The Historicity of Artifacts: Use and Counter-Use

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by Sara Ahmed's notion of 'queer use,' I present and extend a neo-Aristotelian theory of artifacts to capture what I call 'counter-use.' The theory of artifacts is based on the idea that what they are, how they come to be, and what their functions are cannot be understood independently from each other. They come to exist when a maker imposes the concept of their substantial kind onto some matter by working on the matter to make an artifact of that kind out of it. The extensions to this core theory that I describe are two. First, I show how using can be a kind of making and how disparate users may form what Benedict Anderson calls an imagined community. Second, I describe what I call an artifact's historicity and suggest that, like its substantial kind, an artifact's historicity is essential to it. On this basis, I characterize counter-use as use of an artifact by an imagined community that re-arranges an object's historicity and hence brings into existence a numerically distinct object. Thus, politically motivated counter-use has genuine ontological implications.

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'[I]t is not enough to affirm the queerness of use. To bring out the queerness of use requires more than an act of affirmation: it requires a world dismantling effort' (Ahmed 2019: 228–9).

In previous work (2016), I have developed and deployed a neo-Aristotelian account of the metaphysics of artifacts. Here, I aim to extend my account in two significant directions in order to address a phenomenon called by the critical theorist Sara Ahmed 'queer use.' It will be my contention that my account of artifacts, extended in the ways I suggest, can show that something like Ahmed's 'queer use,' a notion developed in a socio-political context, has ontological underpinnings.[1]

1. QUEER USE AND COUNTER-USE

Sara Ahmed describes herself as working at the intersection of feminist, queer, and race theory. All of these fields inform her book *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* where, predominantly in its final chapter, she characterizes what she calls 'queer use.' Here are some of the things she says about it. Queer use, Ahmed (2019: 198–209) tells us, is 'to make use audible, to listen to use, to bring to the front what ordinarily recedes into the background.' It is 'how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended.' It involves a 'commitment to a principle that not all uses could or even should be foreseen' and can therefore lead to 'releasing a potentiality that already resides in things given how they have taken shape.' It is 'not being willing to receive the will of the colonizer' and hence living 'in proximity to violence.' 'To queer use can be to linger on the material qualities of that which you are supposed to pass over.' 'Queer use can be offered as an ethics of finitude, an appreciation of the wrinkle or the scratch, expressions of time on the surfaces of bodies and things, loving what does not, and will not, last.'

It is clear that Ahmed is not attempting to *define* 'queer use' and the characterizations just quoted are not intended as individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for its application but some themes emerge particularly strongly in Ahmed's work. The norms of the 'straight' use of artifacts are determined by those with power. They are the ones who get to say who can do what with what. This is one way in which their power manifests and maintains itself. Queer use is use made by marginalized and oppressed groups (women in patriarchy, people of color under white supremacy, LGBTQ people under heteronormativity and others) as a way of loosening the grip of their oppression and reclaiming some of their material environment. As such, it is fraught with risk.

Because I am not a queer theorist and so am not entitled to the term and because 'queer use' is not precisely defined by Ahmed, I will introduce my own counterpart of the expression, 'counter-use,' which is intended to overlap with a lot of what Ahmed is interested in but is not co-extensive with her concept. (See section 6. for discussion of the differences between the concepts.) Here is my definition of 'counter-use.' I think of counter-use as something that is done collectively by a number of agents, or by a community, rather than by a single individual. (A single agent might accomplish it if she is sufficiently important or prominent.) It is undertaken deliberately and thus requires a collective and at least somewhat explicit intention to change the norms governing the on-going use of a type of object or of an individual object in virtue of its belonging to a kind under which it is subject to the governing norms being challenged. It is thus performative – its status as counter-use is intended to be recognized as such and its success depends, at least in part, on this recognition. The norms that are challenged by it, principally, are the norms governing the intended use of the artifacts in question. (I shall give a more ample account of the norms in section 4. when I discuss salience.) If intended use is understood broadly, this may include restrictions on who is entitled to use an object. So, counter-use will typically involve multiple agents using artifacts in ways that lie outside their intended uses, which may, on occasion, consist simply in their use by unintended users (or perhaps better: by intended non-users). This use will be performative and

aimed at significant change regarding the object, or type of object, in question. My contention in this paper will be that counter-use is not only a politically significant kind of action, as Ahmed takes queer use to be, but that it is ontologically transformative. Counter-use, if successful, quite literally changes the world.

2. A NEO-ARISTOTELIAN THEORY OF ARTIFACTS

In order to make my case for this contention, I begin by outlining my own neo-Aristotelian account of the nature of artifacts (2016). My account is inspired by Aristotle's claim that for substances, the formal, efficient, and final causes 'often coincide. What a thing is [the formal cause], and what it is for [the final cause], are one and the same, and that from which the change originates [the efficient cause] is the same in form as these' (*Physics* II, 7 198a25; translated in Charlton 1970: 38). This is an aspect of Aristotle's views that has not been taken up in much of the recent resurgence of neo-Aristotelian metaphysics.[2] What I take Aristotle to be getting at, to put it in non-technical terms, is that for objects that fall within the scope of a theory governed by this principle, one cannot separate an account of what such objects are (formal causes) from accounts of how they come to be (efficient causes) and what their functions or characteristic activities (final causes) are. Certain kinds of objects essentially have certain kinds of origins and certain kinds of uses and functions. Consequently, one cannot deal with any one of essence, function, and origin without at the same time saying something about the other two.

How this looks for artifacts is this. An artifact of kind K is essentially the product of human activity. Specifically, it comes to exist when a maker works on some matter, M, with the intention of making a K out of it. K, the artifact kind, is essentially tied to certain uses and functions, U (chairs are for sitting on, beds for sleeping in). So what the maker produces, if her work is successful, is essentially an artifact of kind K (that is, K is a substantial kind), made out of, but distinct from, M, that has the functions and uses U essentially. If she makes a chair, the object that she makes is essentially a chair. It could not have been a table, though of course, the matter the chair is made out of might have been used to make a table instead. Furthermore, the object that the maker makes, the chair, is not a chair just in virtue of being sittable on – or more broadly, in virtue of having the distinctive shape and heft of chairs. A 'swamp-chair,' the random product of lightning striking a log, may be indistinguishable from a real chair taking into account only its current, intrinsic properties, but it is not a chair (though it could easily be used as one).[3] Chairs are, essentially, a type of artifact; the swamp-chair is not an artifact at all, the product of intentional making, and hence cannot be a chair.[4] Finally, what the maker makes, a chair, is, in virtue of being a chair, something that has the function of being sat on. It has that function because that's what chairs are for. This is so even if, in a particular case, the maker did not intend the result of her labor to be sat on. What features in the maker's intention is not the function itself but the artifact kind that is associated with a function.[5] If the maker made the chair with the intention that it be used only as a display model, then the object still has the kind-relative function of being sat on but also has an idiosyncratic function of being used only for display.

I say the artifact is distinct from its matter. This is required if we are to allow, as we should, that a given artifact can change its matter over time while maintaining its identity. In virtue of what, then, is the artifact distinct from its matter, despite apparently sharing so many properties with

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2   See Fine (1999), Johnston (2006), and Koslicki (2008) for examples of neo-Aristotelians who do not concern themselves with this.

3   The original 'swamp' entity was Swampman, introduced in Davidson (1987) to show that a being without a history cannot have thoughts, even if it is an exact physical replica of an existing human being.

4   This is a little too simple. As Risto Hilpinen (1992) has pointed out, there are kinds, like *village* and *path*, whose instances may or may not be artifacts.

5   Seeing the function as coming to an artifact through its maker's having the associated kind in mind, rather than the function itself, disposes of some objections, such as that of Bloom (1996), to intention-based accounts. Something has to be said about prototypes, of course (see Evnine 2016: 119–25). This is a deep question, and the difficulty of accounting for how types of substances could first come to be instantiated is one of the things that led Aristotle to posit the eternity of the universe. Beginnings, it seems to me, are among the most interesting topics in philosophy.

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it? Or, to frame the same question in different terms, what kind of thing, precisely, is an artifact? The standard approach to this among contemporary neo-Aristotelians is to bring into the picture a third entity, in addition to the object itself and its matter, that plays the role of form. This may be a property or relation (Fine 1999), a (mathematical) function (Grandy 1975; Fine 1999), a structure (Koslicki 2008), or a principle (Johnston 2006). My reasons for being wary of these attempts are two, one global and one local. First, globally, there is a danger, one actually faced in some cases but looming in others, of building into an object's identity all its future and possible embodiments. This will be true if the form is something like a function and the function must specify, for all times and possible worlds, which quantity of matter is the matter of that object (at that time, in that world). This builds far too much into the object itself which, in some sense, ought to be independent of its vicissitudes. A second reason is local to the case of artifacts in particular. None of the approaches just canvassed treats artifacts as ontologically distinctive. But artifacts, I think, are ontologically distinctive, and this distinctiveness has something to do with the relations between origin, essence, and function I outlined above. A theory that has nothing special to say about that seems to me to miss the most important feature of artifacts.

In the face of these problems besetting an analysis of artifacts in terms of other ontological concepts, I prefer to treat them as *sui generis* objects.[6] Nevertheless, we can still say some ontologically helpful things about them. Their ontological nature is not the same as that of non-artifacts. It is distinctive. It is made internal to the object created by the very act of creation. I offer the following four postulates as holding for artifacts:

* they have matter but are not identical to their matter;
* they are essentially made by intentional making;
* that intentional making takes the form of a maker working on the matter with the intention to make an artifact of a given kind;
* they have their functions essentially, in virtue of the kinds to which they belong.

I describe artifacts as 'ideal' objects, not because they are not real but because they essentially depend on facts about their makers' intentions.[7] These intentions are not components of the object but the work on the matter that they guide throws a shadow forward and it is this shadow that, as it were, hovers over the artifact, making of it an ideal object. Using a different metaphor, the novelist Neal Stephenson describes beautifully what I am trying to say:

> How can he walk across a field salted, by the retreat of the last glacier, with countless stones, and pick out the arrowheads? Why can the human eye detect a tiny artificial form lost in nature's torn and turbulent cosmos, a needle of data in a haystack of noise? It is a sudden, sparking connection between minds, he supposes. *The arrowheads are human things broken loose from humanity, their organic parts perished, their mineral forms enduring – crystals of intention.* It is not the form but the lethal intent that demands the attention of a selfish mind. (1999: 287–8; italics mine)

So much for a summary of my account of artifacts. I want now to think about extending it in two complementary ways in order to develop an account of counter-use that will be fairly faithful to Ahmed's conception of queer use. The first extension concerns the creative power of users. The second introduces the notion of historicity.

3. THE CREATIVE POWER OF USERS

Counter-use, I have suggested, has an ontological, and not just a political, aspect to it. It can actually change things into other things – it can bring new things into existence. To reconcile this with something like the approach to artifacts I have just outlined, we need to

6 Lest this seem alarming, let me say that I think other theories of a neo-Aristotelian stamp also, ultimately, must take them to be *sui generis*, whether they acknowledge this or not. Kit Fine, for example, is one who does acknowledge this fact. Introducing the theory of rigid embodiments, he writes: 'I should like to suggest that we take the bold step of recognizing a new kind of whole' (Fine 1999: 65).

7 Lynne Baker (2007) uses the term "intentional object" to much the same effect.

show how that account can accommodate creation by a disparate group of users. This, in turn, requires dealing with creation by users and creation by disparate groups. I take these up in turn.

So-called intention-based accounts of artifacts and their functions, of the kind I have just given, dominate the current field. Such accounts are advocated by Risto Hilpinen (1992, 1993), Randall Dipert (1993), Lynne Baker (2007), and Amie Thomasson (2009), to name only some of their most prominent defenders. Different as these views are, they all share a commitment to the idea that artifacts depend, for their existence and their functions, on the intentions of the people who make them. The users of artifacts have no (official) ontological role. How, then, can my intention-based account be reconciled with creation by use?

Consider this example, discussed by Kathrin Koslicki as a potential objection to intention-based theories of artifacts.

> Suppose that Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, initially intended his new device to be used as an aid for the hearing-impaired, while later users came to think of the telephone as a certain kind of long distance communication device which allows two or more users (whether they are hearing-impaired or not) to carry on a conversation even when they are far apart. [Koslicki's note: I borrow this example from Carrara & Vermaas (2009), p. 135, who suggest that the above description is historically accurate. I remain neutral on the question of historical accuracy and wish to use the scenario only as a further illustration of the possibility imagined by Kornblith, that user-intentions can override author-intentions in determining what features are relevant to an artifact's membership in a certain kind.] Given author-intention-based accounts of artifact-essences, assuming that Alexander Graham Bell in fact intended the device he invented to have a certain function, viz., to aid the hearing-impaired, and assuming that there is no obvious reason to think that Bell's original author-intentions misfired during the production of the first prototype, then the device Bell invented *is* in fact a hearing-aid (and essentially so); and the same applies to every subsequent device which is successfully produced with the intention of being of the same type as the device Bell invented. Proponents of this view are committed to holding that the intentions of later users cannot override Bell's original author-intentions, according to which the device he invented is a kind of hearing-aid, and lead to a re-classification of the telephone as a certain kind of long distance communication device. But the scenario under consideration suggests that it is in fact possible, under certain circumstances, for the intentions of later users to override the intentions of the original author as to how the device he or she has invented, designed or produced is to be used. (2018: 227–8)

Koslicki writes here of users' overriding the (essential) function of the telephone by using *it* in other ways, coming to associate with *it* a new (essential) function. What is going on? On the one hand, we want to say that there is a kind of object, the telephone, that initially has a function determined by the inventor's intentions but subsequently comes to have a function determined by the use made of it. This is not merely a case of a hearing-aid being used as a communication device, something that is certainly possible. It is supposed to be a case where the collective and persistent use of the telephone as a communication device means that it comes to *be* the function of a telephone to be so used. In other words, the power of (the right kind of) use is to alter the function of a given kind of thing. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the intended function of artifacts is essential to them. On the view I developed above, this essentiality is genuinely *de re*, not *de dicto*. Thus, if the intended function of the objects manufactured under the name 'telephone' changes, then one kind of object is replaced by another kind called by the same name. Although Koslicki acknowledges the essentiality of the function to the kind (and I think she considers it to be *de re*), the corollary about change of kind is obscured by her interposition of a further, fanciful, intention, which is allegedly involved in the production of things called 'telephones,' namely 'the intention

[to produce something]... of the same type as the device Bell invented.' This seems to insulate the unity of the kind across changes in (essential) function.[8]

Why is the change in kind not announced head-on for advocates of user-intentions to embrace? I think what may be happening is this. Bringing an object into existence seems to require physical labor with respect to the object's matter. If mere use were able to bring into existence a new (kind of) object, we would have a case where creation did not involve work on anything. And cases of creation without work are, in the eyes of many, disreputable. Zimmerman (2002), for example, argues against Baker's author-intention oriented account by *reductio*: on her account, one would have to say that simply by dragging a piece of driftwood inside and intending that it be (used as) a coffee table, one would thereby bring a coffee table into existence. Elsewhere, however, I have defended Baker by arguing that creation in this way is perfectly legitimate (see my 2016: 110–2). Hence, I am quite willing to say that users can create new objects and new kinds of objects merely through use. But the crucial thing to be clear about is that creative use is use of an object which is not the (kind of) object being created. (If it were, there would be a paradox since one cannot use something until it exists.) It is the non-standard use made of one (kind of) object that brings into existence another. It is by using a piece of driftwood as a coffee table that the user brings into existence a coffee table. The coffee table is distinct from the driftwood, its matter, because its function is essential to the kind to which it belongs but is not essential to the driftwood. The non-standard use of a kind of hearing-aid brings into existence a new kind of communication device, the standard use of which is as a communication device.[9] Use of one thing just is, in the right circumstances, a way of creating another. Hence users can be makers. Once the distinction is made between the object creative use of which is made by users engaged in non-standard use and the object created by such use, creation by use is simply a (rather special) case of ordinary creation on my account.

The second aspect of creation by disparate users that requires consideration is the disparateness of the multiple creators. On my view, it will be recalled, creation of an artifact is a *sui generis* process of imposition of mind onto matter that happens in virtue of the intentional work involved in the making (in the case we are interested in here, the creative counter-use made of some (kind of) object). This can easily accommodate multiple creators if we think of those creators as forming a joint intention in the work. We might say that the several makers here are of 'one mind' and it is this 'mind' that is imposed on the matter. The problem arises when we have, as we often will in cases of counter-use, a number of disparate users who do not obviously form a joint intention with each other.

To see how creation by multiple disparate users might happen, let us consider an example which does not involve counter-use. The case I have in mind is one way in which a language can come to exist.[10] Imagine people at the boundary between two cultures communicating, as best they can, without a common language. Each starts out by using their native language (slowly and loudly) supplemented with bits of the other's language (as they become familiar), gestures, pointing, and a heavy reliance on context. As the communities interpenetrate there gradually stabilize conventions governing words and syntax. The need for gestures, for slow and loud speech, and for heavy reliance on context subsides. Simultaneously, and increasingly, the speakers using these new conventions come to conceive of themselves as having a common language. The language's matter, the material out of which it is made, is something like the linguistic conventions governing syntax and semantics. But it is distinct from those conventions since they may change over time while the language retains its identity. Eventually, speakers of the language produce dictionaries and grammars for it, teach their children its history (including how its syntactic and semantic

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8   One finds a similar elision in Preston's (2013) treatment of these issues. She is primarily discussing functions, not kinds, and writes, for example, that it seems that users 'can change the functions of items of material culture, or add functions in addition to those anticipated by the designer' (164). Changing functions but the same 'item.'

9   To anticipate an obvious objection, I agree that the point at which a new (kind of) object comes to exist is vague.

10   The example of language raises another issue which I shall skate over here, namely, the applicability of my account to abstract artifacts. An artifact is abstract when it is made out of abstract matter. 'Matter' has a functional meaning of something that is used as material rather than denoting occupancy of space or impenetrability.

conventions have changed over time) and establish authoritative language academies designed to stifle the very fluidity and flexibility that led to the creation of their language in the first place. This story, in fact, gives a rough and ready account of the development of Creole languages.[11]

In this example, the work by which the language is made is the uncoordinated labor of many people over time. How can this uncoordinated labor be seen as the imposition of mind onto matter? To put it crudely, whose mind? How do these multiple and disparate users, spread out in space and time, manage to be of 'one mind'? There are a number of philosophical approaches to collective action and joint intention that might be appealed to here. Margaret Gilbert, one of the chief theorists in this area, recognizes the need for an account of groups like the one in the language example:

> In many populations, particularly large ones, members do not all know of one another as individuals… Let us call such populations *distanced* populations, for the sake of a label. The question arises whether the members of distanced populations can participate in a joint commitment together and if so how such a commitment can be formed. (2014: 51)

I don't think joint commitment is the right tool, exactly, to describe what happens in the cases I am interested in but I cannot undertake the development of a better one here. In fact, the language I favor (though it is not accompanied by anything like a theory) is that of Benedict Anderson's (2006) 'imagined communities.' Gilbert considers, and rejects, this expression on the grounds that 'imagined' incorrectly suggests 'imaginary' and of course she is right. I don't think there is anything at all imaginary about the groups of people involved in creative counter-use. But the allusion to imagination does get at something important, something to do, perhaps, with a utopian feeling to the kinds of projects these groups may engage in.

Before going on to the second extension of my initial theory, I will mention an example that illustrates the phenomenon I just described. (In the next section, I will return to the example and offer a slightly different way of thinking of it.) The function of a slur is to derogate the group to which it is applied. Suppose that this function is an essential feature of such terms. Members of the derogated group may, in response, act, in the knowledge that indefinite others of them (an imagined community) are also so acting, to counter-use the slur. They counter-use it by using it in a non-derogatory way to apply to each other. By using one thing, the derogatory term, in a way at odds with its essential function, they bring into existence a new term, a word phonologically similar to the original slur but having a quite different function. Once the new term exists, using it in a non-derogatory way will no longer be a case of counter-use but of ordinary use. The semantic change in this case is different from regular semantic change in that the latter generally happens without counter-use; there is no new imposition of mind onto matter as there is with the appropriation of slurs. Hence, with regular semantic change, we are not required to conclude (though we may, on other grounds) that a new word comes into existence.

4. HISTORICITY

Let us return, to think about the second extension of the theory presented in section 2., to the core case of a single maker working on some matter with the intention of making an artifact of a certain kind out of it. Take, for example, an artisanal Swiss watchmaker, making beautiful and original one-off watches on commission. This is the sort of case the core account is developed to capture. There on her workbench are the materials out of which the watch is to be made: springs, cogs, diamonds, etc. The watchmaker sets to work on these materials with the goal of making an artifact of a certain kind, a watch. It is by working on the materials with that intention that mind – the concept *watch* that features in the artisan's creative intentions – gets imposed onto the matter, the result being a unified, single object, the watch, that has those materials as its matter but is distinct from them (it will persist even as the springs are replaced over time, etc.). The entire description of this situation is confined to the artisan and the materials on her workbench.

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11   See, for example, the chapter in Aitchison (2013) on language birth. I discuss languages as abstract artifacts at greater length in Evnine (2016: 145–59).

But of course, this is not actually the entire situation. There are many further factors at work in the background. The watchmaker comes to her trade through family inheritance and the family has operated as part of a long tradition of Swiss watchmaking that holds itself (formally or informally) to certain very high standards. There are the sources of the materials needed. The diamonds are 'blood diamonds,' the cogs are made by a small women-owned collaborative in Mumbai, financed by microloans, and the springs are mass produced by a sweatshop in Vietnam. There are the conditions of capitalism that allow someone to pay a huge amount for a custom-made luxury and allow the artisan to make a living selling custom-made watches. And clearly, one could go on indefinitely like this. When the artisan makes this particular watch at this particular time, it is like a nexus for all these forces, conditions, and histories. But do any of these factors have ontological implications in the way that the intention of the maker does? Does the fact that an artifact is generally produced as a nexus of a variety of historical and social forces mean that the artifact, *in itself*, is freighted with all of that? Or is it all just part of a history of the artifact which may have causally contributed to the existence and character of the watch but on which the watch does not *essentially* depend?

When introducing the idea of the imposition of mind onto matter above, I used the metaphor of the maker's intention's casting a shadow forward over the resulting object. The same metaphor can be used here. All sorts of circumstances, in addition to the maker's intention, cast a shadow over the object. Having resorted to fiction once, already, to help express my view, let me do so again. Here my inspiration comes from Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). The character who is speaking here, a wealthy collector, is ridiculing the idea I want, but in doing so, gives a good impression of that idea:

> Getting up, he hurried into his study, returned at once with two cigarette lighters which he set down on the coffee table. 'Look at these. Look the same, don't they? Well, listen. One has historicity in it.' He grinned at her. 'Pick them up. Go ahead. One's worth, oh, maybe forty or fifty thousand dollars on the collectors' market.'
>
> The girl gingerly picked up the two lighters and examined them.
>
> 'Don't you feel it?' he kidded her. 'The historicity?'
>
> She said, 'What is 'historicity'?'
>
> 'When a thing has history in it. Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn't. One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it?' He nudged her. 'You can't. You can't tell which is which. There's no 'mystical plasmic presence,' no 'aura' around it.' (63)

Historicity, a thing's 'having history in it,' is what I am after. According to me, however, *all* artifacts have historicity, not just ones involved in 'historic' events. And by 'history' I don't just mean things in the past. Contemporary social conditions also count.

Can we make any sense of this idea? Here is an (at best partially successful) attempt. Associated with any artifact is an indefinite set of all its properties. Some the object will have in virtue of its kind, others will reflect contingencies of its history. Not all of these properties will be known by anyone who makes or uses the artifact but, at least for artifact kinds that are still current, we may expect most makers and users to be aware of some subset of these properties and for some of those known, some number will be deemed *salient* by that person. It will not be the same known and salient properties for everyone. But consider some subset of the indefinite set of all an artifact's properties that are such that one would reasonably expect them to be widely known and considered salient. Call this set an artifact's Common Salient Properties set (CSP for short). Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there can be at least widespread consensus on at least core members of a CSP. In the example from Philip K. Dick above, for example, there is likely to be widespread agreement that *being in Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated* (in a possible world in which he was assassinated) is a salient property. For an ordinary, mass produced widget, the property of its having been made on a Tuesday will almost certainly be non-salient for most people, even if they happen to know it.

Now my claim might initially be put as follows. For any particular artifact A, A is essentially dependent on its having the properties in its CSP. By itself, this will yield counter-intuitive results. We will probably not want to say that Roosevelt's lighter becomes a numerically distinct object when it acquires the new salient property of being in his pocket when he was assassinated. So some story must be told about the kinds of changes an artifact's CSP can undergo to account for ordinary change over time. Finally, we can say that an artifact's CSP is its historicity and changes to its historicity beyond those permitted by ordinary change over time will result in the creation of a new object. (What happens to the original object will depend on the particular circumstances, as I shall illustrate below.) We cannot, of course, change which properties an object has had and which have been salient, but we can bestow new properties that go beyond those permitted by ordinary change over time and, most important, we can change which of its properties are salient. These are the ways in which counter-use is capable of creation.[12] Take my example of slurs from the previous section. Suppose one were to object to my treatment on the grounds that the derogatory force of slurs is a pragmatic rather than semantic feature. Hence, when a slur is appropriated its semantics remain the same so there are no good *semantic* grounds for saying we have a different word. Let it be so. If derogation is not a semantic feature of slurs, it is most certainly a salient fact about them that they are used to derogate. Counter-use, in the form of appropriation, changes that by ostentatiously using such words to create solidarity rather than division. Hence, it brings about the creation of a new word since the 'appropriated' word has a different CSP from the old one. What happens to the old word? In this case, the old word, homophonous with the new (though perhaps not quite, and distinguished by small differences in spelling), continues to exist. Which word one uses will depend on the circumstances and it may often be opaque to the user which one she is uttering. The phenomenon of someone's wanting to use the new one, but actually, because of circumstances, offensively using the old one, is well attested.

Can the identity of artifacts really be opaque to competent users? The wealthy collector in the quotation from Dick is making an argument that historicity (in his narrower sense, but how much more so in my broad sense) is bunk. The argument turns on the assumption that relevant properties of an object should be detectable directly by some kind of perceptual faculty. The fact that one cannot tell which of the lighters has historicity is evidence that no direct, perception-like knowledge is available to us. But the idea that the essential features of an artifact must be detectable without knowledge of its history should already be rejected even before one gets to historicity. Above, I asserted that a swamp-chair, something that appears to be a chair, created randomly when lightning strikes a fallen tree in a swamp, is not a chair. Given how it looks like a chair and can be used as a chair, one could not tell it was not a chair without knowing that it did not come into existence through the intentional action of an artisan. One might think that the implausibility of there being any swamp-chairs undermines the efficacy of the example. In actual fact, nothing looks like a chair just by accident. So think about the flint arrowheads in Stephenson's example. Take two shards of flint, to all intents and purposes indistinguishable. If one of the shards came to have its shape as the result of an agent's intentionally working on it to make an arrowhead, while the other just got chipped off a larger block by chance, then the first is (the matter of) an arrowhead and the second is not. It just isn't, though it could, conveniently, be used as an arrowhead and might even become (the matter of) one if so used in the right circumstances.[13]

Obviously the main debt incurred by this approach will be to say how the members of an artifact's CSP are to be determined. The answer, as indicated, involves reference to what can reasonably be expected to be known. When I described my basic account of artifacts in section 2., I called artifacts 'ideal objects' because of the way in which the intentional act of their being made is essential to them. The idea of historicity, understood in the manner suggested here, is an extension

12   I assume that salient conditions always include intended function and intended users (and non-users). Hence the characterization of counter-use here subsumes the one given in section 1.

13   Although writing of a more restricted class of entities, Carolyn Korsmeyer (2019) holds that some artifacts 'bring the past into the present' or 'put us in touch with the past.' Such sentiments, which seem to express something like an acceptance of historicity, are not uncommon among people writing about ruins and relics. See Korsmeyer for many examples. Such a view, I think, is not implausibly attributable to Heidegger with regard to all artifacts.

of the ideality of the artifacts. In the case of making, the ideality arises from the nature of the relevant properties – having been made with a certain intention. In the case of historicity, ideality enters the picture not through the properties in a CSP (though no doubt many of those properties will have to do with the mental states of people) but through the requirement that they can reasonably be expected to be known. The properties are there as potential objects of knowledge.

5. COUNTER-USE IN ACTION

Let me recapitulate and synthesize my suggestions so far. Historicity makes artifacts prime sites of ideological struggle. This insight lies behind Ahmed's characterization of 'queer use.' Many artifacts have, as parts of their historicities, oppressive social relations and other things that make the objects themselves offensive to many. (This point, without the ontological underpinnings I give it here, is well brought out in Liao and Huebner (2020).) Counter-use can attempt to change the very objects themselves into less offensive ones. This can happen because when users are related in the right way (as an imagined community) they can, through their disparate and uncoordinated actions, make changes in which properties of an object are salient.

Let me now try and make this less schematic by considering a couple of examples to complement the example of slurs that I discussed in the previous two sections. Think of an anti-slavery museum that is housed in a slave plantation. The plantation has intended uses and intended users. After the end of slavery it is no longer used by those users for those uses. Someone comes along, purchases the place and begins to display artifacts that convey how monstrous slavery is and people come to view the things displayed. At this point, the users are counter-using a slave plantation as a museum. But as a result of this counter-use, a new object, a museum, comes into existence. When *this* object is used as a museum, it is not counter-use but ordinary use. When people mount slavery-related displays and others come to view them, they are intended users who are using the museum in accord with its intended use. What happens to the original object, the slave plantation? In this case, the original object which was subject to counter-use does not exactly disappear. It becomes the matter for a new object that is made out of it. The intended uses and users of the *plantation* are on display themselves. The plantation itself is an exhibit in the new museum. This is quite different from a situation in which a slave plantation becomes, say, a modern art museum. In this case, the museum is made directly from the matter of which the planation was made – the buildings etc. But the planation itself no longer exists at all. Nor would we have, in the modern art museum, any counter-use at all. At no point was there a performative re-arrangement, by an imagined community, of the saliences of the former slave planation. The creation of the art museum is not accomplished through (counter-)use but by quite distinct mechanisms.

Within this context, we can actually accommodate several of the things that Ahmed says about queer use. Not only do we have the salient contrast between the intended users (white plantation owners and Black slaves) and the counter-users (people of all races intermingling in a common repudiation of slavery) and the contrast between the intended use (profitable production of some commodity) and the uses made by the counter-users (education, memorialization). The counter-use also 'makes use audible' (it forces on us the recognition of the original intended use and the use currently being made of it); it 'lingers on the material qualities of that which you are supposed to pass over' (the new use displays the material qualities of the planation; we see how small and poorly insulated the slave quarters are and how sumptuous the main house); it offers us 'an appreciation of the wrinkle or the scratch' (we see as marks of resistance the scrawled initials on the walls or as evidence of oppression the well-worn handle of a whip). Furthermore, since the counter-use is of the planation, which is being used as a museum, and not of the museum itself, which is in the process of being made by this counter-use, it is likely to be happening when there still exist people who value the original object highly. Hence it could be described as 'not being willing to receive the will of the colonizer' and it would place the counter-users 'in proximity to violence.'

As another example, we can consider a case discussed by Ahmed – squatting. Suppose there is a house that was built as a single-family home in a suburban area in the USA. We have some idea of its historicity. The erection of the suburbs, white flight, the assumption of whiteness by previously non-white people such as Italians and Poles, red lining, the attempt to shape a nuclear family out of – by the standards of the powerful – the unruly family structures of recent immigrants, and so on.[14] This house we are imagining has all that in its historicity – but it no longer has any people in it. The owners are very wealthy, live elsewhere, and keep the property empty as part of some tax write-off scheme. Now imagine that a loose-knit group of idealistic but down-on-their-luck young people, LGBTQ kids who have been kicked out of their family homes by their parents, see the empty house, break into it, and start living there, not as a nuclear family at all, but as a commune of some sort – truly an imagined community. They continue to use the structure as a place to live but the differences between their community and the nuclear family structure adds new salient properties to the building and subtract others. Ahmed (2019: 211) quotes Erika Doucette and Marty Huber (2008), who write that the 'range of uses for squatted buildings is often much wider than simply providing a place to live. These projects link ideals with material realities and utopias.' The kids in question make counter-use of the building, thereby displacing one set of ideals – those of the nuclear, white family with two children and a dog – with another set of ideals – those of oppressed people who dream of utopia, that revolve around the tradition, stretching back to antiquity, of people forming intentional communities. There is the place of LGBTQ people in our society, especially of children who find themselves rejected by those who should be the most accepting, their families; anti-capitalist protest in the Occupy movement, and so on. Their case is quite different from a case in which another nuclear family simply moves into the empty home and makes unauthorized use of it. This would not constitute counter-use and would not bring into existence any new thing.

Unlike the slave plantation and the museum, squatting does not require that the earlier historicity remain in place. The earlier historicity is not being made into an exhibit. What is important lies in the transformation, the take-over of one part of the artifactual environment, and its being put into the service of other ideals. The essential project of the intentional community, as such, does not require it to be created in the immediate space of a nuclear family, but it does require the loosening of the grip that the nuclear family holds and squatting, one particular route to an intentional community, is one way in which the utopian actually gets to work at this loosening. The result is, on my account, a genuinely new object. The old object depended essentially on its historicity for existence. The loss of that historicity, and the replacement of it by a new one, means the destruction of the old object and the creation of a new. But it does not bring into existence an object of a new *kind*. It only effects the transformation of one house into another, numerically distinct one.

6. COMPARISON OF COUNTER-USE AND QUEER USE

In this final section I shall offer some remarks about the relation of the concept I have attempted to theorize here to its inspiration, Ahmed's notion of queer use. I have argued that counter-use involves a certain kind of ontological transformation. But not all instances of this kind of ontological transformation will be cases of the kind Ahmed wishes to capture under the heading of queer use. I believe that for her, queer use is, all things considered, always something positive. But the same ontological processes I describe here are also at work in (bad) cases of cultural appropriation. There too it can happen that a group of the right kind can performatively counter-use something and thereby create something new in its place (or of which it is the matter).[15] 'Queer use,' then,

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14   See Feder (2007: 25–44) for a good account.

15   Some people are happy to let 'cultural appropriation' apply to 'good' cases as well as 'bad.' In that case, 'cultural appropriation' works roughly as a term for the ontological transformations that are common to (good) queer use and (bad) cultural appropriation. Walsh and Lopes (2009) discuss, under the heading of 'cultural appropriation,' the following 'good' case. A statue of the white Canadian settler Samuel de Champlain stands overlooking Ottawa. For many years, it also included a depiction of an indigenous scout but, for various reasons, in 1999 the scout part of the statue was removed to another location. The First Nations photographer Jeffrey Thomas began taking photographs of himself and his son Bear in the space that the scout had occupied. Subsequently, he placed an advertisement inviting anyone to come and have their photo taken there. The response by both First Nations and other people was enthusiastic. The statue, whose original function was to commemorate white settlement of the area, was, we might say, put to a decidedly queer use by Thomas and those who came to be photographed there.

does not designate a distinctive type of ontological transformation but would be one kind of counter-use, a kind that is politically inflected in a certain way.

So, not all instances of counter-use are instances of queer use. What about the converse? Do all cases of queer use entail the kind of transformation in terms of which I have characterized counter-use? I think the answer to this must be 'no.' There are several reasons why. For one, I have implied that counter-use requires an imagined community. But queer use as Ahmed describes it can be engaged in by a single individual whose efforts are not sufficient to effect an ontological transformation of the historicity of an ideal object. The transformation must re-arrange the saliences surrounding an artifact and since saliences are defined in terms of conditions a reasonable person could be expected to know and that are salient to many people, a lot of force is needed. Only in exceptional circumstances could a single person accomplish this. A second reason why not all queer use comes with ontological transformation, even when it is undertaken by an imagined community, is that the use in question may be interrupted or the transformation fail for other reasons. Not all attempts are successful. Finally, not all queer use is use of objects (just as, in fact, not all cases of cultural appropriation are cases of the appropriation of objects). Customs, modes of behavior, styles of speaking, and many other things of this sort can be put to queer use (or appropriated). But it is unclear, without further consideration, what the ontology of these things is and whether it follows the Aristotelian model I advocated for artifactual objects.

To conclude: I have presented a neo-Aristotelian theory of artifacts on which they are 'ideal' entities essentially tied to the way in which they come to be: through the imposition of the concept of their substantial kind onto their matter by the work done by the maker. I then described two extensions of the theory. The first allows that things can be made by the use of something by an imagined community, in Anderson's (2006) sense. Use of something that is not a K can impose the imagined community's 'mind' on it, making a K out of it. The second extension was to allow that more than a substantial kind can be essential to an artifact from the conditions that lead to its creation. Some, or all, of its historical conditions (I include contemporary conditions under that rubric) also individuate an artifact, expanding its ideality and making it a likely site of ideological conflict. Inspired by Sara Ahmed's concept of queer use, I deployed my expanded theory of artifacts to outline a phenomenon I call counter-use and I discussed several examples of this phenomenon. I have certainly issued several very important promissory notes – chiefly around what an imagined community is and how it acts to impose its 'mind,' and what historicity is and how it relates to artifacts. But my hope is that the paper may nonetheless be illuminating by bringing together ontological and socio-political conditions and processes. This seems a worthy task for social ontology.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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