

LETTER : 8 JULY 2025

1

I have shared this with friends who found nothing in it, who probably thought I was wasting my time. More on that later. Here it is :

Consciousness is being. Being is consciousness. Lately I've been using "presence" instead of "being." So consciousness is presence. Presence is consciousness.

2

As long as one thinks of consciousness as an internal stuff, this claim that consciousness is presence is implausible. It sounds like solipsism perhaps. Like I'm saying the world is just in our heads.

But the idea that consciousness is an internal stuff is *itself* the implausible claim that we've come to take for granted. In other words, most of us vaguely believe that consciousness is a *stuff* that emerges from other kind of stuff.

Two kinds of stuff means two kinds of being. So the claim that consciousness is being will sound like we are getting rid of the most important stuff. The stuff that the objective real world is made of.

3

This idea of two kinds of stuff is so dominant that people find themselves with so-called the hard problem of consciousness. They *think* they understand the other kind of stuff, the "physical" stuff. They don't see that consciousness (in fact their own personal consciousness) is the presence of this physical stuff.

In other words, their consciousness is the *being* of this physical stuff.

4

Yet we *share* physical objects. We can all talk about and sit on the same chair. That's what makes the chair "physical" and the daydream "mental." I can't see your mental stuff and you can't see mine.

I grant you a blurry version of this. But I think we should frame it differently. We come call "mental" what we think is not public unless we want it to be. We call "physical" what we take to be available to others without our help.

5

I can *tell* you about my "daydream." If the doctor gives me a pill that makes me hallucinate while driving so that I crash into a tree, then I will justify my bad driving by linking my hallucination to a legally prescribed drug. The hallucination—which is "mental"—is *inferentially-causally linked* to the crash—which is "physical."

6

My headache is only-for-me. Sort of. Because I can talk about it. But I have a special "point-of-view" on *my* headache. I can tell you about the pain, but the pain is "mine."

The apple on the table is different. So I might assume. But the way that the apple shows itself to me is *just like the headache*. My *seeing* of the apple is like my having of the headache.

I can usually escape the apple in a way that I can't escape the headache. I may worry about someone stealing my apple, but I

don't worry about someone stealing my headache.

7

It's not obvious to others that my headache is there. Someone might correctly guess that I have a headache. It might be an educated guess, because they know me, they know how I get when I have one of my headaches.

But the apple is usually more obvious than my headache. Now your *seeing* of the apple is like a headache. You can conceal your seeing of it. You can sneak a peak into my kitchen when I'm putting on my shoes.

8

The apple exists *as* seeings and touchings of it, and so on. We remember where we last saw it, and we expect it to remain there, if nobody takes it. Our belief in the possibility of finding it there is our belief in the "reality" of the apple.

I'm not saying that the apple *isn't* real. I'm trying to saw *how* it is real.

9

The headache is real likewise as pain for you or me. But this pain is also understood as a "headache" which we can talk about and try to explain.

"You shouldn't have eaten that apple. You know they always give you a headache."

10

So I don't think consciousness is a stuff. Consciousness is the presence of the apple for you, the *presence* of that pain you call a "headache." Consciousness is the *presence* of your sense of your dog being still asleep, so you can finish your thought as you type up your letter to a friend that makes a case for phenomenalism.

11

If I look for your consciousness in your brain, then I am looking for the presence of the world for you in what is present in the world for me.

When I say that you are "conscious" just like me, then I mean that the this world is also *THERE* for you.

Why would I hope to find the there-ness-of-the-world-*for-you* anywhere in the-world-that-is-there-*for-me* ?

12

People who want to "prove" the existence of consciousness as a *stuff* — as something present — are correct when they say they can't find it.

Because it is not an it.

Yet "consciousness" *is* a noun. We have the concept consciousness, which is a thing, an "it."

13

The people who believe in the hard problem of consciousness are not fools. Those who talk about the hard problem are often scientific in their approach.

They want to find the *truth* about consciousness. The *objective* truth.

14

This is perhaps how very clever people could find themselves on what to me is the wrong path.

The very notion of objective truth tacitly *presupposes* dualism.

An objective truth needs an objective reality. An objective reality is not compatible with a phenomenism that is just as much a perspectivism.

15

Consciousness works as being if we let go of truth and objective reality. We do not need to let go of rationality or science. We can still understand knowledge as warranted or tested belief. But we do lose knowledge as a mirroring of the-world-from-no-perspective.

16

With the presupposition of truth-as-correspondence and the implied objective reality, we are tempted to understand experience as an internal mindstuff. The seeing of the apple is separated in a radical way from the true or objective apple.

Consciousness is understood in this objective reality framework not as presence itself but as *present* mental stuff.

Consciousness is understood as one kind of stuff that translates another kind of stuff. The brain is understood to be *somehow* the site of translation.

17

When I root through your brain looking for your consciousness, I can forget that your brain is present for me. I forget that — according to my own theory — I am really only rooting through my *own* mind stuff, as I claim to be looking for yours.

18

We love our technology, and we respect the nerds who make it for us. Perhaps we fear math and can't follow the academic jargon.

I suspect that those who understand and create technology tend to be taken as and take themselves as also good at philosophy.

But philosophy is useless. Philosophy is not technology.

19

A bias that works in the creation of technology may obscure the issue of consciousness for those with this bias.

Secular scientific types also often define themselves against not only the traditionally religious, at least when the religious drag their beliefs into the science itself, but also against suspicious continental philosophers.

I have seen consciousness talk on Reddit. Consciousness mysticism often incorporates scientific terminology. It's a mess.

20

Is the claim that consciousness is presence a *mystical* claim ?

Is the claim that consciousness is presence an *empirical* claim ?

I think it is *neither* a mystical claim *nor* an empirical claim.

It is instead an *ontological* claim — perhaps “the” ontological claim.

21

But isn't ontology something we should trust to the engineers ?

Is fundamental ontology a *technical* enterprise ? Even if it isn't like physics or biology ?

22

When it comes to getting some complicated machine to work that you don't understand, I suggest that you trust the people who designed it and built it.

But what *is* the figuring out what consciousness “is” ?

I'm saying that consciousness is is.

Consciousness is being is presence. How is that claim checked ?

Perhaps one “gets” it, “understands” the claim. But I don't think this understanding is therefore mystical.

23

For me that claim only became plausible and then more convincing as I tried to *make sense* of the usual story. That usual story is of an objective reality from which pockets of representational mindstuff *somehow* emerge.

This mindstuff is your experience and my experience. So the same people — the same philosophers whose ideas became part of the atmosphere we breath — who told me about “physical objective reality” *also* told me that my experience is not part of this reality but only a bag of icons that hovers above it.

My seeings of the apple are some of these icons. The true objective reality is never seen, but it causes these seeings made of mindstuff. This mindstuff, a kind of (present) *stuff*, is consciousness. So I was given to understand.

24

This is a weird story indeed, and *I don't believe that anyone believes it.*

I think people believe that they believe it. When they switch into the mode of philosopher, they take this position. They defend it.

Now I say that the arguments that seem to be in support of this position all hint at my own position. Consciousness as presence is situated. Consciousness is the presence of the world for me. Or for you or him or her. So the seeing of the apple is always from a point of view.

25

This from-a-point-of-view-ness is what messes with people. Because there is “obviously” objective truth, while people don't always agree on this “truth,” the from-a-point-of-view-ness of the thing seen must imply that the thing is not really seen.

But we are empiricists, right ? So science needs experience as its foundation. It needs public objects to play their role in public facts. Predictions must be confirmed, even at the cost of inviting from-a-point-of-view-ness.

So the unreal seeings of the apples have to be inferentially linked to the objective apple. The unreal seeings are “representations” or “translations” of the real apple.

26

From my current position of phenomenism, I can only find all of this contortion amusing. But also a little sad, a little frustrating.

The attachment to scientificity — questionably understood as the quest for “objective” truth as the mirroring of “objective” reality — the empirical is removed from empiricism. Or —to be more charitable — displaced.

27

Experience is declared unreal, epiphenomenal. The “objective reality” of the world is declared off limits to experience, but then assigned the role of playing its obscure cause.

The apples that always give you a headache in the example above are not the apples you eat. The apples you eat are mindstuff. Even your eating of them, as you experience it, is mindstuff. Even your head as you know it is in your head as you can never know it.

28

The absurdity is so blatant that I reiterate that no one believes this story. At most they believe in Locke’s version, but vaguely, ever so vaguely. When they forget philosophy and pet their cat, they just pet their cat. Mindstuff icon of hand doesn’t pet mindstuff icon of cat.

29

If I say that consciousness is the presence of the world, I am indeed a phenomenist. But *I’m* the solipsist ? The one who puts the world in people’s heads ?

This is how phenomenism is misunderstood by indirect realists, who imagine the rejection of “objective reality” as nonsense as the claim that only mindstuff is therefore left.

But *consciousness is not mindstuff*. That’s the idea — the deep assumption — of indirect realism.

Consciousness is the presence of the familiar world.

30

But the world becomes world-for-Mary, world-for-Jack, world-for-Marvin-the-cat, world-for-Larry-the-spider, etc.

No more objective reality. The concept doesn’t fit. No more truth-as-correspondence. We still have seeing-is-believing. We still have the testing and discussion of beliefs.

On the bright side, objects are *fully* empirical. The seeing of the apple is *part* of the apple. Now this seeing can also be thematized as a perception. As manifestation, it’s a piece of the apple, although a piece you don’t eat. As “perception” it’s thought of in a different way, used in an explanation for salivation, etc.

31

If we zoom in on how we *share* objects under the assumption of phenomenism, we get the understanding of objects that inspired the choice of the name “ontocubism.”

But I’ve written about that elsewhere.