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## **Questions for Harman/Latour Symposium Panel on 5 February 2008**

### **1. Could metaphysical and methodological reading of ANT live side by side?**

The question where were the microbes before Pasteur causes typically a heated debate whenever discussing Latour. And so it happened in our ANTHEM reading group. Harman (pp. 157–163) provides the answer. Microbes did not exist before Pasteur made them to exist, because everything that exists in Latourian conception is understood as an event resulting from its associations.

Harman argues denying entities any existence before they have been associated is a flaw in Latour's philosophy than can be, however, remedied by being consistent with its more fundamental principles. Harman (2007, p. 185) makes, however, an interesting distinction between philosophical and empirical thinking: "An object can only be measured or registered by its relations, not fully defined by them. Pragmatism has value as a method, but it fails as a metaphysical doctrine."

Could there be *both* methodological *and* metaphysical, two different readings of this controversy? To me the reading that Harman claims to be a mistake has been a quite insightful methodological tool.

### **References**

Harman, Graham (2007): Prince of Networks. Bruno Latour and Metaphysics. Unpublished manuscript.