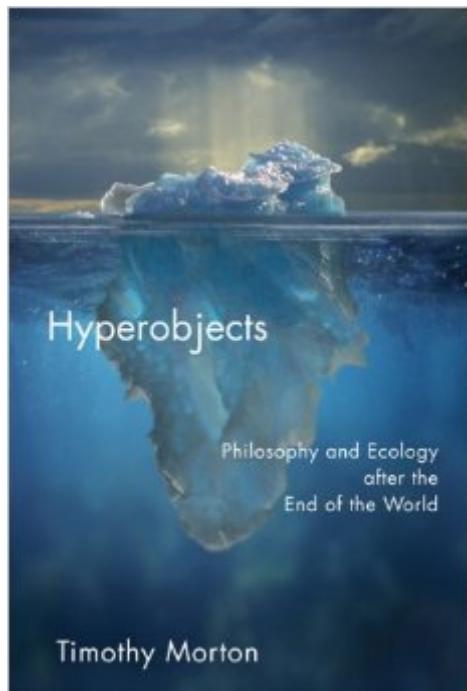


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Hyperobjects: Philosophy And Ecology After The End Of The World (Posthumanities)



Synopsis

Having set global warming in irreversible motion, we are facing the possibility of ecological catastrophe. But the environmental emergency is also a crisis for our philosophical habits of thought, confronting us with a problem that seems to defy not only our control but also our understanding. Global warming is perhaps the most dramatic example of what Timothy Morton calls "hyperobjects" — entities of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they defeat traditional ideas about what a thing is in the first place. In this book, Morton explains what hyperobjects are and their impact on how we think, how we coexist with one another and with nonhumans, and how we experience our politics, ethics, and art. Moving fluidly between philosophy, science, literature, visual and conceptual art, and popular culture, the book argues that hyperobjects show that the end of the world has already occurred in the sense that concepts such as world, nature, and even environment are no longer a meaningful horizon against which human events take place. Instead of inhabiting a world, we find ourselves inside a number of hyperobjects, such as climate, nuclear weapons, evolution, or relativity. Such objects put unbearable strains on our normal ways of reasoning. Insisting that we have to reinvent how we think to even begin to comprehend the world we now live in, *Hyperobjects* takes the first steps, outlining a genuinely postmodern ecological approach to thought and action.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Based on some comments on line, I thought this book would be a useful exploration of

environmental ideas that have widespread subscription, yet little understanding by its subscribers. Sustainable development, mass extinction, climate change, and ecomodernism are examples. As a natural scientist who believes the separation of knowledge into natural and social science and the humanities needs to be eliminated, this sounded promising. Environmental ideas are syntheses of all three ways of knowing, so I was excited by the author's approach. The natural science, however, is, in most places, extraordinarily weak and often wrong. The use of the personal and popular, described by the author as devices for the exposition, is actually a mask for what the author cannot resolve or treat efficiently. Sometimes they seem almost deliberate distractions, like using display to distract from lack of coherent content. I really cannot recommend this book, though I admit that perhaps it simply does not work for me. Clearly others like it. I see nothing new or sensible in hyper objects. Indeed, it makes a muddle of important constructs of pressing importance and that is hard to tolerate.

I am a little over halfway through the book, and I am enjoying it. I am in the applied social sciences, and my research examines how social systems and ecological systems influence each other, so I welcome anything that helps me to think creatively on that matter. I also am not a philosopher, so I don't know if I am really the best to judge the quality of ideas in this book. One thing I am not so sure about though. Our brains weed out the large majority of the sensory information that hits us. Which means we continually only have partial pictures or models in our head of pretty much everything. So, doesn't that make everything a hyperobject? Isn't that kind of the basis of phenomenology in general? Anyway, it is an interesting read so far, and I am enjoying trying to apply the concepts Merton is using, although I don't know if I will stick with this framework.

Occasionally, a new book comes along with a concept so startling that you never see the world in the same way again. *Hyperobjects* is such a book. Concepts, ideas, and entities that Morton terms "hyperobjects" challenge and then defeat traditional thinking about how the world works. This way of thinking is critical to fully understanding the consequences of climate change, the technology revolution, chemicalization of the environment, and the coming paradigm shift resulting from the confluence of these changes. Transformational thinking, such as Morton presents in *Hyperobjects*, is not the first step - that occurred in the 1970s with the whole earth concept and later presented as the Gaia hypothesis - it's the first leap into comprehending the world we live in now and that near future generations will inhabit.

Excellent multidimensional approach to posing an interesting problem in a human approachable way using contemporary language and not digging out outdated dead men to support the argument, only occasionally, when appropriate, and without curtsying to patriotism or seeking credibility with statistical juggling.

The idea of a hyperobject is, I think, a vital one. Morton makes a compelling case for this, and I have no doubt that there is good philosophical work to be done with this concept. The trouble, I think, is that he proceeds to overdo it. His writing is dense, and that is to be expected with such strange and technically complex ontology. At times, however, I realised that it was vastly more Byzantine than it needed to be. Philosophy of all strains should aim at clarity, not performance. Morton, disappointingly, cannot help but perform.

There is a dynamic and creative movement in philosophy today, generally identifying itself as speculative realism, which has grown out of the most radical thinking of the 20th century in phenomenology, process philosophy, and French postmodernism and which is flourishing in England and America in the English language. Timothy Morton's version is strikingly original while remaining well-grounded in the work of Bergson, Heidegger, and Deleuze, with the added value of his passionate and inspired awareness of the ecological crises facing humanity. This is really philosophy worth reading.

Absolutely essential perspectives on our ability (or lack thereof) of absorbing complex things into our consciousness that are nonetheless as real as the nose in front of your face. Our survival depends on grasping the meaning of what Morton addresses. It is very much in question whether we really can. This writing could be seen as a part of the OOO canon as it stands so far.

Really enjoyed it. Ecology is much more interesting to me now, and Morton's way of approaching and blending subjects like global warming, oil, Heidegger, capitalism, Wall-E, Nietzsche, sustainability, Monty Python, Buddhism, Aristotle, the Beatles, the Talking Heads, etc. all so seamlessly is great. Most aspects of OOO, and traits of hyperobjects like viscosity and undulation, are still beyond me. Nonetheless, it remained a challenging, fun, awareness-enhancing read. Morton works hard and does well to communicate difficult ideas in thoughtful and creative ways, even to novices.

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