On the Existence of Digital Objects

YUK HUI

FOREWORD BY BERNARD STIEGLER

How and why digital objects are best theorized through relations

Yuk Hui is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Culture and Aesthetics of Digital Media in Leuphana University in Germany.

Digital objects, in their simplest form, are data. They are also a new kind of industrial object that pervades every aspect of our life today—as online videos, images, text files, e-mails, blog posts, Facebook events. Yet, despite their ubiquity, the nature of digital objects remains unclear.

On the Existence of Digital Objects conducts a philosophical examination of digital objects and their organizing schema by creating a dialogue between Martin Heidegger and Gilbert Simondon, which Yuk Hui contextualizes within the history of computing. How can digital objects be understood according to individualization and individuation? Hui pursues this question through the history of ontology and the study of markup languages and Web ontologies; he investigates the existential structure of digital objects within their systems and milieux.

Interdisciplinary in philosophical and technical insights, Hui's work develops an original, productive way of thinking about the data and metadata that increasingly define our world.

"The object of this remarkable, groundbreaking book is as elegant as it is profound—to provide us with a radically objective account of the digital objects that populate our world, both on- and offline. *On the Existence of Digital Objects* is a truly innovative and philosophically grounded 'object oriented ontology' that is designed for and can scale to the increasingly complex orders of magnitude confronted in the twenty-first century." **—David J. Gunkel**, author of *The Machine Question*

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