispensable. It is necessary that experience, in its overflowing and even dangerous aspect, not only redefines transcendentalist patterns, but implodes them, placing the species itself in an ongoing and distressing state of negotiation.

Similarly, the multiple abilities of human beings, from throwing stones to throwing cricket balls, from climbing trees to climbing ladders, from whistling to playing the piano, emerge through maturation work within fields of practice constituted by the activities of their ancestors (Ingold 2009).

To the extent that he enshrines *pure experience* as the main foundation of any organism, Ingold also gradually deconstructs the existing boundaries between history and nature, or even between human and animal, but without falling into the phenomenological pact of a homogeneous and undifferentiated space. Within more classical social theory, especially the dialectical tradition, many believe that “only when humans appear on stage do we enter history proper” (Ingold 2011). Humans would be seen as free, creative, able to work, and modifying the world around them according to their needs, while animals, on the contrary, would simply follow orders from a Newtonian nature with cold, rigid, external and inviolable laws. In Ingold, to the contrary, nature and animals continue to preserve a creative and even frightening autonomy, an abundance that undermines all transcendental pretensions of humans, forcing each element to go beyond itself and decentering its conventional boundaries. In other words, the epistemological dualism is broken, that border deployed by the philosopher (anthropologist). On the other hand, an *ontological dualism* begins to form, as nature does not always cooperate or participate just as the *Body* deterritorializes itself, getting out of control and shattering expectations.

In this vitalist anthropological context, there is also a *continuum* that goes through the “modes of existence” of the “lower mammals”, passing through the practices of hunters and gatherers and arriving, finally, at the hygienic, aseptic laboratories of contemporary scientists. About this “practical similarity” between *Neanderthals* and *homo sapiens sapiens*, Ingold states

I believe we will find, then, that the fundamental trend of relational sociability is by no means limited by hunters and gatherers, but runs through them and connects the lives of people everywhere, past and present, even modern urban dwellers like us (Ingold 2003).

Everyone's life, defined by what they do and think, should be evaluated depending on the interaction between their *Bodies* (*without organs*), and not from some prior predicate, *a priori*, as if everything was already a Hegelian thing primed from the outset, before the game even begins. Nothing guarantees the solidity of the world, except an enormous effort to guarantee its phenomenological integration, conquered only on the basis of high costs and investments. That is, the *epoché* when (or if) it happens, requires an unusual investment, mainly due to the simple fact that reality does not cooperate, does not allow itself to be subjected to the transcendental limits of an implicated subject, be it a *Body*, consciousness, or even *Dasein*. When phenomenological integration fails, breaks down, when it is up against the wall, as well as its transcendental background elements, an unprecedented kind of ontology springs forth on the horizon, a new model that exceeds the limits of subject philosophies. Even considering the epochelian ground of the phenomenological universe, in welcoming reality as an undifferentiated field in which subject and object are diluted and mixed, there would still exist something beyond, a kind of overflowing element that oozes through the gaps of that phenomenological pact, a kind of strange resistance. "From these considerations it should be clear that there must be some surplus in things that is both *deeper* than its effects and *shallower* than its constituent pieces" (Harman 2017).

Representations and vitalism

Many centuries have passed and the "West" continued to bet on the existence of representations, dreaming of autonomous, obvious and predefined entities, be they mental, like Saussure's concepts, or exterior and "objective", as with most sociological knowledge. Concerning this search for objectivity, understood here as a substance deposited in the world, graphs and maps are good examples of how the researcher can, for some reason, forget about a whole *mesh of* interobjective relations that ensures the very notion of objectivity. It is curious that "[...] map-making has come to be divorced from the experience of bodily movement in the world" (Ingold 2000), becoming deduced from "abstract formulas" and, for that reason, independent of the singular position and the *Body* (*without organs*) of all its participants, whether human or not. Ingold describes that this "pretension of correspondence", this mania for understanding the *Body* or *Language* as simple bridges to something already defined, remains thanks to a kind of indifference of gaze, as if the scientist, an Aristotelian subject, could extract from the world substances lost out there, forgetting what Simondon (1992) called the *process of individuation*. That Aristotelian approach cannot direct its gaze horizontally at the world, as if "observe" and "involve" had become two inseparable verbs, but vertically, almost like an eagle flying over its prey miles above the ground. The reasoning would be more or less as follows: everyone, regardless of where or how they are, can deduce the location and route they need to take, all it takes is a map in one hand and a compass in the other. Here, the desire for objectivity reaches its limit, excluding the *Body's* (*without organs*) fingerprints, avoiding any sensitive mark that might hinder the efficiency of the coordinates and their rigid, inviolable spatiality. However, Ingold's answer

does not pass through intersubjectivity, as would be expected from phenomenological authors, but bets on an uncommon and almost invisible idea in Social Theory with its transcendentalist overload. Instead of the intersubjective, the proposal moves towards interobjectivity, a bond between objects, things and animals, without necessarily having any human subject implicated. “All we could obtain was the impression of an extremely dense and tight fabric, yet flexible and soft, while always remaining flat” (Latour 1996). This means that Ingold’s relationism has nothing phenomenological about it¹⁰, especially because humans, like every object, animal or thing in the world, are emergent properties that arise from the dynamic interplay of vitalist forces. For Ingold the human is an important but not mandatory ingredient in experiential arrangements, which become a kind of cake recipe involving billions of spices, colors, smells, and tastes. He can be considered one of the first post-humanist anthropologists, which may sound like an oxymoron, especially when we investigate the background of the word “Anthropology” and its almost implicit *Anthropos*. This leads us to the following question: is there even the possibility of an anthropological project without humans, or at least the human as an optional, provisional or even emergent element? That is, would it be possible to think of an Object-Oriented Anthropology (O.O.A)?

Ingold and Nietzschean opposition

Nietzsche, already at the end of the nineteenth century, carried out an open fight against the rationalism of his time, questioning the Kantian project that insisted on spreading to the four corners of the philosophical universe. Nietzsche’s thought, in this sense, predates many of the conclusions drawn by Latour, Ingold and Haraway decades later. For example: The (epistemic) erosion of the nature-culture or humanity-animality pair is clearly present in his book *Gay science*¹¹, or the discussions of flux, corporeality and performance in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*¹², the critique of a philosophy of the subject in “Beyond Good and Evil”¹³, and in the polemical “Twilight of the Idols”, when he questions Platonism, contrasting the Platonic project with the true “structure” of reality, that is, *pure becoming* and its emergent elements (Nietzsche 2006). In relation to the first work, Nietzsche understands the pretentious side of the (epistemological) gulf created between animals and humans, not as

¹⁰ In phenomenology, the human and the world are understood as a unified entity, a completely undifferentiated dimension. Therefore, within phenomenology, “the world serves as the absolute context for ourselves and all the things we experience” (Sokolowski 2000). In other words, “[...] we cannot leave ourselves” (Sokolowski 2000), we cannot imagine a world without humans always there. While I acknowledge that Ingold identifies himself with phenomenology, particularly in the second phase of his career influenced by Heidegger, I believe he goes beyond that perspective, as evidenced in his third phase influenced by Deleuze and his notion of lines.

¹¹ “The influence of ‘external circumstances’ is absurdly overestimated by Darwin; what is essential in the process of life is the enormous shaping power, which from within creates forms, using, exploiting the ‘external circumstances’ [...]” (Marton 1990).

¹² “I could only believe in a God who could dance” (Nietzsche 2002).

¹³ “The subject (or, more popularly speaking, the soul) has hitherto been the most solid article of faith on earth”.

a naive, but as a suspicious boundary. If each element of the cosmos participates in a horizontal space of relations, being the trajectory traveled by their *Bodies* and the intersections of experiences and sensations, there is no reason in building some wall, except when this barrier is created by the world itself and by the animals themselves, in a clear movement of resistance (ontological dualism). To the disappointment of every good Kantian, there would be no criteria to be sought in one's interiority, except a virtual capacity for new and unpredictable encounters, nothing more than pulsating *Bodies* crossing each other's paths.

The very centrality of the concept of the *Body*, as can be seen in contemporary studies on "place of speech" (Ribeiro 2017), "Situated Knowledge" (Haraway 1988), "Ontological Turn" (Castro 2014), "Agential Realism" (Barad 2007), is also taken up by Nietzschean vitalism, albeit with alternative contours. The *Body*, in contrast to Platonic dualism, perfected by the Kantian distinction between *desire* and *will*, is no longer reduced to some kind of servile involvement, much less to a transcendental structure dissolved out there; in fact, it is just the opposite. It ends up being the master of itself and the criterion of each and every form of existence, by ceasing to be a simple bridge, a vehicle, or some kind of supporting actor waiting for a command. Reason, once exalted in its autonomy and centrality, especially in Cartesian and Kantian discourse, transforms itself into a disjointed auxiliary, at best, or even the very extension of a *Body* (*without organs*) that has become absolute, omnipresent. It is curious that this way of conceiving rationality as just an extension of the *Body* (*without organs*), and of its demands along a biographical path, was anticipated by the empiricism of David Hume, passing through the pessimistic philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and taken up again by Freud in the 20th century, when he attributed to reason (consciousness) an auxiliary role, just as a potentiator of the affections, or as a simple dampening barrier of traumatic shocks with reality (Freud 1937). The *Body*, therefore, "[...] is [the] richest, most explicit, most apprehensible phenomenon" (Nietzsche *apud* Dias 2011), at least when it is not thought of as a transcendental and inescapable structure.

According to Nietzsche, life is not defined by anything that is prior or superior to it, unless one considers its creative, and therefore aesthetic virtuality as an essential characteristic. This tendency is never a privilege of humans, but belongs to the whole set of beings that seek to intensify their lives, expand their energies and conquer their environment. Nietzsche's vital world is in its own process of making, in the trajectory itself as a realistic flow that dispenses with human fingerprints and its insistent phenomenological *epoché*. Every form of essentialization is taken as a kind of repressive obstacle, a violence against the richness and flexibility of things themselves. In this sense, "[Nietzsche] urges everyone to sculpt [their] existence as a work of art. Life must be thought, willed, and desired just as an artist desires and creates his work, as he employs all his energy to produce a unique object" (Dias 2011). For this reason, Ingold can be considered a Nietzschean anthropologist, insofar as he rescues the pulsating aesthetics that runs through everything that exists.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to explore how the Anthropologist Timothy Ingold formulated a novel approach to anthropology, departing from the traditional concept of intersubjectivity towards a more vitalist and Nietzschean perspective. In this new interpretation, the human is not seen as a transcendental *Anthropos*, that originates meaning; rather, other elements possess their own trajectories and can even resist the theoretical and practical impositions of that *Anthropos*. According to Ingold, the world overflows with agency, and this particular ontology provides an alternative lens through which to understand anthropology in contemporary times. Humans matter, of course, especially given their phenomenological and pragmatic arrangements, but there is always something more, a creative characteristic that is not reduced to a stubborn humanism. Something takes us, therefore, straight to the heart of an interobjectivity, an unprecedented, complex and incredible field. “What doors is an Object-Oriented Anthropology capable of opening?” This question, which has only just begun to be answered, generates a new space of possibilities, an impressive field of research that awaits us.

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Comments

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