

All For A Realist Defense of Metaphysics Graham Harman vs. Peter Wolfendale

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Abstract: Metaphysics is generally claimed to have been in decline since Kant. Recent debates on the feasibility of metaphysics have introduced renewed readings into metaphysics and theorizations of the *object*. Speculative realism on the possibility of metaphysics is the target of this article, and Graham Harman is the essential figure for approaching this issue. With a critique on Harman's speculative realism, Peter Wolfendale triggered a separation within speculative realists. Both Harman and Wolfendale defended the feasibility of metaphysics. Harman's metaphysics is shaped by a special rendering of Heidegger's views on objects. Object being the central concept, this theory is also named OOP (Object-oriented philosophy). Wolfendale argues that Harman's object theory offers such a vague definition of object that it eventually makes the object unknowable. This, according to Wolfendale, creates an incoherent stance for Harman, as this vague definition of object creates a return to Kant's unknowable noumenon. The first stage of this article will focus on the concept of object as explained by Harman. The second stage will summarize Wolfendale's criticism that Harman's objects are neo-Kantian noumena reframed. Eventually, we reach a conclusion that leads to a discussion of the theory of objects and their epistemic value in relation to a defense of metaphysics without discussing the details.

Keywords: Speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, Metaphysics, Graham Harman, Peter Wolfendale, Martin Heidegger

Öz: Kant sonrası metafiziğin gözden düşme sürecinin hızlandığı söylenebilir. Yakın zaman felsefe tartışmaları metafiziğin nesne kavramının yeni okumalarına sahne olmuştur. Bu yazıda Spekülatif gerçekçilik tartışmaları içinde metafiziğinin imkanının Graham Harman ve Harman'a getirdiği eleştirilerle Peter Wolfendale tarafından nasıl tartışıldığı ele alınacaktır. Harman'ın ontolojisi, Heidegger'in yeni bir okuması ile nesne kavramının kurgulanması ile şekillenmiştir. Nesnenin merkezi konumundan dolayı teori, nesne-merkezli ontoloji olarak da isimlendirilmektedir. Wolfendale'in eleştirisi, Harman'ın nesne tanım ve teorisinin oldukça belirsiz olması ve neticede nesnenin neredeyse bilinemez bir konuma getirilmesi iddiası üzerine kuruludur. Böylece, tutarsız bir tutum ortaya koyan Harman bu belirsiz nesne tanımlaması ile Kant'ın bilinemeyen 'noumen'ini teorisinde yeniden hayata döndürmüştür. Bu makalede, ilk aşamada Harman'ın nesne anlayışı, daha sonra Wolfendale'in ona getirdiği eleştiriler üzerinde odaklanılacaktır. Neticede nesnelere teorisi ortaya koymanın ve nesnelere epistemik değerinin bir metafizik imkan tartışılması için ne anlam ifade ettiğine dair genel bir zemine erişmek amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Spekülatif gerçekçilik, nesne-merkezli ontoloji, Metafizik, Graham Harman, Peter Wolfendale, Martin Heidegger.

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Introduction

These days, despite the dominance of positive sciences in humanity's web of knowledge, big questions remain regarding the demand for specific treatments that go beyond the method and language of the sciences. If dethroning metaphysics from the authoritative state of big questions was achieved by Kant, then speculative realism is one of the latest follow-ups to Kant's question, as well as resistances against it. Across from Kant, speculative realists represent a stance for defending human's capacities from metaphysical knowledge. The publicity of the movement traces back to a conference at Goldsmiths College, University of London, in April 2007.¹ The name speculative realism is attributed to Ray Brassier.² The movement, through the common discomfort with pro-Kantian approaches to correlationism, connects a vast variety of scholars (also part of the 2007 conference): Alberto Toscano of Goldsmiths College, Ray Brassier of Middlesex University, Iain Hamilton Grant of the University of the West of England, Graham Harman of American University in Cairo, and Quentin Meillassoux of the Ecole Normale Supérieure. The movement views Deleuze as an early appearance of realist attempts.³

The members of the movement prefer the term *speculative turn* in contrast with *linguistic turn*. For the realists, this recalls the post-Kantian, post-linguistic turn, and post-modernist phases. The realism called for differs in content among members of the movement, yet they share speculation over the nature of reality *independent of thought and humanity*.

1 The publication of *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism (TST)* is another important gathering point for discussions around speculative realism after the 2007 conference (triggered by Meillassoux's *AF*), including contributions from Ray Brassier, Nathan Brown, Gabriel Catren, Manuel DeLanda, Iain Hamilton Grant, Martin Hägglund, Peter Hallward, Graham Harman, Adrian Johnston, Francois Laruelle, Bruno Latour, Quentin Meillassoux, Reze Negarestani, Nicole Pepperell, John Protevi, Isabelle Stengers, Alberto Toscano, and Slavoj Žižek.

2 See how Graham Harman describes the early stages of the movement: Harman, July 23, 2010.

3 "The first wave of 20th-century continental thought in the Anglophone world was dominated by phenomenology, with Martin Heidegger generally the most influential figure of the group. By the late 1970s, the influence of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault had started to gain the upper hand, reaching its zenith a decade or so later. Towards the mid-1990s, Gilles Deleuze entered the ascendancy shortly before his death in November 1995, and his star remains perfectly visible today. But since the beginning of the 21st century, a more chaotic and in some ways more promising situation has taken shape. Various intriguing philosophical trends, their bastions scattered across the globe, have gained adherents and started to produce a critical mass of emblematic works. While it is difficult to find a single adequate name to cover all of these trends, we propose 'The Speculative Turn', as a deliberate counterpoint to the now tiresome 'Linguistic Turn' (Bryant, Srnicek, & Harman [Eds.], 2011, p. 1).

This paper focuses on one of the latest debates within the movement between Graham Harman and Peter Wolfendale. Harman's object-oriented philosophy first surfaced in his doctoral dissertation *Tool-Being: Elements in a Theory of Object* (1999). After a number of exchanges in the form of blog entries and articles, Wolfendale wrote his *Noumen's New Clothes*, criticizing Harman's metaphysics as a regression to Kant. This paper focuses on Harman's theory of objects and Wolfendale's criticism for evaluating two attempts at a metaphysical system where the main difference lies in these two systems' stances on epistemological realism.

Background for the Confrontation Between Harman and Wolfendale

The issue of causality and Harman's reconstruction of Heidegger are two of the most critical parts of Harman's analysis shaping many of Wolfendale's criticisms.⁴ Both these points relate to Wolfendale's central criticism that Harman's critique of correlationism is misleading and the reality is that his theory brings back correlationist ontologies. The title of Wolfendale's book, *The Noumen's New Clothes*, is no accident, as correlationist approaches find their background in Kant's noumen-phenomen distinction. For coining the term *correlationism*, as well as grasping its meaning, we need to refer to Meillasoux's *After Finitude*. Meillasoux explained that for correlationism, admission that humans can "never grasp an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject," and that humans "can never grasp a subject that would not always already be related to an object" (Meillasoux, 2008, p. 13) are necessities. Here, we can see why causality becomes such an important part of the discussion, as relation is made essential for understanding the subject. Kant was suspicious about the limits of where the achievements of reason end and he proposed a narrowed understanding of metaphysics. This suspicion and the idea of narrowed metaphysics have developed into denial of metaphysics only after Heidegger when he took Husserl and his relation-centered understanding to its theoretical centralization (p. 18).

Other than skeptical attitudes about knowledge of the object itself and situating objects in relation to each other, correlationism at this stage also attracts attention by positing humans at the center of the theory. Reminiscent of Heidegger's *Dasein*, Meillasoux stated:

4 An early appearance of Wolfendale's criticism can be found among many of his later writings on his blog at <https://deontologistics.wordpress.com/commentary/>

To say that we cannot extricate ourselves from the horizon of correlation is not to say that the correlation could exist by itself, independently of its incarnation in individuals. We do not know of any correlation that would be given elsewhere than in human beings, and we cannot get out of our own skins to discover whether it might be possible for such a disincarnation of the correlation to be true. (2008, p. 23)

At first look, Wolfendale and Harman share a critical approach against correlationism, with both evaluating the faults in the approach (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 6). Moreover, they both hold individuality to be an important metaphysical topic, panpsychism⁵ to be undervalued (one should still be cautious of Harman's care in not committing to panpsychist conclusions; Harman, 2005, p. 220), and aesthetics to be important (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 35).⁶ However even among these common points, both thinkers handle many details in fundamentally different ways. Rather than dealing with how they differ on common issues as well as the already disagreed-upon issues, I will aim to present these differences by evaluating Harman's ontology and theory of causality.

An important point for this article manifests through their shared criticism of correlationist approaches (Lewis, Jan. 10, 2016); they also share optimism for the feasibility of a proper metaphysics or ontology (Note that in most of the discussion, metaphysics and ontology are used interchangeably)⁷. Further discussion on Harman's *objects*, the center of his ontology, is required at this stage.

Harman's Flat Ontology

Harman builds his ontology on a single term, object. Thus, ontology is an epistemic endeavor in understanding objects.⁸ In Harman's universe, all that exists is

5 This is the claim that every material entity has an element of individual consciousness. Discussions related to consciousness can be traced back to Spinoza and Leibniz. The modern representatives of the movement are related to Jamesian and Russelian monism, and neutral monism arguably entails panpsychism. Analytical philosopher Galen Strawson has significance among recent defenders of panpsychism (Seager & Allen-Hermanson, 2015).

6 For Harman and OOP's influence on the arts, see Cole, Summer 2015; Kerr, April 8, 2016). This video presents how Harman himself directly took the influence seriously (Harman, March 14, 2014).

7 Despite an explanatory section on these terms that can explain their nuances in Wolfendale, (2014, pp. 216–236), the difference is superfluous for the present discussion, which means that interchangeable usage does not affect the course of explanations.

8 "The central notion of this book is that philosophy must turn its attention toward objects. The bedrock and inspiration for this approach is found in Heidegger's famous tool-analysis... In other words, the central rift is not between conscious and unconscious human activity, but between objects and our

described equally as “...objects. No object, including human, has any ontic priority over any other object” (Harman, 2002, p. 29). Harman argues flatness in ontology to have been on display since at least the time of Meinong (Harman, 2012).⁹

Once we know what object means, we will be closer to discovering everything else. Yet Harman is disappointed that the metaphysics of objects has not attracted enough philosophical attention. Thus, we cannot know much about objects by investigating the history of philosophy.

Our subject matter is not human access to objects, but objects themselves. Objects are no longer a popular theme among philosophers, who pride themselves on a suspicious attitude toward all mysterious substrata and unverifiable things-in-themselves lying beyond all hope of contact. In most quarters, philosophy tends to become theory of knowledge, even theory of language in the narrow sense. Those rare philosophers who continue to venture beyond the human sphere (Whitehead foremost among them) tend to favor concrete events over withdrawn unified objects, and to cast doubt on any notion of an object as something not fully expressed in the current state of the world. (Harman, 2005, p. 190).

Despite defending the vitality of grasping the reality of object; in the many places where Harman talks about objects, he uses a negative language where objects have no direct contact and are withdrawn from all kinds of relations. All that can be perceived and ever grasped is always less than the object itself: “...object is not that which comes from nature or from peasant handicraft -instead, an object is simply whatever unifies notes, creating a private inner reality that no other object ever exhausts” (2002, p. 228).

relations with them, whether these relations be explicit and lucid or tacit and vague. But this contrast between objects and relations is not confined to the human realm. Mammals, beetles, amphibians, and serpents all fail to exhaust the total reality of the trees and rivers that surround them, and the same holds true even of inanimate beings, which brush up against only a small part of the realities they touch. All loose initial prejudice concerning the supposed gradation between different types of living and inanimate entities must not be smuggled into the realm of basic ontological distinctions” (Harman, 2002, p. 190).

9 “While Roy Bhaskar used this term pejoratively to refer to anti-realist philosophies that flatten everything onto an epistemic plane of human access, Manuel DeLanda (an admirer of Bhaskar) reversed it into the positive principle that all realities are equally realities. Similar notions can be found in the “absistence” of Alexius Meinong, the “irreduction” of Bruno Latour, and my own critique of the undermining/overmining pair. Also noteworthy is Levi Bryant’s use of the term “flat ontology” throughout *The Democracy of Objects* and his earlier essay *The Ontic Principle*. But for Garcia, flatness is only one face of the cosmos, and one that he ultimately declares to be rather impoverished. Even so, he always remains an advocate of a flat ontology” (Harman, 2012).

Only when Harman positively defines object can we accept the mystification to have been unveiled. The properties of object are “unity, withdrawal from relations, and a surplus of reality beyond any of its discernible features” (2002, p. 188). Alas, even this time his positive definition separates real and sensual objects. Being influenced by past philosophers since Aristotle, he finds relevance in discussing the object’s parts in relation to the object and also mentions the object in relation to its unchanging reality. Thus he claims the realm of objects to be external to their qualities or parts. *Parts* can be taken away and the object itself remains, and similarly the object is not affected from changes in the *qualities* of that object. Just as objects are classified into real and sensual objects, qualities are also separated into real and sensual. The elements of Harman’s universe, even its mechanisms, are explained through the relationships among these four stations. He calls them quadruple categories. The relations are also classified into fusion and fission. As a result, 10 main relational concepts emerge: (1) fusion: causation- essence (2) fusion: allure¹⁰ -space), (3) fission:theory -idos, (4) fission: confrontation -time), (5) sincerity, (6) disjunction, (7) contiguity, (8) duplicity, (9) contraction, and (10) emanation.¹¹

This dispatched explanation of object torn between objects and qualities, realness, and sensitivity (despite the large amount of Harman’s writing explaining this) is not clarified further when we try to understand the mechanism of this universe. According to Harman, never do two real objects interact directly, they always withdraw from each other. This disconnectedness taken in his causal theory is explained as *vicarious causation*. Thus some sort of relation exists in the universe, yet the relation itself works in mysterious ways.¹² Our grasp of this universe and its

10 Harman’s treatment of allure is attention-worthy for two reasons. One is that allure is one of the relations that most clearly give insight into Harman’s treatment of the broken tool and how the central core of the object can ever be apparent. Secondly, thanks to his detailed description of allure which commonsensically necessitates consciousness, is not constrained to human beings. This helps us understand the radical rupture of his ontology from other anthropocentric approaches.

11 As my aim in this article is to scan general ideas in relation to ontology, I will not go into the details of these relations. However, these relations, which make the central body of Harmanian literature, are detailed enough to be a topic of another article. Harman (Nov. 12, 2009) gives insight into the 10 possible links in his blog.

12 “In this way, object-oriented philosophy resembles the classical forms of metaphysics in its concern with three important themes: how a thing relates to its own inherent qualities, to the inessential traits that skate along its surface, and to other separate things in the environment. All three of these problems can be clarified only if we take a closer look at how perception converts separate component objects into a single new object, thereby granting the new one its own constituent features (notes), gracing it with irrelevant and fleeting sensual facades (accidents), and both fostering and blockading its links with other distinct objects in the vicinity (relations). One feature shared by all three forms of noise is that all are object oriented. The notes of a thing, its accidents, and the vague background enti-

objects will reflectively be affected and we will never fully grasp the reality of other objects, only some percentage of their reality (a question will remain for our own selves). In this stage, seeing better why Harman calls his approach *weird metaphysics* becomes easier.

Is Vicarious Causation Isolation in Disguise?

When everything is posited independent of everything else, and when everything exceeds their presentations, does this then result in a universe of windowless monads? If this were the case, a theory of detailed causal links between real/sensual objects/qualities would make no sense and Harman's effort would be in vain.

Wolfendale (2014, pp. 11–12) finds this endeavor in its present form to still be in vain, stating that Harman's world is a world of disconnected volcanic island nations floating in a cool sensual sea world in which you can travel as much as you like, but you will always be a tourist, "...you will never see the real island... you might get the occasional taste of it... but that is all you will ever get."

On one hand, the causal connection between objects is achieved through a medium, while on the other the inner state of the object maintains its unity and connectivity:

The reality of things consists in their molten cores, the liquid specificities of which withdraw behind a sensual crust of visible features... The substantial magma at the heart of every entity is forever taped beneath a rocky outer surface... We never glimpse the molten essence as it leaks the fault lines in its phenomenal facade, but only catch it as it cools, already crystallizing into new sensual continents. The lava itself is nowhere to be found. (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 11)

Thus the inner reality of things, which Harman (2002, p. 193) equates to lava itself in the volcano metaphor, is also made relevant for Harman's theorization (pp. 166–167). The objects are defined in terms of their mediated relations; additionally, they are created in an internal web of relations. In addition to defining object in a web of relations, another important step for Harman is his consideration of

ties that surround it, are all structured as objects in their own right, given that no mere raw qualities are possible. Any noise exceeding the object of our attention is structured to as great a degree as the object itself. It is not a white noise of screeching chaotic qualities demanding to be shaped by the human mind, but rather a black noise of muffled objects hovering at the fringes of our attention" (Harman, 2002, p. 183).

every relational reality as an object (“relations are objects;” 2002, pp. 165, 188). Remember early comments on how comprehensive Harman’s objects were? Artificial things and even relational things are considered as objects: “An object can be natural or artificial, German, American, or Soviet in origin, and not be any less an object in any of these cases” (Harman, 2002, p. 228). This move in admitting relation itself to be an object allows Harman to include artificial relational facts as objects.¹³ In fairness to Harman, he finds moments of truth accessible to humans through his reconstruction of the broken-tool analysis in *Tool Being* and inner relations and unity analysis of objects in *Guerrilla Metaphysics*. I guess this is where he attempts to tone down the extremity of withdrawal and fundamental disconnectness in his theory: “The substantial magma... whose stillness is only occasionally interrupted by the tectonic forces it unleashes. However, these occasional eruptions always catch us unawares” (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 11).

Harman’s tool analysis is built upon Heidegger. However, Wolfendale criticizes this as a version of tool analysis stripped of the most essentially Heideggerian features of the theory. Harman (2002, p. 226; Harman, 2005, pp. 6, 8) himself argues that Heidegger’s analysis is misunderstood, with scholars having mainly confused *object’s presence with its active subterranean being*, (*Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit*). Harman claims the tool-being to be the real source of the as-structure (2005, p. 229). One should note Harman’s boldest move is his omission of *Dasein* from the Heideggerian framework.

I argued that the primacy he grants to world over entities is not just a primacy for human life. This mistaken notion comes from the idea that world is a human structure, that the natural world really is a set of isolated present-at-hand material blocks, and that only human praxis constitutes them as a total system of meaning. But in fact, objects themselves are already delivered over to the world their forces mutually determining one another, their identities partly dissolving into a single all-embracing system. (2005, p. 227).

Wolfendale criticizes Harman because he identifies encountering the broken tool with the as-structure. Remember, no direct encounter between objects is possible and only causality is vicarious and indirect. Harman (2005, p. 221) expresses the relations among the analysis of tool, being, and causation as “causality is just another form of the as-structure.” Wolfendale maintains that this eventually

13 There is a tension between the object- and fact-centered approaches that Harman recognizes as threatening to his approach (Harman, 2002, p. 231).

not only changes how the human is understood but also the picture of the world. Harman's reading is then a disaster, his omission of *Dasein* results in accepting nonhuman objects as possessing some understanding (*Verstand*) as well as having interactions between things.

Wolfendale's approach to Harman's view of Heidegger is more than a Heidegger scholar's disappointment in an eccentric rendition; it relates to Wolfendale's own epistemological realism and what he thinks proper metaphysics needs to be. The place of a human or a conscious/knowing object at the center of the philosophical system is expected to be critical if the metaphysical system to be established aims at accessing the reality of things, and Harman does just the opposite.

If we are to go any further in the discussion, the real question of which we need to be aware is whether maintaining a sustainable metaphysics entails epistemological realism.

Another question that the reader should ask in order to deepen the understanding of the discussion is whether Wolfendale's quest for the return of metaphysics should be regarded as resembling the pre-modern understandings of metaphysics. One should be conscious of which metaphysics is at stake when the return of metaphysics is the issue. Recognizing the efforts since Parmenides, Wolfendale posits Aristotle to be the first philosopher to have defined metaphysics as "study of beings as such and as a whole" (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 303). Linking the question to the history of philosophy, what followed Aristotle is scholasticism and ontotheology (Wolfendale, 2014, p.303). Hume came later as the first to define metaphysics and to prove its impossibility, an approach Wolfendale (2014, p. 305) termed a skeptical strategy.

Wolfendale's metaphysics is closely related to the positive sciences and plays a controlling and guiding role in relation to what has already been achieved in the positive sciences. What makes metaphysics proper and additionally necessary is that:

Metaphysics proper is critical insofar as it properly delimits the various questions with which it is concerned and the ways they are related, from an a priori standpoint (logic)... [it] is systematical insofar as it attempts to provide a unified answer to all of these questions which takes into account the whole variety of a posteriori considerations provided by various natural sciences as a whole (Wolfendale, 2014, pp. 325–326).

Criticality and systematicity are the two principles that also create autonomy for metaphysics. If not for these two, the same content is already present in natural sciences. Defined this way, metaphysics is not the first philosophy any more.

Wolfendale has embraced the changes in the nature of metaphysics since Hume and welcomes Heidegger's revision of metaphysical problems. His approach is aware of scientific developments (i.e., revolutions). The early phases of these developments had already shattered the authority of metaphysics by weakening the hierarchical linkage among metaphysics, mathematics, and physics. Overthrown from being the first philosophy, metaphysics is now in a position to oversee and organize the content and theories in natural sciences.

After this reminder about metaphysics' altered usage from the scholastic approach, which makes Wolfendale's quest for metaphysics very different from a call for or defense of a first philosophy, we can now return to Harman and Wolfendale's confrontation and summarize Wolfendale's discomfort with Harman's theory on a number of points.

Wolfendale Criticism of Vagueness

This picture so far shows that Harman's object is too comprehensive. This point is no weak link from Harman's point of view. While Harman aims to include as much as he can into object-ness, Wolfendale conversely regards this comprehensive approach as entailing vagueness.

Harman's is a world of disconnected volcanic island nations floating in a cool sensual sea- a world in which you can travel as much as you like, but you will always be a tourist... you will never see the real island... you might get the occasional taste of it... but that is all you will ever get. (Wolfendale, 2014, pp. 11-12).

Vagueness is the point that legitimizes how Wolfendale labels Harman as a correlationist. This vagueness results in inaccessibility. One point not made explicit by Wolfendale is a methodological issue, that this comprehensive conception of objects is non-homogenous. What combines all objects is thus mostly defined negatively. Is it really possible for a concept to be as comprehensible as to include vast spectrum of realities, from relations to concrete objects, in its definition?

Criticism of Disconnectedness

The vagueness of object spreads to the relations between objects; thus, within the cosmos and even within selves, objects are stripped off of their unity and defined two-dimensionally as sensual and real. Additionally, objects are distinguished from their own qualities.

Using the fourfold object, qualities, real, and sensual, Harman aims to define object and its categories. Wolfendale's criticism at this point is on connectivity. The disconnectedness of objects also relates to Harman's peculiar reading of Heidegger, another important matter of criticism for Wolfendale. A short reply should be given to this criticism by giving Harman more credit in his analysis of objects' inner relations. His complex system of relations bravely uses the same concepts as connection and separation points, and the inner relation of objects both multiply objects within themselves and particularizes and stands the course of change through the principle of unity. These criticisms lead to the next section.

Criticism of Returning to Noumen

Within this framework, correlationist charges against Harman's metaphysics are embodied by Wolfendale's term *noumenal cosmology*. Apparent terminological tools such as withdrawal, vicarious causation, and element together with his rendition of the fourfold and broken-tool analysis reveal Harman's loyalty to Kant's noumen. Still, as Balanuye rightly summarized, Harman's real object is not an inhabitant of the realm of Kantian noumen but rather a reality wholly present in the realm of phenomena benefiting from all the possibilities of a nominal realm (Balanuye, 2017, p. 296). Harman's position is then to make the noumen real (Heft, 2016, p. 24). This Harmanian synthesis of realism and transcendental idealism proves Wolfendale to be mostly correct in his diagnosis that Harman had brought back the notion of noumen. Epistemological skepticism is at the center of the criticism because epistemological realism is critical to Wolfendale's project.

Wolfendale claims a metaphysics that is worth advocating can only be possible when we prioritize methodological epistemology. This criticism is phrased as *explanatory weakness* (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 109). No viable realism can exist without a definition of real that is more subtle than "that which is always other than our knowledge of it" (Wolfendale, 2014, p. 36). Wolfendale regards Harman as a correlationist because, according to him, the essence of correlationism is epistemological, not metaphysical. To end the article on a positive note for Harman, epistemology is not central to metaphysical endeavor for him (Harman, 2002, p. 42):

Our subject matter is not human access to objects, but objects themselves. Objects are no longer a popular theme among philosophers, who pride themselves on a suspicious attitude toward all mysterious substrata and unverifiable things-in-themselves lying beyond all hope of contact. (Harman, 2002, p. 190)

Eventually the clash between the two speculative realists is in their approach on how central epistemology is to metaphysics.

A List of Questions in the Place of a Conclusion

I wanted to use the debate between Wolfendale and Harman to establish the basis for a number of questions. Using Harman's metaphor, the debate itself is the volcano, the inner molt of which reveals the epistemological question of whether metaphysical realism entails epistemological realism. In other words, what is metaphysics if it does not provide access to reality?

Wolfendale establishes metaphysics with two essential functions. Yet, this is a lightened version of metaphysics compared to classical notions.

Harman's metaphysics provides us with a detailed description of how the world is intertwined, the web of things are described through an intricate theory of relations and causations. The controversial feature of the theory is that precise confrontations between objects, and thus a strong sense of causation, are rejected. The system centralizes the object and objectifies every conceivable thing, including relations. Yet almost ironically, the most mystified term, the most hidden reality, is arrived at by the end of our reading: the concept of object.

In this sense, does OOP appear as an Ouroboros? Is the system an unending description and mystification of reality? Is the OOP version of metaphysics a failed attempt? And is this failure mainly because it mystifies the central concept it was missioned to unveil? Is this failure due to the epistemic inaccessibility of the object? Does the alleged failure in OOP prove epistemic realism to be an essential feature of any proper metaphysics? If this is not the case, what good does a web of descriptions do without providing us access to the realities of things? On the other hand, what good does a metaphysical system with epistemic realism do if reality is limited to what has already been provided by science? What is the advantage of strong access if the role of metaphysics is already reduced to guidance and order regarding what has been achieved in the sciences? The deficiency of an enlightened mission of metaphysics echoes in Harman's criticism on the current state of philosophy circles: "In most quarters, philosophy *tends to become theory of knowledge*, even theory of language in the narrow sense." (2005, p. 190). Thus, in addition to centralizing object, another starting point for OOP is a return to object from this limited epistemological and linguistic myopia of current philosophies.

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