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THINGLY COSMOPOLITANISM: CARING FOR THE OTHER BY DESIGN::

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The following is a slightly modified version of the opening keynote to a conference entitled: "Cosmopolitanism and Place: Designs of Resistance", University of Technology, Sydney, October 2005. As will become apparent, much the paper is a renegotiation of this title, but also the predominance of architecture over non-architectural design at the conference. It also needs to be noted that the presentation was accompanied by images of a range of backpack designs.

Cosmopolitanism is many things. (I will say nothing else by the way, if the emphasis falls on *things* and their many ways of being with us, for us, of being us.)

A) It is an increasingly globalised society of spectacle, a superficial exposure to the differences all presented in the same way. Lets call this consumerism.

B) It is a sensitivity to difference that comes from living in diversity, a liberal tolerance for others so long as their otherness does not impinge. Let's call this multiculturalism.

C) It is a faith in universal values policed by international institutions, a hope that a meta-framework can arbitrate on differences. Let's call this internationalism.

D) It is an obligation that exceeds current social institutional possibilities, a necessary impossible whose practical failure on each occasion remotivates pursuit of the ideal. Let's call this cosmopolitanist ethics.

These are perhaps in reverse chronological order, with (post-)postmodern sociology lying between A and B, Kant between B and C and the Stoics between C and D. However D is for Derrida.[1] The conference title — with its antinomy of cosmopolitanism and place — to my mind foregrounds a Stoic version of Derrida's cosmopolitanist ethics.

In this version, cosmopolitanism is the attempt to institute a dual allegiance, an allegiance to ones city and all that makes it function as 'this particular place', and yet also an allegiance to something greater than the city, a cosmos beyond the specificity of this place. Where the first demands that one police the borders of the city, protecting it from those who, not being from here, cannot help sustain it and therefore may risk disrupting it, the second demands that one be open to those who seek to cross those borders, to protect, help and sustain them. Whilst these out-of-place people are strange, there is, in the wider scheme of things, something that we still share with them, something that obliges us to be hospitable to them, to share our shelter and sustenance with them.

'Cosmopolitanism and Place' then seems to be the aspiration that all that is judged to be good about any particularly place, but also the idea of place in general, of autochthony, can be affirmed in way that does not necessitate exclusionary protectionism.[2] We can be rooted and still be friends, or have a diverse group of friends.

However, as with all things Derridean, it is important to note the rigorous symmetry of this dual obligation. We must not only compromise our allegiance to our city with hospitality toward outsiders, but we must also compromise our hospitality with allegiance to our city. We must accept aliens only in ways that do not alienate what is particular to our place. We must be hospitable in our distinct ways. This is not just a way of preserving our place but also a way of preserving of what is particular to the stranger. A certain compromising of our hospitality allows the visitor to maintain their distinctness.

This symmetrically dirempted obligation is what differentiates cosmopolitan ethics (D) from multiculturalism (B). In the latter, the identity of the city is diluted into a mere plurality of identities on the one hand, and on the other hand each of the multiple cultures is only able to manifest its cultural difference in the same sanctioned way (once-a-year costumes and round-the-year food, but not beliefs).[3] Neither place nor the other is granted its uniqueness.

It is also what differentiates cosmopolitan ethics (D) from internationalism. The "something wider than the city" that constitutes the other allegiance of cosmopolitans cannot be a universal. Whilst there are shared things between the hosts and hosted, there is not a commonality. With too much sameness, the stranger is no longer strange, and by corollary, what is particular to this place is endangered. Cosmopolitanism is therefore not a humanism, presuming an identical essence with merely varied existences — human nature or human rights manifesting as different cultures.

Yet, that there is nevertheless still a sharability, an also-beyond-uniqueness, means that cosmopolitanists are not isolated in relativism. There are relations, of exhange and equivalence. The border crossing others are not utterly Other. What is strange is not unrecognizable, just not currently categorizable; what makes the stranger strange is that there are likenesses despite their overwhelming difference.[4]

And so cosmopolitanism and place keep oscillating; place without exclusion; similarity without commonality; difference without untranslatability. As with other poststructural quasi-transcendentals, this dynamism, far from being a limitation, is the notion's significance. We are motivated to work through the oscillation of implementing cosmopolitanism because it contains the hope that we can have our cake and eat it; we can have place and others. We cannot, but that we might provokes us to keep seeking to be ethical.

Nevertheless, this oscillation, foregrounded by the conference title, 'Cosmopolitanism and Place', is perhaps overly symmetrical. It lends itself to the sort of dialectical play that too often sounds cleverer than it is. So I am going to offer another direction, one that I want to suggest is more cosmopolitanist than 'Cosmopolitanism and Place', that is to say, one that captures the dynamism of that antinomy but in a less speculative way. I want to try displace 'place' from the title. I want to replace it with 'things', by which I mean designed-things-of-everyday-use.

There are three related reasons for doing this.

1 'Why Things? Placelessness'

Firstly, I am concerned that place is one of those concepts whose prevalence is indicative of the loss of its referent. Like community, identity, and meaning, is not everyone talking about place because it has been irreversibly interrupted? [5]

So many discussions about place today are in fact calls for its restitution, thus commencing with the admission that it is lacking. Invariably these sorts of exhortations for the reconstruction of place never explain how such places could ever be subsequently lived in ways that overcome their patent constructedness. Elaine Scarry, who I will take up in detail below, has a beautiful essay called 'The Made Up and the Made Real,' in which she identifies that any restorative project requires a double making, a re-making of what has collapsed, and then an un-making of its madeness, a naturalisation of its artifice.[6] You can rebuild a place, but how do you bring placefulness to dwell in it; people can be put in it, but how do you put it in people.

If place is lacking, what has undermined it are things. In a quite prosaic sense, what makes places all round the world today the same, is not, for example, international architecture — buildings remain strong differentiators — but products, the things of globalised manufacture and import/export in the shops and offices and houses everywhere. Bill McKibben argues that there can be no such thing as wilderness once Styrofoam beads can be found in every environment around the world.[7]In the same way, you can say that notions of place become untenable once multinational water bottles and plastic bags can be found blowing in the streets of every city around the globe.

Consumerist cosmopolitanism (A) is perhaps a limit on place-based cosmopolitanism. The presence of designer product shops is a signature of a cosmopolitan city, but for that very reason, also a sign that this city is no longer a cosmopolitanist *place*. As just one more franchise of global capital, it is a non-place.[8]

To this extent, it worth remembering that the cross-border flows of people today, tourists or refugees, that have given rise to revivals of cosmopolitanism, are quantitatively insignificant when compared to the volume of products crossing borders. Whilst a persistent media humanism means that the focus of debate is the movement of people, the focus of the world, with regard to its institutitions and workaday lives, is wholly on the flow of things. It is precisely because a certain internationalist cosmopolitanism (C) is the efficient infrastructure for transnational goods that places are being flooded by generic things. Someone like Bruno Latour, who I will also focus on below, would suggest that the traffic of human-agents would be more easily negotiable if it was taken to be a mere subset of the already well-managed traffic of non-human agents, and not a problem wholly different in kind.[9]

If this is empirically the case, if placeness is being eroded by things, does this mean that cosmopolitanism is also withdrawing? In what follows, I want to find a cosmopolitanism that is less in place, less place dependent, a cosmopolitanist ethic that is more appropriate for the hegemony of globalisation. This will mean a cosmopolitanism that is not directly opposed to global capital, or to the material products of capitalism. It will not be a resistance to capitalist production, but rather the resistance of, or within, capitalist production; not the designs of resistance, but the resistance of designs, of the designs of material things that we buy and use. For example, the cosmopolitanism that I am after is one that claims that the problem with consumer materialism is that it is not materialist enough; that is to say, it does not acknowledge enough the extent to which we are dependent, for our sustenance, our sociality, and even our identity, on material goods. We say that all that matters is material, yet we pay very little attention to material things, neither conceptually or actually in terms of maintenance and repair for example.[10] To this end, I will be bringing trying to bring together cosmopolitanism D and A, to find D in A.

2 Why Things? Mid-Sized Perception and Interaction

Secondly, I am concerned about the ontological status of a notion like place. I am worried that, whether it is present or absenting, it is an abstraction of our being-in-the-world.

From the perspective of a 'hermeneutics of facticity,' there are only things; by which I mean again, everyday material things, human-scale products-of-use.[11] We are meso-level-ly. We do not live at the macro- or micro-level. Things are, from the perspective of existence, what is primary.

If there exist bigger forms, even just at the scale of buildings for instance, these are either, in their construction or in their being-lived-in, dealt with thing-by-thing, brick-by-brick or doorway-by-doorway; or these bigger forms, to be negotiated as wholes, are scaled down to thing-size, a model, an elevation, an artist's impression. The same goes for bigger forms, now approaching the size of ideas, for example 'the city'; these are, only as materially communicated, as hand-held maps, or as materially experienced, as a series of footpaths and traffic lights and shops and park benches. This is what the Situationist psychogeographies and *derive* remind us.

To put this another way, there is no place. I am with Dame Thatcher ('there is no such thing as society'): if place ever was, it was an abstraction, an abstraction of the things that locate us, that allow us to be who we are. We exist only with and through mid-level things, a specificity that is overlooked by collective nouns like place.

And if this 'we', by the way, is, or should be, many, each of those 'we's is different through its distinct things. There is only material culture. Different cultural values, incommensurable cultural habits, are, only to the extent that they are materialised as things, as distinctive things.

So too then cosmopolitanism.[12] What matters, the following emphasises, what conditions what we do, how we live, from day to day, are thingly things. If there is something at issue named by the sub-title of this conference — Cosmopolitanism and Place: The Designs of Resistance — then that issue is nothing unless it takes place at the level of things, of products, designed and manufactured and bought and used and disposed. If cosmopolitanism is in the end a practice and not a theory, then cosmopolitanism lies in the design of things. And in fact, I will argue, things are already, fundamentally, insofar as they are designed, cosmopolitan.

3 'Why Things? Noticing Design'

Thirdly, as should be apparent, there is a polemic to these historical and ontological claims. There is an academic institutional politics about the underrating, even forgetting, of Design, of non-architectural design in particular, the design of products and communications. The role of 'thing design' in determining the nature of how we live, retrospectively or prospectively, is not well or widely enough understood.[13] It is even overshadowed by the macro-assemblages of related practices like architecture and planning (and I single these out, rather than politics and beliefs for example, to maintain the materialism of my second point, that ideas are nothing without materialisation). For example, with regard to social change over the 20th Century, the introduction (in homes and work) of mechanical technological devices in the first half of the century and the replacement of and addition to those devices with electronic and communication and information technologies in the second half, is more instructive for understanding who and how we are than much less prevalent architectural movements and plans that nevertheless tend to undermined when inhabited. The relative immaturity of the profession and discipline of design mean that the 20th Century continues to be read through non-design frameworks, and the implementation of current ideas, is still overwhelmingly thought to lie in architecture and planning, rather than in the enabling performed by everyday devices.[14]

Things are changing. This presentation would like to locate itself in what Peter-Paul Verbeek calls the 'thing turn' in social theory.[15] This is the noticing of the missing of things, and the attempt to get "back to things themselves." The source of this modern movement is often attributed to Heidegger, to Heidegger's tool-based hermeneutic ontology, and takes the form of a recovery of Heidegger's middle-period work on The Thing, as opposed to his later privileging of the poetic and language and his earlier intra- and interpersonal existential analytic. It is promoted by those attempting non-essentialising philosophies of technology, like Don Ihde (instrumental realism), and primarily Albert Borgmann (focal things). And it has recently been adopted as 'Thing Theory' in literary cultural studies, taking insights from material culture studies, both anthropologico-archaelogical and ethnographico-economical.[16]

The most powerful advancer and advocate of the thing turn, and the one that I will be most concerned with, is Bruno Latour. Much of what I said as my second ontological reason for being more interested in things than place is a paraphrase of one side of Latour's materialist network accounts of society. In a series of polemical texts (*We have never been Modern*, *Pandora's Hope, The Politics of Nature*, [17] and most recently and explicitly, the giant exhibition and catalogue essays *Making Things Public**[18]***), Latour has insisted on the importance of things to any and all political discourse, by arguing

- that politics is essentially, and not just contingently, impossible without its material supports (assembly rooms, round tables, transcripts and tabled documents)

- that every political dispute has things at its heart (weapons of mass destruction and veils, cars and petrol and tolls, backpacks and guns),

- that science is politics by other means (medicine determines what living is and even who lives, physics arbitrates on cosmologies, etc),

- and that technologies are politics made durable (mobile phones recommend longer working hours as a policy, energy efficient bulbs advocate sustainable development, processing refugees requires locks and fences, etc).

For Latour, politics is therefore nothing without things, without taking into account the politics of things, something that Latour finds very inadequately acknowledged in current political discourse.

This polemic becomes directly relevant to cosmopolitanism in Latour's response to Ulrich Beck's essay on cosmopolitanism.[19] Latour notes that the place-based cosmopolitanism that Beck advocates, despite claiming to not be, remains of the universalist variety, by having a universalist account of the universe, that is to say, a fixed determination of the cosmos as comprising stable entities that can be excluded from politics because they are common to all peoples. As Latour notes, this is indeed strange for the sociologist of ecological risk. Latour proposes in place of cosmopolitanism, Isabelle Stenger's notion of cosmopolitics, that is, a politics that is always also the dispute about what constitutes the cosmos.[20] What follows is therefore seeking to forward this cosmopolitics by interrogating the cosmopolitanism of things, or more specifically, the cosmopolitanism of the design of things and what things design.

Thingly Humans

To this extent I should make clear that, particularly with regard to Latour, I am presenting a very one-sided account. I am taking up only the thingly side of Latour's work, but as with Derrida, Latour's theory is profoundly and explicitly symmetrical. There are always things and humans, never the one without the other. This is exactly why things are political; things are never just things.

Or obversely: humans are never just humans. The idea of human nature that underwrites a universalist/multicultural cosmopolitanism suggests that the minimal unit for politics (and natural science) is the naked human. No matter what our race or creed, we are all supposedly of the same species, the same type, as represented by the figures etched into a disk on the Pioneer deep space probe.[21] Once the cultural contingencies of things like our clothing are removed, our lowest common denominator sameness is starkly apparent, and should thereby command transnational ethical respect. However, this naked unit is simply not sustainable. The least survivable human must be accompanied by some tools, at least clothes. This is what the fable of Empemetheus tells us. Humans are artificial not for Kantian reasons, freed by apperceptive concepts from nature's determinism, but for the fact that they can not exist without artefacts. Humans are in essence monstrously prosthetic. To a certain extent, the figures in the Pioneer space probe are correct: we humans are cosmonauts, separable only from the life-support systems and sign systems that surround us on pain of death.

The smallest component of politics (and the social sciences) should therefore be the backpacker, the be-luggaged traveller. Even the refugee who comes with nothing almost never comes with no things. To neglect this essential thingliness of humanity, to amputate from humans not mere accessories but their very life-sustaining-being-there-with-things, this is precisely the violence of the biopolitics of bare life that Georgio Agamben has diagnosed for us.[22]

To make this clear, it is crucial that the things that make up the human be considered continuous with the human. They cannot be thought of as mere additions, but as incorporated into the lived-body of being human. Whilst separate, they are, in fact, inseparable. They are things like Merleau-Ponty's blindperson's white cane, or Heidegger's hammer, not distinguishable from what and who they enable.

Latour's insight is to recognize that this goes for all artefacts, whether or not they are physically joined to the body. Things that stand apart, are, as functioning things, as things that humans depend on, as human as humans, or at least as human as humans who are in a fundamental sense be-thinged. In an article whose title signals the polemic against the forgetting of things by sociology, "Where are the missing masses?" – the title refers to the fact that mundane artefacts are the extra-force needed to explain how societies hold themselves together – Latour describes the way devices function anthropomorphically.[23] Doors can be shut after you pass through them by doormen or by door springs. This equivalence refers to more than the mere action in either case. Just as doormen are judged not merely by their instrumental ability to close their door, but also their sensitivity to the situation in which they are closing their door – not excluding those too weak to push the door open, not closing too quickly on those who are too slow – so too are springs. What motivates the introduction of a designer to reform a door spring is a moral evaluation about the inadequate civility of the spring, just as a manager is called in to discipline a rude doorman. And the outcome of the designer's work should be a more ethical door spring.

A more poetic version of this, and one that is more revealing of the process that Latour calls moral delegation to things, is Elaine Scarry's account of making. In a massive and important and woefully under-read text, Scarry explains the nature of making through insights gleaned from a study of unmaking, in particular, torture.[24] From the wilful infliction of pain in an attempt to break someone, Scarry develops an account of making as motivated and sustained by the desire 'pain be gone'. As with Latour, Scarry sees equivalence between people and devices. To alleviate another's pain, I can hold and rub them. But to alleviate their pain when I am no longer able to be there, I must create an artefact, a chair to take their weight, a coat to keep them warm, a room to make them feel at home.

Scarry goes beyond Latour in recognizing that being empathetic to the pain of the other will not only initiate the making process, but guide it. The form of the artefact will come from an internalisation of the nature and cause of the unwanted pain. I will see another stumbling under a weight, the weight of the things they need to live, to be human, and wanting them to no longer stumble, I will re-enact the feeling of that weight, and

shift and frame it until that weight is as unnoticeable as possible, held in a backpack that disperses that weight in almost magic ways.

> "A chair, as though it were itself put in pain, as though it knew from the inside the problem of body weight, will only then accommodate and eliminate the problem. A woven blanket or solid wall internalise within their design the recognition of the instability of body temperature and the precariousness of nakedness, and only by absorbing the knowledge of these conditions into themselves (by, as it were, being themselves subject to these forms of distress), absorb them out of the human body
>
> The shape of the chair is not the shape of the skeleton, the shape of the body weight, nor even the shape of pain-perceived, but the shape of perceived-pain-wished-gone. The chair is therefore the materialized structure of a perception; it is sentient awareness materialized into a freestanding design. If one pictures the person in *the action of* making a chair – standing in one place, moving away, coming back, lifting then letting fall his arm, kneeling then standing, kneeling, half-kneeling, stooping, looking, extending his arm, pulling it back – what one at that moment has before one is *not* the *act of perception* (his seeing of another's discomfort and wishing it gone), but *the structure of the act of perception visibly enacted*." (288, 290)

The beauty of Scarry's description is that it explains designing as the process of humanizing things. To design is to put an understanding of human sentience into things; it is to develop things that react with human sensitivity to the frailty (and agility) of humans. Things, which obviously cannot feel, cannot feel for humans, by design come to embody a knowledge of the feelings of human. Their structure is a knowing, a materialised intimacy with human being. Shadowing Latour's analysis of how we evaluate the performance of devices, Scarry explains how a product liability trial is precisely a test of a device's knowledge. The court is sitting in judgement of whether some thing is knowledgeable enough of the idiosyncracies of humans. The court will arbitrate on the relative responsibility of more or less smart humans and more or less smart things. And should the thing be found to be not smart enough, it will be recalled, removed from the social, expelled from the city for its incivility. So it can be asked of any designed thing: what do you know of humans?

> "[The aspirin bottle] knows about the chemical and neuronal structure of small aches and pains. It knows the size of the hand that will reach out to relieve those aches and pains. It knows that it itself is dangerous to those human beings if taken in large doses. It knows that human beings know how to read and communicates with them on the subject of amounts through language. It also knows that some human beings do not yet know how to read or read only a different language. It deals with this problem by further knowing how human beings intuitively and habitually take caps off bottles, and by being itself counterintuitive in its own cap. Thus only someone who knows how to read can take off the cap and successfully reach the aspirin which, because the person not only knows how to read but has been made to stop and be reminded to read, will be taken in the right dosage." (305)

The backpack for example knows that we are not just naked but thingly. It knows that we like to walk and therefore walk with our things. It knows that we like to protect the things that complete and extend us, from the rain, from stealing others. It knows that we are not so strong, certainly less so the further that we walk. It knows that we have a well-engineered frame and a centre of gravity and that we need to swing our arms when walking. So it holds our things together on our back in water proof material with small zips that are not so easy to grab while the bag is moving. It knows that we are different sizes, so it is adjustable. And it knows that we cannot carry too much this way, so it is not so big.

Only some packs ('frontpacks') know something about children's posture or that we use pubic transport where room is cramped, especially when we sit. And only some (backpacks made of transparent plastic) know that some of us are of middle-eastern appearance and that people are paranoid about such people, particularly when they wear backpacks on public transport.

In this way, designed things, and all designed things, are materialised ethical dispositions. One could even say that they are more human than humans, or at least, they mimic humans at their best, insofar as designed things are not just apathetically sympathetic, tolerant at a contemplative distance, but always already concretely acting on behalf of those they have been designed to be sensitive toward. In a quite Levinasian way, theirs is a knowledge that only exists in action; things are hostage to acting for, before thinking about, the other.

Cosmopolitan Reliability

There are two important points to note about this Latour-Scarry account of humanised things, both of which will lead us back to cosmopolitanism.

What I have just said about the Levinasian nature of pro-actively ethical designed things, also attests the fact that Scarry's is not a merely a poetic, nor Latour's a merely laconic, celebration of things, an idiosyncratically rhetorical pathetic fallacy. To make use of designed things, to accomplish through things, intuitively and expertly, involves taking-for-granted the knowing agency of the thing. This is exactly what Heidegger's ready-to-handedness means. When things withdraw in-use, we are presuming that things know what they are doing. To let them be within whatever it is we are doing, we all are each time precisely denying that they are just so much inert matter. You cannot use a device without such faith. Poetic or laconic it might be in description, but in action it is unavoidable. For instance, Latour discusses the agency of the oversized hotel key ring.[25] It is not just that such a clunky object is an inert substitute for an overzealous desk clerk reminding you to return your key whenever you walk past; for the object to work, for the desk clerk to be freed from that task, he or she and the patron must all assume that the clunkiness has the moral valence of an insistent clerk in your pocket. If we did not interact with the key ring as we do with people, it would merely be an uncomfortable thing in our pocket.

As usual Scarry makes the point counter-factually:

> "Our behaviour toward objects at the exceptional moment when they hurt us must be seen within the context of our external relations with them. The ongoing, day-to-day norm is that an object is mimetic of sentient awareness: the chair routinely relieves the problem of weight [when the chair suddenly breaks beneath somebody's weight] The very reason the chair's object-stupidity strikes all who witness its collapse as a surprise, an outrage, is that it has normally been wholly innocent of such object stupidity. In fact, it is crucial to notice that if the person now picks up a fragment of that object and hurls it against the wall (as though it could be made to feel the hurt it inflicted), the person is actually continuing to act out of the context of the normal situation (in which the chair indeed has the mimetic attributes of sentient awareness) rather than out of the immediate moment (in which the chair has just exposed its object-obliviousness). Thus the moment of revenge merely occasions the dramatization of the ongoing assumption of animism rather than occasioning the animism itself." (295-6)

So it is not just that things *can* be interpreted to be *like* humans. It is that humans can only function with things that they take to be human. All human-to-thing interactions take the form of human-to-human.

The second important point is that this is the case for all designed things. Scarry's account of making, of the investment of emotional intelligence into things seems plausible for the design of private products, that one person creates for a close relation. However, it is of the nature of the semi-permanence of the products of work in Hannah Arendt's sense,[26] that they can service not only those that they are designed for, but others. In being there, always already enacting their care, they can be of use to any who share the condition they are designed to alleviate or assist. For this reason, products can exceed their personal designation and service anyone – or at least any one like the one they were designed for. They can bestow their knowledge

of humans onto people they do not know. The personalised thing serving one is no different to the one anonymously serving many. The mass produced item is no less humanised, no less actively ethical.

> "It is almost universally the case in everyday life that the most cherished object is one that has been hand-made by a friend: there is no mystery about this, for the object's material attributes themselves record and memoralize the intensely personal, extraordinary because exclusive, interior feelings of the maker for just this person — This is for you. But anonymous mass-produced objects contain a collective and equally extraordinary message: whoever you are, and whether or not I personally like or even know you, in at least this small way, be well. Thus, within the realm of objects, objects-made-for-anyone bear the same relation to objects-made-for-someone that, within the human realm, caritas bears to eros. Whether they reach someone in the extreme conditions of imprisonment or in the benign and ordinary conditions of everyday life, the handkerchief, blanket and bucket of white paint contain within them the wish for well-being: "Don't cry; be warm; watch now, in a few minutes even these constricting walls will look more spacious." (292)

It must be noted that this wider servicing of not-yet-known users can only happen if the thing is designed for someone; its generalisability is an accident of its successful particularity. User-centred designers have now realised that designing for anyone is designing for no-one; generic products are not very sensitive human things. The current vogue in user-centred designing is the use of personas; the assumption is that you can only design well for one person; only if you succeed in alleviating his or her pain, will the product be likely to be useful to others.

In this way, the mass produced item seems to manifest a more intense humanity. There is something surprising about the way well-designed products appear personalised even if mass produced, taking care of my specific needs, just so. It is almost unimaginably humane that there should be this thing, that so services me, yet that was designed and produced by people I have no knowledge of. These sorts of products are received by the anonymous, the anybody consumer, but, in an early-Marx way, the receiver, if not completely duped by product-fetish, is touched by the fact that this was made by somebody, somewhere. Whether or not the product bears traces of the finger prints, or sweat or blood of the maker, that it exists by actively assisting me, that it is human, reminds me of the someone that animated it. Through anonymised things, humans seem extended, enhanced, beyond their familiar best.

In short, through things, or more precisely, as things, people exceed their place. They manifest a sharability which cannot be reduced to a known commonality; they activate an obligation to the most distant and the greatest diversity whilst serving the most near. Through design, thing-humans affirm a thorough cosmopolitanism.

Or to put it more strongly, cosmopolitanism is nothing without things. On the most literal level, it is not possible to be a host without designed products. Discussions of hospitality are only ever speculative without the tools to sustain, protect, and assist. More interestingly, given that designed things are designed to be humanly active on behalf of others, things can host without people. Whenever the fleeing or the lost stumble across a vacant hut, they are given refuge by things themselves. Similarly, what émigrés see in the destination are not merely friendlier people, but friendlier things, things that are more actively human. As they know no-one, what they do know of where they would now like to live is its things. That is the community they seek to join with.

The Good Earth that Sustains Capitalism

There are two aspects of this account of cosmopolitan things that I would like emphasise before closing. The first returns to my stated intention at the outset, to find within consumerist cosmopolitanism and

cosmopolitanist ethics. I have tried to explain how it could be that anonymised things manifest an even more profound attentiveness to the needs of the other, by arising from a particular place and time and yet being available to be depended on by many others in many other place and times. What supports the existence of such anonymised things is not just mass production, but the exchange economy for which mass production is only a means. In this case, capitalism does not merely allow the existence of such cosmopolitanistly ethical things, but promotes it.

To put it another way, Adam Smith tells us that the reason why there is something rather than nothing, or many things rather than nothing, is self-interest, in particular economic self-interest, meaning profitability through division of labour. What Smith has accounted for is why things are marketised, not why they are made, or more exactly designed, in the first place. At the most, profit is only one final cause of the thing, and one that can never specify the nature of the thing; its form and function must arise out of a cosmopolitanism. Markets can only ever capitalise on what has already been developed from necessarily other-directed processes of creation. Exchange depends on the gift of innovation. This is perhaps the fascination with invention and design; these are excessive processes, acts that always seem to exceed their specificity. Whether gift-shop gizmos or breakthrough medical technologies, there is a wonderment that someone somewhere thought of that, that is to say, thought of me and my childish pleasures or me and my debilitating condition.[27]

No doubt this sounds very unfashionably sentimental. On the one hand, I would respond that sentimentality, the ability to think through the feelings of other, is the unavoidable essence of any truly ethical cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, I would respond that this sentimentality is in no way a humanism. As indicated before, the sentimental human here is not only interpenetrated by things, but is things themselves. This is a post-humanist human dispersed amongst the things that feels for him and her.

> "Modern humanists are reductionist because they seek to attribute action to a small number of powers, leaving the rest of the world with nothing but simple mute forces. It is true that by redistributing the action among all these mediators, we lose the reduced form of humanity, but we gain another form, which has to be called the irreducible. The human is in the delegation itself, in the pass, in the sending, in the continuous exchange of forms. Of course it is not a thing, but things are not things either. Of course it is not a merchandise, but merchandise it not merchandise either. Of course it is not a machine, but anyone who has seen machines knows that they are scarcely mechanical Humanism can maintain itself only by sharing itself with all these mandatees. Human nature is the set of its delegates and its representatives, its figures and its messengers."[28]

Let me push this further. There is something profoundly unhumanistic (uncivilised?) about anthropomorphising designed things, as opposed to, say, natural things. To some extent, humanism is best defined in relation to nature; the human as the completion of nature, of nature as a progressing whole. However designed things are far more inertial. In their semi-permanent each-this-one-ness,[29] they refuse to be developmental or holistic. These humanised things cannot be mobilised into a commune; their materiality always resists unification.[30] The human is dispersed and made several through their technicality.[31] It is joined to what is truly its other, rather than fused with what is merely its opposite or prototype or end. Sylvia Benso, taking up Heidegger's insights into the earthness of works, will find in this thingly restraint a more fundamental ethics than Levinas's, one that compels by its withdrawal.[32] Benso foregrounds the paradox of designed things; that they have a presence that commands attention, that inspires possession, yet also a hiding shyness that solicits care, and that makes them unpossessable. In this way, they are unhumanistly human, non-humanly humane, that is, cosmopolitan.

To close I would like to return to the backpack, and to what it is being realised that designed cosmopolitan things do not adequately know. If there is a material ethics at the heart of consumerism, what these human-things are only now just beginning to sense is the extent to which humans become over-enamoured with their agency. Over-consumption can be read as an affirmation of the cosmopolitan ethics of things that this

presentation has been proposing. I buy to have about me as many examples of humans at their best extended in new directions as possible. What things are only now just beginning to feel about us, for us, is the weight of materials involved in their many existences. Each has an ecological rucksack, an amount of material that is consumed to deliver it as final product.[33] It is the size and number of these rucksacks that is making cities in particular unsustainable. Things are realising that there need to be limits to how much they can come to presence in order stretch humans in new directions.

What is worth contemplating is that the current strategy for developing more sustainable, meaning less materials intense, societies — i.e., dematerialising — is servicizing, shifting from products to services.[34] This means literally *re*placing the things that displaced humans with humans again. If this begins to happen — a big if, nevertheless — it will mean that hospitality is being once again provided more by humans rather than by things. Fewer things might be more sustainable, but if cosmopolitanism is thingly, if it happens most dynamically or most Derrideanly via humane things, then cities of service could be less cosmopolitanist.

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[1] There have been a number of recent revivals of Stoic and Kantian cosmopolitanism. Martha Nussbaum fostered a debate about the notion following a polemic in relation to patriotism: see Nussbaum, M. ∓mp; J.Cohen eds *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1996]. More recently, Ulrich Beck has attempted to cast cosmopolitanism as the sociological tenet for negotiating our current second reflexive modernity: see *Cosmopolitan Vision* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006]; see also the special issue of *The British Journal of Sociology* Volume 57, Number 1, 2006. Jacques Derrida's excursions into the more Kantian version of cosmopolitanism, include *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* [London: Routledge, 2001], and with reference to hospitality *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999]

[2] To some extent, this is a paraphrase of what I understand to be Albert Borgmann's attempt to defend a certain form of provincialism against cosmopolitanism. See "Cosmopolitanism and Provincialism: On Heidegger's Errors and Insights" *Philosophy Today* Volume 36 Number 2 (Summer 1992). In the context of my presentation, it is no accident that Borgmann is, I believe, the most important contemporary philosopher of the thing.

[3] This version of 'tolerant' liberalist multiculturalism has been repeatedly and witheringly laid waste by Slavoj Zizeck: see for example the essay "Lenin's Choice" accompanying the texts of Lenin edited by Zizeck *Revolution at the Gates* [London: Verso, 2002]. However, for an interesting partial defense of the consumption of cosmopolitan media imagery, see Bronislaw Szerszynksi and John Urry's "Visuality, Mobility and the Cosmopolitan: Inhabiting the World from Afar" *British Journal of Sociology* Volume 57, Number 1 (2006).

[4] This is what all good horror film makers know. If the strange is scary, what is scariest is not the thing disfigured beyond recognition, but the thing that looks (not-quite-)right, what Freud famously called the uncanny.

[5] See Jean-Luc Nancy's "Myth Interrupted" in *The Inoperative Community* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991].

[6] Elaine Scarry "The Made-Up and the Made-Real" *Yale Journal of Criticism* Volume 5, Number 2 (1992).

[7] Bill McKibben *The End of Nature* [London: Viking, 1990]

[8] The concept is Marc Augé's — *Non-Place* [New York : Verso, 1995] — but I am here more referring to George Ritzer's typically more popular than careful *The Globalization of Nothing* [Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2004].

[9] See for example the contribution by 'Multiplicity' entitled "Border Devices" to Latour and P.Weibel (eds) *Making Things Public* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005].

[10] The point that consumerist materialism is not actually materialist is James Twitchell's: *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1999]. For a beautiful attempt to promote care of the things that care for us, see X's essay on cherishing: Jane Howarth "Neither Ornament nor Use: A Consumer's Guide to Care", *Thingmount Working Paper*, http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/philosophy/awaymave/onlineresources/ neither%20use%20nor%20ornament.pdf (last accessed 18th July, 2006).

[11] Due to space constraints the following does no more than assert this. Arguing it would combine Heidegger's phenomenology drawn from what is nearest, Gibson's ecological perception theory and Lakoff and Johnson's notion of mid-level base conceptual metaphors.

[12] There is some disgruntledness with the abstractness of the cosmopolitanist debates to date, generally seen as evidence that cosmopolitanism is the domain of a globe-trotting elite. See Skirbis, Z., Kendall, G. and I. Woodward "Locating Cosmopolitanism: Between Humanist Ideal and Grounded Social Category" *Theory Culture Society* Volume 21 Number 6 (2004), and the ongoing empirical work they praise by Lamont, M. and S. Aksartova "Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms: Strategies for Bridging Racial Boundaries among Working-Class Men" *Theory Culture Society* Volume 19 Number 4 (2002).

[13] This has long been decried. See for example Clive Dilnot's affirmation of Tony Fry's diagnoses in this regard in "To Change the Object Itself: Notes on the Relationship Between Knowing and Designing" Part 1 in *FormWork* Number 2 (April 1998), Part 2 in *FormWork* Number 3 (November 1999)..

[14] Sustainability policy is a case in point, typifying a faith in planning controls over everyday practices, though the Science and Technology Studies work of Elizabeth Shove amongst others is doing much to counter this. See for example, her research report on building energy efficiency: (With Simon Guy) *A Sociology of Energy, Buildings, and the Envrionment: Constructing Knowledge, Designing Practice* [New York: Routledge, 2000].

[15] See Peter-Paul Verbeek *What Things Do* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005], and for example Alex Preda "The Turn to Things: Arguments for a Sociological Theory of Things" *Sociological Quarterly* Volume 40, Number 2, 1999.

[16] See the work of Bill Brown: "Thing Theory" *Critical Inquiry* Volume 21 (Autumn 2001).

[17] Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, 1999 and 2004 respectively.

[18] Latour, B. and P.Weibel (eds) *Making Things Public* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005].

[19] Bruno Latour "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck" *Common Knowledge* Volume 10 Number 3 (2004). The Beck essay to which Latour is responding is: "The Truth of Others: A Cosmpolitan Approach" Volume 10 Number 3 (2004).

[20] Stengers' contribution to Latour's *Making Things Public*, "The Cosmopolitical Proposal" clarifies that her use of the term cosmopolitcs must be understood as unrelated to the Kantian or Stoic notion of cosmopolitanism. It is not for instance the same concept as in the title of Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins'

Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998]. However, this article is attempting a rapprochement.

[21] I am thinking here of the powerful and amusing critique that Laurie Anderson performs in "Say Hello" of the supposed neutrality of these (very Western and patriarchal) figures that have been chosen to represent humanity to intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pioneer_plaque#Criticism_of_the_plaque (last accessed 18th July 2006).

[22] See *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998].

[23] B. Latour "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artefacts" in Bijker, W. and J. Law eds *Shaping Technology / Building Society* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992].

[24] Elaine Scarry *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985]. Page numbers given in the body from now on.

[25] "Technology is Society made Durable" in J.Law ed. *A Sociology of Monsters* [London: Routledge, 1992].

[26] *The Human Condition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958].

[27] I am paraphrasing here aspects of an argument beautifully made by Clive Dilnot in "The Gift" *Design Issues* Volume 9, Number 2 (1993).

[28] *We Have Never Been Modern* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993], p138.

[29] This is Heidegger's definition of the thing in *What is a Thing?* [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1968].

[30] See Jean Baudrillard *The System of Objects* [London: Verso, 1996]

[31] The argument here translates to design Jean-Luc Nancy's in "Why are there Several Arts?" in *The Muses* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996]

[32] *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000].

[33] This concept is primarily associated with Friedrich Schmidt-Bleek's Factor 10 Club and the Wuppertal Institut.

[34] I am referring to the work on sustainable product-service systems primarily associated with Ezio Manzini, researched by large EU-funded networks such as SusProNet (www.suspronet.org), and promoted by UNEP.