

## 1

- The personal continuum. What James called it. What Valberg called the personal horizon. Approximately.
- The stream of phenomenal consciousness.
- Yes. But understood as the being of the world, its only kind of being.
- Which sounds like idealism.
- What I’m getting at emerges from the same soil as idealism.
- How so ?
- The world is given **through** the sense organs of that sentient animal that it is given **to**. In some sense a private show.
- But also through language and culture.
- Right. For humans especially. Time-binders. Our bodies host an evolving accumulative “virus”. A quilt of memes. Interpretedness.
- So the world, in our case, is given to or through a trained animal.
- An animal with memory, an animal that anticipates. The stream of such an animal is full of echoes. Of analysis and recombination.
- The digestion of experience.
- Right.

## 2

- And it’s a continuum or a stream because of these echoes.
- Right. Memory, analysis, recombination, projective anticipation. The stream folds back on itself. In a certain sense.
- Can we also say that this personal continuum is time ?
- Yes. Being’s the telling of time. Time will tell. The continuum is an unrolling, an unfurling, an unfolding.
- Discoveriture.
- Yes. Like the Ingo Farin translation of the Dilthey draft of *Being and Time*. Existence is discoveriture. In other words time.
- Being’s the telling of time. So time tells beings.
- We might say it voices them. If entities are voices, then moments or aspects of those beings are words. As words are united by the voice, so the moments are moments of an entity. This entity is moment-transcending, moment-synthesizing.

- In other words, even mundane entities “need time” in order to show themselves.
- Right. And they are never done showing themselves. And they only show one aspect-moment at a time. One aspect at a time. Hence an aspect is *a* time of the entity, or a moment thereof.
- We can only see one side of a coin at a time.
- Right. Each side conceals to the other. To show one side is to hide the other.
- Showing is also hiding.
- Exactly. Showing is hiding. The entity can only manifest against the horizon or background of time.
- Where would we be without memory ?
- A good question. And we might also talk about logic, about what it means to intend an entity, to grasp the entity as such.
- As a durably unity.
- Right. As something grasped through this or that moment, but understood as being essentially beyond that one moment among so many possible and actual others.
- And this is us talking only about one personal continuum.
- Right. The castaway on an island, intending a particular coconut.
- But the logical transcendence of the intended entity is also interpersonal.
- Right. The object is a transcendent logical synthesis in both a temporal and an interpersonal sense.
- A mouthful.
- That’s true. But also just a formal indication. A hint. Readers can check for themselves. I don’t think there’s a final, perfect foregrounding description of this situation.
- This issue of what a thing is.
- Right. What is a thing ? And what does what a thing is have to with time ?
- I recently looked at a syllabus for a course on Heidegger. And it’s mumbled in this syllabus that being is time. And it’s suggested that this is important. But what this is supposed to mean is not even sketched.

### 3

- I can’t speak for what you read. But there’s plenty of idle talk out there about Heidegger. And around any famous supposedly profound thinker. It’s risky to have a definite idea.
- Grim humor.

–Yes. But I think that famous philosophers really do serve as props for those who don’t yet understand them.

–Does anyone ever finally understand them ?

–No. And that’s an important point. But I think we can distinguish between those who can only repeat soundbites from those who can paraphrase.

–But those who can only repeat soundbites would recognize the paraphrase.

–Exactly. It’s what Hobbes said. Only those with some measure of science even know what the fuck it is.

–In those words no doubt.

–Exact quote.

–Well we can agree that a paraphrase should be offered. A risk should be taken.

–Right. There’s personal responsibility in that. Professor, profess. Or rather let’s look to that root meaning. Not essentially an institutional man. Instead a man with his own words.

–Even if a paraphrase ?

–Right. And so much of this time-binding Conversation is paraphrase, admittedly often re-contextualized.

–Pieces of one quilt sewn into another.

–Right. And this or that aspect of a rich thinker is chosen as especially relevant.

–For you lately it’s the thing’s relation to time.

–Right. But also a solution to the mind-matter problem.

–A solution ?

–Yes. Or at least a substantial reduction in cognitive dissonance. That’s what it was for me.

–Your ontological realization ?

–Yes. It all just clicked. A neutral or nondual phenomenism. Which I wish I could claim as my own invention or discovery. But of course I cannot. It’s an old thought, even if only a few people are able to enjoy it.

–You must be torn.

–Because I want to share it ? And because I want it to be difficult and rare ?

–Exactly.

–I think you are right. I do think I share it with one other person, but our styles are very different. His is relatively academic. Mine is influenced by James and Mach.

–And yours is more careful to avoid an idealistic flavor.

–Right. And more secular. Mach and Avenarius and Mill. Which one might think would make it more accessible. But people who like physics tend to be indirect realists. And, frankly, to be bad at philosophy for just this reason. And because they can't help framing philosophy (usually) as a battle against religion.

–There are lots of idealistic religious types out there, accusing others scientism.

–That's true. I've been on the secular side for a long time now, but I also always saw that physics is not at all enough. Not at all an elucidation of our total situation. However impressive and even beautiful it is, it isn't a good substitute for ontology. And indirect realism is an inferior product. It's got a good sales pitch. But if you kick the tires the wheels fall off.

## 4

–Let's jump to the weakest part of your own story.

–Sure.

–What's the thorniest issue with phenomenalism ?

–The pre-sentience past and the post-sentience future.

–You had that on speed-dial.

–A metaphor that the kids will not recognize.

–They watch old movies.

–Fair enough. But let's talk about the presentient past.

–The time before consciousness.

–Right.

–So phenomenalism (roughly) identifies being and consciousness. So the issue is what kind of existence, if any, the mountains, for instance, had. Before something sentient can stare at them.

–Right.

–So a dualist will say that the physical stuff was somehow here before consciousness emerged.

–Right.

–But you disagree.

–Not exactly. I don't dispute carbon dating. For me the issue is semantic. To say that those mountains were here before sentience is to say what exactly ?

–That they existed. That they were here.

–Right. But I can't help but most people intend or mean the familiar mountains of experience.

- The mountains of sentience. The mountains of experience.
- Right. So I’m saying that “exist” seems to float free and empty if we disconnect it from experience.
- Well how would you go about decoding the claim that the mountains existed before sentience.
- Inferentialism. If we could take a time machine and check, we’d see the mountain. And we could also understand the postulated presentient past in terms of its implications. The one’s we can check now or eventually.
- So you want to plug everything back in to experience somehow.
- Right. In order to make some kind of sense of it. The speculative realist invokes the pre-sentient object as an objection to correlationism. But I don’t think this presentient object is a reliable weapon. Because asking after its meaning takes us right back to correlation.
- The speculative realists seem to want to understand the math to somehow refer independently.
- Mathematical mysticism. Semantic atomism. “Justified” as a prophylactic against fideism, against religion. So speculative realism becomes a boring shadow of a boring idealism.
- A boring idealism.
- Religionist idealism. A crowd that doesn’t care much, as far as I can tell, about the famous labor of the concept.
- My hopefully polite question is whether your own stubborn neutral secular position isn’t invested ?
- I’m sure it is. Neutral because I’m not political either ?
- Right. No religion. No utopian stuff. The mundane is enough.
- I’m not even saying that the mundane is enough. I’m open to Schopenhauer’s grim take on the world. But I relate to Shakespeare. What was his total existential judgment on the world ? What was his committed identity ?
- This double neutrality makes your stuff a hard sell.
- Yes indeed. Like pure math. I keep telling myself to write an “existential” novel. But obviously it gives me pleasure to articulate the same realization again and again, with a tweak here and there.

## 5

- Well let’s get back to that, big picture style, to be done with it.
- Sure. So the world is a system of parallel continua. We are each of us, as persons, at the center of a continuum.

–A stream of experience.

–Right. But experience is world. So a *worlding* continuum. A river of world. Each of us at the center of our own. Yet all of them rivers of our one same world.

–Your view is anti-representational.

–Yes. Perception is not representation. My continuum includes moments or aspects of objects. I grasp these moments or aspects as parts of a whole, as appearances of the object. So the object is “in” my stream in one sense and yet not in another.

–Objects are between us.

–Right. Objects show themselves only a moments, which are scattered over time and continua. So no object is itself completely in a single stream. And this is for the mundane reason that we can talk about objects. We can intend objects together. This has serious and surprising consequences, if one is bent on avoiding performative contradiction. And having a grip on what one means.