

## 1

Even if I can't convince you to adopt the following ontological beliefs, I hope to make myself more understood. I'd like to show you the Big Picture, because I find only the total view coherent.<sup>1</sup>

I do have other readers in mind, so I include statements that I think you already understand and perhaps accept.

## 2

To say that **being is presence** is to say that that all entities manifest with a from-a-point-of-view-ness that cannot be scrubbed off. I am suggesting something *like* panexperientialism. But "experience" is not intended as something internal or representational here. I don't have experience. Experience has me. Experience is the world as it encloses *me*. It's the for-ness of this enclosing world that makes it "my experience," but this "experience" is the phenomenological Lifeworld in all of its richness.

## 3

I utterly repudiate any kind of solipsism. To avoid this misunderstanding, I drag in some lingo. The **ontological ego** is a **formal** concept analogous to the total stream of "experience" of a particular experienter. The **empirical-linguistic ego** is of course this experienter, who is also a believer.

The ontological ego, often understood as "phenomenal consciousness," is not a kind of stuff but rather the *presence* of all kinds of stuff. Experience or consciousness is the presence of the world. I am conscious iff the world is present for me.

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<sup>1</sup>The radicalized redundancy anti-theory of truth is crucial.

## 4

The claim that the world is “made of” experience is a first approximation but also misleading. I understand the neutral monism that I almost endorse to be just this claim.

But I prefer radical pluralism. Presence is not a kind of stuff but the presence of many entities that are classified in various ways. I lean on the famous ontological difference here.

Presence is “first-person” or “from-a-point-of-view” being. **The meaning of being is presence.**<sup>2</sup>

## 5

I call streams of experience “ontological **egos**” because they are “structured” by the **belief** of their *associated* linguistic-empirical egos.

I use “belief” to indicate not only the system of explicit beliefs of the empirical ego but also the lived “structure” of experience that need not already be put into words.

If you tell me there is a red ball in the closed cardboard box, then I can open it and “match” this explicit claim with the thereness of the correctly predicted situation. This correctness, it should be noted, is situated. **I believe** that your prediction was correct because **I** have adopted that belief. My sense of the world now includes the being-in-the-box of the red ball.

## 6

I will jump ahead to say that this kind of personal confirmation — a transformation of belief explainable psychologically in terms of direct experience — gets inflated to the ultimately empty notion of truth as correspondence.

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<sup>2</sup>See Polt’s essay “Revisiting Presence” for more on this.

Ayer's typically brilliant *LTL* is incoherent on just this point. He endorses the redundancy theory of truth, seemingly in the strong sense, but also endorses verificationism. This can be partially fixed perhaps by defining empirical statements in terms of experience that makes us *call* them "true." But even this mixes in too much psychology. Explication that depends on explanation is questionable, for the point is to define ( secure a firmer grip on ) the basic terms that appear in explanations. <sup>3</sup>

## 7

An empirical ego's belief is the **form** of the world as it has that ego, or (if you prefer ) the world from the POV of that ego. As Mill already emphasized, most of the world is not perceptually present for us at any moment. Our human sense of the world or human belief depends on memory. I have a vague "picture" of the "state" of the world. Since I *live* in my belief as the "truth," I don't usually thematize it as my ( mere ) belief, though I can hold *tentative* beliefs *as such*.

## 8

The world that has me is a vast, transcendent, and interpersonal lifeworld. This is why experience, traditionally conceived as internal and mediating, is a misleading term, even though it does try to speak presence.

Indirect realism traps this presence as something internal, as one kind of being among another kind. So we get the wretched concept of qualia, as opposed, of course, to non-present "being" as the "cause" of such qualia.

Phenomenalism, akin to panexperientism, is almost always initially misunderstood to reduce the world to indirect realism's internal stuff. It is understood to keep the representation but

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<sup>3</sup>I think Wittgenstein might have been shrewder in his refusal to say how this "picturing" worked. But I confess that I did not look over the original texts when writing this, so reader beware !

discard the represented. Or it is understood to *construct* the represented from internal “ingredients.”

Ayer presents objects as “logical constructions” and features neutral sense-data. This is less than ideal, but he admirably dissolves the being of the perceiver into such sense-data, and this is the essential move. For Ayer, however awkward his lingo, there is no brain-in-itself that generates a secondary epiphenomenal stuff.

## 9

Ayer compactly presents what is basically Mill’s phenomenalism. Mill, thoroughly secular, seems to have seen himself as correcting Berkeley, completing the implied immaterialist intention, which was cancelled by the inclusion of a God who simply replaced the matter of atheists with the more congenial matter of theists. Berkeley’s Matter is the-world-in-God’s-unflinching eyes, the world as it manifests in its Truth to a God who never blinks. I claim that **substrate physicalism** with truth-as-correspondence is unwittingly equivalent to this view, with a philosopher’s simplified god swapped for Jehova, but more on that later.

## 10

I don’t think it’s much noticed that Mill’s phenomenalism gives us an atheistic twist on Leibniz’s monadology. Phenomenalism is perspectivism.<sup>4</sup>

And as the same town, looked at from various sides, appears quite different and becomes as it were numerous in aspects; even so, as a result of the infinite number of [monads], it is as if there were so many different universes, which, nevertheless are nothing but aspects [perspectives]

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<sup>4</sup>Not just epistemic perspectivism, which I see as trivially implied by indirect realism, but “ontological” or “fundamental” perspectivism. Perspectivism as phenomenalism is being as presence. To solidify this identity, we have to sacrifice truth as correspondence, which implies the “essence” of dualism.

of a single universe, according to the special point of view of each monad.

These “different universes” are what I mean when I claim that the consciousness of the other is the presence of **the entire world** from another perspective than my own. The hard thing to let go of is the unstable notion of **the world as it Really is.**<sup>5 6 7</sup>

## 11

I claim that the essence of both Matter and God is a “substrate” or *purportedly* non-present being that **makes truths true**. Phenomenalism, understood as a genuine immaterialism, is a post-truth non-representational ontology.

It is **owned** or “authentic” because it understands and presents itself as **situated belief** and The Truth.

**Phenomenalism is perspectivism is the radicalized redundancy theory of truth.** To unfold this aphorism is to appropriate my perverse ontology.

## 12

The “true” state of the world is the world as “God” sees it.

**The truth is what “God” believes.**

In less jarring rhetoric, the truth is what the ideal believer believes.

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<sup>5</sup>This would be the town from God’s perspective or the town as the obscure cause of its perspectival manifestations. But this “cause” looks to me like nothing but our *intending* one and the same world. The projection of this Cause is, in my eyes, nakedly non-empirical and theological. This Cause would itself need a Cause, if the world does.

<sup>6</sup>It’s also worth noting that the geometrical metaphor, however dazzling, is also misleading. We tend to think of automatically coherent aspects, as if a shape were broken into pieces that could fit back together perfectly. But we disagree regularly on even the “facts.” Our systems of beliefs as individual believers do *not* gel together concordantly. So these monads are **not** in Leibniz’s pre-established harmony. Like Berkeley, Leibniz *built Truth* into his system. I think scientific ontology’s tend to make the same mistake. A coherence personally sought is projected as already accomplished in the “essence” of the world.

<sup>7</sup>I discovered later, to my delight, that Heidegger understands a “Dasein” to be just such an adjusted monad. He discusses this in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, and I read the relevant passage in one of my earlier vids.

The truth is the story the Omniscient 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Narrator tells.

13

Now those who project the objective “presence”<sup>8</sup> of a truth-making Stuff<sup>9</sup> don’t tend to see the “theological” implication of this projection. Indeed, they are typically atheists or agnostics who pride themselves on scientificity. I am counting on just that identification with scientificity as I make my case against the semantic security of the concept of truth.

14

What **is** science ?<sup>10</sup> As I see it, many take for granted the mission of science to **mirror** “objective reality.”

If science is understood as the pursuit of **truth as correspondence**, then “true” beliefs have to somehow “correspond” with “objective reality.”

This conception of science as the pursuit of truth usually **takes for granted** the secure and unambiguous meaning of these fundamental terms.

15

I suggest that the correspondence theory of truth is a misreading of — for instance — the personal confirmation of a prediction.

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<sup>8</sup>First, I put *presence* in quotes because the presence is exactly what is cancelled and denied. Second, as many may know, Heidegger uses “objective presence” for the way an object is present to the cold theoretical gaze. This is a genuine kind of presence, if it is presence for you or presence for me. The scientific image, as appropriated in a particular believer’s sense of the world, attempts to grasp Nature in just this kind of cold presence. I have no objection to this. My objection is a dis-owned or de-situated scientific image, as the belief of an implied but disavowed god.

<sup>9</sup>I should emphasize that I don’t intend only former, more primitive versions of the scientific image. Fields are also “stuff” in this sense in their purported function of truthmaker. The “absolute solidity” I mention is the promise bedrock that makes a belief more than just belief. I suggest that truth-as-correspondence is a flight from the “groundlessness” of belief. I don’t at all mean that people have no reasons for this or that belief. I mean that there is “only belief,” however much one may prefer this or that belief. To live in belief is an existential risk. If we change our beliefs, we tend to describe that change as a story of progress.

<sup>10</sup>I’ve discussed a non-truth-seeking vision of science elsewhere.

You tell me there is a red ball in the closed box. I open it, see the red ball. I grant that what you said is “true.”

Note that my situated belief — my personal sense of the world — is transformed. Nothing more.

## 16

I may *share* my newly enforced belief with others, and I may explain and justify my belief ( both at once ) by telling the story of the ball in the box to others. They may adjust their own sense of the world, their own situated belief.

Likewise I may publish details about an experiment in a scientific journal. Beliefs are contagious. Some beliefs may become so common that they are part, more or less, of “understanding English.”

## 17

A **radicalized** redundancy theory of truth is not merely a linguistic observation but a **demystification** of the concept of truth as “empty.” Our inherited tendency to express our own beliefs with the handy device of the word “true” leads us to misunderstand “truth” as an “objective property” of some assertions.

But I can’t find any depth in the concept. Things supposed to make assertions “true” turn out to be **explanations** for the transformation of belief.

I don’t dispute that perceptual presence of situation tends to inspire certainty about descriptions of that situation, especially as long that situation remains perceptually present. This is belief at its most intense. I will swear that it’s “true” that the situation is just this way and no other.

And yet we doubt it when a stranger is Certain that he was

abducted by aliens or contacted by God.

I also grant that we tend to agree on the “fact” when we stand in the same room and gaze at the same situation. I suspect our mutual intelligibility depends on this agreement being the rule rather than the exception.

Yet I think we go too far if we ignore eyewitnesses who disagree as dismissible edge cases and then go on to insist that this rule never fails, that at least one of the two disagreeing eyewitnesses must simply be *wrong*. We need only imagine that we are one of these quite certain witnesses, next to another witness just as certain. Both will be certain, perhaps, that the other is wrong. *The tacit assumption is that world always manifests itself to different subjects in a coherent way.*<sup>11</sup>

## 18

To reiterate, I suggest that **truth is the wind in the trees**. An empty emphasis. A handy device for *discussing* belief that is always situated. To suggest this is of course to express my own impious situated belief about this holy concept.<sup>12</sup>

To those who assume that science — and rational discussion in general — is the *pursuit* of such truth, this will sound like a reckless irrationalism.

To those who presuppose such **representationalism**, my term

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<sup>11</sup>Again, I think the world has to be “regular” enough in its provision of “empirical coherence” for us to have mutual intelligibility. As a practical person in the world, I don’t worry about such issues, and I tacitly assume the empirical coherence. But dragging this assumption into the light is...fun. It helps us realize premises in our thinking that we have perhaps never noticed and therefore been in a position to evaluate.

<sup>12</sup>I borrow this rhetoric approach from the Young Hegelians, who loved playing on one another’s anti-theological self-conceptions. As I see it, truth as correspondence is scientism, an scientism is an accidentally pious distortion of what I take to be a better, freer conception of science or scientificity. You might say that I attack scientism from the left. I offer an immanent critique, the kind that might sting. But my implication that “theological” is a pejorative adjective is also a personal risk, because I decisively side against the enemies of scientism to their right. I love Feyerabend, and I think his vision of science is more scientific than the vision of those who see him as an enemy. Faith in the Method of science is, as I see it, monotheism by other means. The obsession with demarcation is the pursuit of catholic or universal creed. Freedom, plurality, tolerance, curiosity, a willing to have one’s cherished beliefs challenged. This I associate with rationality and science, not a mirroring of The Way Things Really Are. This is not to deny or resent that the beliefs of experts do sometimes beautifully converge. Nor am I an instrumentalist. I *might* be a contrarian, because perhaps I’d argue in the other way if everyone was already a phenomenalist. But that too is scientific in the sense of exploration, in the discontent with any hardening complacency. Schlick’s views on ethics involve perpetual “youth” in a metaphorical sense. That resonates for me.



for the mission of mirroring, the claim will *sound* like the assertion that *the truth is there is no truth*.

The claim is instead that I can't find any meat in the concept, having tried. Nor can I make sense of other's finding meat on it. Not yet.

## 19

How do I **know** that there is only situated belief ?

For me, knowledge is warranted belief. Whether or not a belief is warranted is itself a situated belief. I can explain why I have come to believe that there is only situated belief, and why that belief seems rational to me, and worth sharing. I don't assume or demand that others will judge the belief to be justified or even intelligible.

Part of my conception of rationality as a virtue is an acceptance of this risk of speaking and a friendly engagement with any friendly criticism of this belief. The criticism can be incisive and even devastating and yet be friendly.

## 20

I suggest that belief in Truth — typically truth-as-correspondence, usually tacit and unspecified — is entangled in the projection of a unrepresentable “objective being” that functions as truth-maker.

The ontology that I razz as “scientistic” projects something like the idealized scientific image as a True Reality. <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>I know that you, Ryan, admit the reality of the psychical or “experience” as also “real.” So I don't know how much of this critique is against your position. But I think you do mostly embrace (tentatively, as you look further into it) truth as correspondence. So I present a general critique not aimed right at you but seemingly relevant. I hope to convince you to question this correspondence conception of truth.

## 21

A fair response would be : **what's so wrong with this ?**

My critique is essentially unoriginal. **What is this correspondence ?**

Husserl's discussion of signitive versus fulfilled intention is roughly equivalent to Wittgenstein's picture theory of representational language. I endorse both.

But I understand both in terms of **situated belief**.

## 22

I am no longer impressed by Popper's falsificationism<sup>14</sup>, but I rate him as a great philosopher anyway.

His concept of a **basic statement** is under-appreciated and relevant here.

Every test of a theory, whether resulting in its corroboration or falsification, must stop at some basic statement or other which we decide to accept. If we do not come to any decision, and do not accept some basic statement or other, then the test will have led nowhere.

[...]

By its decision, the jury accepts, by agreement, a statement about a factual occurrence—a basic statement, as it were.

[...]

The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or “given” base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that

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<sup>14</sup>I think Feyerabend destroys this famous piece of Popper's work in *Against Method* and scattered essays

the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.

Basic statements are tentatively accepted **shared beliefs**.

As I see it, basic statements are a generalization of observation statements, but Popper emphasized, shrewdly, that observation is always theory laden. Since all theories are tentative, statements invoking them are fragile.

Another point, anyone can make the observation, but *someone* has to make it. A prediction is empirical if directed at *possible* experience.<sup>15</sup>

## 23

Is this merely an epistemic issue ?

I don't think so, and I think epistemology depends on the explication ( the secured sense ) of its fundamental concepts.

How does belief or the meaning of belief **correspond to** or **mirror** non-belief-like “objective” being ? Or is the world **made** of truth ?

If Reality is mirrored by Truth, then Truth is mirrored by Reality. Reality ( non-present being as truth-maker ) is *MEANING* !?

Surely spoken sentences — understood as vibrations of the air — are not the same as the electrons they somehow — as significant and representational — intend and make claims about.

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<sup>15</sup>Ryan, it was illuminating to hear how your privilege the actual and were surprised at how much I insist on possibility in ontology. On the other hand, you often invoke the counterfactual, which reminds me of an exploration of logical possibility. Phenomenalism is **built** on the possible. The entity is a synthesis of its **effigies** because these “effigies” are its fugitive manifestations. I agree with Mill that we do indeed tend to take the interpersonal possibility of manifestation as “more real” than the manifestations that inspired their institution in the first place. Some of this is perhaps “hardwired” in the species.

## 24

Does physicalism as an ontology, inspired by but other than “empirical” science **lose experience** ? I think so.

Let us even grant, for the moment, that every **thing** is “ultimately” physical. Note that this is almost a neutral monism, and “physical” becomes ambiguously vague. But we proceed.

The “hard problem of the physical” is the not noticing that “consciousness” is precisely the **presence** of the physical. I too “eliminate” consciousness. In the sense that it is **no thing**.

## 25

Physicalism misses the ontological difference. Quality or presence gets flattened and neutralized in qualia, which is to say things that are merely present. Even “champions of consciousness” speak this futile language, try to **say presence** with things that are merely present.

The ontological difference is embarrassing to those determined to **explain**.

## 26

Presence is “just a noun.” Isn’t presence as a concept just one more entity ? Well, yes. The *sign* “presence” is there in the world with everything else. But the sign “red” is also there with everything else.

It’s strange enough to try to point not at the redness that is **there** with the apple. I’m talking about an apple before *my* eyes. That redness-**for-me** is what I intend with this “public” sign “red.”

Now I take that redness to have been there before I learned to call it redness-for-me. As I see it, we tend to assume that others’

experience of objects is like our own, but this breaks down quickly when it comes to taste in music or certain foods.

## 27

Color is perhaps a less than ideal approach, however traditional, because the public pragmatic concept succeeds with effort. Exertion is required to separate the concept of my-red from the concept of pragmatic-red. This pragmatic-red is just our *calling* the same things red, without us being able to see the pragmatically-red object through one another's eyes.

In my view, whatever *his* intention, Wittgenstein's "beetle remark" explains why I choose a *public* sign when I try to express something that is nevertheless "private" or "ineffable."

Now someone tells me that he knows what pain is only from his own case! –Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle. –Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. –But suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language? –If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a something: for the box might even be empty. –No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.

An LLM can speak of a redness that most of believe it does not "have." The chatbot does not have "consciousness." I tend to believe that myself, but perhaps an android will change my mind in 2045.

## 28

I understand or explicate consciousness as the presence of the world *for* the conscious entity. Experience is a synonym of both consciousness and presence.

Physicalism — and indirect realism because it projects a substrate — tries to speak being without presence.

Physicalism omits presence altogether. Indirect realism traps presence and flattens it into qualia that are present.

Explanation is the linkage of the present with the present. An explanation is also present, a thing that is *THERE* — for Joe or Jane and so on.

You can't *do* anything with presence.

Redness is there. Roundness is there. This thereness of qualities hints at the identity of quality and presence.

## 29

Some may grant me that much. If presence is “experience” or “presence for,” then, OK, presence is quality. Is quality presence ?

Is there redness for no eye ?

For Locke, the brute being of the world was stuff in space smacking into other stuff in space. This brute stuff was colorless. Somehow a brain made of such colorless stuff, with a clockwork based only on communicated impulse, generated color, painted the world of experience. The real world could be recovered from this user-interface by getting rid of the color. And the stink and the lust and fear. The brute stuff was “there” without presence, the cause of presence.

Yet Locke was alive, and he signitively intended and invoked this brute stuff as he wrote his book. His readers too, for whom the

world including this book was present, could repeat, more or less, this same questionable projection.

### 30

Where are the snows of yesteryear ? How *was* the Big Bang present ? It wasn't. But it is signitively present *now* as something that "would" have present then.

Do I believe in the Big Bang ? Well, more or less, as a respectable dominant hypothesis. But I can also vaguely believe in a theorem that I don't **understand**.

I can even make convincing inferences from an assertion I don't — ontologically, deeply, holistically — understand. Yet I don't mean to imply that understanding is ever final.

I think the point made in *After Finitude* accidentally *supports* correlationism. The book awakens us — perhaps against its intention — to our complacency. We who are respectable and scientific and educated believe, of course, what science tells us.

We assent to it. Yes, of course. But how exactly does the distant past exist **now** ? In what sense did it exist **then** ?

### 31

The book reheats Locke's primary qualities for today's science. The primary qualities of experienced or present entities were chosen by Locke from the scientific image of his day. *He fit his ontology to his epistemology*. Or tried to, because — like Democritus — he forgot to include the normativity that makes science more than a culture's dominant myth, more than its story of the local gods, however depersonalized.

Shape without color. Sounds like a T. S. Eliot poem.

The way the world existed then — which already assumes the

singularity of a global past — is the way the world exists now, but stripped of its secondary qualities, all that is not quantifiable.

**Is presence quantifiable, mathematizable ?** I can only count what is already present. I cannot count presence itself. Presence is the condition for the possibility of anything and everything. Unless I can understand being apart from presence.

## 32

I am “conscious”. I share and defend beliefs. I sketch the signitive presence of invisible causes like electrons, but I do so through the qualitative presence of signs. These entities are judged “real” in the honorific sense because they predict and control the qualitative presence that I **care** about.

Meillassoux cares about “the great outdoors,” longs for an escape from presence. He sings the signitive presence of the never-present. He applies his rhetorical crowbar against his reader’s presumed scientism.

But something comes loose in all that prying. If I remember correctly, he grants the power and appeal of correlationism. He is a small knight who chooses a baby dragon to slay.

## 33

For all his daring embrace of radical contingency, he does not think to challenge the assumption of the singularity of **the** past.

He does not question the concept of truth. He allows the presumed singular journey of the objective state of the world to leap lawlessly.

Lenin attacked empiriocriticism. As Sartre saw, perhaps before sinking into the mire of such seriousness himself, materialism is the choice of the Serious man. **The essence of materialism is matter as truthmaker.**



## 34

Theist Berkeley or Communist Lenin, purveyors of Truth, either God's the proles'.

Meillassoux too, apparently a skater on the thinnest of ice, affirms his faith in The One.

The One Story of the lonely but lordly Omniscient Narrator, who will not tolerate a rival narrator. Mononototheism, in 32 flavors.

## 35

Generalized “materialism” — which may allow for a “cream” of experience on top — projects non-present being as truth-maker, forgetting that its postulated entities are (only) *significantly* present in the *discordant* beliefs of various scientists.

## 36

How is this mononototheism of The One Truth related to the **coherence norm** that structures the ethical notion of rationality ? <sup>16</sup>

**One is one around here.**

The coherence of my beliefs is the coherence of the world that encloses me.

As Heidegger said in an early lecture against Husserl's obsession with certain foundations, *anxiety in the face of relativism is anxiety in the face of existence.*

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<sup>16</sup>Speculation : whence the coherence norm ? In tribes where individuals may become leaders, that leader's belief had better be coherent, so that decisions don't annul or ruin one another. I can disagree with you, but I can't disagree with myself. Two possible leaders can have different belief systems, as long as only one of them ends up leading.

I suggest that mutual intelligibility depends on a general sense of successfully intending the same objects. The world between us is constrained but not necessarily already exhaustively specified and determinate. Indeed, the sense of I have of the past is not automatically but only ideally linear. One has a singular past around here. So I try to get my story *straight*.

I live in ambiguity and uncertainty. It's convenient for me to assume that the desired coherence of my beliefs is already out there, mirrored by the state of the world.

Yet I think idea of a “truth maker” is an unwarranted inflation<sup>17</sup> of “significant” experience that confirms or dissolves a particular situated belief, impinging presumably — more or less — on that believer's entire system of belief.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>I confess it maybe be pragmatically “justified,” but that's part of my anti-pragmatism. Of course we can trudge on with blurry concepts in a hurry to pile up coins, but pragmatism is almost laughably redundant in a context of the dominance of a technical interpretation of thinking. It's a bit like preaching water as a nice way to quench thirst.

<sup>18</sup>I spent many consecutive hours on this — worked most of the day on it — and it loses a melodious ordering — fittingly enough — near the end when I speak of linearity. But I'm a jazz man, so I'll share this raw version. One day, he tells himself, he will carefully compose a book.