



**The Media School Research Seminar**  
The Media School  
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**The Greatness of McLuhan**

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In *Laws of Media*, Marshall & Eric McLuhan introduce their concept of the tetrad. Every medium can be described in terms of four polarities: enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval, and reversal. In his preface to the work, Eric McLuhan boldly describes the tetrad as “the single biggest intellectual discovery not only of our time, but of at least the last couple of centuries.” Recently, he stated that he “does not retract one iota” of that brazen claim. But not only has this assertion not been accepted— it has rarely even been mocked. The tetrad has largely been ignored, even by admirers of the McLuhans. This talk will proceed under the assumption that the tetrad is, in fact, the greatest intellectual discovery of at least the last couple of centuries. In a parallel universe in which the year 2008 is marked by a crushing McLuhanite orthodoxy in all spheres of the humanities, what are the gains beyond our own less appealing version of 2008? And what work still remains to be done?

**Biography**

Graham Harman is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the American University in Cairo, and currently Visiting Associate Professor of Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002), *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (2005), *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing* (2007), and *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (just completed). His current book project is a systematic work of metaphysics entitled *Object-Oriented Philosophy*.