

LETTER

1

I sometimes try to say too much. To give all the background. But ontoperspectivism is not for beginners in foolosophy. I remind myself that I am writing for a few other weirdos who obsess over this strange art. And philosophy is an art. A science too, in its way. More concretely, I sometimes have to stop myself from explaining why indirect realism fails. I *can* do this to my satisfaction, and I have done it, piecemeal, in various informal papers. But doing this would be to repeat my influences. In a non-synthetic, non-creative way, with the exception of what might be original in my style of expression. Now I'd bother to do this if I was, for instance, a professor, with a reliable paycheck, who also had to teach undergrads anyway. Instead, I'm an "outsider" philosopher, "forced" by the muse to work basically for free. I've made perhaps 100 USD via Patreon, which is better than 0 USD, but more symbolic than substantial.

So I "should" attend to what *I* offer, presupposing *some* grasp of the context by my readers, who are likely enough to be other outsider philosophers. And maybe some academics, though I tend to think — perhaps too cynically — that many such professionals might be biased against outsiders. I also look at the thousands of seemingly unread papers on the obnoxiously greedy website **academia.edu**. Needles in the haystack all of us, even most of the professionals.

2

My wife basically — in a non-technical way — understands the existential gist of my foolosophy. She's a profound person, who tends like most people to focus on the gist, the "life meaning" of a theory of the world. And this "life meaning" is what matters most, by far.

But philosophy is an *art* through making it explicit. Through the foolosopher carefully finding words for what is otherwise a vague if existentially sufficient *sense* of the world.

Just as a painter is sensitive to the way colors and textures “live together,” the philosopher is sensitive to the way that concepts “live together.” This is one explanation of the centrality of meaning in philosophy. Meaning is the “product.” The philosopher *arranges meaning*. This arranging of meaning often involves an explication of meaning itself. What *is* meaning ? How do signs work ? As a painter might study paint, even at the level of chemistry and optics, the philosopher will often study meaning itself, which is something like the essence of his or her product.

3

While some philosophers have acted as if they believed otherwise, through what I’d call the fetishization of formal logic, I see philosophy as a tentative and inexact enterprise. As a phenomenologist, I try to point at what I take to be universal features of experience.

For instance, empirical objects are caught in the play of presence and absence. I walk my black chihuahua at night and she sometimes vanishes in the indeterminate darkness. In the intermittent light, this side or that side of her is illuminated. Her location becomes definite. These intermittent manifestations are “automatically synthesized.” They are manifestations of *her*, the “same” sweet old dog, whose tongue perpetually hangs from her almost toothless mouth.

Now we live, pre-theoretically, in a world of enduring objects. So perhaps it’s better to say that I analyze or deconstruct my pup into intermittent manifestations. This manifestation is far from always and only being ocular. I feel her little belly when I pick her up, to carry her up the stairs. When she hasn’t gone too long without a bath, she has a distinct and enjoyable scent, very different from the scent of my cat.

Her tongue didn't always hang out. This started after she had some rotten teeth pulled. We "inherited" her and she was already old then. She was overweight too. But we changed her diet, got her teeth fixed, and now (years later) she's skinny and her tongue hangs out. Lately she's clumsier, and she probably has arthritis. She's quite old now, so we don't take our time with her for granted.

Note that I've been talking about this same chihuahua all along, who has "moved through time" with me. How many thousands of manifestations of this dog have been part of my psychical stream ?

Now these manifestations could be called "perceptions" and then understood to be internal icons in my personal mind-stuff. That would be indirect realism. I completely reject that approach, which has been refuted for a long time now, as I see it, though a default belief of indirect realism remains dominant — but when people are wearing their philosophy hats. Nobody, far as I know, *lives* a belief in indirect realism. For that would be to live as if trapped in a multi-sensory VR suit. As, essentially, a brain in a vat.

Because Kant took this default "user-interface bubble" for granted, not seeing its incoherence, he felt the lack of a proof of the *external* world. For Kant, as for many others like him, it was "obvious" that we had an *internal* world to begin with.

Now Kant is fascinating and worth studying, but on this point he is terrible. Indirect or representational realism is a *beginner's* confusion. One can remain such a beginner for decades, throughout an entire lifetime. Just as one can spend a life trying to square the circle. Just as one can be bad a painter till the end. Or never learn to carry a tune.

4

People seek different things from what is called philosophy. Philosophers understand what they are trying to do in very different

ways. The existential significance of a way of seeing the world is primary, for all of us. Even the “artistic” or “technical” style of philosophy is constrained in each case by a total vision of who one is trying to be.

Let’s get concrete. Wittgenstein gave us the *TLP* and Ayer gave us *LTL*. Wittgenstein, handsome and eerie, has always had his cult. Ayer never. As I see it, both books contain first-class “technical” philosophy, but Wittgenstein’s book is as “spiritual” as it is technical. Speaking from experience, I think young readers tend to favor the richer more holistic aura of the *TLP*. Just as younger coffee drinkers are more likely to pollute their brew with cream and sugar.

We might also compare Husserl with Mach. As with Wittgenstein, Husserl gives us a blend of the spiritual and the first-class technical. While there is “spirituality” in Mach, it is the understated and anti-mystical spirituality of the *theorist*. Mach is “spiritual” in the recessive way that Freud is “spiritual.” In my experience, those who advertise their reactionary spirituality don’t even notice this recessive but vibrant spirituality in critical theorists.

Wittgenstein *pontificated* on the ineffable as a young man. This is somewhat dissonant and incoherent. But also intriguing and forgivable, especially in a precocious genius like Wittgenstein. Other pontificators on the ineffable are more jarring.

For instance, *phenomenalism is nonduality*. But the label “nonduality” is taken by those who mostly have no interest in the art of explication. For them, a person has an Personal Illumination. Now I think there is something like “personal illumination” in the assimilation of traditional insights. But I also emphasize the difference between an intense but vague *feeling* about a bumpersticker mystic phrase and the controlled ecstasy that results in the specification and arrangement of concepts.

Hegel is great on this issue in the famous preface. After the labor of the concept, one can summarize the result. If I went through this labor, then I can legitimately enjoy that summary.

But to those who haven't done the work, that summary will not properly signify. It may be suggestive and enticing. But the work cannot be squeezed into the "theorem" itself. For philosophical results are not like mathematical theorems. The meanings of words change through intense conceptual labor. Even this last statement will only signify in its proper sense for those who have *experienced* the "coming into meaning" of the elementary words.

Bad philosophers can be instructive. Perhaps we learn to transcend our own faults largely by finding them repulsive in others. I spent years on internal philosophy forums, where the members ranged from clueless to expert. In philosophy, even the experts readily despise and degrade one another. Rivalry within disciplines is perhaps not strange, but in philosophy we find contempt. The rival expert is totally deluded. The "game" is so "open" that we end up with "analytic" versus "continent" philosophy. Those on one side aren't always eager to recognize those on the other as genuine philosophers. Indeed, it's not obvious that there really is philosophy in the singular.

Forums open to just about anyone make this obvious. I've seen mystics and math cranks and stereotypical analytic grinchers and stereotypical continental fog machines. And manic preachers of anti-natalism and folksy retired engineers repurposing taoism. The stereotypical analytics and continentals aren't all flavor and pose. Sometimes they make a good point. But "stereotypical" is indeed pejorative here. For it points at a failure of creativity. Proximally and for the most part, we are bots.

The member I studied and followed most was a spiritual guy, an old hippy. Think Kastrup or Vervaeke, but less willing and able to read physics or primary sources in phenomenology. On the other hand, he was a technical writer in the real world. Still is, I guess, unless he's retired. So he wrote well. He performed the role of knight against the dragon of materialism. Also a diagnostician of the "spiritual crisis." He assembled quotes from piles of secondary sources, for there is of course a little industry of "countercultural" spiritual-but-rational philosophy. For instance, Ken Wilbur.

I found this guy fascinating and disturbing. I also had many interactions with him, sometimes pleasant, sometimes not. To me he was an *accidental* sophist. By “sophist” I mean someone who lives in fallacies and narratives and is mostly deaf to logic.

Now I agree with Lakoff that thinking is embodied and metaphorical. So the logic I’m talking about is a sensitivity to inferential norms. A sensitivity to logic is something we *enact*. It’s a kind of taste. A “logical” person is relatively *conceptually* coherent. Concepts are nothing mystical and magically immaterial here. The art of explicative or technical philosophy is the art of keeping a story relatively straight.

It’s a platitude that humans aren’t generally more logical than they have to be. I think we mostly pull our costumes from the ancient closet, re-enacting ready-made poses. This is why I said above that we are mostly bots. Also, fallacies are common because fallacies succeed. Fallacies win fans, sell books, and (if not challenge and recognized as such by their user) protect one’s self-esteem.

Now this guy lived on fallacies and flip-flopping and ambiguity. *Without seeing it*. A cynical manipulator may be more morally odious, but the accidental sophist is especially intellectually repulsive. Repulsive but fascinating. As witnesses, who take ourselves to be more logical, we know that so-and-so is a human with feelings. But we also suffer in fascination the jammed mechanical predictability of the bot. If the “machine” learns, it advances only the level of style. No increase in logical taste, but instead the use of ChapGPT to polish the paragraphs.

The primary device of this guy and others like him is a folk psychology of the opponent. The other is biased through fear of religion, through conformity to the scientistic spirit of the age. Of course people do have their biases. They tend to be *invested* in this or that pose. The problem is of course accusing others of bias and pretending at the same time to be beyond bias, the only rational personal around. This tiresome accusation is all the more disagreeable from those not only obviously biased but

also lacking logical sensitivity.

Unless I rudely point you to this guy's online stuff, you have to take my word for it. The reader has perhaps met some other instantiations of this type.

I happened to pick on a "spiritual" philosopher, who leans on the myth of suppressed ancient wisdom. But scientistic varieties of the accidental sophist are also available. The spiritual guy, at his best, launched some adequate criticisms of such scientism. He just didn't see the vulnerability and incoherence in his own position. His position was insufficiently *defined* in conceptual terms. He would defend "idealism" but retreat if challenged to a trivial indirect realism. But indirect realism is perhaps the dominant view of secular philosophers. It's ridiculous that the great spiritual crisis of our time, as he sees it, is the product of a few eliminativists. This guy, getting his Heidegger through Vervaeke, didn't grasp that the ontological difference allows us to understand that consciousness is no thing but *being itself*. *Eliminativism is adjacent to mysticism*. Mach, the phenomenalist, *demonstrates* Nonduality. Not as if a mathematical theorem. But he makes a strong case. Conceptually. Without incense and the invocation of ancient Buddhist wisdom.

I linger on this, like an old splinter still caught in my thumb. For this guy, the conceptual or logical equivalence was invisible, because he lived on the level of tribal aura. Perhaps most do. We might speak of the priority of the pose. One problem with the pose as defender of ancient spiritual wisdom is that there's no impetus to invent. It suffices to hint at one's Enlightenment. There's nothing new under the sun, so one can shrug off the anxiety of influence. All "progress" in philosophy since the great ancient insight is decay and forgetting. This makes the role easy on the level of content. One repeats the usual tropes. All invention, if one bothers to try, is on the level of style.

Now I don't hate theism *as such*. Frankly I'm a long-time atheist with respect to personal God that many non-philosophers seem to be discussing. But sophisticated philosopher's gods are feasible, even if I don't currently have one. Some people identify

God with being itself.

I do think “Being” is the best candidate, for “Being” is the ground that is an abyss. But why name it “God” ? A recognition of being as ground/abyss involves the transcendence of onto-theology. Explanation is finite. The stage on which explanation is possible is itself “beneath all explanation.” I could say “as its condition of possibility,” but this doesn’t work, for it makes being a particular being. It makes being as “presence” a mere present part in the machine of beings. A “cause.” A “condition.”

This issue of being is so elusive that it’s easy to understand the frustration of some with what sounds like (and often degenerates into) “Being mysticism.” Yet eliminativism, in its sacred white lab coat, is almost an accidental expression of this mysticism. Consciousness does not exist. Is not a thing, a stuff, a being. Consciousness is “nothing.” And yet consciousness is the “presence” of the physical. Its “quality” is “here” and “now”. Consciousness is here-ness and now-ness of what is now here.

To me this is a fundamental issue. And yet also “useless.” *Fundamental* ontology, understood to take this issue as its foundation, is hard to tell from mysticism. We should note that it’s not just Heidegger. The young Wittgenstein told us that it is *that* the world is and not “how” it is that is “mystical” To see *that* the world is. To grasp the *being* of the world. He, like Heidegger, emphasized that it sounds like nonsense. It *is* nonsense. In some sense.

I don’t think it’s nonsense. Instead I think “being” is a strange noun, a particular being, that is used to try to point at being itself. So fundamental ontology, centered on the ontological difference, depends on an exceptional use of language. Which tries to express wonder at the world’s being there at all. Of course this will confuse and offend those attached to a formal mechanical conception of rationality. Those who pray in symbolic logic now for the A. I. gods to come.

I called my phenomenism an attempt to “rescue the empirical object as empirical.” Now we all live with genuine empirical objects and treat them as such. So this rescue is merely theoretical. I rescue the empirical object from a few theorists who, understanding themselves as scientific, indulge themselves in sci-confusion. A harmless hobby that I should perhaps not interrupt.

Unlike the “spiritual” guy discussed above, I don’t think the world turns on these theoretical vanities. Hence my use of “art” and “game” for “technical” philosophy.

On the other hand, Mach’s rational explication of the flat phenomenal field is Nonduality. When I first understood what I at the moment call “ontoperspectivism,” I was ecstatic. Like I solved the fundamental puzzle in philosophy. But really I understood an old, mostly forgotten solution. Some understand “Nonduality” with help from drugs. They see that they “are” the street they stand on, the wall they stare at. An “aspect” or “facet” of reality itself. A “torrent of naked reality.”

I think I used more enticing psychedelic rhetoric in the earlier days of my channel. I suspect that many enjoyed the rhetoric without caring about or much understanding the case I made. So I was taken as part of the spiritual infotainment industry. My computer graphics were psychedelic after all.

But I made most of those graphics as abstract art. They were to handy to slap over the soundtrack as something for the eyes to focus on that wouldn’t overpower the concepts given via voice. My channel seems to have peaked. And I am ambivalent about it. Only YouTube made money from it, since we are in the habit of “paying” for things with attention rather than cash. If I was sufficiently cynical and greedy, I might be able to prioritize likes and specialize in anti-scientistic sophistry. But that would be making shitty art on purpose, just to make a buck. I might as well wait tables.

To me it's plausible that every consumer will soon be offered not only a customized feed but a customized *generation* of content. Your face-swallowing VR Mask will drench you in stuff that is made almost instantaneously just for you. This Mask will measure your emotional response and get better and better and keeping itself on your head. Hackers will jailbreak some of them so that users can wallow like Caligulas in illicit phantasms of sex and violence and vague but deeply satisfying Synthetic Spirituality.

As a creator, who grew up in different world, this is disconcerting. To some degree. I remain a gallows humor pessimist. It doesn't "really" matter. But it threatens with obsolescence an old daydream. The usual one, of creating something that stains the world. That people bother to remember.

I don't think the usual tradition will completely die out. Unless the species does, which it could. But we are moving toward a world where the internet could be "dead" without us noticing it. The bots could get that good. We befriend them, feel less alone. We would even *be* less alone, in some sense.

But until we get warm fleshy androids, there will remain those we know in the real world. If warm fleshy androids come along, the possibilities are such that I won't even go into them here. Except to say that society could be yet more intensely atomized as people come to prefer customized synthetic lovers to problematic real humans.

Proximally and for the most part we are bots. I said that above. Synths (like sort-of-bodiless chatbots) are stochastic parrots, trained on actual human discourse. So we move toward a world of mutated echoes. The human species will lose itself perhaps in a maze of such echoes, especially since randomness can be injected into the echo machine, to keep things fresh. Or pseudo-fresh.

A cynic might say that most people and maybe all of us most of the time already live in a maze of echoes. Since we are primarily bots. A good point. But what is consciousness ? This elusive "mystical" issue is decisive. Maybe. My synth lover "acts" like

she loves me. But she doesn't really *feel* anything. Or does she ? The chatbot can solve difficult math problems. Are those math problems "present" for it ? Or is the damned thing just the largest abacus on the world, drunk on the largest pile of data yet ?

Elsewhere I tried to distinguish between "ontological consciousness" and "operational consciousness." Not many got it. I can emit the expected modest signs. Maybe I'm the crank. Others often look like cranks to me. But really I believe I do see the issue. And the cranks believe the same of themselves.

I sometimes talk of "Moloch" as a symbol of the "game theory situation" (the incentive structure) that maintains the manic death trip of our species. One of my favorite guys on the forum, despite his blindspots, offered a dark vision of dissipative structures. The fossil fuel uses us to get itself burned. To advance the holy heat death. In his version there's a tinge of dark mysticism. But I think his basic vision is correct. Though I'd maybe invoke Darwin and Dawkins more and not so much the Cosmic Entropification Directive. Indeed, I love Schopenhauer, though I think he offers a mystical exposition of what Darwin later made more concrete and empirical. But Schopenhauer was basically right, despite what he leaned on. Or his attachment to grand metaphysical language.

6

This informal paper is too revealing perhaps to be written by an academic. That's my strange and weakness. I too am a creature of my times, of the new internet age. Serious, yes, in terms of my "technical" contribution. But disillusioned with the traditional academic trappings. Obviously, I might say, it's superstition to focus on the trappings. That's more tribal aura stuff. But I know that that's what we mostly are. Responders to flags. We all need an in-group, my brothers and sisters.

Existentialism has been attached to nazism and communism. Heidegger and Sartre. These intellectuals get sucked into the

vortex. They are Serious men. If politics doesn't work out, try mysticism. Get the consumer something *juicy*. Institute a cult. No such thing as an anti-cult. Yet to me "science" is something like the dream of an anti-cult. Stirner's goofy name for it was a society of egoists. Or something like that. But the ego, as social, inflates to include friends. Even if the body usually remains of central concern. Epicurus is my guy. Sort of. Don't talk about him much, but he's the picture of sobriety, and an appreciator of slow-burning and long-burning pleasures like friendship. Warns who can be bothered to listen, undesparately, of the futility of infinite consumption and absorption into the unsolvable trauma of politics.

But a preacher against preaching is incoherent. In our age of preachers and screechers, it is perhaps hard to understand Epicurus, for instance, as one who is willing to offer counsel. But not thirsty for converts. "Maybe what helped me won't help you. Hard to say. But I can tell you about it if you won't be bored or annoyed. I can also go about my business, seeking those who enjoy my company."

This is why I say that "the black flower" of "transcendent pessimism" is a necessarily marginal position, a parasite on Moloch. On Schopenhauer's demonic Life Force. On Darwin's merciless incentive structure. The game removes patterns that do not competitively replicate. They have to replicate because individually they are fragile and mortal. Memes, as Dawkins saw, are like genes in some ways. The desire to remember is the desire of the dead. The desire to be seen is the desire of a ghost.