

Thinking Education through Object-Oriented Philosophy: A triple pedagogical movement

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Abstract:

A historic shift is taking place in present-day continental philosophy. In this paper I will take the measure of some of the implications of this dramatic shift for educational theory and pedagogical practice. The shift involves an explicit and renewed call for realism. One of the most salient features of this development is a revitalised interest in ontological questions. Within the confines of this paper, I will particularly focus on Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology (OOO) as part of this overall trend towards realist and materialist ontologies in current continental thinking. Harman's object-oriented philosophy is a new and robust approach to metaphysics and ontology that provides an invigorating account of objects and invites us to go against the grain of present-day philosophical approaches to the reality of the world and the things in it. In order to come to terms with this new approach to reality, I suggest education be defined as the process of thematic engagement on many different levels with reality understood in the Harmanian idiom. Formal schooling tends to eschew what Harman calls 'the carnival of life.' The impressively rich and dynamic texture of life is ignored in favour of a static and dull cognition that is stripped of the bizarre enigma of our world. Such an approach to reality is then used to structure an impoverished learning experience for students with an eye towards control and predictability through increasingly aggressive forms of measurement rather than genuine encounters with the dramatic experience of the carnival of things.

Keywords: objects, object-oriented philosophy, new realism, phenomenology, interiority

Introduction

A historic shift is taking place in present-day continental philosophy (Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman, 2011). In this paper I will take the measure of some of the implications of this dramatic shift for educational theory and pedagogical practice. The shift involves an explicit and renewed call for *realism*. This might sound alarming for some people since continental philosophy is known for its anti-realism, which maintains the untenability of knowledge of a reality independent of thought. Yet thinkers in Anglophone continental philosophy today proudly proclaim their new and varied versions of materialism and realism. As the editors of the volume, *The speculative turn* (2011), indicate

[i]t has long been commonplace within continental philosophy to focus on discourse, text, culture, consciousness, power, or ideas as what constitutes reality. But despite the vaunted anti-humanism of many of the thinkers identified with these trends, what they give us is less a critique of humanity's place in the world, than a sweeping critique of the self-enclosed Cartesian subject. Humanity remains at the center of these works, and reality appears in philosophy only as the correlate of human thought. In this respect phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism have all been perfect exemplars of the anti-realist trend in continental philosophy (Bryant et al., 2011, pp. 2-3).

As opposed to this anti-realist trend, what Harman (2007) calls different modalities of "weird realism"¹ have come to the fore. Especially through the work of Ray Brassier (2007), Iain Hamilton Grant (2006), Quentin Meillassoux (2008), and Graham Harman (2002; 2005)—the original group of speculative realists—"The

Speculative Turn,” as a deliberate counterpoint to the now tiresome “Linguistic Turn” (Bryant et al., 2011, p. 1) in philosophy has been taken.

One of the most salient features of this turn is a renewed interest in ontological questions. Thanks to thinkers like Deleuze (1994) and Badiou (2005), a rejuvenation of ontology has been under way. Within the confines of this paper, I will particularly focus on Graham Harman’s object-oriented ontology (OOO) as part of this overall trend towards realist and materialist ontologies in current continental thinking. Harman (2011) develops a model of objects that have a fourfold structure—the quadruple object—based on his reinvigorating and somewhat unconventional readings of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. He aims to challenge once and for all the fundamental assumptions of what he calls ‘the philosophies of human access,’ according to which the post-Kantian continental thought have been completely ‘unconcerned with the reality of things outside their accessibility to consciousness’ (Harman, 2010, p. 3).

Rejecting the post-Kantian obsession with a single relational gap between people and objects, I hold that the interaction between cotton and fire belongs on the same footing as human interaction with both cotton and fire (Harman, 2011, p. 6).

Despite his aversion towards ‘the philosophies of human access,’ however, Harman is no stranger to the very tradition he sharply criticizes. He is very well-versed in the Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, and his approach can be considered a radicalization of the latter rather than their outright repudiation. There is a lot that need to be retained in the phenomenological tradition. As a matter of fact, it is hard, if not impossible, to imagine a speculative realist movement emerging without a healthy dispute with the phenomenological insights.

Inspired by Harman’s fruitful confrontation with the phenomenological thinking, I would like to make a case for a pedagogical movement comprised of three phases: pre-phenomenological, phenomenological, and post-phenomenological moments, which form themselves, in that order, into an overarching movement. These three moments correspond to states of being that can be characterized within the stance of, respectively, naïve realism, correlationism, and weird realism. The main thesis of the paper can thus be put in the following manner: education, as the process of thematic engagement on many different levels with reality, is best served by undergoing the pedagogical movement elaborated here. That is, starting out within the stance of naïve realism, and then, being compelled to engage the correlationist moment, and finally questioning the latter to reach the state of weird realism. The end point of this movement is the ability to engage reality with increasing intensity and joy.

A brief exposition of the three moments of the pedagogical movement and the corresponding stances involved will be followed by an attempt to make a case for all three moments to be considered as integral parts of an overall pedagogical movement in education. In the first part of the essay, I will elaborate on these three moments. Then, I will focus my attention on Harman’s theory of objects. In closing I will discuss the educational implications of such a pedagogical movement.

The Three Moments

To begin with, very basically put, we find ourselves within the milieu of the pre-phenomenological engagement with the world in a state of naïve realism. Given an appropriate impetus—usually a crisis of meaning of some form—we move on to the next moment, which is of the phenomenological engagement whereby our initial and unthematic absorption within the world of everyday life is questioned and rejected. Finally, the phenomenological moment itself is questioned and experienced to be insufficiently radical, and a return to the world with a renewed sense of its inscrutable reality and contingency is achieved.

Not surprisingly, the movement described above is inspired by the famous Zen aphorism in the context of the three stages of enlightenment, which can be paraphrased as follows:

Before I studied phenomenology (Zen), mountains were mountains, and water was water. After studying phenomenology for some time, mountains were no longer mountains, and water was no

longer water. But now, after studying phenomenology longer, mountains are just mountains, and water is just water.²

In the pre-phenomenological phase of the movement, mountains are mountains and water is water. That is, in a state of naïve realism, we are unthematically (pre-reflectively) immersed in our everyday involvement with the people and things in our workaday life in which, what Husserl calls ‘the natural attitude,’ prevails.

Within the natural standpoint (or natural attitude, as Husserl actually calls it) the ‘world’ is tacitly accepted as ‘real,’ as having its ‘being *out there*, and as being reliable enough for all ordinary pursuits (Natanson, 1973, p. 20, emphasis original).

In the state of being characterized by naïve realism, we go about our daily life in an unquestioning attitude ‘accepting the existence and givenness of the world in its usual temporal course’ (Moran, 2012, p. 25). In other words, we are primarily focused on the objects around us rather than the active role our own consciousness plays in positing them as objects of consciousness. In the natural attitude, the world is ‘simply there for me, spread out in space and time’ (Moran, 2012, p. 60)—mountains are mountains and water is water. For Husserl, the sense that an object exists ‘in-itself’ in the world out there needs to be confronted by a critical-reflective attitude on our part to expose the way this sense of being an object is constituted in consciousness through intentionality. Put differently, the natural attitude needs to be transcended and the everyday naïveté left behind so that ‘the nature of the world as an achievement of subjectivity’ (Moran, 2012, p. 60) is realized.

This is the first moment of pedagogical importance.³ As we suspend the natural attitude and reflectively focus on the constitutive role played by our own subjectivity, a new unsuspected realm of experience opens up for us. This is the realm of the Husserlian transcendental phenomenology wherein mountains are no longer mountains, and water is no longer water. This, of course, should not be taken to mean that, all of a sudden, mountains and water disappear, or are obliterated, replaced by something else instead. Nothing really happens to the mountains or water. Rather, something happens to us: we confront the problem of *constitution*—that is, our relation to objectivity. As Alweiss (2003) points out, ‘[t]o *constitute* here means to disclose, to bring forth, to make manifest, or to reveal—not to create or construct’ (p. 182, emphasis original). For Husserl,

[t]he question is not ‘How do we impose subjective forms onto an objective reality?’ or ‘How do objects appear within our mind?’ but ‘How do subjective acts *instantiate*, or, *constitute*, objective ideal laws of logic or meanings which are true and exist in themselves, independent of our thinking about them?’ By addressing the problem in this manner Husserl does not reduce objectivity to subjective experience; rather, the reverse is true: he describes our relation to objectivity (Alweiss, 2003, p. 5, emphasis original).

Carrying out a substantial analysis of transcendental phenomenology here is far too big an undertaking for the purposes of this paper. Suffice it to say that the discovery of the transcendental field of consciousness—the constitutive role played by the *I* of subjectivity—is pedagogically transformative. Once you successfully go through it, you come out a different person on the other side. The world is now understood to be a correlate of transcendental subjectivity. We are no longer naïve about the reality of the world. Mountains are not merely mountains; they are mountains to the extent that they are mountains for us.

To what extent we should relax into the second moment of the pedagogical movement, that is, engage the phenomenological moment, is complicated by the complex history of arguably the greatest philosophical school of thought in the 20th century inaugurated by Husserl and developed and radicalized by Heidegger. The tension and the interaction between these two and their adherents are ongoing and very productive. Phenomenology is a vibrant tradition and out of its dark and rich soil, many approaches and figures (e.g. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Derrida, Patočka, and so on) have blossomed. Engaging these thinkers is an utterly rewarding experience. Despite the allure of this moment—the intoxicating experience of Husserlian transcendental project, or of *being* in Heidegger’s sense—however, we need to go back to the world with a renewed sense of its reality and contingency for having spent enough time in the realm of transcendental subjectivity and the ensuing ‘repetitive continental focus on texts, discourse, social practices, and human finitude’ (Bryant et al., 2011, p. 3),

we now are ready to turn toward reality itself and speculate ‘once more about the nature of reality independently of thought and of humanity more generally’ (Bryant et al., 2011, p. 3).

The third moment of the movement therefore emerges out of healthy immersion into what Meillassoux (2008) calls ‘correlationism,’ the name he gives ‘to the contemporary opponent of any realism’ (Brassier, Grant, Harman, and Meillassoux, 2007, p. 408).

Correlationism rests on an argument as simple as it is powerful, and which can be formulated in the following way: No X without givenness of X, and no theory about X without a positing of X. If you speak about something, you speak about something that is given to you, and posited by you. Consequently, the sentence: ‘X is’, means: ‘X is the correlate of thinking’ in a Cartesian sense. That is: X is the correlate of an affection, or a perception, or a conception, or of any subjective act. To be is to be a correlate, a term of a correlation (Meillassoux in Brassier et al, 2007, p. 409).

The second moment of pedagogical importance is achieved when the correlationist moment itself is confronted. As a result of this confrontation, we move beyond the correlationist breakthrough and return to the beginning, but a beginning informed now by the insights gained through correlationism: mountains are just mountains, and water is just water. Mountains and water have reality that can neither be reduced to their common sense everyday meaning (first moment) nor to the structure of consciousness, Dasein, or language (second moment). Mountains are just mountains: they have autonomous reality independent of their ‘accidents, qualities, relations, and moments’ (Harman, 2011, p. 19). This brings us squarely to Harman’s ontology of objects, a form of weird realism.

Harman’s Objects

The starting point for Harman’s ontology is neither the really tiny subatomic particles or strings or quanta of information or mathematical structures nor some sort of majestic holistic unity supplied by divine or human consciousness, Anaxagoras’ *aperion*, or Heraclitean flux, but the so-called mid-sized objects such as the Shard, the architect who’s designed it, a London telephone box, my beloved iPhone, a steel mill, the Arf invariant of a quadratic form in characteristic 2, Doc Martin, antimatter, the Minotaur, French fries, liquid nitrogen, Texas A&M University, the Arab Spring, dolphins, Jungian archetypes, a chrysanthemum, fuzzy set theory, hyenas, Eyjafjallajökull—the unpronounceable Icelandic volcano that wreaked havoc on international air travel in 2010, and so on. All of these are objects simply because they all have an inscrutable inner core that is completely withdrawn from any relationship whatsoever; in other words, they withdraw from all access, human or otherwise; they cannot be touched: they are *real*. Mountains are just mountains, irrespective of any relationship they enter (or are pushed) into.

If objects reside in an inaccessible core impervious to contact with one another, how on earth do any two objects influence and interact with each other then for it is patently obvious that they do? Well, through what Harman (2007) calls ‘vicarious causation.’

My claim is that two entities influence one another only by meeting on the *interior* of a third, where they exist side-by-side until something happens that allows them to interact. In this sense, the theory of vicarious causation is a theory of the molten inner core of objects – a sort of plate tectonics of ontology (Harman, 2007, p. 190, emphasis added).

Despite its strangeness, Harman uses this concept as ‘the launching pad for a rigorous post-Heideggerian philosophy, and a fitting revival of the venerable problem of communication between substances’ (Harman, 2007, p. 187). So at its core, object-oriented ontology problematizes the tension between objects and relations. ‘The term “object” as I use it means anything that exists. The term “relation” means any interaction between these objects. I hold that such interaction is always a kind of translation or distortion, even at the level of inanimate things’ (Harman, 2010, p. 2). This suggests that objects (say, two billiard balls, or a billiard ball and Ronnie O’Sullivan, the world snooker champion) never encounter each other fully, rather they do so only as translations or caricatures of each other.

Based on this, Harman postulates two polarizations that occur in the matrix of reality: ‘one between the real and the sensual, and the other between objects and their qualities’ (Harman, 2012, p. 4).

One [polarization] involves a ‘vertical’ gap, as found in Heidegger, for whom real objects forever withdraw behind their accessible, sensual presence to us. The other is a subtler ‘horizontal’ gap, as found in Husserl, whose denial of a real world beyond all consciousness still leaves room for a powerful tension between the relatively durable objects of our perception and their swirling kaleidoscope of shifting properties. Once we note that the world contains both withdrawn real objects with both real and sensual qualities and fully accessible sensual objects that are also linked with both real and sensual qualities, we find ourselves with four basic tensions or gaps in the world. These gaps are the major subject matter of object-oriented philosophy (Harman, 2012, pp. 4-5).

So, according to Harman, real and sensual objects and their real and sensual qualities make up the fabric of the whole cosmos. In order to substantiate this claim, but at the risk of oversimplification, I will attempt to provide a sketch of the quadruple object with an example⁴. The account that follows will necessarily be incomplete for it is beyond the limits of this paper to provide a full exposition here, and also because Harman’s account itself is in the process of development and refinement. My goal is a modest one of providing a glimpse of his content and style.

So let’s take the infamous Icelandic volcano, Eyjafjallajökull, as the object of choice. To begin with, Eyjafjallajökull is a *real* object in the sense that it withdraws ‘into a subterranean background, enacting [its] reality in the cosmos without appearing in the least’ (Harman, 2011, p. 35). At no point is the being of Eyjafjallajökull completely present to consciousness or to anything else. The reality of this object cannot be exhaustively identified with its presence in human consciousness, or in anything else. It recedes into a private interior that no-thing can touch. Put differently, it is ‘autonomous from whatever encounters it’ (Harman, 2011, p. 48). The being of Eyjafjallajökull is withdrawn from all access, human or otherwise.

According to Harman (2011), this bizarre sounding conclusion is derived from an intensification of (some might say, violence to) Heidegger’s famous and respected tool-analysis provided in *Being and Time*, and constitutes the core of Heidegger’s philosophy. It is Heidegger’s ‘insistence on an obscure subterranean depth that haunts all accessible entities’ (Harman, 2011, p. 96) that marks him out as the major philosopher of the twentieth century. Heidegger’s core insight (in Harman’s interpretation) suggests that the reality of objects exceeds their presence to a conscious observer; it also exceeds the workings of tacit human praxis, as well as their presence within a causal chain of events. In other words, Heidegger’s tool-analysis makes a case against *relationality* per se, and a case for autonomous and inaccessible things (Harman, 2010, p. 3).

In the case of Eyjafjallajökull, before it became conspicuously present to us in the form of a massive disruption to the entire worldwide air transportation network when it erupted, we had been quietly relying on its silent subterranean life. It was absent in the sense that we took it for granted. It was in the background silently executing its reality unbeknownst to us. Then, in an unexpected shooting of lava and ash cloud, it made itself known. It became present. It appeared before us. For the farmers living at the foot of Eyjafjallajökull, the volcano is not grasped thematically as a present-at-hand object floating in the clouds. Rather, it is in the background disappearing in favor of some purpose it serves; for instance, the myths and legends that have become a part of their communal understanding of the landscape they inhabit. Eyjafjallajökull does not exist as an isolated entity. As ready-to-hand, it dissolves into an overall structure of references we unthematically experience to be meaningful. Yet by virtue of the inscrutable depths of its being, Eyjafjallajökull cannot be reduced to any system of meaning. Its reality always exceeds any and all systems of thematic grasp. It always retains its ability to surprise.

When Kate Humble, the presenter of a BBC documentary about Eyjafjallajökull (Ausden, 2012), faces the volcano, what she sees is a *sensual* object that can only be encountered within the intentional sphere of her consciousness. She does not see the *real* volcano for the latter lies beyond the intentional sphere and constantly eludes her and recedes into the inscrutable depths of its being. When the topic of discussion is the intentional

sphere, the figure we need to reckon with is undoubtedly Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. For Husserl, according to Harman's interpretation, objects do not have 'autonomous reality apart from being the objects of actual or potential observation. They are granted no secret life or inherent causal power, but are "real" only insofar as they might now or someday appear to consciousness' (Harman, 2011, p. 22). In short, objects reside in an immanent mental sphere, closed off to the world outside the mind. Nevertheless, within the intentional sphere Husserl carves out, he discovers an unexpected drama between objects and their qualities (Harman, 2011, p. 22).

As Kate Humble circles around the Eyjafjallajökull volcano from above in a helicopter ride, the volcano constantly shows different profiles (*adumbrations* in Husserlian terms). It is impossible to see all the sides of the volcano all at once from all angles. Each moment of perception through which the volcano is made manifest is different from the others and yet the volcano remains the same volcano, the same unified object. It does not become a new volcano every time Kate Humble shifts her vantage point.

A point worth stressing is that the intentional object is no bundle of adumbrations. We do not grasp a tree or mailbox by seeing it from every possible side—which is physically, mentally, and perhaps logically impossible. The object is attained not by adding up its possible appearances to us, but by *subtracting* these adumbrations. That dog on the horizon need not have its hind leg raised exactly as it now does, nor does it cease to be the same dog if it stops growling and wags its tail in a spirit of welcome. Intentional objects always appear in more specific fashion than necessary, frosted over with accidental features that can be removed without the object itself changing identity for us (Harman, 2011, pp. 24-25, emphasis original).

So the sensual object—the unified intentional object—retains its unity despite being in tension with its ever-shifting sensual qualities of myriad colours and shapes and whatnot. Eyjafjallajökull is the same volcano present to us whether it is 'benign, beautiful, great, shining, pure white glacier' (Humble's description of the dormant volcano seen from above in a chopper), or it spews out 'untold amounts of ash' causing massive disruptions to air travel. Eyjafjallajökull cannot be reduced to a set of its sensual qualities. Neither can it be reduced to a set of its real qualities, 'which the object desperately needs in order to be what it is' (Harman, 2011, p. 27). Being an opening that channels molten magma towards the surface of the Earth's crust, for instance, is not an accidental shifting sensual quality of Eyjafjallajökull. It is an essential quality without which the volcano will not be what it is. Yet this does not mean that we have a total grasp of the reality of these essential qualities either. What it means to hold and channel magma up towards Earth's atmosphere will always elude us no matter how precise a scientific description we might come up with for knowing the essential qualities of a volcano is never the same as being one. The reality of the quality in question will always elude us. It will remain inaccessible to us.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, 'two entities make contact only on the interior of a third' (Harman, 2010, p. 12). Hopefully, we can now make more sense of this statement having had an initial understanding of what real and sensual objects are all about. When Kate Humble encounters Eyjafjallajökull, Kate, a *real* object, confronts the volcano, a *sensual* object, since, as has been established by now, a real object cannot encounter another real object for they constantly withdraw from mutual contact. Instead a real object encounters a sensual object on the *interior* of a third object. The third object in this case is the intentional relation between Kate and Eyjafjallajökull, which is a unified object on its own. Kate and the volcano are components of this new object, which is equally inexhaustible in terms of its reality since it now enjoys a life of its own. No matter how deeply and widely we analyse this intentional relationship between Kate and the volcano, we will never exhaust it.

Educational Implications

The implications for education of the triple pedagogical movement discussed here can be tremendous and far-reaching if, by education, we understand the open-ended process of thematic engagement on many different levels with reality, now understood in its weird sense. Engaging with reality is an infinite task and has no goal other than the freedom to further enrich and intensify such engagement. The movement from naïve realism to anti-realism to weird realism then is a pedagogical movement of increasing freedom for the individual

undergoing it. When properly engaged, it is transformative. The absence of such movement, that is, the opposite of increasing freedom, is increasing ossification. Alternatively then, education can be defined as the process of keeping the *bodymind* dynamic against ossification. The latter can take many different forms: physical, mental, emotional, social, and political ossification. The pedagogical rule of thumb is that against all forms of ossification, the bodymind needs to be simultaneously exercised on many different levels. These exercises, or curriculum processes if you will, can come in many different patterns and styles. Here I will only hint at some of them. I do not mean to be prescriptive in the least in my suggestions.

If we take the two moments of pedagogical importance—suspending the natural attitude in the phenomenological phase and engaging Harman’s ontology of objects (as one example) in the post-phenomenological phase—seriously (and I think we should), cultivating what I would like to call ‘the pedagogy of interiority’ becomes imperative. Thanks to the excesses of scientific realism—an overly narrow positivist outlook in all areas of life—reality has been stripped of the enigma of interiority. The phenomenological tradition, with a most eloquent account of interiority, that is, the account of the field of transcendental subjectivity, has done its bit to counter the ossifying effects of the natural attitude. Furthermore, as one of the foremost representatives of the speculative realist movement, Harman has argued (indisputably in my estimation) that objects have inscrutable interiors that cannot be eliminated or conquered in any way or form, and that therefore they always are ready to surprise us with novelty. The ability to surprise and be surprised, in other words, the ability to have a sense of awe and wonder in the face of reality, is what we look for in a well-educated person, a person who loves interiors.

The pedagogy of interiority, for the duration of the phenomenological phase, entails cultivation of the art of slowing down. The realization that mountains are not mountains and water is not water is not just one-click away. As a matter of fact, we might do well to just say goodbye to clicking altogether since the sense of slowness required to cultivate this phase of the movement is not conducive to the 21st century habit of clicking anyway. Instead, I would suggest, in no way a prescriptive manner, exercising the muscles of the bodymind, ideally simultaneously, in the five threads (one or more from each) given below:

- Philosophical/existential thread (focused and earnest study of phenomenology, existentialism, Mahayana Buddhism, or some tradition equally compelling)
- Body arts thread (any form of dancing, martial arts, t’ai chi, archery, yoga, and so on)
- Crafts/fine arts thread (drawing, calligraphy, pottery, ceramics, sculpture, carpentry, metal work, playing an instrument, and so on)
- Stillness thread (sitting meditation, tea ceremony, origami, breathing, cooking, gardening, praying, and so on)
- Nature thread (walking, hiking, climbing, birdwatching, and so on)

At the risk of sounding utopian, I would like to point out the obvious that such exercises should be integral components of the curriculum of any form and level of formal schooling.

For the post-phenomenological phase, the pedagogy of interiority involves engaging the inscrutable interiority of objects and all the drama that takes place therein. Lamenting the near universal dominance of the constructivist ideas on learning that basically reduce teaching, in a lopsided way, to ‘nothing more than just the facilitation of learning or the creation of learning environments’ (Biesta, 2013, p. 459) and therefore ignoring the irreducible role of teachers as those that bring something radically new to the pedagogical relationship between the teacher and learner, Biesta argues that teaching ‘needs to carry with it a certain notion of *transcendence*’ (p. 459, emphasis added). Opposed to the Socratic approach to education as *maieutics*, that is, ‘bringing out what is already there’ (ibid., p. 452), Biesta defines transcendence, following Levinas, ‘as something that comes from the outside and *adds* rather than that it just confirms what is already there’ (ibid., p.

453, emphasis original). He further claims that ‘the very point of education is precisely *not* to repeat what is already there but to bring something new to the scene’ (ibid., p. 452, emphasis original).

I couldn’t agree more—with a twist though. Surprisingly, the transcendence, or the radical exteriority, Biesta is after issues from within the autonomous depths of objects. The inscrutable interiority of objects is the Great Outside! The exteriority Harman elaborates is not relative to consciousness, language, history, being-in-the-world, the Other, or reflection. Rather, it is relative to the *reality* of the interiority of objects, which is relative to nothing. In other words, the source of novelty, which is arguably the most essential thing for education to unfold, lies within the depth of objects, which can neither be grasped nor therefore be measured in advance.

The pedagogical imperative of teaching therefore is to provide the impetus for our students to engage the phenomenological and post-phenomenological moments of the pedagogical movement, which are not readily given. They need to be chosen.

Conclusion

When asked whether there is a place where poetry and philosophy meet (Beckett, 2011), Harman answers in the following way:

At times I wonder if they are different at all. This statement causes outrage for scientific philosophy, with its insipid model opposing real facts outside the mind to arbitrary, decorative, poetic fictions inside the mind. I reject this scientific model not for the ‘postmodernist’ reason that everything is a poetic fiction inside the mind, but rather because everything is a poetic reality *outside* the mind. In other words, I don’t see the real world as the brutal collision of physical chunks monitored by tough-minded researchers in white coats, cheered on by their philosophical sycophants. Instead, I see the physical world as riddled with cracks and fissures of the same sort that is generated by poets, and the great scientists know this as well. There is obviously something quite poetic about the ideas of Einstein and Bohr, for example.

In this paper I have made an attempt to address the implications for education of the speculative turn in continental philosophy. In particular, I focused on Graham Harman’s object-oriented philosophy to see what might be done with his assertion that ‘everything is a poetic reality *outside* the mind.’ Formal schooling sooner or later tends to turn into a static and dull engagement with a terrain of easily manipulable pre-given objects that have been stripped of the bizarre (or poetic) enigma of our world. The Great Outside ‘riddled with cracks and fissures’ is ignored. I have argued based on the formulation of the triple phase pedagogical movement inspired by the famous Zen aphorism that to interact with the Great Outside, we need to go through the Great Inside first. Our schooling experience has to be restructured in such a way that the impetus to engage the field of transcendental subjectivity and then the inscrutable interiority of objects is provided. As Biesta (2013) argues, the role of the teacher is still central in this endeavor since it is the activity of teaching that provides that impetus.

Notes

1. As Harman (2007), in his usual colourful manner, describes, ‘[i]nstead of the dull realism of mindless atoms and billiard balls that is usually invoked to spoil all the fun in philosophy, I will defend a weird realism. This model features a world packed full of ghostly real objects signaling to each other from inscrutable depths, unable to touch one another fully’ (p. 187).
2. The original aphorism, which can be found in many different forms in Zen literature, esp. the Ox-Herding Pictures, is taken from Garfield and Priest (2009).
3. The majority of people, left to their own devices, would not bother taking this step. They are content that ‘mountains are mountains, and water is water.’ However, some form of a crisis of meaning might

trigger the process of thoroughly questioning the stance of naïve realism and finding it problematic. Usually (but not necessarily), presence of a teacher who has undergone the movement himself/herself is required to provide the impetus to get the transition under way.

4. In this example, we will closely follow the account of objects provided by Harman (2011).

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