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THE SHORT HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT OF OBJECT-ORIENTED ONTOLOGY**

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Abstract: The article traces the history of the development of object-oriented ontology (OOO), a contemporary school of thought within post-continental philosophy, founded by Graham Harman in the late 1990s. It outlines OOO's emergence in the early works of Harman, its participation in speculative realism movement, its institutionalization as an independent philosophical direction and school of thought, and its expansion into different fields. The analysis is structured through a clear periodization, charting OOO's evolution from its inception as Harman's solitary project (1997–2006) to its participation in the birth of speculative realist movement and the subsequent formation of canonical OOO quartet alongside Levi Bryant, Ian Bogost, and Timothy Morton (2007–2011). The third period details OOO's institutionalization and prolific expansion beyond philosophy in ecology, art, architecture, archeology, religion, and other fields (2011–present). The article concludes by evaluating OOO's current state of maturity, acknowledging signs of internal diversification and theoretical reassessment among its founders, while asserting its enduring legacy as a distinct and influential school of thought that successfully challenged the anthropocentric paradigm of much preceding continental philosophy. The author makes a hypothesis about the beginning of fourth period.

Keywords: Graham Harman, Guerilla Metaphysics, Ian Bogost, Levi Bryant, Object-Oriented Ontology, Quadruple Object, Speculative Realism, Timothy Morton.

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Object-oriented philosophy (OOP), or object-oriented ontology (OOO) as a direction, intellectual movement, and school of thought, emerged over than a quarter of a century ago. However, despite its fame and influence (especially in the fields of environmental criticism, art, architecture, design, etc.), there have been no attempts to write the history of its formation and make a historical and philosophical analysis of this phenomenon in the philosophical research literature.

Partly due to this, its importance is underestimated in world philosophy, although, in my opinion, its founder, Graham Harman (b. 1968), deserves to occupy his place in the history of philosophy among first-rank thinkers, such as R. Descartes, I. Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, F. Nietzsche, L. Wittgenstein,

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M. Heidegger, and others. In the article under consideration, I will try to fill this gap and place OOO in the context of contemporary post-continental philosophy, trace the connections with other philosophers, trends, and schools, highlight the main stages of development and propose its periodization.

Harman first used the name object-oriented philosophy in April 1999 in his lecture at Brunel University of London. Among other participants, the French philosopher and social theorist Bruno Latour (1947–2022) was present; he later became a kind of godfather of OOP and Harman’s main intellectual sparring partner for many years. At that time, object-oriented philosophy was perceived as a less successful twin of actor-network theory (ANT) due to the similarity of its main ideas.¹

Object-oriented philosophy began as Graham Harman’s project, and for a long time he remained the only OO-philosopher. After the famous seminar at Goldsmiths College, University of London, which launched the speculative realist movement (2007), there was an explosion of interest in it. In 2008–2010, three more philosophers joined Harman’s project, forming the canonical quartet of object-oriented philosophers: Timothy Morton (b. 1968), Levi Bryant (b. 1974), and Ian Bogost (b. 1976). In 2009, Bryant proposed rebranding the project by changing the word “philosophy” to “ontology”—this is how the acronym OOO, or triple O, appeared.

OBJECT-ORIENTED PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-CONTINENTAL THOUGHT

Object-oriented ontology can be classified as a post-continental direction in philosophical thought. The prefix *post-* indicates a certain problematic character of this positioning—both within and outside the continental tradition. As John Mallarkey notes, the prefix *post-* means that the thinkers in this group “represent a real change in the intellectual current, one that both retains and abandons parts of what previously went under the rubric of ‘Continental philosophy’” (Mallarkey, 2007: 1). Mallarkey identifies four French thinkers—Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), Alain Badiou (b. 1937), Michel Henry (1922–2002), and François Laruelle (1937–2024)—as post-continental thinkers. However, Paul Ennis places the philosophers associated with OOO among the “post-continental voices” of contemporary philosophy

¹Sometimes this has caused real confusion. For example, in the *Speculative Grace: Bruno Latour and Object-Oriented Theology* (Miller, 2013), the object-oriented approach is understood exclusively as the actor-network theory.

(Ennis, 2010), although in another work he characterizes them as “continental realism” (Ennis, 2011).

Indeed, Harman and Bryant, by virtue of their philosophical training, belong to the (post)continental tradition: the former studied French phenomenology and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the latter studied Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan (1901–1981). Morton and Bogost came to philosophy from literary criticism, and they also turned to continental thought in their philosophical works. On the other hand, these philosophers seek to overcome the framework of continental thought, which they consider correlationist and anti-realist (Bryant et al., eds, 2011: 3–4). Harman even contrasts his approach with both the continental and analytic traditions (Harman, 2005: 1).

OOO has become part of several philosophical turns: speculative (Bryant et al., eds, 2011), ontological (Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017), and non-human turns (Grusin, 2015). And although the multitude of self-proclaimed “turns” has significantly diminished the significance of this approach to the history of philosophy, they can be interpreted as separate aspects of a change in the philosophical paradigm, drawing on Thomas Kuhn’s concept. All these “turns” are united by a critique of the anthropocentrism of the preceding philosophical paradigm. If Immanuel Kant carried out a “Copernican revolution” in philosophy, then OOO, with its guerrilla metaphysics, can be seen as participating in an “anti-Copernican coup.”

In their programmatic article “Towards a Speculative Philosophy,” Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman argue that “despite the vaunted anti-humanism,” thinkers from such areas of continental philosophy as phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and post-modernism “give us is less a critique of humanity’s place in the world, than a less sweeping critique of the self-enclosed Cartesian subject.” At the same time, human being remains at the center of these approaches, and reality in them appears as a “correlate of human thought,” which is why these areas of continental philosophy can be called anti-realistic. Thus, overcoming anthropocentrism begins only with speculative philosophy, to which OOO belongs (Bryant et al., eds, 2011: 2–3).

OBJECT-ORIENTED PHILOSOPHY BEGINS (1997–2006)

The founder of OOO, American philosopher Graham Harman, grew up in the Midwest, in the small town of Mount Vernon, Iowa. Little Graham’s interest in philosophy was instilled by his mother, who enrolled the 13–14-year-old boy in philosophy classes. By the age of 16, this interest became

more conscious, and Harman felt that “at heart I am a metaphysician” (Harman & Pinho, 2020). In 1990, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland and entered the Master of Philosophy program at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), where Harman’s primary field was phenomenology. In 1991, he defended his master’s thesis under the supervision of Prof. Alphonso Lingis (1933–2025), a distinguished American phenomenologist and translator of the works of Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) into English. All three had a major influence on Harman’s formation as a philosopher.

In 1996, Harman began his doctoral studies at DePaul University in Chicago. As early as 1991–1992, he had the idea that “the whole of Heidegger’s philosophy can be understood from the tool-analysis² of *Being and Time*” (Harman, Morozov & Myshkin, 2015: 13),³ and he wanted to demonstrate this in his doctoral research. However, until 1997, when his philosophical thinking changed, there was no hint of realist philosophy or an object-oriented approach in Harman’s work. When he began his doctoral studies, he had no idea how to implement this project; he was at an impasse and made a living by reviewing sports events. Unlike Lingis, whom Harman always spoke warmly of, he was never able to find common ground with his new supervisor, the young professor William McNeill (b. 1961). The conservative Heideggerian, McNeill was not too welcoming of his unorthodox interpretation of Heidegger: “Even in later years he could not introduce me to an audience without making snarky remarks” (ibid.). Harman still looks back on his time as a doctoral student in rather dark terms.

In the summer of 1997, Harman encountered two books that freed him “from Heidegger’s long shadow” (ibid.): *Process and Reality* (1929) by Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) and *On Essence* (1962) by the lesser-known Basque Catholic philosopher Javier Zubiri (1898–1983).

Alfred North Whitehead’s *Process and Reality* liberated me from the Kantian burden of Heidegger’s thinking, where the relationship between a human person and the world is thought as more important than the relationship between two inanimate objects... After Zubiri, I became convinced that any entity must be construed in a radically non-relational sense (ibid.: 13–14).

²Harman uses the term *tools* to refer to Heidegger’s *das Zeug*.

³Harman provides many biographical details of his early work in the preface to the Russian-language edition of *The Quadruple Object*.

In the autumn of that year, Harman made several attempts to put his ideas into writing. One such attempt was a lecture on the theory of objects in Heidegger and Whitehead, which he gave on Halloween evening to graduate students and several professors at his university (Harman, 2010: 36). The insight came at Christmas in 1997, when Harman was able to formulate the central tenet of object-oriented philosophy for the first time: “Far from being a coherent system, as Heidegger supposes, the world is partly connected by a chain of autonomous individual beings, each of which is partly hidden from the others” (Harman, Morozov & Myshkin, 2015: 14).

Later Harman explained how such philosophically opposed thinkers co-existed within his own approach:

Retrospectively, the tension between the two authors is obvious. But I was more intrigued by how they complemented each other. Although Javier Zubiri’s rejection of the relational approach clearly conflicted with Whitehead’s metaphysics, it was Whitehead who liberated me from the anthropocentric defect in Heidegger’s philosophy. The result of this combined influence was an early form of what is now known as object-oriented philosophy: a cosmological philosophy that deals with object-oriented relations, including humans as objects, and a philosophy in which objects are dark surpluses, never fully expressed in any relations (ibid.).

In addition to Whitehead and Zubiri, “the perfect medicine for my post-Heideggerian hangover” (Harman, 2010: 8) was reading Bruno Latour, whose works Harman first encountered in 1998. He entered into a correspondence with the French philosopher that marked the beginning of their friendship and intellectual competition.

On March 17, 1999, Harman successfully defended his doctoral thesis, entitled *Tool-Being: Elements of a Theory of Objects*. After slightly reworking the text of the dissertation, Harman published it as a monograph, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Harman, 2002). The first two chapters of the book constitute the very same unorthodox commentary on the tool-analysis and the main concepts of Heidegger’s philosophy (*Dasein*, *Ereignis*, being, time, truth, language, technology, etc.), whose essence is to shift the focus from *Dasein* and to see in the tool-analysis of the German philosopher “an ontology of *objects themselves*” (ibid.: 1). In the third chapter, Harman offered the first detailed sketch of object-oriented philosophy, turning to the ideas of Whitehead, Zubiri and Levinas. Two central concepts of object-oriented philosophy appear in this work: *withdraw*, which places the object in a *private vacuum*, isolating it from all direct

relations, and *philosophy of human access*, which he later replaced with the term *correlationism* proposed by Quentin Meillassoux.

After defending his dissertation, Harman entered the academic job market and sent his résumé to several dozen educational institutions.⁴ He received a response from only one — the American University in Cairo, Egypt, where he was offered the position of associate professor of philosophy. In addition to teaching and research, Harman also received an administrative position as vice provost for research. Cairo became his main place of work until 2016. In 2005, his second book, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Workshop of Things* (Harman, 2005), was published, which Harman described as a sequel to *Tool-Being*. Initially, this book consisted of two different manuscripts: one was devoted to the problem of perceiving objects in the context of carnal phenomenology, to which Harman refers Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Lingis. One of the chapters in the first part also discusses the phenomenology of Dominique Janicaud (1937–2002) and the theory of intentional objects of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), which would later play an important role in the formation of his own theory of objects.

The “guerrilla” character of Harman’s metaphysics indicates that it stands in opposition to the traditional metaphysical mainstream, against which the main philosophical criticism of metaphysics as ontotheology is deployed (and Harman agrees with this criticism). At the same time, however, his metaphysics is able to respond to this criticism from an unexpected angle, winning back the right of metaphysics to exist. Guerrilla metaphysics simultaneously attacks traditional metaphysics as ontotheology, on the one hand, and nonmetaphysical phenomenology (Janicaud) and post-metaphysics (Marion, Caputo) on the other.

In the second part, Harman first proposed the concept of *vicarious causation*, which replaced the less successful concept of *occasional cause* from *Tool-Being*. Among the sources that influenced the formation of this concept, one should mention the theology of Arabic medieval occasionalism, which Harman became acquainted with in Egypt. Vicarious causation was supposed to explain how objects removed from all relations into private vacuums interact with each other. Here he also proposed the theory of metaphor, which is key to all subsequent object-oriented philosophy, based on the works of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955).

⁴Harman told this story at the presentation of the second Russian-language edition of his book *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New “Theory of Everything”* at the Moscow branch of the Piotrovsky bookstore on February 22, 2024, which the author of the article attended.

This period in the history of object-oriented philosophy is associated with the individual efforts of Harman, to whom the image of a lone wolf fits perfectly. This image was ironically embodied in the confrontation between the Prince and the Wolf in the book of the same name (Latour et al., 2011), dedicated to the public discussion of Harman with Latour on the new metaphysics at London School of Economics (2008).⁵ By the time of the discussion, Harman had not yet acquired his own “pack,” but the process of forming a school had already begun.

AT THE ORIGINS OF SPECULATIVE REALISM (2007–2011)

The second period in the history of OOO is associated with the emergence of a group of Harman’s followers — the classic quartet of object-oriented philosophers. But it begins with the gathering of another quartet of philosophers — the co-founders of speculative realism, in which Harman played an important role.

In April 2006, at the annual congress of the Nordic Society for Phenomenology in Iceland, Harman, in his words, had “a big fight... with the ‘Husserlian mafia’” (Brassier et al., 2007: 376) about the interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy. And the search for like-minded people in the confrontation with the conservatively minded continental philosophical establishment became an urgent task for him. Shortly before this, the British philosopher Ray Brassier (b. 1965), who had invited Harman a year earlier to lecture at Middlesex University in London, drew his attention to the book *Après la finitude* (Meillassoux, 2006) by the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux (b. 1967). The idea to hold the workshop arose almost immediately.⁶ The British philosopher Ian Hamilton Grant (b. 1963) joined as the fourth participant.

The first workshop, entitled “Speculative Realism,” took place on 27 April 2007 at Goldsmiths College, University of London. It was co-sponsored by the philosophical journal *Collapse*, which published a full transcript in Volume 3 (2007) (Brassier et al., 2007). Brassier, Grant, Harman and Meillassoux (in order of presentation) were the speakers, and the Italian philosopher Alberto Toscano (b. 1977), representing Goldsmiths, served as a moderator. According to Harman, the title of the workshop was suggested

⁵Back in 1999, in one of his early works, Harman called Latour the King of Networks; in the new iteration, the King has become the Prince of Networks. In turn, the French philosopher ironically compared the critics pursuing him to wolves.

⁶Harman was in correspondence about organizing the seminar from Iceland.

by Brassier as a compromise between the participants' positions. An earlier version had been "Speculative Materialism," but this title did not suit Harman's own "ardently *anti*-materialist position" (Harman, 2018b: 13).

The second workshop of the group at the University of the West of England (April 24, 2009; Bristol, UK) already contained a reference to a certain split in its title—"Speculative Realism / Speculative Materialism." The same philosophers took part in the meeting, except for Meillassoux, whose article was presented by Toscano. The group never met again in this composition, and after some time, disagreements between its participants called into question the viability of the speculative realism movement.

Researchers and the participants of the movement themselves agree that speculative realists are substantively united by a common critical position toward the methods of the continental philosophy that preceded them, which Harman characterized as the *philosophy of human access*, Meillassoux as *correlationism*, and Brassier as the *argument of the Gem*.⁷ As a result, Meillassoux's term became the most widely used among speculative realists. The movement broke up into four independent directions:

- ◊ Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman);
- ◊ Speculative Materialism (Meillassoux);
- ◊ Transcendental Materialism, or Neo-Vitalism (Grant);
- ◊ Radical Nihilism (Brassier).⁸

Eventually, speculative realism continued to exist in the form of the Harman-Grant alliance,⁹ while Brassier and Meillassoux, recognizing each other as allies, separated from it.¹⁰

In 2011, in an interview with the Polish journal *Kronos*, Ray Brassier spoke quite harshly about speculative realism, in the creation of which he had participated:

The "speculative realist movement" exists only in the imaginations of a group of bloggers promoting an agenda for which I have no sympathy whatsoever:

⁷See more, Gratton, 2014; Harman, 2018b.

⁸Graham Harman has called Grant's direction *Vitalist Idealism*, and Brassier's — *Prometheanism* (ibid.).

⁹By the mid-2020s, this alliance seemed to have broken down, as indicated by the implacable criticism of speculative realists by Timothy Morton, who presented them as opponents of OOO (Morton, 2024a). The original article, titled "Hideous Gnosis Unbound: The Apotheosis of Speculative Realism," was published on December 20, 2024, in Morton's blog *Bring Me My Bow of Burning Gold* and removed from there in April 2025 during a rebranding. Thus, the text remains available only in Russian translation.

¹⁰For various interpretations of speculative realist alliances, see Žižek, 2012: 640; Harman, 2013: 23–26.

actor-network theory spiced with pan-psychist metaphysics and morsels of process philosophy.¹¹ [...] I agree with Deleuze's remark that ultimately the most basic task of philosophy is to impede stupidity, so I see little philosophical merit in a "movement" whose most signal achievement thus far is to have generated an online orgy of stupidity (cit. in: Gratton, 2014: 3).

Brassier was referring to the network of philosophical blogs through which "speculative realism gained influence and grew into a movement" (Pisarev & Morozov, 2020: 27). Of the Goldsmiths quartet, only Harman was active in them. Although the participants of the philosophical blogosphere viewed it positively as a useful communication platform that allowed them to present ideas at an early stage, provided the opportunity to receive a faster feedback from colleagues than in journal publications, and leveled academic hierarchies (Bryant et al., eds, 2011: 6–7), its downside was trolling, squabbling, and mutual insults (Gratton, 2014: 3). Brassier's skepticism had some reason.

However, it would be wrong to reduce speculative realism to blogs: gradually it began to receive more traditional forms of academic institutionalization. In 2010, the almanac *Speculations* began to be published, positioning itself as the first journal devoted to speculative realism (ed. by Paul Ennis). In January 2011, a collection entitled *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* was published (ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman). It was devoted to the discussion of the ideas of the quartet of speculative realists. In February 2011, Edinburgh University Press launched the series "Speculative Realism" (ed. by G. Harman).¹² The Polish journal *Kronos* published a thematic issue (№ 1 2012) on speculative realism with articles and Harman-Meillassoux debates. The Russian philosophical journal *Logos* published a thematic block of texts entitled "Speculative Realism" (No. 2 2013), as well as two issues of the so-called "Dark Logos" (No. 4–5 2019).

Speculative realism has been the subject of a number of monographs (Ennis, 2011; Gratton, 2014; Kozlova & Joy, 2016; Shaviro, 2014). Graham Harman attempted to survey the ideas of speculative realism three times (Harman, 2011a,b; 2013) before publishing his own comprehensive interpretation of this phenomenon in a separate monograph (Harman, 2018b). Two

¹¹This caricature depiction points in the direction of Graham Harman and Ian Hamilton Grant.

¹²By early 2025, the series already included 18 monographs, the last of which was published in January 2024. See the series page: <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/series-speculative-realism/>.

collections edited by Charlie Johns and Hilan Bensusan (Johns & Bensusan, 2024; Johns & Bensusan, 2025) aim to offer a kind of summation of more than fifteen years of the history of speculative realism.

The position of object-oriented ontology in the context of speculative realism is a kind of paradox. On the one hand, it is one of the directions of this broader movement. On the other hand, from a certain point of view, speculative realism can even be seen as a phenomenon that developed within the internal logic of OOO itself. At every fork in the road, OOO ended up prevailing in the struggle for the legacy of speculative realism. In the Harman-Grant alliance, OOO philosophers played the leading role.

Today, according to Bensusan, “What we have observed is a slow death [of speculative realism] not by crumbling, but by dissemination.” (Bensusan, 2025: 290). But this cannot be said of OOO, which continues its development and expansion into other spheres of human knowledge and activity, while maintaining a certain integrity and methodological rigor.

“WE’RE MORE POPULAR THAN DELEUZE NOW...”¹³

A year after the Goldsmiths workshop, object-oriented philosophy became the subject of another high-profile public event. In February 2008, London School of Economics hosted a one-day public debate between Graham Harman and Bruno Latour on the new metaphysics, entitled “Harman’s Review of Bruno Latour’s Empirical Metaphysics.” The discussion was focused on Harman’s manuscript of *The Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Harman, 2009). While acknowledging that “thanks to Latour, object-oriented philosophy has become possible” (ibid.: 228), Harman also pointed out the essential differences between the two theories. This debate influenced not only Harman’s work, but also Latour, who later proposed the concept of “object-oriented politics” (Latour, Porter, 2013). At that time, Harman was working to demarcate OOP from philosophical approaches that were in the same theoretical field. In addition to ANT, the closest “competitors” of OOO were Manuel DeLanda’s ontology (Harman, 2008) and Quentin Meillassoux’s speculative materialism (Harman, 2011a).

Shortly after the LSE debate, Harman was contacted by Levi Bryant, who became one of his early followers. Bryant graduated from Loyola University in Chicago and completed his doctorate in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (2004), published as a monograph, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze’s*

¹³Morton, 2024a. *The Beatles’* original line: “We’re more popular than Jesus now”: The Formation of the Object-Oriented Philosophers’ Quartet (2008–2011).

Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence (2008). He even practiced for a time as a Lacanian psychoanalyst (Ennis, 2010: 64). After completing his doctorate, Bryant took up a position as professor at Collin College in Dallas, Texas, where he continues to work today.

In 2008, the philosophers began corresponding, the reason for which was the preparation of *The Speculative Turn*, which Bryant and Nick Srnicek began, inspired by Meillassoux's book and Goldsmiths. They invited Harman to become the third editor of the project. Bryant knew nothing about object-oriented philosophy and entered an email dispute with Harman, trying to clarify this theory for himself. He "came out of the tail end of that debate transformed [by Harman's ideas]" (Bryant, 2011: x). By that time, Bryant had already been actively running his blog *Larval Subjects* and subsequently made it a platform for the active promotion of ideas of object-oriented philosophy and speculative philosophy.

Another member of the OOO quartet, Ian Bogost, had been interested in object-oriented philosophy much earlier than Bryant, but had become involved in the movement somewhat later, influenced by philosophical blogs. He majored in Comparative Literature at the University of California in Los Angeles (Master's degree in 2001, PhD in 2004). In 2003, Bogost co-founded the video game company Persuasive Games LLC with Gerard LaFond and began working on critical theory of video games, combining philosophical approaches with media and technology studies, programming, game design, and related fields. Bogost turned his attention to the work of Graham Harman "perhaps half a year before the publication of *Tool-Being*" (Gratton, 2020: 111). In his first monograph, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (2006), he applied some Harman's ideas to the analysis of video games and called OOP a "related concept" (Bogost, 2006: 5).

In 2008, Bogost took up a position as an Associate Professor in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture at Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, USA). After joining OOO, he became an organizer of the workshop on speculative realism entitled "Object-Oriented Ontology: A Symposium" in April 2010 (GIT, Atlanta). This workshop was the third in a series that began at Goldsmiths, but only Harman participated all three. Bryant and Bogost were also among the participants, as well as Steven Shaviri (b. 1954) and Eugene Tucker.¹⁴

¹⁴After the workshop. Shaviri and Tucker continued their work in speculative realism. They can be classified in the direction of Ian Hamilton Grant.

Timothy Morton was the last of the OOO quartet to join the movement. A native of London, he completed his doctoral thesis at Oxford University (UK) in 1992, after which he moved to the United States, where he taught at New York University (1993–1995) and the University of Colorado (1995–1999; 2000–2003). Morton’s academic career developed in the fields of literary criticism and cultural studies. He established himself as an expert on English Romanticism, in particular the works of Percy and Mary Shelley. He studied issues of consumption, diet, the human body, and the relationship between human beings and the environment in the literature of English Romanticism.

In 2003, Morton took up a professorship at the University of California in Davis, where he shifted the focus of his research to environmentalism and ecological criticism, initially in the literature of English Romanticism, but gradually broadening the context. He came to OOO as the author of two groundbreaking monographs on eco-criticism (Morton, 2007; 2010). He learned about object-oriented approach from Levi Bryant’s blog, which had reviewed the recently published *The Ecological Thought* (2010), and soon began to associate himself with this movement, actively participating in discussions and events.

In December 2010, the second OOO symposium (and the fourth since Goldsmiths) was held at the University of California in Los Angeles, under the title “Hello, Everything! Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology.” It was the first time that the OOO quartet gathered in one place. Harman gave an introductory talk on the distinction between OOO and speculative realism. In September 2011, the third symposium on object-oriented ontology (OOO III) was held at the private research university New School in New York, which finally secured the institutional leadership of object-oriented philosophers among speculative realists. In addition to the quartet, Shaviro and Tucker also took part in the OOO III.

PUBLICATION OF KEY WORKS ON OBJECT-ORIENTED PHILOSOPHY (2011–2013)

The third period in the history of OOO begins with the publication of key works by members of the classical quartet. For Morton, Bryant, and Bogost, they were the first monographs in which these authors directly declared themselves to be object-oriented philosophers.

In July 2011, Graham Harman published one of his most important works, *The Quadruple Object* (Harman, 2011b). A year earlier, this text was published in French for the “MétaphysiqueS” series of Presses Universitaires

de France (ed. by Q. Meillassoux). Harman, in a condensed format, represented the basic principles of OOO, proposing a model of the quadruple object consisting of a real (RO) and a sensual object (SO), as well as real (RQ) and sensual qualities (SQ). In his model, he integrated the ideas of E. Husserl (discussing SO, SQ, RQ), M. Heidegger (SO, RO) and G. W. Leibniz (RO, RQ). Harman also placed OOO in the context of speculative realism. In particular, he pointed out the difference between his approach and panpsychism, which was developed by speculative realists of the Grant's direction (for example, S. Shaviro and others), contrasting it with the *polypsychism* of OOO.

In November 2011, Levi Bryant published his monograph *The Democracy of Objects* in the "New Metaphysics" series of Open Humanities Press (ed. by G. Harman and B. Latour). According to Bryant, "Every page of the book that follows is inspired by Harman's work, such that it is impossible to cite all the ways in which he has influenced my thinking" (Bryant, 2011: x). The central topic of the book — "the democracy of objects" — is most fully explored in the concept of *flat ontology*, a principle that denies any hierarchies of being. In 2014, Bryant moved away from the basic principles of OOO. In his second monograph, *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media* ("Speculative Realism" Series), he partly returned to a Deleuzian perspective and proposed a new approach: machine-oriented ontology (MOO). The main difference between MOO and OOO is that Harman's objects do not directly interact with one another, whereas Bryant's machines, on the contrary, "can directly affect one another" (Bryant, 2014: 58).

In March 2012, Ian Bogost published his monograph *Alien Phenomenology, or What is it Like to Be a Thing?* In his approach, which he called alien phenomenology, Bogost, relying on the anti-correlationism common to OOO, extends the phenomenological concept of intersubjectivity not only to humans but to all living beings and even things. The book discusses and develops Harman's key concepts: ontography, metaphor, carpentry,¹⁵ etc. Bogost also rethinks the concept of flat ontology and proposes the notion *tiny ontology* (Bogost, 2012).

In 2013, Timothy Morton published two monographs at once: *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World and Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, and Causality* ("New Metaphysics" Series). A year before, Morton

¹⁵The subtitle of the *Guerilla Metaphysics* is "Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things." Carpentry indicates the constructivist character of the work of the speculative philosopher.

left California and moved to Texas, where he took up the Rita Shea Guffey Chair in English at Rice University, Houston. In *Hyperobjects*, he directly calls himself an “object-oriented ontologist” (Morton, 2013a: 3). Both books are an application of the OOO to concepts previously proposed by Morton, such as hyperobjects and dark cognition (both have existed since 2010).

THE PEAK OF OBJECT-ORIENTED ONTOLOGY POPULARITY (2016–2021)

The academic activity of OOO philosophers continued to accelerate. In the period 2011–2023, Harman published 16 monographs and collections of articles (2 co-authored), Morton published eight (one co-authored), and Bogost one.¹⁶ Harman also headed two academic series—“New Metaphysics” (with B. Latour) and “Speculative Realism.” Bryant and the founding director of Punctum Book Eileen Joy, attempted to launch a journal dedicated especially to OOO.¹⁷ Since 2019, the peer-reviewed open access journal *Open Philosophy* (one issue per year by De Gruyter Brill) has become a new platform for academic discussion of OOO ideas, where G. Harman became the editor-in-chief.¹⁸ This journal publishes works by a new generation of philosophers who associate themselves with the ideas of OOO—Nicky Young, Arjen Kleinherenbrink, Jordi Vivaldi, and others.

In 2016, Harman returned to the United States and took up a professorship at the prestigious Southern California Institute of Architecture in Los Angeles (SCI-Arc). In August of the same year, he, along with Tim Morton, was included in the list of the top 50 best living philosophers according to the venture company *The Best Schools*. A year earlier, in 2015, Harman had been included in the top 100 most influential people in the field of art according to the influential magazine *Art Review* (Morton was included in 2016). In 2023, the publication of *The Graham Harman Reader* (ed.

¹⁶Of course, quantitative characteristics in philosophy cannot be considered the main argument for the success of a school. But for comparison, Harman’s colleagues in speculative realism R. Brassier and I. H. Grant have not published a single new monograph or collection of articles since 2006; Q. Meillassoux published—3.

¹⁷The journal *O-Zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented Studies* published only one issue in 2014, dedicated to ecology. It is difficult to judge the reasons for the unsuccessful launch of the journal. Perhaps they relate to the fact that *O-Zone* duplicated the almanac *Speculations*, published by the same publishing house *Punctum Book*.

¹⁸Three special issues have already been published with the general subtitle “Object-Oriented Ontology and Its Critics” (ed. by G. Harman, 2019, 2020, 2021), as well as a special issue “Towards a Dialogue between Object-Oriented Ontology and Science” (ed. by A. R. Sandru, F. G. L. Ortiz and Z. F. Mainen, 2024).

by J. Cogburn and N. Young) became a kind of recognition of Harman's merits as a systematic philosopher.

OOO's academic success quickly converted into its popularity among a wider audience of non-fiction readers. In 2015, Ian Bogost and writer and editor Christopher Schaberg launched the "Object Lessons" project about the "hidden life of ordinary things."¹⁹ Its founding advisory board also included G. Harman, T. Morton, and others. The project was a series of non-fiction micrographs from Bloomsbury and a series of journalistic essays in the online version of one of the oldest American magazines, *The Atlantic*. Each micrograph tells the story of one object from a non-anthropocentric perspective, and the essays tell individual aspects of this story. The heroes of the books were a TV remote control, a golf ball, a drone, a refrigerator, a hotel, whale songs, potatoes, wine, the ocean, jeans, mushrooms, OK, an email, and many others. In total, the series, which continues to this day, has published more than 80 micrographs and more than 200 essays.

The British-American media giant *Penguin Random House*, which is aimed at a mass audience, included OOO in the publishing program of its division, *Pelican*, which specializes in non-fiction literature. The new "Pelican Books" series has published *Being Ecological* (Morton, 2018), and *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New "Theory of Everything"* (Harman, 2018a). Morton's book opened the series, and Harman's was the eighth one. Both authors offered the mass reader a popular and systematic presentation of their philosophical ideas, previously developed in other works. In 2021, the new *Penguin Random House* series, "Green Ideas," by *Penguin Classics*, published *All Art Is Ecological* (Morton, 2021). It became the third in the series after eco-activist Greta Thunberg and journalist Naomi Klein. The 2017, 2018 and 2021 editions marked the peak of the public presentation of the OOO ideas.

EXPANSION OF OBJECT-ORIENTED PHILOSOPHY INTO OTHER AREAS (2011–2023)

In his *Object-Oriented Ontology* (2018), Harman set the ironic, yet ambitious goal of demonstrating the potential of OOO as a new "theory of everything" that can be applied to a wide range of human thought and activity—the humanities, social and political sciences, natural science (especially in everything related to environmental issues), art, architecture,

¹⁹See more, <https://objectsubjectobjects.com/>.

popular culture, etc. However, interest in OOO in these fields had emerged long before the book's publication.

Ecology. In May 2014, Timothy Morton gave the prestigious Wellek Lectures on dark ecology at the University of California, Irvine. He had been developing this concept in his works since 2005. In *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), Morton contrasted dark ecology with the activist strategy of deep ecology. The latter effectively deifies Nature and presents humans as parasites on the body of the planet. Morton rejects the concept of Nature and proposes instead to view the surrounding world as a symbiotic *mesh* of coexistence between humans, non-human living beings, and inanimate objects. In autumn 2014, inspired by Morton's ideas, the Dutch art collective *Sonic Acts* together with Hilde Methi, a curator from Kirkenes (Norway), and in collaboration with Norwegian and Russian partners, launched a three-year project, "Dark Ecology," in the border zone of the Norwegian and Russian Arctic. The goal of the project was a scientific, philosophical, and artistic understanding of the "intimate interconnections" of humans with other non-human beings — "iron ore, snowflakes, plankton or radiation" (Dark Ecology, 2017). Philosophers, ecologists, artists, and sound designers took part in the project.

The first expedition of "Dark Ecology" took place in October 2014 and traveled along the route Kirkenes-Nikel-Zapolyarny-Kirkenes. Morton visited the Nickel steel plant as part of a group and acted as a key speaker with a number of lectures during the project. The second expedition proceeded in November 2015, with Murmansk added to the itinerary. The key speaker at this stage was Graham Harman. The third expedition was happened in June 2016 and included a trip to Pasvik and Kirkenes, as well as the vicinity of Nickel. Each trip involved around 40 and 60 people. In 2016, Morton published the book *Dark Ecology: Towards a Logic of Future Coexistence* (Morton, 2016).

The Dark Ecology project (2014–2016) focused on the study of meshes of coexistence and their dark cognition in the context of the post-industrial landscape of the Norwegian and Russian Arctic. The idea of dark ecology continued to influence the eco-art agenda after the project ended. In spring 2018, it was included in the program of the festivals "Inversion" (Murmansk), "SALT ART" (Oslo), "Terminal B" (Kirkenes). It also became part of the international eco-art projects "Living Earth" (2018) and "Changing Weathers" (2014–2020).

Art. Aesthetics plays a crucial role in OOO as "the root of all philosophy" (Harman, 2018a: 59). It becomes one of the key types of indirect access to

real objects. This explains the keen interest of OOO philosophers, especially Graham Harman and Timothy Morton, in art as a way of understanding reality, both in its theoretical aspect and in practice. In turn, representatives of the art world reciprocated by inviting philosophers as experts and involving them in their art projects. Already in *Guerrilla Metaphysics* (2005), Harman began to develop his theory of metaphor, drawing on the early ideas of J. Ortega y Gasset. He addressed the problem of paraphrase in literature in his works on H. P. Lovecraft (Harman, 2012). The approaches outlined in several articles in 2014, which engaged the works of American art critics Clement Greenberg (1909–1994) and Michael Fried (b. 1939), were developed in the chapters on aesthetics of *Dante's Broken Hammer* (Harman, 2016), Chapter 2 of *Object-Oriented Ontology* (Harman, 2018a), and *Art and Objects* (Harman, 2020a). Harman's main thesis is: "All art is theatrical." This means that the art object (including literary metaphor), as a real object, is withdrawn from direct access and the beholder must take its place and perform it: "For this reason, artworks are all compounds that consist of an art object plus a beholder" (Cogburn & Young, 2023: 1365).

Morton expressed this theatricality in his own way. For him, all art is ecological, because "the experience of art provides a model for the kind of coexistence ecological ethics and politics wants to achieve between humans and nonhumans" (Morton, 2021: 10–11). Morton developed the aesthetics of OOO in close connection with environmental criticism in his works (Morton, 2013a,b; 2016; 2021, etc.). In parallel with this, he actively participated in various art projects. In addition to the already mentioned "Dark Ecology," the most famous of these include a number of installations by Justin Brice Guariglia—"We Are the Asteroid" and "Baked Alaska" (both 2018); "Human Kind Ness" (2019), for which Morton prepared the text. He also wrote the libretto for the opera "Time, Time, Time" (dir. by J. Walsh, 2019) and performed one of the roles in it.

OOO has become a source of ideas and inspiration for many artists. One of the first was the Polish artist Joanna Malinowska with her work "Time of Guerrilla Metaphysics" (2009). Icelandic singer Björk entered an email correspondence with Morton, which later became part of her solo exhibition at the MoMA in New York (2015) and was included in the publication *Björk. Archives* (2015). Among the artists whose works were inspired by OOO's ideas are Eduardo Navarro, Pamela Rosenkranz, Pierre Huyghe, Olafur Eliasson, among others. In 2019, American director, producer, and screenwriter Adam McKay, inspired by Morton's concept of hyperobjects, created the Hyperobject Industries studio. The director's

idea for the studio's first film, "Don't Look Up" (dir. by A. McKay, 2021), was inspired by "We Are the Asteroid."

Architecture and design. Graham Harman entered the debate on architectural theory several years before taking up his position at SCI-Arc. In June 2013, a workshop entitled "Is There an Object-Oriented Architecture?" was held at the headquarters of the Swedenborg Society in London. The discussion was organized by Joseph Bedford, director of the "Architecture Exchange," and Jessica Reynolds, co-founder of "vPRR Architects." In addition to Graham Harman, the participants included such theorists of architecture as Adam Sharr, Lorens Holm, Jonathan Hale, Peg Rawes, Patrick Lynch, and Peter Carl. In 2020, following the discussion, a collection *Is There an Object-Oriented Architecture? Engaging Graham Harman* was published (Bedford, 2020).

The discussion continued in October 2016 at the symposium "The Secret Life of Buildings," organized by the School of Architecture at University of Texas, Austin. The conference was attended by the OOO quartet, as well as Albena Yaneva, who was one of the first to apply ANT to architecture. In 2018, a collection of the same name was published (Benedikt & Beig, eds., 2018). Among other things, it contained a polemic exchange between Graham Harman and Patrik Schumacher (b. 1961), the author of the concept of *parametricism* in architecture (2008) and director of Zaha Hadid Architects.

Harman's work at SCI-Arc gave impetus to the application of OOO in architecture and design. One of the striking examples is the work of Tom Wiscombe, founding director of *Tom Wiscombe Architecture*. In addition to architectural projects, Wiscombe initiated several publications that discussed the application of OOO in architecture: *Objects of the Model World* (2021) and *Conversations on Architecture and Objects* (2021) with the participation of G. Harman, T. Morton, and others.

In 2022, Harman published a summary of the above discussions and a response to critics in *Architecture and Objects* (2022). He analyzed three major waves of influence of philosophical ideas on architectural theory over the past sixty years, associated with the names of M. Heidegger, J. Derrida, and G. Deleuze, and proposed his own approach as a fourth alternative.

In Russia, the OOO theory has been applied to design by Oleg Paschenko, a media designer, digital artist, and lecturer at HSE School of Design in Moscow (Paschenko, nodate).

Archaeology. OOO's expansion into archaeology began in 2014, when Graham Harman delivered the prestigious Haragan Lecture at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. The topic of time in OOO repeatedly came up during

the lectures. The TexTech professor of archaeology Christopher Whitmore invited Harman to discuss it separately and to examine several archaeological examples from the standpoint of OOO theory. The result of the discussion was a joint monograph by Harman and Whitmore, *Objects Untimely: Object-Oriented Philosophy and Archaeology* (Harman & Witmore, 2023). Harman took the opportunity to clarify one of OOO's major weaknesses: the problem of time. He develops an argument that time is generated by objects rather than encompassed by them, discussing the processual approaches to time of M. Heidegger, H. Bergson, A. N. Whitehead, G. Simondon and G. Deleuze, the concept of the unreality of time by J. M. E. McTaggart, and responding to criticism from P. Wolfendale, P. Gratton and A. Kleinherenbrink.

The influence of OOO on archaeology can also be found in the collection *Contemporary Philosophies for Maritime Archaeology: Flat Ontologies, Oceanic Thinking, and the Anthropocene* (2023). It contains articles by G. Harman and C. Whitmore, as well as one by one of the friendly critics of the object-oriented approach in archaeology, who helped in the work on *Objects Untimely*, the Norwegian archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen.

Religion. The expansion of object-oriented ontology into the field of religion is primarily associated with Timothy Morton, who openly declared himself a religious person. Graham Harman and Ian Bogost can be described as indifferent to religious issues, and Levi Bryant is openly hostile toward theistic religiosity.

Morton identified as Buddhist for quite a long time, he belonged to the Drukpa Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism and practiced Mahamudra and Dzogchen. Apparently, Morton received Buddhist initiations, as indicated by the presence of his sacred Tibetan name — *Gyurmë*. Having become acquainted with the object-oriented approach, he found many intersections with Buddhist philosophy. In 2010, he even set the ambitious task of combining their basic principles in a project of Object-Oriented Buddhism.

Morton turns to the ideas of the Indian philosopher Nāgārjuna (2nd–3rd centuries) in *Realistic Magic* (2013), developing the topic of indirect (vicarious) causality (along with medieval Arabic occasionalism). In the same work, Morton examines his own concept of *interobjectivity* through the Buddhist concept of *bardo* (Morton, 2013b: 177–184, 196–198). In 2015, he co-authored the book *Nothingness: Three Introductions to Buddhism* (Boon et al., 2015) with the writer and journalist Marcus Boon and the specialist in critical and cultural theory Eric Cazdyn.

In March 2023, Morton experienced a religious conversion and became a born-again Christian.²⁰ In his book *Hell: In Search of a Christian Ecology* (2024), he turns to an unorthodox Christian theological perspective without any strong references to Buddhism. Together with his wife, literary critic and writer, Trina Baldis, he maintains a Substack blog on theological topics.

Russian theologian and philosopher Andrey Shishkov also applies the ideas of OOO to theology (Shishkov, 2021; Shishkov, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Summing up more than a quarter of a century of history of object-oriented philosophy/ontology, it can be said that despite its youth, there is no doubt that it has already established itself as an independent philosophical direction and school of thought. Its formation can be divided into three main stages, which, by analogy, may be compared to periods of human life.

In the first stage (1997–2006), Graham Harman single-handedly developed the basic principles of OOP, taking the first timid steps in a new direction with the support of his “godfather” Bruno Latour and gradually separating himself from the “parental figures”—the French phenomenologists, Alphonso Lingis and, of course, Martin Heidegger. In the short but stormy period of “puberty” (2007–2011), OOP sought to challenge the “adults”—the continental philosophical establishment, startling it with the scandalousness of philosophical blogs. During this time, the “teenage gang” of speculative realists emerged and disintegrated. It was replaced by a daring quartet of object-oriented philosophers, who also did not last long in full complement.

Then came a period of maturity (since 2011), associated with the institutionalization of OOO and its expansion into other areas of knowledge and activity—art, architecture, design, archeology, ecology, religion, etc. Object-oriented philosophers, first of all, Harman and Morton, received well-deserved recognition, although it came mainly from outside philosophical circles. A sign of maturity can also be called attention to criticism. For example, Harman published a book devoted to careful analysis and response to critics (Harman, 2020b). Largely due to Harman’s charisma and organizational talent, OOO has acquired younger followers, among whom Niki Young from the University of Malta is considered the most promising.

²⁰The term “born-again Christian” is commonly used in Evangelical, Baptist, and other Christian traditions where water baptism is considered insufficient for a full spiritual life. Morton calls himself this in: Morton, 2024b: XXVIII.

Continuing the analogy, one might wonder whether OOO is going through a “midlife crisis” associated with a reassessment of values. Some signs of such a crisis can be identified. Levi Bryant, having rethought his approach as a machine-oriented ontology (Bryant, 2014), has since offered no further significant development of his ideas. His blog *Larval Subjects*, which he actively maintained all these years, has remained inactive since September 15, 2022. Ian Bogost continues to publish the “Object Lessons” series, but already in his latest monograph (Bogost, 2016), which Harman characterized as “something like an OOO ethics, or at least an OOO art of living” (Harman, 2018b: 223), he appears to distance himself from the conceptual apparatus of OOO. Tim Morton, having experienced a religious conversion in 2023, reinvented himself as a Christian theologian in 2025, starting from a blank state. In April 2025, he deleted his blog *Ecology without Nature*, where he had been expounding his thoughts on various aspects of OOO (including Object-Oriented Buddhism) for a decade and a half. However, Morton still associates himself with the object-oriented approach and even promised to host the fourth OOO workshop at Rice University (the last one took place in New York in 2011) (Morton, 2024a).

Graham Harman has moved away from systematic philosophy into various specialized spheres — art, architecture, archeology, as evidenced by his publications of recent years. And although in these works, he contributes to the development of individual aspects of the general theoretical framework of OOO (e.g., to the theory of time: Harman & Witmore, 2023), a new systematic work like *Guerrilla Metaphysics* or *The Quadruple Object* is still lacking. It is hoped that such a work will be Harman’s new book *Waves and Stones*, scheduled for publication in late 2025. It is quite possible that the books by Morton (2024) and Harman (2025) will mark the beginning of a new, fourth, stage in the development of object-oriented ontology.

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КРАТКАЯ ИСТОРИЯ СТАНОВЛЕНИЯ ОБЪЕКТНО-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОЙ ОНТОЛОГИИ

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Аннотация: Статья посвящена истории становления объектно-ориентированной онтологии (ООО)—школы постконтинентальной философии, основанной Грэмом Харманом

в конце 1990-х годов. В ней предлагается периодизация эволюции ООО, начинающаяся с ее возникновения как самостоятельного проекта Хармана (1997–2006). Второй период (2007–2011) охватывает роль ООО в движении спекулятивного реализма и формирование ее канонического квартета — Хармана, Леви Брайанта, Иена Богоста и Тимоти Мортон. Третий, текущий период (2011–по наст. время) детализирует институционализацию ООО и ее активную экспансию за пределы философии в такие области человеческой мысли и практики, как экология, искусство, архитектура, археология и религия. В заключении автор оценивает нынешнее состояние ООО, отмечая признаки внутренней диверсификации среди ее участников, и в то же время утверждая ее прочное наследие как самостоятельной и влиятельной школы мысли, которая успешно бросила вызов антропоцентрической парадигме в континентальной философии. Автор также выдвигает гипотезу о возможном начале нового, четвертого этапа в ее развитии.

Ключевые слова: Грэм Харман, партизанская метафизика, Иен Богост, Леви Брайант, объектно-ориентированная онтология, четверякий объект, спекулятивный реализм, Тимоти Мортон.

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