

# After Speculative Realism

Speculative Realism was a noticeable movement in the philosophy of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It brought together thinkers informed by the environment crisis that decenters humans from the concerns about life on Earth and interested in rethinking some kind of absolute beyond the limits of what has set by Kant and the diagnosed correlationism that was arguably part of his legacy. The movement intended to renew both methods and topics in philosophy and succeeded in signalling to a maturity of the English-speaking continental thought. Together with New Materialism, its sister movement the movement gave rise to several new philosophical propositions such as Harman's object-oriented ontology, Garcia's de-determination, Cogburn's paradoxico-metaphysics, Barad's agential realism, Goldgaber's speculative grammatology and Bogost's alien phenomenology. Sister movement, we wrote, and notice the gender divide here, that also transpires in the contributions we have received and in the papers collected in this volume. This divide is itself worth of philosophical consideration – in here we confine ourselves to apologize and regret. In any case, this volume of *Das Questões* is dedicated to the contemporary effects of Speculative Realism. It collects essays that indicate the state of the art of the Speculative Realist heritage from several perspectives.

Reid's paper examines the issue of the centrality of the human in critical thinking. The tension between materialist commitments on the one hand and the impulse towards criticism have oriented works as different as those of Bruno Latour and Tristan Garcia. Reid's aim is to begin to bridge together these apparently quite different orientations of thought. The difficulties related to decentering the human within the ways of philosophy appear clearly in this effort.

Busch's work brings to the fore an important common influence on the thoughts of several otherwise quite different philosophers listed among Speculative Realism: that of the writings of H. P. Lovecraft. The very effort of decentering the human in thinking was a central concern of Lovecraft far before the philosophical assemblages of Garcia, Latour and their contemporaries. Busch develops the notion of *lovecraftian networks*.

In Maciel's paper, "Towards a Category Theory for Complex Realism", it is attempted to retrace some steps that were used to conceive Complex Realism (CR) as a way

forward for Speculative Realism. First, Maciel diagnoses some important turns and directives that specifies CR's metametaphysical stances built upon and beyond the movement. The author then outlines how a Category Theory could be framed by building upon other related important authors and their movements for CR, such as Whitehead's Process Philosophy and Nicolai Hartmann's Critical Realism as a way to not only reinforce some important Speculative Realist theses, but to cover other significant aspects of the (meta)metaphysical endeavours.

Brahovic takes on the question about the relation between Speculative Realism and literature. He provides brief accounts on the ways in which literature can be observed through the philosophical lenses of the four creators of the movement, in order to determine how their thoughts fare when addressing the literary object. The possibility of these philosophies remaining a part of the literary discourse.

Pinho's contribution, "Who's afraid of ontology? Tables, Humans and the arrival of Object-Oriented Social Theory (O.O.S.T.)," comes from Social and Human Sciences and its interactions with OOO, particularly Graham Harman's and Levi Bryant's versions. For him, the main obstacle for an SR-Social Theory alliance can be related to the traditional rendering of what "Human" and the "Social" are for commonplace theories. Pinho relates it to what he names the "Transcendental Man", which is "a kind of persistent matrix what we cannot get rid of" and supposedly informs the entirety of the social theoretical endeavour. With arguments he brings from Garfinkel and other authors, an important tenet is that both theory and practice have the potential to distort objects – therefore a primacy of the practical is not the skeleton key it might seem at first. His proposal for an Object-Oriented Social Theory (O.O.S.T.), which rises from his takes on OOO and Latour's ANT, is outlined by contrasting it with the mainstream social theory (traceable to Hegelian, Marxist and Critical Theory paradigms, as well as traditional Social Phenomenological approaches), while also showcasing how OOST has interesting nods to vitalism and posthumanism.

Cogburn and Owm's article looks into the interaction between speculative gestures and storytelling – and how to relate philosophically to literature. What is at stake is an ethical approach to fiction in relation to approaches that lean towards some kind of object-orientation. The consequences point not only at the effects of narrative in general but also towards the very act of speculation.

Obirek's contribution to our volume, "Speculative Realism and its allure – Marketing withing Philosophy" is very closely related to Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology (OOO) as its own way of philosophizing. By contrasting with what he named the

“Deleuzo-Guattarian” paradigm, Obirek provides us with an informative outline of OOO by going through some of its basic concepts, but also discussing what can be done in terms of “philosophical marketing” as an interesting way of performing philosophy as a whole. Obirek then ends his contribution by giving the readers a glimpse of how OOO/SR has influenced other areas of inquiries, with much more room and potential for new developments.

Heft looks at the connection between Nick Land and the speculative realists. The revival of libidinal materialism, partly due to the formulations rehearsed by the CCRU (Culture and Cybernetics Research Unit) at the University of Warwick at the turn of the last century, gave rise to several debates that prefigured speculation and offered elements for a critical take on correlationism. Fueled by Iain Hamilton Grant’s translations of Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, together with the reception of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, the CCRU developed a connection between desire, capital and cybernetics that provided the groundwork for philosophical movements of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Land was a crucial figure in the reactivation of some tonalities in the thought of Georges Bataille and a way to think of capital as both libidinal and artificial.

Ferreira’s contribution is called “A Progenie Transcendental do Realismo Especulativo: heranças cruzadas de uma linhagem bastarda”. His main point is to propose a further development beyond traditional Speculative Realism which can be tracked down back to the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU). Important players at that moment were Iain Hamilton Grant and Ray Brassier, both dealing with many interesting influences from Schelling, Deleuze and cybernetics. However, as per Ferreira’s argument, the seeds of a renewed transcendental philosophy were at work with these authors, particularly noticeable in Brassier’s works on Wilfrid Sellars’ transcendental naturalism. Through Brassier and Sellars, Ferreira leads us to Adrian Johnston’s transcendental materialism as one of the examples of how SR has been approaching particular trends of Marxism and other possibilities for political philosophy. The last piece is a translation into Portuguese of Latour’s article “What is the style of matter of concern”.

This volume – together with forthcoming books around Speculative Realism to come out soon at Zero and Bloomsbury - attests that our attempt to inaugurate an appraisal of the impact of the movement on philosophy has been met with interest. It seems to us that the philosophical landscape in the 2020s is very different from that of the earlier years of the century – and the growing attention to decolonization efforts is a welcome feature of this

change. Still, the impetus of speculative realism seems to somehow still resonate more than fifteen years after its inception.

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