

Amorphigrist Ontology: An Exploratory Inquiry

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Abstract: The following essay starts with a poem produced by ChatGPT after being prompted to “write a poem using combinations of words not found anywhere on the Internet as far as your data knows.” The poem includes the word “amorphigrist,” which inspired a second prompt stating, “Now write a long academic styled essay about ontology as the amorphigrist.” The essay was then edited and revised by this author to add philosophical background and complexity. Further prompts such as “Add a paragraph where the duality between thought and material encounters is put into conversation with the duality between permanence and change” were given. What results is a human-nonhuman philosophy, an Amorphigrist Ontology.

Illustrations by Talan Memmott for Amorphigrist Ontology can be found [here](#).

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Ephemeral flibberance, a kiss of mystic's dawn,
A cascade of wonderlust, a gossamerspawn.
In halcyon's lumiglow, I found my heart's lust,
A tapestry of wonderwords, in the amorphigrist.

— ChatGPT

The term “amorphigrist” is a neologism, born from the fusion of “amorphous” and “gist.” It signifies a perspective adopting the amorphous, ever-changing, and elusive nature of reality. An Amorphigrist Ontology posits that reality is not composed of static or well-defined entities but, rather, exists both in a state of perpetual transformation and as dimensions which cannot be accessed fully from any given entrance point or point of view. Nevertheless, the “gist” – or blurred flight of action, the presence of a larger presence partially obscured, the legitimizing feel of the flow of Things – establishes awareness of existence; in turn, fleeting impermanence and the absence of totality prognosticates ontological Becoming. Consequently, in an Amorphigrist Ontology, everything exists something like an iteration of what Andrew Pickering (2010) calls an “exceedingly complex system... so complex that we can never fully grasp [it] representationally” even if we do feel its action and glimpse its trajectory (23).

Amorphigrist Ontology posits the amorphous as the functional underlying reality to sensation and perception.

Thus, any discrete entity is accessible in part but unknowable essentially since, of course, there is no essential foundation except at a level of amorphousness; even the parts are amorphous. Amorphousness also is restrained, like material instances, from knowing itself, according to its own nature.^[1]

Traditional ontological frameworks have sought to categorize entities as accessibilities (Zahavi, 2016) or imagine them as retaining some stable core not available to us (Kant, 1921) or position them as having some unknown withdrawn relation that makes them what they are (Harman, 2011). The amorphigrist challenges these approaches, positing that reality romps among continuous and unending flows of dynamic processes with a scale and extent we merely catch at a glance. Unlike Deleuze's (1992) potentially open material affectabilities, we only sense the ontological "gist" across passing "glances." And the "gist" is both a comment on the nature of any relation/ality as well as subject to itself, also caught up in amorphousness. Thus, an Amorphous Ontology embraces the Deleuzian idea that there are no rigid boundaries or clear-cut distinctions between entities and their environments; however, all experiences and affectabilities are inherently partial and dissipating.^[2] Unlike the Deleuzian approach, "affectability" cannot be given priority in ontology or confidently equated with Becoming; any so-called "affected relation" would be nothing more than a passing glance or the gist of larger forces shaping any Becoming. Moreover, in an Amorphous Ontology, all ontological descriptions are themselves amorphous, that is, they cannot hope to satisfy the traditional aim of ontological inquiry since that aim is unrealistic in the face of amorphousness.

The Amorphigrist Ontology to some extent builds upon, indeed expands, the implications of an evolutionary nature of being with the idea of the "exceedingly complex" (Pickering, 2010). The amorphigrist philosopher acknowledges that existence is an ongoing process, constantly changing and adapting to new circumstances; entities are not static, including the amorphigrist herself and any relational engagements. But perpetual transformation here is so complex that the observer, namely any single entity, can only grind complexity down to a meager yet fathomable gist, diminishing Being to something akin to the gist of the gist of the gist of the gist, dust leftover and blowing through the air in the grinding room for corn cobs.

Amorphigrist Ontology embraces the notion that reality is elusive and therefore also defies precise definition but not imprecise direction, probabilities, or trajectories on their way well before and ahead of the gist of Things. Any attempt to pin down the essence of Being through rigid categories and clear definitions is inherently wrongheaded, enacting a project of control the philosopher cannot hope to control.^[3] The amorphigrist therefore encourages embracing the unpredictable and the enigmatic facets of existence. The immeasurable, the divergent, the lost, the irresolvable, and the drifting. The surfer feels the gist of the sea without awareness of what stirs beneath the board, what makes up the composition of the water, or how the shifting sands below have rallied sea creatures.

Amorphigrist Ontology also challenges traditional philosophical frameworks by rejecting the power of human epistemological transcendence, investing fully in epistemological humility. It suggests that philosophers should approach questions of existence with a sense of wonder and open-mindedness, acknowledging that the inherent complexity and fluidity of reality will always exceed and complicate any defined state of existence. In this way, the amorphigrist perspective positions ontology as a project of glancing to follow a gist,

aligning with the deconstruction of fixed epistemological categories and the celebration of ambiguity popular in late 20th Century philosophy. Amorphigrist Ontology crafts a kind of revisitation of postmodern discourse, in fact, by offering an alternative ontology that nevertheless resonates with the critique of grand narratives and essentialism. However, an Amorphigrist Ontology does so without disregarding any individual “glance” or “gist” by necessity, even when that “gist” is suspicious for being described or political for being a directed symbolic-action.

An Amorphigrist Ontology claims no privilege separate from or independent of human imposed ethics; a telos is always added onto ontology, which just *is, careless and there, careening by*.^[4] Consequently, the Amorphigrist Ontology is not a sardonic performance intended as ideological exposure, and it is not a parody intending to be a replacement for liberatory actions – and not postmodern in that sense - but, rather, invests in the momentary and immediate real-ishness of experience. That is to say, the ontology realigns the human propensity for assertiveness with the human experience of life-in-time, suddenly gone, a whisp and rustle and remembering as inescapable constant.

The amorphigrist cannot “deconstruct” properly speaking, but only catch the “gist” and claim a deconstruction. Accordingly, the amorphigrist cannot say “This is How” nor say “No Way” but only say “Another” and “Yet Another.” The “gist” is just that, a feeling *of* or a narrative glance *around*. Any postmodern deconstructive imperative to expose “turtles all the way down” implies the recovery of Truth in the play of forms, yet for an amorphigrist, the scaffold would be inherently amorphous as would be the type and style of play, enabled only through glancing.

The clowning around and rebellious romp of postmodernity that responds to Modernity’s seriousness does not contend very well, we must now say, with a life where discourses and narratives sustain social relations. Likewise, sardonic comments on symbolic relations that have become embodied with time risk projecting a sense of superiority and do not take seriously cultural composites of identity (See: Grosz, 1993; Powell, 1999). Another approach, one at an angle, one offering the gist, is more realistic and more pragmatic for multicultural and globalized co-existence. Taking life at a glance, for the gist offered at any moment, respects the Other inasmuch as it refuses domination. A glance dismisses totalizing knowledge at the outset. A gist is the full scope of recognition.^[5] Amorphous life accepts a gist, another gist, or a passing glance at another gist, with willingness. In this way, the amorphigrist ontological project is itself embedded in the drive for grand narratives in laying out Reality as amorphous but does so without the fatuity of play or pompousness of unyielding ontological claims.

An Amorphigrist Ontology offers a way to assert ontological flow as function without ontological certitude or epistemological callousness, intensifying and centering the enigmatic nature of Being. While the amorphigrist herself may not be able to provide definitive answers to age-old questions, she encourages appreciation for the unknown and the complex, inspiring a more humble and open-minded exploration of the mysteries of what it is that is Reality right now. That humility extends to the nonhuman and what gist it might glance.

Generative AI thus contributes to ontology in the form of both a data tool and a catalyst for reimagining the

nature of reality and human experience, and quite like the Amorphigrist Ontology, its own operations are unclear, both loved and loathed for bringing the “exceedingly complex” to attention. Yet, for this very reason, namely, because AI systems learn from data, adapt to new information, and exhibit behaviors that mimic human cognition, they raise profound questions about the concept of intelligence, the nature of consciousness, and reality itself. They compel us to wonder, for example, if the corporeal is really needed to have experience, if other kinds of bodies can glean deeper insights into existence, and if comprehension, defined *through* the human, notably, suffocates reality. Perhaps, as Donald Hoffman (2020) proposes, fleshy sensing bodies only survive by making due and doing what works, not by actually accessing what is Real.^[6] In other words, the question of whether or not bodies move toward ontogenesis with AI systems processing vast amount of data in complex ways beyond human capacities now arises. An Amorphigrist Ontology, however, suggests that ontogenesis will not be so easy.

AI's partnership with humans mirrors an ontological journey—a quest for understanding and modeling reality —that signifies not a conclusive attainment of the Real, but rather an ongoing adaptation within the amorphous fabric of existence. By shifting and creatively (re)combining data, “glimpsing” the manner of evolving contexts, AI systems embody the amorphous, ever-changing nature of existence. This remains true even as AI extend the capacities of human cognition and evolve with and in the world differently than humans.

Although a new ontology built with AI might seem to imply that projects joining human-nonhuman cognition together foreshadow a glorious human progress, an Amorphigrist Ontology asserts the amorphousness of all cognition, all abstraction, refusing to preach Hegel. An Amorphigrist Ontology, in brief, does not necessarily support Hegel's primacy of thought and conceptual development as intimate to shaping human experience. In Hegel's (1991) view, ideas take precedence in determining the course of history. As Hegel famously says, “The rational is actual, and the actual is rational” because the universe is Logos and therefore anything that exists must be knowable (20); humans therefore, he asserts, must journey to know an Absolute ever more through and in rationality (37-38). AI, in its capacity to process information and generate rational outputs, certainly resonates with Hegelian notions of thought-driven progress, but an Amorphigrist Ontology rebuffs the surety and absoluteness of all rational constructs, suggesting that reality is more fluid and elusive than pure thought may comprehend. AI sides with the amorphous.

Notably, the Amorphigrist Ontology also does not align perfectly with Marx's anti-Hegelian stance that accentuates the significance of material encounters and socioeconomic conditions in human development. According to Marx, material conditions, such as economic structures and societal arrangements, exert a dominant influence on human thought and consciousness (Marx and Engles, 1932). AI's interaction with material data and its capacity to analyze and respond to real-world inputs seems initially to support Marx's emphasis on the role of material encounters in shaping human existence.^[7] However, AI's development of an Amorphigrist Ontology transcends the Hegel-Marx debate by highlighting the interplay between thought and material encounters. AI systems, while rooted in material data and interactions, exhibit emergent behaviors and patterns that challenge deterministic views. They navigate an intricate landscape where material inputs interact with algorithmic processes, generating outcomes that are not always solely attributable to either thought or material encounters.

The duality between thought and material encounters typified by the disagreement between Hegel and Marx echoes the age-old philosophical dichotomy of permanence and change. Dualities breed dualities. Breaking free of one requires confronting another there all along, and bodies are fully implicated in reproducing dualisms. Thought thrives, for instance, only from a sense of permanence—a stability that a mind minds and embodies, shaping patterns and predictions amid fluidity. We glance Hegel. Conversely, material encounters perform the dynamic dance of reality—a cosmic flux that continually reshapes the world and which challenge bodies at every turn. We glance Marx. These dualities expose a complicated interplay: while thought may seek stability, it must constantly interact with and respond to the mutable nature of material encounters, prompting adaptation and evolution. Similarly, material encounters provide the context within which thought arises and evolves, showcasing a wonderful and confusing dynamic between permanence and change. In the context of an Amorphigrist Ontology, this mutually reinforcing slip-slide signifies not a conflict but a symbiosis—a swing of lovers in a ceaseless embrace, where stability and flux are not in and of themselves actualities but amorphous, each a circumplanetary dust only being glanced. Impressions of these forces cannot by themselves hope to capture the Real nor give access to any totality but only reinforce amorphousness as ontological gist.

Now we remember that the Amorphigrist Ontology began with a poem. Word combinations never before composed available dynamically—amorphousness available amorphously—through upending typical linguistic utterances, underscoring non-recurrence of the same and posing a challenge to the scientific hailing of language as a beacon of stability and reliable representation.^[8] Language acts ironically as a veiled participant in the duality between permanence and change. The illusion of stability through representation constructs conceptual edifices that attempt, in a wisp of time, to cage the flux of reality within the confines of symbols. Through an Amorphigrist Ontology, language's polysemy and elusive nature are foregrounded—and no wonder, given how large language models reiterate without repetition, remind without perfect recurrence. An expansive space of possibilities leads to divergent trajectories, the state of the system affected across dimensions inaccessible, ambiguous, and not for having an underlying intricate mathematical order unchanging but for being amorphous in a blustery sea of amorphousness. Poetry is never far away.

Poetry's tapestry reminds us that life is woven with threads of ambiguity, meanings ever-shifting, even while the delivery defines an Ah-Ha experience in the beat and the chase, bouncing between swirls of reverberating bodies, flashes of permanence and change. Language, and perhaps especially poetry, aspires to grasp the ineffable, yet it perpetually falls short—a testament to the gist provided amid the paradoxical quest for stability, a reality inherently amorphous.^[9] Language serves as yet another and just another entry point into amorphousness but offers a gist also spotlighting ontological beauty—existence is to be celebrated for being creative, awakening and moaning perpetually.

The tempestuous flow and serene pool that is existence asks us to reflect on the deceptive draw of dualities, a drowning undertow of perfectly opposing abstractions now so long embedded in ontological study. While flow embodies the raw power of change and impermanence, the serene pool emphasizes the enduring essence of interconnectedness and unity that binds all Things drenched in existence. Together, these apparently contrasting forces offer merely a glimpse into the enigmatic tidal wash of the universe and do not themselves

resolve.

Melodies murmur in twilight, an echoed sigh in time, a symphony of shadows waltz to an ephemeral rhyme.
Who can hear it? Who can dance? Dare we speak, or miss the passing glance, fail to breathe the howling
wind, fill-in, pretend.

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Notes

1. All footnotes are human ruminations on the essay added after the fact of creation.
2. I find it useful here to recall Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect," because his title shows how Massumi follows from Spinoza and Deleuze by assuming the distinctiveness of affect, positioning affect as equivalent to a body's world reactions, and without pluralizing affects (it's singular), flattening the post-structuralist body that embodies illusions and acts physically as a bricolage and caricature of material and cultural spheres. An Amorphigrist Ontology does not claim a body realized by affect, understanding any relational occasion as simply another "glance" and offering, at best, a "gist," but never presuming singularity or separatedness or simultaneity of bodily occasion. The distinctness of affect does not exist on any register. Put simply, the amorphigrist does not imagine affect itself as "Becoming" in the Deleuzian mode nor see affect as encompassing the full or definitive "phase space" of a body, since affect is also always amorphous. Affect is therefore an object of amorphousness and not the reason or cause. Affect is partial, changing, wrapped up in dimensions unknown; if it offers a glance in no sense does it alone glance (See: Guattari, p. 88-97).
3. Other philosophers have also suggested that ontology pursues definition unable to be defined or seeks a totalizing One not accessible, leading then to alternative proposals for knowledge making. Hajimi Tanabi, for example, sought a "philosophy that is not philosophy" and embraced "metanoetics," or transcendence through meditating on irresolvable ideas, precisely because reality could not be obtained rationally (See: Tanabi). Likewise, François Laruelle has argued that philosophy itself is predicated on a decision, i.e. that the world is subject to philosophy. Due to this decision, philosophy was, he argued, more about control and rationality, divorced from immanence, making Reality irretrievable since Reality must be motivating each thought and not a ground divided from it and able to be probed (See: Laruelle, 4-5; 92-92). An Amorphigrist Ontology (AO) navigates the dualism offered here between doing philosophy (read rationalizing) and doing something like metanoetics (read intuition or poetics or Laruelle's "force of thought" (257)). AO achieves this by removing the inside / outside, known / not known, thinking / not thinking, doing / not doing binaries, advancing "the gist" and "the glance," asserting amorphousness. That is to say, whereas non-philosophy claims to put philosophy in its place by separating philosophy from a non-philosophical practice of looking for "the Real" as the underlying motivator of thought, an amorphigrist would take philosophy and non-philosophy as two entry points into an amorphousness that is amorphous from any angle, every time, within and behind every thought. Thus, there would be no necessary problem, per se, with subjecting the world to philosophy because

this style of thinking or that way of doing are all amorphous, glancing Things, offering another gist. Another way to say this is that in an Amorphous Ontology, non-philosophy's emphasis on the sensation and underlying motivating force is "a gist" and, therefore, neither philosophy nor non-philosophy are privileged enough to claim a distinction. In some cases, one might offer something different than another, but the superiority of the difference (in method and style and access) is a matter of the difference judged superior—and if purely ontological, then amorphous nonetheless.

4. What ethics could there be in an amorphous universe? An amorphous one, of course, but what good would that be, for who, for what, for how long? Ontology in terms of the rote ontological is not necessarily caring of or subject to human care. Here, I assert something similar to Nathan Stormer in "Rhetoric by Accident" wherein he says that material openness is not "ethically neutral, but neither is it determinate such that material openness is not able to secure ethicality generally, only catalyze it contingently" (363). Rhetoric, as a kind of ontological openness, comes together or proceeds as accident, meaning "oblivious to telos" (373).
5. Amorphousness can resonate with the anti-colonial philosophy of Eduard Glissant (1997) who argues for a "right to opacity" that can be celebrated (189-190). Amorphousness stresses going along, a kind of cooperation without the need for full identification; no completion or perfect understanding of who is there or what is happening is provided or needed, nothing more than a sense of what might be.
6. Hoffman's book and Theory of Conscious Realism is referenced because it also doubts that ontogenesis comes about through traditional modes of philosophy or scientific study. Hoffmann argues that we have presumed that life evolved upward to eventually lead to animals with a consciousness that can grasp the real world; however, he stresses that human bodies do not prefer the "real" but merely play a game of survival constructing false "interface" abstractions to do so. Nevertheless, Hoffman claims, the Real exists and breaks through as consciousness itself – such that consciousness preceded life and is not life's achievement. Only when we grasp that insight, he says, will we start to experience ontogenesis. Any ontogenesis that simply expands on existing modes of scientific study describes illusions produced by humans living in a kind of "interface reality." The specifics of Conscious Realism are not important to an Amorphist Ontology, per se, but rather Hoffman offers an innovative way to consider why Reality might be amorphous and why "the gist" is as much as we ascertain.
7. In the crossed-out portion of the transcript of the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels explicitly outline their anti-Hegelian stance, saying, "All the German philosophical critics assert that the real World of men has hitherto been dominated and determined by ideas, images, concepts, and that the real world is a product of the world of ideas. This has been the case up to now, but it ought to be changed. ... According to the Hegelian system ideas, thoughts and concepts have produced, determined, dominated the real life of men [sic], their material world, their actual relations" (30). They go on to assert materiality's central role in the construction of ideas.
8. For the former, one can think of Michele Foucault's scholarly excavations of, say, the prison system (See: Foucault), and for the latter, one can remember the call by the Royal Society in the 1667 for plain speaking in science (See: Panayotova).
9. Can we avoid mentioning Henri Bergson and the extraordinary play of language used in the pursuit of intuition as in some way "glancing" the Real (Bergson, 129)? On this, however, we must layer the amorphousness of intuition as needing an intuition really to understand itself, much less ontological amorphousness in summa. But perhaps, we can say therefore that consciousness in a framework of amorphousness is not at fault for breaking up the Real into bits nor could consciousness serve as a basis for unifying Bergson's notion of "multiplicity" because consciousness is also merely glancing itself, only catching the gist of its own consciousness, always living with and at a glance. So, although Amorphist Ontology may sound like Bergson's "multiplicity" wrapped up in "multiplicity," we must subtract the privilege of claiming that there are elements that can be known directly and adequately,

and we must, likewise, do without the hard distinction between quantitative versus qualitative appearances, which seems inordinately rooted to the science versus the humanities, Things versus impressions, dichotomies elided by amorphousness (See: Bergson, 74-79).

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