

Here I deal with some of the technicalities of the phenomenism I endorse. So this is not an ideal text to start with.

How “real” are typical objects like cast iron skillets ? Are they “really” “made of” “truly real” fundamental particles ? This scientific reductionism, usually coupled with metaphysical realism, doesn’t tempt me in the least. I find it naive.

But can they be dissolved into their relations ? Is the world a blanket ? A single spiderweb ? Hegel wrote that no finite thing has genuine being. As I vaguely understand him, Spinoza thought that everything is just God. This holism appeals to me. To explain what a thing is involves the invocation of every other thing, if the explanation is ideally complete. I agree that we don’t use individual concepts but always *sets* of concepts. Basically as Sellars and Brandom suggest.

But I still find it too indulgently speculative to deny “genuine” being to “finite” objects. This over-intellectualizes being, in the direction of the identity of thought and being. I follow Feuerbach’s sensualistic “materialism,” which is not at all a reductive physicalism but rather an existential and phenomenology awareness of the “visceral concreteness” of human existence. I eat *this* crust of bread, here and now. *This* woman is my wife. The concrete particular thing is “penetrated” or “laced” with iterable sortal concepts. I call her a “wife.” A “her”. And so on.

Experience is “conceptually” articulated, yes. But concepts are not immaterial. We *enact* them. The sign is a sensory event, a thing of this world. The world, as Heidegger emphasized, is already “significant” or wet with a visceral meaning. The “meaning” of the smiling face of that charming woman in the elevator that I never saw again. That I remember from time to time. Or that big dog that attacked me when I was a kid, running after me. The perceptual presence of that dog “meant” something “bad” to me, in its particular way that I can’t “squeeze into” signs. As Eliot put it, taking it from Husserl, I have to rely on an “objective correlative.” My poem only succeeds by invoking a similar mood in you, through the invocation of correlative or associated entities. But my poem will fail if we don’t share a “form

of life” or frame of reference. Can I check my poem’s success ? We can talk. Trade more signs. In fact, we sometimes do feel understood. I again invoke Peirce. Inquiry is the settlement of belief. When our (genuine) doubt ceases, so does the inquiry. We move on. And of course life can interrupt one inquiry, leaving it still unsettled, and drag us to a more threatening ( or promising ) irresolution in our sense of reality.

Peirce — questionably in my view — tried to find a use for “truth.” He saw that truths are beliefs, that truth is belief. So truth is the limit point of ideal inquiry. A calculus idea. The scientific community converges on *the* truth.

My anti-truth talk *may* seem reckless. Perhaps even indulgent and irrationalist. Maybe impious for the sake of impiety. But for me it’s a matter of economy and beauty. All we need is *belief and its transformations*. Peirce talked of the settling of belief, and of course beliefs often settle down. We can become more confident. We enact more trust in this or that belief. But beliefs are also assimilated and constructed.

As I continue to see it, truth as correspondence to “true” reality is a confused forgetting or overlooking of the stubborn situatedness of belief. I believe. You believe. Even if we share belief, the world manifests itself — as far as I can — always “for” this or that “conscious” entity. The past that haunts the now is *my* past. The future that haunts the now is “my” future — what *I* hope for or fear, etc. The perception that confirms or shatters my belief is *my* perception. I see it with these ties, hear it with these ears.

The fever dream of representationalism, the idea that consciousness is a weird internal stuff full of representational pictures of objects I never otherwise see, is an incoherent misreading of this situatedness.

The “from-a-point-of-view-ness” of the world is what “mentalistic” or “idealistic” theories get right. But *what* is given in this from-a-point-of-view way is the world itself, the world we share.

If I hadn’t spent so long myself confused on this issue, I might be

more shocked that philosophers still put this stuff on the market. Some claim that we live in a realm of icons, in a graphical user interface. Others are “idealist,” pointlessly claiming that the world is “mental” rather than “physical.” When either “All Is X” statement is equally empty, except for the *feel* of it. The idealists will sell you medicine for your soul. Afterlife, star seeds. It’s a flavor. It’s a vibe. The physicalists will ( often ) give you secularism, maybe some left wing utopian politics. Frankly I see both positions as bad philosophy. But I also see that people “live” in bad philosophy. Because the “vibe” and “crowd” are *important*. To me good philosophy involves a kind of allergy to plot holes and incoherence. Either these drapes go or I do. “Aesthetic” rationality. Philosophy becomes an art. But this art is constrained. If the sculptor has to work with the stone, then the philosopher has to work with life and concepts, obeying them in order to arrange them so that they feel right. As if catching our situation in the right words.

My own journey on this issue: I didn’t care much about it for a long time. I read thinkers like Nietzsche and Freud. I was vaguely scientific, but I was more of pragmatist. I gripe about pre-theoretical pragmatism as anti-philosophy, which misses the art. But pragmatism proper was a potent movement. James is a lovable *person*. And his philosophy is great.

When I finally cared about “metaphysics,” finely got sucked into its vortex, I was more anti-idealistic than idealistic. Because I saw that philosophy presupposes our being here together in the first place. Or we couldn’t argue about what is going on in more detail. I vaguely absorbed the usual indirect realism. But the more I thought about it, the more I saw “from-a-point-of-view-ness.”

First I focused on personality as a “filter.” I saw what we all see. That different people understand the same world very differently. The-world-for-Joe is not The-world-for-Bill. Joe lives in a world run by a God. Bill’s a bitter atheist, who *used* to believe, and sometimes envies those who still believe. Bill lives in “a tale told by an idiot.” Now maybe Joe and Bill mostly live

the same when they aren't in a theoretical mode. But at times their "worlds" diverge. Of course the details of their havings of the world generally diverge. But we do tend to agree on perceived situations. On what are therefore called facts. At least we tend to agree when our "spiritual" beliefs are entangled with these facts. There's a debate on near death experiences on The Philosophy Forum at the moment. Bias on either side is clear. I don't think bias is bad or avoidable. But it's something we modify and sophisticate in the long run, ideally. I personally don't doubt NDEs themselves, but frankly I don't believe in afterlives or reincarnation. I can imagine experiences that might change my beliefs, but I don't expect such experiences. Yet I would *like* to be immortal, if conditions are good. If Heaven is better version of Earth, or close enough, sign me up. But it's just not currently plausible to me. Thought there's money to be made, if I switch sides. Note that Hoffman and Kastrup, two STEM guys, are famous. And that they both offer different flavors of something spiritual. I don't think a grim old pessimistic logical positivist would have the same pull. Earnest anti-natalism is not what I'm talking about. By "pessimistic," I mean beyond every world-saving pose. I mean gallows humor pessimism. A loss of interest in the very *archetype* of the grand political-spiritual narrative. That sees all such narratives in their kinship, as aspects as a personality *type*.

So I was this kind of gallows humor old man pessimist when I found myself — finally — fascinated by the classic mind-matter problem. I went at it cold and theoretical like a chess problem. How could the jigsaw of concepts be made to fit ? Basically I started with my inherited indirect dualism and tried to find some version that wasn't nonsense. I read Husserl. And his analysis of spatial objects in terms of adumbrations or aspects delighted me. This is one of the first things I found in Husserl. But I kept thinking about it. I also read Mach. And James' "Does Consciousness Exist ?" long ago. But I happened to be reading Mach when the bell rang. Mach and Husserl. But it's also in Leibniz, which I discovered as I followed the theme of aspect.

The radical move, simple in retrospect, is to understand a per-

ception as a piece of the object's empirical being. Perception is presentation is adumbration. A perception is not "inside" the subject. This container metaphor has kept people confused. Thinkers were right that perception is yours or mine and "private." In that you can't see through my eyes. But they got tangled up in the causal relationships between sense organs and not-me objects. Mach's genius was to see the unity of the phenomenal field. My nose in the mirror is another transcendent object. But functionally related to other elements in the field. If my nose gets stopped up, the smell of roses exits. My eyelids descend like curtains, and the glass of orange juice, vivid in the morning sun, is replaced by a pink vagueness. So our sense organs remain causally related to not-me things. But the manifestation of these not-me things is not "internal." This is a misleading metaphor, inspired by our duplicity, our social tendency to conceal, if only out of politeness.

Lakoff's work suggests that this container metaphor is basic to our operation in the world. Apes digging ants out of a rotten fallen branch. So Lakoff helps us understand how philosophers, who pride themselves on their shrewdness, could end up so confused on this issue. Confused enough to claim that we all live in a private illusion. Hoffman's popularity suggests to me that the counter-intuitiveness of this belief is actually a selling point. Like an exciting conspiracy theory. Those idiot normies think they live in the real world. But me and mine know the Equations of True Reality, etc. Hoffman is useful, though, as an example of where metaphysical realism, in a dualist context, leads. Not that it's of great importance. The issue is aesthetic, artistic. To many people, this "far out" speculation is just what philosophy *is*. That or a weird projection on Nietzsche, visions of The Alpha dancing in one's head. In aesthetic terms, good philosophy *depends* on bad philosophy as its foil. Ladders. Hierarchies. Stories of advance and accumulation. Determinate negation. This too is vanity. But a better way to kill time than others, in my all-too-limited experience. A sense of horizon. Of the world that exceeds me but only becomes "real" as it presents itself to me. The horizon is crystallized in the situations of my life.