

The Spectral Plain

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We habitually distinguish between conscious and non-conscious, sentient and non-sentient, alive and not-alive, and indeed between existing and not-existing. In this lecture I'm going to show how such distinctions cannot be thin or rigid if we factor in ecological awareness and contemporary science. I'm going to focus on one particular area, the difference between alive and not-alive, and I'm going to focus within that on a distinction we often make between people and puppets. I'm going to show that lifeforms inhabit a spectral region that is not about Life in some rigid, metaphysically defined sense. I call this region the Spectral Plain, as it is an expanded, deconstructed version of the Uncanny Valley famous in robotics design. The deep reason for the existence of the Spectral Plain is that reality as such is profoundly performative, not because things don't really exist, but because they do.

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