

Our Issues? A Garcian-Latourian Approach to Speculative Realist Political Theory

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Resumo: Levi Bryant em seu artigo *Speculations IV* sobre “Política e Realismo Especulativo”, argumentou que as teorias críticas em geral enfatizam negativamente a relação humano-mundo. Bryant argumenta que deveria haver uma ênfase maior no mundo real (para ele o “material”). Mas não se pode perder de vista como é que nós, políticos, temos em vista essas questões reais e materiais. Neste artigo, procuro abordar o problema realista das relações políticas por meio de *We Ourselves*, de Tristian Garcia. O “nós” garciano é então conectado a uma teoria política realista latouriana das “questões”. Uma política orientada para questões exige que se preste atenção à trajetória das preocupações políticas e a quem exatamente essas questões dizem respeito. Em outras palavras, essas questões (que podem ser categorizadas diferencialmente para clareza analítica, como Bryant faz), de certa forma pressupõe um nós garciano que tem uma questão em vista. Esse “ter algo em vista” pode excluir o não-humano, ou o não-humano pode ser levado em consideração, dependendo de nossa concepção de “nós”. Finalmente, tento enfatizar que uma filosofia política orientada para questões requer uma teorização de sobreposição de questões ou “empilhamento”, e que a ênfase de Garcia em transparências e pilhas (de “nós”) pode ser aplicada à política realista de questões.

Palavras-chaves: Levi Bryant; Tristian Garcia; política orientada para questões;

Abstract: Levi Bryant in his *Speculations IV* article on “Politics and Speculative Realism”, argued that critical theories in general detrimentally overemphasize the human-world relation. Bryant argues that there should be a further emphasis on the real (for him the “material”) world. But one cannot lose sight of how it is that we political persons have these real, material issues in view. In this paper, I attempt to approach the realist problem of political relations by way of Tristian Garcia's *We Ourselves*. The Garcian “we” is then connected to a realist Latourian political theory of “issues”. An issue-oriented politics requires that one pay attention to the trajectory of political concerns, and who exactly such issues concern. In other words, these issues (which can be differentially categorized for analytical clarity as Bryant does), somewhat presupposes a Garcian we that has an issue in view. This “having something in view” may exclude the non-human, or the non-human may be taken into account, depending on our conception of “we”. Finally, I attempt to emphasize that an issue-oriented political philosophy requires a theorization of issue-overlap or “stacking”, and that Garcia’s emphasis on transparencies and piles (of “we’s”) can be applied to the realist politics of issues.

Keywords: Levi Bryant; Tristian Garcia; issue-oriented politics;

I

In the first section of Levi Bryant's *Speculations IV* "Politics and Speculative Realism", Bryant notes that speculative realism has led to controversial debates in domains beyond the discipline of philosophy "proper", including 'literary studies, media studies, the social sciences, and variants of political thought inflected by neo-Marxist theory, feminism, race theory, and queer theory' (2013: 15). Of course, as Bryant notes, there is no unifying central thesis that speculative realism advances. Speculative realism (SR) both posits a positive program that amounts to 'a defense of some variant of realism or materialism' and a critical program concerning the human-world relation.¹ SR follows Quentin Meillassoux's critique of 'correlationism', defined as 'any current of thought which maintains the unsurpassable character' of the 'correlation between thinking and being' that delimits our thinking 'either term considered apart from the other' (2008: 5). Bryant here is interested in why this technical philosophical issue has led debates in politically inclined disciplines. His argument is that SR's defense of realism risks position notions like 'being-a-king' entails assuming that the king *really* is a king (2013: 17). For critical theory, being-a-king is not a real and *necessary* social relation, it is a "socially constructed" rank.

The debates around SR and its relation to the humanities and social sciences are still on-going, and often do not refer to SR explicitly. That is, they may refer to one of the "schools" within this broadchurch movement. For instance, Graham Harman's object-oriented philosophy, usually now referred to as a variant of object-oriented ontology (triple O - "OOO"), has been both defended as a reasonable approach to the humanities and the social sciences (Pierides & Woodman, 2012; Meehan, Shaw, and Marston, 2013; Pedinotti, 2013; Gun, 2018) and it has been critiqued for being too neoliberal (Malin, 2016) and for extending subjectivity to every kind of thing (Lemke, 2017).² Harman's systematic philosophy, as explicated in the *Quadruple Object* (2011),

¹ In the opening chapter of *The Speculative Turn*, Bryant, Srnicek and Harman (2011: 1-18) explicitly state what the various schools that belong to the SR movement are generally concerned about - rejecting correlationism and defending some form of realism or materialism.

² There is a shift in perspective between Meehan, Shaw, and Marston's 2013 paper "Political geographies of the object" (see also Shaw & Meehan, 2013) and their 2014 paper "The state of objects". They defend the utility of OOO in the former, then recoil to some extent in the latter. The latter paper is a response to Schmidt's (2014) paper "The retreating state". There is a debate here on whether the state should be treated as a 'unified thing' (Harman, 2011: 19), as a substantial entity of sorts. My view is that there are object-oriented arguments supporting the claim that the state is a unified thing as much as there are arguments supporting the opposite claim, that the state is not just one thing (i.e., it is an 'assemblage' of distinct things). This depends on how loosely one defines the term "unified".

concerns defending an object centered realism - his positive programme - and critiquing forms of reduction, that is reducing objects to their relations or their components - his critical programme. For Harman, objects are ‘unified things that both display and conceal a multitude of traits’ (2011: 7) that ‘need not be natural, simple or indestructible’, as they are defined only by their autonomous reality (*ibid*: 19). Some of Harman’s arguments are more controversial in the humanities and social science when compared to others. For instance, the idea that physical things have causal powers is easier to accept than the idea that there are “unified things”, that there are substances. Harman (2011) finds it necessary to posit that there are substantial essences (real objects) that are not reducible to our sensual contact with them (sensual objects). Also, such (sensual and real) have essential properties (real qualities) and accidental features (sensual qualities) that make them what they are. This is described by Harman elsewhere as an ‘immaterialist essentialism’ that does not profess to have access to any direct knowledge of what essential properties are (2016: 17). Many of the critiques of Harman’s OOO focus on the notion of substantiality and the idea that things have essential properties.

Some of the controversies and debates discussed above however, I think, *precede* Harmanian OOO. What most of the defenders of OOO in the humanities and social sciences have in common is a shared interest in actor-network theory (ANT), and it is well known that Harman is a reader of the French philosopher often credited with the creation of ANT, Bruno Latour.³ The programmes and critiques of ANT, including Latours own critique of it in *Modes of Existence* (Latour, 2013) are too numerous to document here in total. I simply want to point out here that Harman may have inherited some of the controversies that surrounded ANT, namely, the idea of expanding causal efficacy beyond the human sphere (for instance, see Lemke, 2017: 136-139).⁴ Bruno Latour’s philosophical, sociological and anthropological project is broad and engages with fields as distinct as jurisprudence, neuroendocrinology, economics, the arts, and theology. In this

³ Harman has written two books on Bruno Latour: *Prince of Networks* (2009) and *Reassembling the Political* (2014). In this paper, I will mostly be referring to the latter book, as it is explicitly relevant here. It should also be noted that Harman planned to write a third book on Latour, the *Prince of Modes*, but the actual publication status of this book is unknown.

⁴ Bruno Latour is not always an appreciated philosopher even among those affiliated or adjacent to SR. Some SR philosophers are fond of Latour’s work, including Ian Bogost and Levi Bryant. The most notable (post)SR philosopher who is critical of Latour’s project is Ray Brassier (2011: 51-55). I say “post” here, as Brassier does not see himself as part of or close to the SR project.

paper, I will restrict myself to discussing Latour's political thought and Graham Harman's reading of Latour in *Reassembling the Political* (2014).

Harman, summarizes Latour's political position as such: 'he is a liberally minded Hobbseian who adds inanimate entities into the political sphere' (2014: 5).⁵ Of course, the next question is what does this mean? Latour initially advocates for a kind of power politics that insists on the impossibility of political truth due to 'regrettable [...] factors' (*ibid*). Latour's early attitude to politics is surmised in his comment on Machiavelli: 'if democracy is to be stable, the harsh realities of power have to be understood' (Latour, 1988: 20). The reality of the political domain for Latour is not just about postulating abstract "oughts", it is about grasping power to realize oughts. As Harman puts it, '[for Latour] right that never takes the trouble to attain might has a futile or even pathetic character about it' (2014: 32). Another important aspect of political reality for Latour is the fact that non-human entities have causal power. That is, they are actors in the same sense that a human person can be an actor. This addition of non-human things to the political domain can be noted in early Latour's writings on Machiavelli and Hobbes (Callon & Latour, 1981; Latour, 1988), and his later writings on climate change and politics (Latour, 2017; 2018).

Part of Latour's account of what goes on in the political domain involves a critique of social contract theory, brilliantly reconstructed by Peer Schouten (2013: 555-563), and a critique of the scales (the "micro" and "macro" distinction). As everything for Latour is an actor *irreducible* to another (Latour, 1988b: 158. My emphasis), then defining what is meant by scale becomes problematic. There is also an ontogenetic question implicit here: 'how does a macro-actor become a macro-actor? How can men *act like* one man?' (Callon & Latour, 1981: 279. My emphasis). I will return to this specific question below, as it is my contention that Tristan Garcia provides us with useful resources that possibly affords one the chance to provide an SR-inflected answer to this Latourian question. Specifically, Garcia's conception of politics as about *we ourselves*: 'the subject of politics is we' (2021: 5).

Before approaching Garcia's conception of politics, I want to explicate a central idea of the "middle" period of Latour's political philosophical period (Harman, 2014: 56-80). Some of

⁵ It should be noted that Latour's political philosophy is more complicated and contains more twists and turns than this "executive summary" could do justice to.

the thematic problems Latour was writing about at that time are relevant for postulating an SR-inflected political theory. To be specific, I am referring to how Bruno Latour responds to the question of specific “issues”. Sketching how Latour frames these themes and why I contend they are relevant for a political theory informed by the lessons of SR, leads to additional questions: *who* is it exactly that confronts issues? Who is it that *has* an issue that matters? Again, it is here where I think turning to Garcia is relevant. Also, a political theory of this sort is neutral regarding the questions that divide the different “schools” of SR; those pertaining to the status of essential properties, substances, relational dependence (or codependency), materiality, and so on. To put it another way, there are a plurality of ways that ‘issues’ and ‘we’s’ can be conceived, and one need not insist on one way of interpreting these two themes.

II

Bruno Latour, in his writings on scientific practice and the politics-science relation, critiques the notion of a distinction between facts on the one side and values on the other. Latour here derides what Whitehead termed the ‘bifurcation’ of nature (Whitehead, 1964: 21; Latour, 2005: 10). As Harman puts it, ‘[Latour refuses] to focus on a single magical gap between thinking, practical, moody humans on the one hand and stupefied inanimate clods of matter on the other’ (2009: 35). Latour’s general argumentation goes like this: “matters of fact” scientific propositions about the world are abstracted from wider ‘networks’ of concerned entities - things that concern said entities *matter*. For instance, why does the fact that ice melts at zero celsius *matter*, and for *who* does this fact matter? It may matter for humans anxious about climate change as much as it might matter to an arctic polar bear who is puzzled about why his habitat is shrinking more and more each year. So, in some sense there are facts like “ice melts at zero celsius” (this is a matter of fact proposition), but the idea that ice is melting in the arctic regions is not only a “fact”, it is a *matter of concern* (Latour, 2005; Latour, 2004a). To put it another way, “matters of fact” are expressions about the universe that are abstracted from what Hilan Bensusan terms an ‘indexical environment’ (2021: 20-28), a specified contextual space denoted by expressions like this or that (i.e., that geographical region called the arctic, this species of animal named the polar bear).

The corresponding political model that responds to the expressive style he terms matters of concern is a *cosmopolitical* one.⁶ In Latour's words:

The presence of *cosmos* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *politics* to mean the give-and-take in an exclusively human club. The presence of *politics* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *cosmos* to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. *Cosmos* protects against the premature closure of *politics*, and *politics* against the premature closure of *cosmos* (2004b: 454. Original emphasis).

In this political model, it is not simply about humans pitted against other humans in a Hobbesian war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*).⁷ This political model concerns the 'progressive composition of the common world' (2004c: 8, 53-62; 2007: 813), in which all the things that concern us matter. As Latour writes, 'if cosmos is to mean anything, it must embrace, literally, everything' (2004b: 454). Latourian cosmopolitics is a realist political philosophy that rejects the bifurcation of nature, the separation of facts from what they concern. In *The Politics of Nature* (2004c), Latour develops a vocabulary of actor types and their functional roles. While it would be uneconomical to discuss the entirety of Latour's middle stage political vocabulary here, it is important to note that he leaves room for what speculative realists following Quentin Meillassoux have termed "the great outdoors".⁸ Meillassoux describes the Great Outdoors as:⁹

The *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which is not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whatever we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory - of being entirely elsewhere (2008: 7. Original emphasis).

⁶ Latour is here following Isabelle Stengers' definition of cosmopolitics. This definition is contrasted with typical liberal conceptions of "cosmopolitanism" (Stengers, 2010; 2011).

⁷ Hobbes uses this expression in Chapter 13 of the *Leviathan* (1991), but it first appears in the *De Cive* (1983). Again, for a reconstructed account of Latour's engagement with social contract theory and the "state of nature" thesis, see Schouten's article "The Materiality of State Failure" (2013: 555-563).

⁸ Paul J. Ennis (2010) in *Continental Realism* critically discusses this idea and its connection to different strands of SR thinking.

⁹ I follow Hillan Bensusan (2021) here in capitalizing the Great Outdoors, specifying conceptual significance here.

Different SR and post-SR philosophers have proposed different versions of what this non-correlationist is or looks like. Graham Harman argues that it is impossible to actually get this Outdoors in view, as the Great Outdoors - composed of real objects - withdraws from accessibility. Some oppose the idea that there is an absolute outside, as they argue that there are no absolutes at all. Concerning the political realities that we have in view, Latour arguably remains neutral concerning the question of an absolute Great Outdoors. Latour notes that when the common world (“we”) encounters a new entity (or a series of them) - what he describes as outside entities ‘knocking’ on our door - even if we veto their inclusion within our common world, we do not deny such entities the right to exist (Latour, 2004c: 104-106, 183; Harman, 2014: 67). In other words, they are not ontologically reduced to nothing through our rejection of their inclusion. Things that make “first contact” with our world from the Great Outdoors, to make use of a science fictional term, do not simply stop being things because of our political choices.

It is here where considering matters of cosmopolitical concern leads Latour towards conceptualizing politics as issue-oriented; as an issue-oriented realm, domain, field, practice, or form of life.¹⁰ Latour’s interest in the American pragmatists John Dewey and Walter Lippmann can already be seen in *Politics of Nature*,¹¹ but his more explicit engagement with these pragmatist’s can be found in “Turning Around Politics” (2007). Latour’s doctoral student Nortjee Marres was pushing for scholars in *Social Studies of Science* to recognize the significance of issues and the ‘practices of public involvement’ in political affairs that concerns the ‘articulation of public issues’ (Marres, 2007: 761). The issue-oriented conception of politics attempts to describe the processes by which a differentially composed general public becomes oriented towards this or that specific issue.¹² The significant aspect here is that not every member of the “general public” may

¹⁰ I am using this plural terminology here to try and keep open the plurality of possible SR or post-SR (and even non-SR) readings of Latour’s political project. This is somewhat complicated by the fact that Latour states that politics should not be defined as a ‘type of procedure nor a domain of life’ (2007: 814). But, I think it is possible to read politics as a domain or field that is *oriented* towards specific problems, issues, or “objects”, depending on what vocabulary one would like to use. Such readings can preserve Latour’s insights.

¹¹ The presence of these names in *Politics of Nature* is contained in the notes section of the book (2004c).

¹² This article follows from Marres’ (2005) doctoral thesis *No issue, no public: democratic deficits after the displacement of politics*. Some of the arguments she makes there are revisited in her book *Material Participation* (2012: 29-61). It is interesting to note here that Marres describes this kind of politics as *object-oriented*. (2007: 759). While she does not use this term in a Harmanian sense, Graham Harman does make an explicit connection between his version of OOO and issue-oriented political theory (2014: 161-182). He also explores Marres’ reading of Lippmann and Dewey there, and how this reading could inform an object-oriented political theory (in the Harmanian sense).

be concerned with every possible issue in equal measure. Drawing on earlier work in ANT inflected sociology of science, Marres indicates that ‘hybrid forums’ (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe, 2009: 18-19) are constituted when something new “knocks” on the door of our common world. These forums draw together different kinds of actors - including those belonging to ‘affected groups, experts, politicians and officials’ (Marres, 2007: 762); but not limited to these actors - concern ‘problems in which they are all implicated’ (*ibid*). Marres notes that the terms ‘issue’ and ‘problem’ for pragmatists like Dewey are ‘interchangeable’ (*ibid*: 768), so this kind of politics could also be described as “problem-oriented”. The take-away here is that there are real issues that matter to actors that are affected by said issues and such issues cannot be reduced to one actor's perspective. Issue-oriented politics is, in other words, *dialogic* (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe, 2009: 35-36).¹³

Latour explicitly outlines his take on issue-oriented in “Turning Around Politics” (*TAP*) conception of politics following Gerard de Vries’ criticisms of Latour and other sociologists of science and technology. The main critique of Latour here concerns the status of what de Vries terms ‘mini-kings’ (2007: 791, 795) and how politics is conceptualized - as one that turns around ‘subjects’ (mini-kings) or ‘objects’ (publics and their issues and problems). Latour’s addition to this ‘issue-oriented’ turn in the sociology of science and technology, what I think can be applied to political issues beyond those domains, is to ascribe ‘different meanings’ to the adjective “political” (*TAP*: 811). That is, Latour aims to describe the ‘successive *moments* in the trajectory of an issue’ (*TAP*: 812. Original emphasis). The noun “politics” means different things depending on the ‘indexical environment’ (Bensusan, 2021) where the adjective “political” is utilized. One of the analytical reasons driving Latour’s attempts to develop a descriptive vocabulary of *issue-moments* is that it limits the common expression “everything is political”. The problem with this expression is that it is uninformative: it does not tell us *how* something is political; in *what* sense is this issue-*x* political. If we are looking for who is affected by an issue (what public is affected) and why, then there should be some comprehension of what kind of “political” an issue is. These

¹³ While Callon *et al* do not refer to Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic - or dialogism - here, one could possibly do so. Elsewhere, I have tried to connect the dialogic modalities of televisual narrative to the fictional exploration of (fictional) issues that refract empirical problems that the public actually face. This was informed by a reading of Bakhtin’s conception of the dialogic and Garcia’s notion of we ourselves (Reid, 2022: 168-191). I will discuss the latter explicitly below.

distinctions - the division of an issue's trajectory into moments - imply certain modalities of responses, procedures, processes:

We [should] focus on the objects of concern and then, so as to handle them, produce the instruments and equipment necessary to grasp the questions they have raised in which we are hopelessly entangled (*TAP*: 814).

Each moment requires different responses, and these differential responses imply the utilization of different instrumentation and equipment - whether these be scientific instrumentation, parliaments, people's assemblies, or perhaps industrial actors. The Great Outdoors' main qualitative feature in this regard is that it surprises us, so there should be no necessary limit on how an issue should be "handled" or "grasped". Latour claims that there are five meanings of the word political. That is, five distinctive moments that one could trace: from Political-1 (Pol-1) to Political-5 (Pol-5). It should be explicitly noted here that Latour claims that there could be 'more stages in the natural history of issues' (*TAP*: 818), but five is the number of moments that Latour proposed in 2007.¹⁴

The first moment, Pol-1, refers to the discovery of 'new associations between humans and non-humans [that] modifies the collective' (*TAP*: 816). Perhaps we encounter an undiscovered interstellar entity (like a planet), a recently discovered deep sea organic lifeform, or a new iteration of a known infectious disease (one only needs to think about the way covid-19 has modified our collective forms of life). But encountering a new planet may not "significantly" alter the collective, in the sense that there is no greater public mobilization around this kind of issue. Whenever an issue 'generates a concerned and unsettled public' (*TAP*: 816), this is Pol-2. The encounter with a new infectious disease may have 'consequences that entangle many unanticipated actors' (*TAP*: 816) in a way that discovering a new interstellar planet may not. To put this another way, discovering a planet may *not yet be a public problem*. Latour argues that Pol-1 and Pol-2 can be understood as 'different segments of the same issue':

¹⁴ I am not aware if Latour has revisited this explicit typology and introduced further moments into his descriptive-political vocabulary. The question of the exact number of moments that any issue could possibly have is an open one.

The almost daily discovery of extra-solar planetary systems is political-1 - we don't live in the same cosmos with or without other livable planets; but it is not political-2 since there is no public at large, at least not yet, which has been rendered problematic by [these systems] (*TAP*: 816).

Latour is not saying here that 'planets in other solar systems have nothing to do with politics', as that would be wrong. Latour here does make the claim that 'planets [are not yet] political in the same sense as the fate of the genetically modified organism or the election of the new French president' (*TAP*: 816). The vocabulary Latour uses here implies that political dynamics are *intensive* in Tristan Garcia's sense (as a matter of more or less); Pol-1 is less intense than Pol-2.¹⁵ Following this logic, when an issue becomes more intensive and it cannot be resolved through public engagement, an issue becomes a Pol-3 political problem. Pol-3 is defined by Latour as the moment within an issues trajectory where 'the machinery of government tries to turn the problem of the public into a clearly articulated question of common good and general will' (*TAP*: 816). It is a question of political sovereignty, a matter that concerns the 'sphere [...] of the commonwealth' (*ibid*). Pol-3 issues are for Latour, closer to the hardcore political theories of Machiavelli and Schmitt, and perhaps closer to the early Latour's conception of politics (Callon & Latour, 1981; Latour, 1988).

But for Latour, not all issues will become Pol-3 issues. They may remain Pol-1 or Pol-2 issues, or they may develop into Pol-4 issues. Pol-4 issues are those where 'fully conscious citizens, endowed with the ability to speak, to calculate, to compromise and to discuss together, meet in order to "solve problems" that have been raised by science and technology' (*TAP*: 817). This "Habermasian moment" (Latour's terminology) is 'what happens when an issue has stopped being a Pol-2 or Pol-3 issue, issues that have been 'metabolized to the point when they can be absorbed by the normal traditions of deliberative democracy' (*TAP*: 817). But what is interesting here - if we are considering Pol-3 to be *more* intensive than Pol-2 or Pol-1 - is that Pol-4 seems

¹⁵ Garcia uses the term intensity throughout his work without explicitly defining exactly what the term is and is not (Cogburn, RayAlexander, and RayAlexander, 2018: ix-xxviii; Cogburn, 2017). The term can be found in *Form and Object* (2014a), *The Life Intense* (2018), and in *We Ourselves* (2021). In Garcia's essay on time ("Another Order of Time"), he argues that temporality should be understood as an intensive phenomenon, where 'the present' is understood as more or less present. Things that have been present are still present in a *less* intensive sense; they are less present to us than our currently *more* intensive present (Garcia, 2014b). Intensity here is specifying variability (i.e., more or less this or that - but what "this" or "that" refers to affects how one should comprehend "more" or "less" variability).

less intensive than Pol-3. That is, the issue in question is no-longer a ‘question of life and death’ (TAP: 816). So, what happens when an issue has stopped being Pol-4, 3, or 2? Latour:

The silent working of the sewage systems in Paris has stopped being political, as have vaccinations against smallpox or tuberculosis. It is now in the hands of vast and silent bureaucracies that rarely make the headlines. As to the distribution of gender roles, it has been so thoroughly “naturalized” that it seems at first to be totally outside politics. Should we abstain from calling those issues political in another sense of the adjective? Of course not, because not only did they used to be loudly disputed controversies [...] but also because they might reopen at any moment (TAP: 817).

This is Pol-5 and refers to ‘all those institutions [that] appear on the surface to be absolutely *apolitical*’ (TAP: 817. Original emphasis) that are political in this seemingly less intensive sense. Latour here refers to Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’ here as to exemplify what this kind of politics is about, and he claims that the notion of cosmopolitics mentioned above (Latour, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c) covers ‘all five meanings’ of the word “political” (TAP: 818). Latour’s five meanings of the word political is summarized by Latour in the table below (table 1).

<i>Meanings of ‘political’</i>	<i>What is at stake in each meaning</i>	<i>Examples of movements that detected it</i>
Political-1	New associations and cosmograms	STS
Political-2	Public and its problems	Dewey, pragmatism
Political-3	Sovereignty	Schmitt
Political-4	Deliberative assemblies	Habermas
Political-5	Governmentality	Foucault, feminism

Table 1: summary of some of the successive meanings of the adjective political through which a given issue might pass (from Latour, 2007: 818).

Latour notes how Pol-1 and Pol-5 are taken as ‘apolitical for everyone but historians of science, feminist scholars and various science studies students’ (TAP: 818). Also, is it true that Pol-1 is a less intensive moment of an issue's trajectory than Pol-5? This of course depends on how

one reads the Garcian concept of intensity. However, if one has read another of Latour's papers on political theory, one can note how Latour sees a circular or cyclical logic at work in politics (Latour, 2003).¹⁶ It may be that political issues, when considered from a Garcian point of view (that is, as intensively variable phenomena) have a certain circularity: a political issue has the capacity to gain intensity as it develops from Pol-1 to Pol-3 while the same political issue has the capacity to lose intensity as it moves from Pol-4 to Pol-5 (table 2). The question of intensity (while not Latour's question) refers matters of concern (Latour's vocabulary) to the publics ("we's") who engage with them. For whom are issues intensive for?

Who exactly is this "we" that comprehends a Latourian issue? Graham Harman notes that the trajectory issue moments 'is surely one Latour's most fascinating loose ends' (2014: 172). It is also my contention that the emphasis on issues leads to a realistic inquiry about politics that is to some degree neutral to the divergences among the different SR offshoots. But here we are back to some of the typical complaints critical theorists raise against SR: what about (human) critique? To be blunter: why are we talking about planets and microbes when Ukrainian cities are under siege; or, why are we talking about sewage systems when the class struggle is ongoing? When each issue 'generates a new public', rather than 'the same grey anonymous mass weighing in foolishly on every possible topic' (*ibid*), they involve and implicate certain "*we*-groupings" in the texture and fabric of politics. All issues, no matter the intensity, are equally issues. We could even argue that we have a flat ontology of issues where specific issues have the capacity to gain and lose intensity. Following Garcia, it is *we ourselves* who face, encounter, perceive and engage with issues that concern *us*. It is *we* who give these issues their intensity, who say that *x* matters more or less than *y*. Explicitly conceptualizing how "we's" face issues (or at least beginning the working out of how we go about conceptualizing the *we*-issue relation) is a significant step if we are to postulate an SR issue-oriented political theory and apply such a conceptual toolkit to empirical cases.

¹⁶ Latour's 2003 paper on political speech acts ("What if We Talked Politics a Little?") is a great resource for an ordinary language philosophical approach to Latour's political philosophy. I will discuss some aspects of this paper below, but doing so in great detail is beyond the scope of this paper. Of course, here Latour does refer to "we's" (what if *we* talk), but this aspect can be further developed by connecting Latour's project to Garcia's more explicitly.

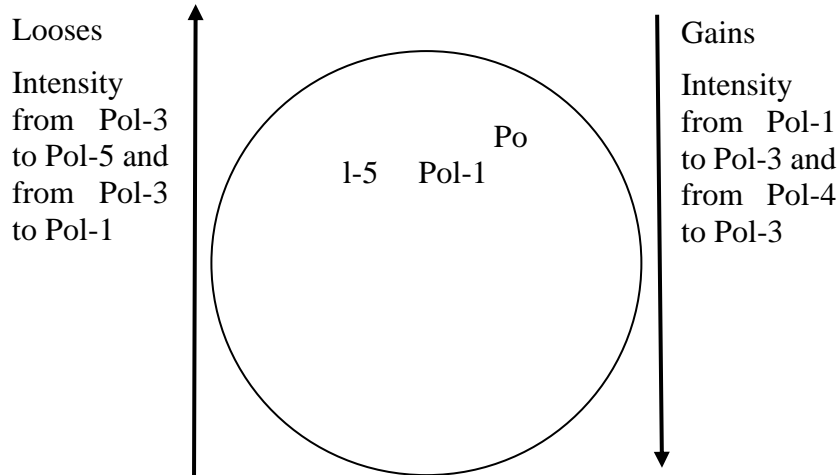


Table 2: circular-intensive conception of moment development along an issues possible trajectory.

III

Tristan Garcia opens his book on political philosophy *We Ourselves* (WO), with a “Latour Litany” of different kinds of we, from socialists to pro-life activists (WO: 5-6).¹⁷ A ‘we’ for Garcia is ‘an ectoplasmic form found in the majority of human languages. It is capable of embracing everything that lies between myself and the rest of the world’ (WO: 5). Through using the first-person plural ‘many subjects situate themselves, limit themselves, negotiate their similarities and differences, and engage in politics’ (WO: 5). As Garcia succinctly puts it: ‘we all say *we*, regardless of the group’ (WO: 5. My emphasis). Like Latour, Garcia conceptualizes politics in reference to circles:

Let us imagine a circle, what we might call the “circle of we”. We can picture how its limits encircle those around us, our family, our clan, our

¹⁷ Ian Bogost invented this term and describes a Latour Litany as an ‘ontograph made of words’ which helps one ‘catalog material, conceptual, and fictional objects’ (2012: 58). Latour frequently makes lists of seemingly random objects, whether physical, natural, imaginary, scientific, or whatever. Here is one of my own creations: neurons, microbes, Luke Skywalker, Christ, Pepsi, Sheffield. Philosophers in the OOO bent use such lists to illustrate that all of these entities are in fact things, whether they are real, ideal, material, immaterial. They can also be used to illustrate that all things are things, and that the bifurcation of nature is not necessary. Garcia here names different “we’s”, I think, to illustrate that no matter what they are, they are all “we’s”. It should be noted that the no-matter-what has conceptual significance for Garcia that I am not really referring to in this instance (Garcia, 2014; Cogburn, 2017).

tribe, and our community. Or, on the contrary, we can imagine the diffusion of that circle within the social realm. This circle is extended to sensate beings, animals, and even certain vegetables. As the circle expands or shrinks, its diameter corresponds to a given state of us [...] There are as many political subjects as there are states of us, which we can understand as possible extensions of this *imaginary* circle (WO: 5. My emphasis).

One can note already that it is not necessary that we-divisions place humans on one side and non-humans on some other not-we side. The “state of us”, or our matters of concern, do not have to exclusively focus on the human world. They are *not* by necessity bifurcated.¹⁸ One can also note here that there is a certain political intensive logic at work (more or less inclusive; more or less expansive). But Garcia here also defines this particular circle of we as imaginary, that is, not “real”. But of course, we-groupings are surely not arbitrary, or why would we be concerned with our “we’s” at all? Here, I think there is an implied difference between our *thought* about we’s and the way in which we-belonging *actually* plays out. Here, I will mostly restrict my account to “Book I” of *We Ourselves* (“Transparencies”), as to outline the general logic of Garcia’s “we”. From here, we can then return to the we-issue relation and how Garcia’s we can supplement Latour’s trajectorial account of political matters of concern.

Garcia, following some general remarks concerning the particularity of we’s - that we *all* say we but we mean *our* we when *we* say we - indicates that we is an intensive concept: there is a *minimal* we, and a *maximal* we (WO: 33). Garcia sets this intensive limitation on the concept as a way to ‘preserve the concept of we’ (WO: 33). He argues that the minimal we that one could conceive is the “I” itself, as there are different iterations of a person (WO: 30-33). We could think this through from Harman’s object-oriented perspective: there is a hidden surplus (real qualities) behind the “I” (real object) that conceals a plurality of possible moods, expressions, attitudes, self-conceptions, and so on (Harman, 2011: 20-26, 48-49, 123). But in thinking the I as a we - and thus thinking the we as an I - one starts to *lose* the specific concept of we: the two words start signifying

¹⁸ I say by necessity here because it seems quite clear that some we-grouping may in fact divide the world into humans as “us” and everything else as “them”. Garcia addresses this kind of we-division in Book II (“Constraints”) of *We Ourselves* (2021: 105-114).

the same thing. But Garcia thinks that it is important to retain this “I” *qua* “we” in the ‘sense of one or another of my personalities’ (WO: 33).

When Garcia turns to the idea of a maximal we, he notes that the Latourian ‘parliament of things’ (2004c), Bryant’s ‘democracy of objects’ (2011) and Harman’s (2011) ‘polypsychic hypothesis’ that involves a we that ‘posits relationships between all of the subjects of both human history and natural history, without distinction’ (WO: 33). The maximal we in other words is a we that rejects the bifurcation of nature. These propositions aim to include ‘all entities, both animate and inanimate, that enter into and circulate within societal networks’ (WO: 33). Garcia of course raises the question of how we are to make these things *say* we (WO:34). Latour claims in numerous works that our entanglements with non-human things have a stabilizing effect on social organization (Latour, 1990). Garcia’s critique of this kind of political thinking is that ‘we becomes the *redundant* name for everything’ that ‘no longer functions as a political form’ (WO: 35. Original emphasis). We begin to lose the concept of we in the opposite direction when compared to the minimal we, as we cannot distinguish *between* we’s. In Garcia’s terms: ‘I and totality are two absolute boundaries beyond which the we disappears’ (WO: 36).

It should be noted that Harman’s, Latour’s, and Bryant’s positions are not analogous. For instance, Harman’s thesis is an ontological or metaphysical thesis, not a political one. Latour’s position on politics has changed over time. The introduction of “issues” and their “moments” into Latour’s political vocabulary sets limits on the kinds of things included within the ‘common world’ - Latour’s largest possible “we” equivalent. Not literally everything is included. But anything could possibly be considered as a possible political issue. The metaphysical thesis concerning the agential status of inanimate things in Latour’s philosophy (specifically concerning their political-subjective capacities) could be critiqued from a Garcian perspective.¹⁹ That said, I will not address such critiques here. Still, different kinds of we - from the minimal to the maximal - turn around issues.

Garcia refers to numerous kinds of possible we-groupings: racial we’s (we-whites, we-blacks, we-indigenous); class we’s (we-proletariat, we-bourgeoisie); we’s of gender, sex and

¹⁹ For a reading of Bruno Latour as a *philosopher* - not only as an anthropologist or sociologist - see Graham Harman’s (2009) *Prince of Networks*.

sexuality (we-woman, we-men, we-straight, we-gays, we-nonbinaries); we's of social movements and political parties (#MeToo, the Communist party, Nazism, LGBTQI activists).²⁰ These we-categories, can be understood as a 'means of visualizing' how we conceptualize 'our identities' (WO: 148). The notion of we and its expression and articulation is again, to be considered as the subject of politics in the first instance:

The essence of political discourse lies in defining how we understand this 'we', what our rights and legitimate claims are, and our conception of society as a whole. However, political discourse requires us to negatively identify those who oppose us, the enemies whom we designate as 'you' and 'them' [...] everyone who says 'we' speaks as the same person, which is to say that they *take on the being of a people who speak that way* (WO: 6. Original emphasis).

Garcia here is close to the 'ordinary language' Latour that emphasizes that the irreplaceable role that politics plays is in articulating 'us' and 'they' distinctions (2003: 144) - what can be read as Garcian "we" and "them" expressions. Latour is interested in the question of how social aggregates are produced at all, how they emerge (*ibid*). Later, of course, we have a political visual where aggregates are produced through responding to empirical issues that concern them. But it is through political articulations, the composition of a public through *we-expressions*, that a social aggregate can be produced. In non-political forms of aggregation - Latour refers to science, technique, law, and religion - there is a specific *form* of 'contamination, concatenation, connection, or mediation' that makes it possible to account for an aggregate's existence. Language here matters: political forms of speech are required, or who could ever 'take on the being of a people who speak' (WO: 6) in this or that way? Latour emphasizes a 'particular manner of speech' that designates political speech (2003: 145). For Garcia, this speech corresponds to a "we-vocabulary".

Politics for Latour is fragile. Likewise, for Garcia, "we" is a 'radically *inadequate*' concept that we are forced to navigate (WO: 219. My emphasis). There is no ultimate 'justice or truth' (WO: 219) when it comes to we ourselves, there is just the struggle of political disagreement.

²⁰ In Book I of WO, Garcia reconstructs a brief and general historical account of these kinds of we (5-30). In Book II, these categorical sortals are 'grounds of we' (WO: 105-148) that function as 'disconnected transparencies'. I will discuss the notion of transparencies below.

This applies to the struggle *between* we's and *within* we's. This takes us back to thinking through the circular logic of we, as Garcia understands the different we-sortals as concentric overlapping circles (WO: 30) that intersect and resist one another:

Let us imagine a we structured as a series of concentric circles. Those circles encompass [a plurality of nonhuman entities including the biosphere and planet Earth] and finally humanity. Now, within the circle of humanity, let us imagine connections and disjunctions between a number of circles. Like a ring with interlocking hands, these overlapping circles criss-cross and intersect with one another according to [the various human we-groupings, including gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, social class, age, communities of belief, and so on]. Now, imagine tightening all of those circles like a slipknot. We pull the knot, it tightens, and different [we groupings] come into view (WO: 30-31).

This idea of we's coming in to view also implies that we's can leave one's view. Garcia attempts to show that these concentric circles can be stacked, and that this stack of "we's" is 'like a pile of transparencies' (WO: 64). Depending on how we 'trace' the divisions between the different we-groupings, we may see different things. As Garcia argues, 'by stacking the transparencies up on top of one another, we suddenly discover the full complexity of what we call "we"' (WO: 65). This 'unstable' (WO: 66) stack of transparencies is fragile in Latour's sense, but such a stack of concentric we-circles also affects how we comprehend our personal and collective identities. Of course, not all these we's are alike: belonging to a political party is not synonymous with being-determined by a racial or ethnic identity, being born into a rich or poor family. For instance, my supporting the British Labour Party in the 2019 UK general election does not necessarily correlate with the whiteness of my skin or my being "British". In this case, I can 'trace' the connections between my socialist values, my political support of the Labour Party (even though I am not a member), my being white, and my being British (whilst being born in England). How we trace our transparencies, according to Garcia, allow us to decipher the world (WO: 67), but some of these transparencies (my being white and being born in England) are not something I can choose, in the way that I can choose to vote Green or Conservative in the next UK general election.

Here, Garcia distinguishes between two we-modalities: *we's-of-ideas* and *we's-of-interests* (WO: 42-43). We's-of-interest refer to 'every we in which a particular subject is raised', a we that is 'inherited' (WO: 42). Such we's, we could argue, follow from a predetermined

situatedness. As the philosopher Katherine Withy puts this, ‘we are thrown into dealing with a particular set of entities, into a particular life, and into a particular culture or tradition’ (2011 :65). We are thus in part determined by our situation. But one cannot be said to be absolutely determined by one’s situatedness. This distinguishes a we-of-ideas from a we-of-interests. Garcia’s we-of-ideas ‘characterized by a we that a subject is able to choose and that can be changed at will’ (*WO*: 43). But there is no fixed dividing line between these ideas, ‘there is no border between absolute we’s-of-interests and absolute we’s-of-ideas’ (*WO*: 43). On some level, it does not matter if there is a us-them relationship between we, socialists and we, conservatives: we are all we, *human*. We’s of all kinds are more or less flexible (*WO*: 7), more or less elastic (*WO*: 162).

Our we’s-of-ideas and we’s-of-interest have the capacity to affect how we view issues and how we respond to them. Latour’s political modalities (the moments of an issues trajectory) - like Pol-1 (we, scientists) and Pol-3 (our Nation state) - imply the involvement of specific we’s (Latour, 2007).²¹ But when an issue ‘emerges’ from the Great Outdoors (however one wants to conceptualize this space or horizon), there are distinct we’s that respond to these issues. In political scientific debates concerning the public sphere and its aboutness, there is already the presence of divergent we-groupings - the national majoritarian public-we and the minoritarian counter-public we’s that diverge from consensus.²² I will now side-step discussing Garcia’s understanding of specific transparencies (e.g., gender and class), and focus on the possible “fusion” of Garcian and Latourian approaches to SR political theory.²³

²¹ Garcia refers to these national we’s as ‘enormous geopolitical or geostrategic we’s that flatten all other identities’ (*WO*: 19). Garcia here is speaking about the nation state during the second world war. But, without diving into a concrete political analysis of the situation, contemporary Russian incursion into Ukraine (and at the time of writing the invasion of Ukraine sovereign territory) could be considered as the ‘flattening’ of other (i.e., we, Ukrainians) identities. Garcia notes that the Cold War may have been ‘nothing more than the passage from disjunction (“or”) to a stable conjunction (“and”)’ (*WO*: 19). This seems to be collapsing as we are passing from the ‘simultaneous coexistence’ of geostrategic we’s (conjunction) to disjunctive military conflicts between European we’s.

²² Authors from Nancy Fraser (1990) to Michael Warner (2002) have contributed to this debate, and it still occupies much debate in media studies, cultural studies, and contemporary sociology. I will not recount these debates here, as it is far beyond the scope of this article. That said, actually existing publics and counterpublics could be fruitfully analyzed from the perspective of Garcia’s overlapping concentric we’s. Garcia’s political philosophical conceptualizations have much to offer to the social sciences.

²³ In his account, the role of intensity is again significant. Exclusive distinctions are collapsed into variations of intensity. For instance, the difference between humans and other animals is collapsed as it is shown that there is not a binary distinction between humans and all the other species, but there are lines that ‘link one species to another’ (*WO*: 110), there is ‘speciation’ and ‘humanization’ (*WO*: 111, 114).

IV

In fusing Garcia’s approach to politics with Latour’s issue-oriented approach, what we have is a political subject or collective of subjects (“we’s”) that turn around the objects of politics (“issues”), without *a priori* specifying in advance what a subjectivity or subject-category is supposed to include. This is important for any SR-inflected political theory because we can think about a “political subject” of some kind without correlationism. Non-human animals for instance, could be included within our we-groupings. As is common in science fictional narratives, there is no reason why non-human aliens (if they were to appear - a Pol-1 situation that could escalate rapidly to a Pol-2 or Pol-3 situation, as in the movie *Independence Day*) or non-human machines with some kind of cognitive capacities (like the machines in the Swedish television series *Äkta människor* [*Real Humans*]) should be *a priori* excluded from our circles of we.²⁴ Also, it seems that focusing on “political subjects” (we’s) at the expense of political objects seems detrimental to a political theory.

If politics is a ‘theater of issues [objects] about which we remain basically ignorant’, and ‘these objects are dealt with not continuously, by the entire mass of humans in the policy, but by different concerned groups each time an issue arises’ (Harman, 2014: 181), then we require a political theory that both has the objects of politics (issues) in view, and the concerned groups (we’s) that gather around such objects. This political theory is also compatible with Levi Bryant’s political categorizations that he introduces in his *Speculations IV* article. There, Bryant introduces the idea of a Borromean critical theory (BCT) that connects the ‘symbolic’ domain of signs (what he terms “semiopolitics”); the ‘imaginary’ domain of human and non-human (alien) phenomenology (the lived experience of humans and non-humans selectively encounter the world around them); and the domain of the ‘real’, what concerns the ‘properties that really do belong to things and the efficacy things organize on other things’ (2013: 19-20). Here, we have something like political subjects that encounter surprising issues.

²⁴ In my article on *The Expanse* (a science fiction television series), I attempted to illustrate that it is possible that in a speculative futuristic social situation, we could have non-terrestrial human groups that form their own we-groups whilst still belonging to the wider circle of we, humans (Reid, 2022). Alexandre Gefen (2022) has recently written on the politics of human-robot (non-human machine) relations in science fiction television.

More significant perhaps is his four additional categories that follow from the exploration of the real domain: *geopolitics*, a form of inquiry that would ‘explore the impact of features of geography’ (*ibid*: 20) on our politics; *infrapolitics*, a way of investigating the ‘role technological and urban infrastructures play on the structuration of social relations and power’ (*ibid*); *thermopolitics*, the exploration of how ‘energetic concerns contribute to the form social relations take, the impact of consumption and waste, and the manner in which energetic requirements exercise power over life’ (*ibid*); *chronopolitics*, an inquiry into the ‘temporal constraints’ that ‘contribute to the structuration of social relations and the perpetuation of oppressive forms of power’ (*ibid*). It seems that these categorizations are compatible with Latour’s political modalities. For instance, an infrapolitical issue *a* could be classified as Pol-4 issue, while some related thermopolitical issue *b* could be classified as a Pol-5 issue. Of course, these issues may be a matter of concern for the semiopolitical we, French and not a matter of concern for we, British. Perhaps because the issue is not yet (or is now not) a Pol-3 issue; but also, perhaps because the issue does not motivate or mobilize a national geopolitical we. Again here, geopolitics clearly has an impact on the kinds of national we’s one may form, as civil wars across the Middle East show us.

But this idea of an issue *a* being related to an issue *b* is not a focus of Latour in “Turning Around Politics”. There, he is attempting to specify how one issue has its moments. But one can conceptualize issue overlap in a similar way to how Garcia conceptualizes we-overlap: there are more or less transparent issues in view; these issues that a we has in view may be related to other issues. Issues can be “stacked” into a pile of issues in a similar fashion to how Garcia stacks we-groupings. Without overstepping too far into empirical territory, let’s take the issue of ‘gender’ that Latour describes as Pol-5 (an issue of governance). This issue as Latour notes may concern certain we’s (the we-of-interests we, woman; but possibly the wider we-of-ideas grouping of we, feminists) more than others. While issues to do with gender in Latour’s description are Pol-5 for many - gender is some natural phenomenon that is not of concern - feminist we’s perhaps *see it as* a Pol-4 issue (a matter of actors coming together to resolve specific issues spawning from the wider semiopolitical issue of “gender relations” - perhaps to resolve an issue concerning who can access bathrooms) or as a Pol-2 issue (the it is a public - or counterpublic - problem concerning our forms of life). Perhaps the state may need to become involved in this issue, becoming a Pol-3 issue. Here,

the issue gains intensity as it moves from Pol-5 to Pol-3. But also, there are different but connected issues, that are, so to speak, *chained together*.²⁵

There is the semiopolitical issue concerning the social status of gender and sex categories. Then, there is the issue of who can access bathrooms, what is perhaps a hybrid infrapolitical-semiopolitical issue. Perhaps thermopolitical concepts are used to justify certain differences - if we are being more critical here one could use the term inequality - between sexes, if not “genders” (men and women are different because men and women should consume different amounts of calories!). Here, a distinct and unrelated thermopolitical public health issue is referenced that is not directly connected to the semiopolitical issue concerning genders or the more particular issue concerning the infrapolitics of public bathrooms. But of course, not all issues overlap. If we fall back onto the claim that every issue overlaps with every other issue, we are regressing into a untextured “everything is political” universe that Latour attempted to circumvent by appealing to specific political speech acts (2003) and the idea that issues are of fundamental significance (2007). This vague and inadequately unempirical example, I hope, shows that one should look at “issues” in the way Garcia does “we’s”, as stacked with different issues above and below (table 3) In some cases, non-necessarily related issues are referenced and cited.²⁶

As I stated in the first section, I think that the analysis of we’s and issues can be approached from numerous SR approaches: from a Harmanian object-oriented perspective, from a strictly Latourian perspective, from a new materialist perspective, from a New Realist perspective, and so on.²⁷ One could also approach we’s and issues from the Bryant’s later position in *Onto-Cartography*, where he outlines three political programs - ‘cartography’ (2014: 11),

²⁵ I have taken this expression from an article that critically discusses Wilfrid Sellars’ reading of the Leibnizian concept of nature (Nunziante, 2018: 36-58). Interestingly, the understanding of an individual substance in terms of episodes in its history (*ibid*: 38) can be compared to how Latour and Marres seem to understand issues and their trajectories.

²⁶ One could of course debate the analytical or conceptual relevance of semiopolitical categories like “genders”. However, as long as they are used within the social forms of life, one will need to account for their functional role. In a co-developing project, myself and a sociologist of the UK healthcare sector argue that abstracting semiopolitical ideas like “masculine” or “man” from their indexical environment and applying them to others can be understood as an instance of categorical imposition.

²⁷ In *Speculations V*, Maurizio Ferraris (2015a: 141-167) has summarized the aboutness of New Realism. There is also the 2012 *Manifesto of New Realism* and the *Introduction to New Realism* (2015b), both authored by Ferraris. Markus Gabriel’s (2015) *Field of Sense* is also considered to be canonical New Realism. Monika Kaup has engaged with both New Realism and Bruno Latour’s “middle period” thought in *New Ecological Realisms* (2021).

‘deconstruction’ (*ibid*: 267) and ‘terraformation’ (*ibid*: 19). It may also not be necessary to distinguish between issues in the exact way Latour (moments) or Bryant (types) does. For instance, it seems to be that Latour does not really have a way to account for revolutionary or insurrectionary political movements - perhaps revolutions are simply not issues? But in that case, in what sense is the chrono-thermopolitical situation of the French we-peasants (they were overworked, they were hungry, and so on), the we-grouping who overturned the semiopolitical order of the Ancien Régime, issue-oriented exactly? While one may be a conservative concerning revolutions, it seems that one still should account for their possibility.

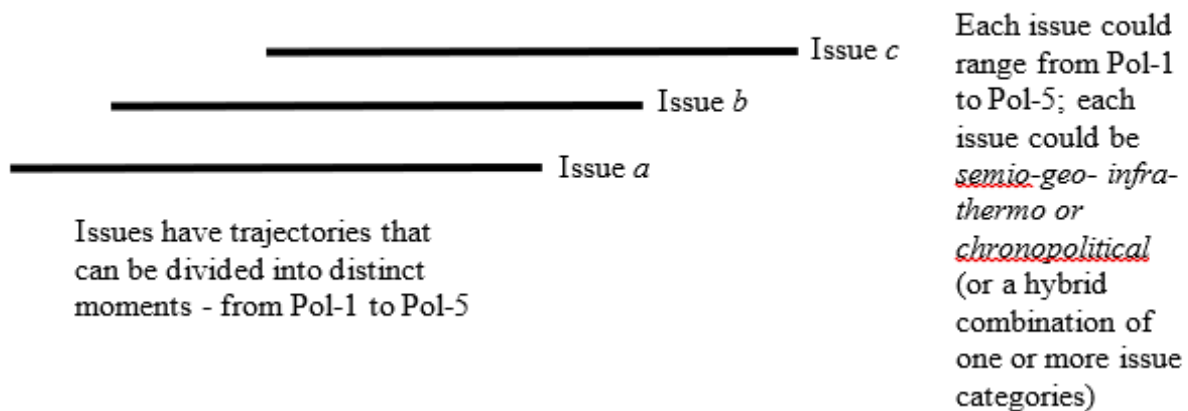


Table 3: hypothetical issues stacked and differentially classified.

Tristan Garcia, concluding *We Ourselves*, indicates that the battles between domination and counter-domination will rage on, as new forms of freedom lead to new domination-effects (2021: 222). But while struggles still rage, we still turn around issues, both seemingly mundane ones and seemingly extraordinary ones. In this paper, I have tried to argue that connecting the ‘loose end’ (Harman, 2014: 172) of Latourian issues and their trajectories to Garcia’s conceptualization creates a fertile space for further conceptualizations of issues and we who turn around them. It is my contention that Garcia’s concept of “we” is more sophisticated than Latour’s, even though Latour saw as early as 2003 (before his explicit issue-oriented turn) that the articulation of “us” is critical for the creation and stabilization of aggregates. I have also attempted to show that one cannot focus solely on the battles between the different “we’s”, we still need to

account for things, objects, issues, whatever one's vocabulary. If nothing else, I have attempted to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of SR thought for the political and social sciences, and the relevance of issue-oriented political thinking for contemporary SR.

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