HOW THE WORLD OF THINGS WILL REPLACE THE WORLD OF PEOPLE (ON SPECULATIVE REALISM)

Primary tabs

View(active tab) What links here

Alexander Dugin

Today we will be discussing contemporary philosophy. In particular, speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. In my opinion, this is a very relevant topic.

I can admit that I have previously not entirely correctly interpreted speculative realism, beginning with Quentin Meillassoux. It seemed to me that his defense of new materialism, his struggle of the subject against the subject, his apologism for contingentiality, his proposal to in the framework of the philosophy of the Copernican Revolution to displace the subject from central positions into the periphery, in this there is something archaic, harkening back to 19th century materialism, non-critical positivism, plus his critique of Deleuze, whom he reproached for various “vitalisms.”

To be honest, all of this left me with the rather impetuous impression that we are dealing with a kind of “correction” of post-modernity with a more archaic, less critical view of intellectually imperfect materialism, a realism of past epochs.

I can say that this was a mistake. I did not understand Quentin Meillassoux correctly. I think that philosophy is such a thing for which we need to recognize our mistakes, or else lose any trust in ourselves.

In other words, it seemed to me that all phenomenology, all of Heideggerianism, Husserl and structuralism, including of the post-modern type - all of this was ignored by speculative realists, and I was not at all correct on this.

In fact, upon becoming better acquainted with their ideas, I have understood that they are not so naive, anachronous personages frightened by post-modernity, like Habermas. Habermas is an example of the backwards philosopher, who upon encountering post-modernity, saw that the spirit of the Enlightenment is in danger and started to swing in all directions in order to try to defend modernity.

I thought of speculative realism in this same spirit as some kind of “archaic modernity”, but in fact this is not the case.

Graham Harman puts everything into its place, because his path towards object-oriented ontology proceeds from Heidegger, corresponding to phenomenology, which is not ruled out, but is included in speculative realism. Speculative realism is not some kind of backsliding to modernity, but is the most genuine post-modernity. It is a continuation of post-modernity, its deepening, it is a move into the depth of post-modernity - a most avant-garde one, I would say.

In my opinion, this is serious - this moving into the depths of post-modernity, or continuing it in some sense, or the honing of its strategy. This is really relevant and everything falls into place.

As follows, when in object-oriented ontology the point is the rehabilitation or apologia of the object, the aspiration to liberate the object from the subject, the point is not a kind of pre-phenomenological realism, nor positivism or materialism, but a post-phenomenology. And this is a whole different matter.

Harman, proceeding from Heidegger, defines the object as Zuhandensein, i.e., as something “handy” or “ready-to-hand”, “handiness.”

In essence, this is an object in the sense of the Heideggerian model as an existential of the Dasein, as a Gestalt of Dasein, or if we employ the methodology of Husserl, is the noema, that which exists in the process of the intentional act. Thus, this is not any pre-phenomenological, naive, object in the likes of the one with which the materialists operated in the 19th century or even the 20th century. This is a more nuanced object.

Harman and others working with object-oriented ontology understand that when we speak about the object, we are speaking about some kind of field within Dasein, within the intentional act. Thus, the object at first glance is essentially a projection of our subjectivity.

But what subjectivity? This is Not Kantian subjectivity, the subjectivity of old, pre-phenomenology, but the new, Heideggerian subjectivity which includes the critique of subject as such. Heidegger’s destruction leads to a kind of disruption of the status of the classical subjectivity, the so-called “Platonic”, and builds a new view of the thinking presence, Dasein, and on this basis deconstructs traditional metaphysics.

As follows, the subjectivity with which object-oriented ontology deals already implies Dasein, i.e., the Heideggerian thinking presence which defines the world and objects as existentials. This is the object of basic existential experience. It all starts from here.

Thus, the object is not the hallucination of the classical subject, some kind of concept as in Hegel, a mental construct inscribed into the external world, but this object is some kind of basic existential experience, existential.

In order to substantiate the autonomy of the object and liquidate the subject, Harman liquidates not the subject, but Dasein. Recognizing that the object exists as an existenial of Dasein, he says “Great, let’s exclude this Dasein and commit to epoché with regards to Dasein”. This is an interesting proposal. And he says “let’s liberate the thing as a tool, as an instrument, noema, as something “handy”, Zuhandensein - let’s liberate it from the Dasein and preserve some kind of structure of its phenomenological description.”

But how can this be done?

To do so, it’s necessary to twist intentionality inside out. Not replace the object with Dasein, but to extinguish Dasein, the human, the thinking to such an extent that the phenomenological element of this thinking acquires independent significance. The instrument is livened in and by itself, not by strengthening its life but by weakening the life of Dasein.

The creation of object-oriented ontology, the transition to the world of things - which is needed for artificial intelligence, post-humanist philosophy, “silicon thinking”, Silicon Valley, silicon botox medicine, and so on - all of this replaces human consciousness and body as an instrument with prosthetics, with mechanical substitutes.

Thus, properly speaking, object-oriented ontology strives to create substitutes for consciousness.

Hence David Chalmers’ formula “the hard problem of consciousness”, which in my opinion loses the status of so-called official philosophy. As they say, the globalists are everywhere, and this “hard problem of consciousness” is ubiquitously promoted by such special foundations. This is the grave of philosophizing. Thus, it begins with analytical philosophy and ends philosophy as such. Those who pose the “hard problem of consciousness” are already, so to speak, written out of so-called “normal philosophy” and are on the path to that of silicon brains. This is already half way to [treating humans as] meat and to the final post-humanism. This means the institutional extinguishing of philosophy.

Normally, analytical philosophy is engaged in by institutions, while object-oriented ontology and speculative realism are the work of more avant-garde, marginal, extra-institutional figures, who are more promoted on this path and have gone ever further, are even more delusional - so to say, more fun, more ‘correct’, but more delusional.

Both Chalmers with his “hard problem of consciousness” and especially Harman try to metaphysically substantiate this, accepting that this is indeed a complex problem, but arguing that its complexity is between material structures, brain tissues, and material thinking wherever such might exist, and that in fact it’s simply necessary to thin the mechanical analysis of the process of thinking through a completely new philosophical course - to solve the hard problem of consciousness by means of destroying consciousness. If there is no consciousness, then there is no problem of consciousness. Their aim is not to show how this “non-material, subjective presence” is born out of material, but to show what the case will be when there is no such consciousness whatsoever. How will the brain function if it lives, but does not think? It lives its life but does not produce thoughts. This is what analytical philosophy leads to, gradually towards the extinguishing of philosophical alertness.

Object-oriented philosophers make this into a program aimed at extinguishing human thinking and to see what there will be, how a brain will think without consciousness. Thus, the “hard problem of consciousness” is solved through the annulment of consciousness and then, as they see it, we will understand everything as it is - how the human brain, and then non-human brain, can exist once consciousness is solved. The hard question of consciousness is liquidated through the liquidation of consciousness.

This is approximately the trajectory of Harman. He proposes to turn phenomenology inside out with regards to the object, but without attributing to the object the qualities of the subject. This is very important.

If one simply extinguishes the Dasein, then the very noema relating to the surrounding, as a so-to-speak conditional object, will be transformed, mutated. The less that Dasein is projected onto Zuhandensein, onto the tool, onto its own views, then this handiness, Zuhandensein will be conceived not from the point of view of the hand which wants to grab something, e.g., a hammer or any article. We see the latter as created for the hand to hammer in nails. The hammer does not have its own being besides as a handy instrument - the very word “handle” refers to the “hand”. It is an object, a tool.

But Harman proposes to consider things thusly: we agree to the handle, but not with the hand that takes it. Imagine a a hammer handle separated from the hand which takes it. Then the handle would bear a different name - it is a handle only because it is handy and in hand as an instrument. But if we say that the worker, the toiler who has artfully over the course of human history hammered nails, is dead and is no more, then what would the hammer be? What is the fate of the hammer if the worker who uses it no longer exists? In this case, the hammer will sooner or latter, in Harman’s view, live its own life. First, it will see that it consists of two parts - a handle which no one will ever again take and which can peacefully grow into a planer, the working desk onto which it’s been left. Or, conversely, its metal part long out of use can be welded if it touches other metals. It can be taken up by wind, it can pour sand, and so on. It can bask in nuclear waste when humanity destroys itself in nuclear war. The fate of this hammer, of this article, will continue in one way or another.

Subsequently, gradually there is the eversion inside out of all the existentials which are connected to this object. Thus begins the movement within this object, which is ensured by the reality of the extinguishing of Dasein - its consciousness, its subjectivization.

This is the phenomenological, Heideggerian foundation of object-oriented ontology: the object continues to be a constituted subject. Not the strong, hard subject which wields it - and this is where Deleuze’s proposal comes in - the paranoid subject which reinforces itself and dissects others, but one which begins to dissolve itself and becomes schizophrenic. This “subject”, according to Deleuze and Guattari, dissipates itself into schizo-masses. With this gradual self-denial, self-splitting, this kind of metaphysical suicide, Dasein begins to endow objects with its own decomposition which enlivens these objects. For instance, in David Lynch’s films, such as in the Twin Peaks series, the character speaks with his own leg. When the character gets lost in the woods, he suddenly starts to speak to his own leg, which responds with its own voice. In other words, the leg, a subordinate, mute, obedient thing, a slave to the human brain, suddenly demonstrates the qualities of autonomy, has its own preferences as to where to go, can be angry, and so on. This is, as object-oriented ontologists say, a kind of “parliament organs”, a “parliament of things” or…as Bruno Latour says the new ontologies of the creation of hybrids between subjects and objects. The talking leg is one example of the constitution of independent objects. Thus, the object of object-oriented ontology becomes a reality, the object acquires independence significance from the subject insofar as the subject is abolished. And this object itself will be extinguished.

The subject is not so much “done away with” as it is abandoned. In this case, the subject is understood not as a pre-phenomenological subject, but post-phenomenological, Dasein.

In other words, object-oriented ontology boils down to the process of the abolition of Dasein. This is a process. If we say that we shall abolish Dasein and that then we’ll have the object of object-oriented ontology, this is incorrect. If we abolish Dasein, then we do not have object-oriented ontology and we don’t have any objects. Rather, objects live and gain strength as vampiric black holes in reality or in virtuality which absorb the life not of the falling, dying Dasein, but through some kind of necrosis. This is the ontology of necrosis, the gradual onset of living tissues within a dead body. This process is what object-oriented ontology wants to fixate.

This introduction to speculative realism might be more penetrating, at least for me, insofar as previously I did not entirely correctly that this is the case.

I have discovered a new author, Reza Negarestani, who goes even further in this direction and topicizes necrosis to the point of beginning to speak of the post-human, infernal beings which will come into the world amidst the process of the enlivening of objects and the living incarnation of object-oriented ontology. I will talk about Reza Negarestani in the next episode of “Dugin’s Expertise.

Translation of Jafe Arnold

4pt