

EISENHOFF'S ANTIREPRESENTATIONALISM

For Eisenhoff, perspective is fundamental. Radicalized redundancy theory. “Belief is the horse. Truth is the unicorn.” He mocks the concept of truth as a mystification. But (as he emphasizes) he does not pretend to offer the truth about truth. There is only belief, like your belief and my belief. This belief is the (dynamic) “speakable structure” of “the-world-from-a-perspective.”

We might speak also of Eisenhoff's anti-dualism. He rejects the assumption of a “consciousness stuff” opposed to a “non-consciousness stuff” from which it is supposed to have somehow emerged. What people *call* “phenomenal consciousness” is, again, world-from-POV. From whose POV ? From the POV of the empirical person (or rodent, or Neptunian) at the “center” of this “world-from-POV.” It is the “belief” (set of beliefs) of this person that functions as the “speakable structure” of this “aspect” of the world. Worth noting that he credits Schrödinger as an influence. Also Leibniz. A “torrent of reality” (a unified stream of so-called phenomenal consciousness) is therefore the world from the point of view of a sentient creature. The POV-ness *includes* (crucially) the beliefs of this creature. ¹

So far, all of this is in the tradition, if largely forgotten and marginalized. But (as I see it) he is more coherent in his adoption (really a radicalization) of

¹Eisenhoff (not his real name, but it gives the flavor of his real name) constantly experiments with terminology, but (according to him) he's been expressing the same basic vision since “all the pieces came together” in 2024. The work of Robert Brandom (especially his inferentialism, which implied a “flat ontology”) seemed to “add the last brick to the wall.”

the redundancy theory of truth. Indeed, he calls it an “anti-theory of truth.” He uses this anti-theory of truth (the rejection of the concept of truth altogether) to offer what I’d call an *absolute* perspectivism. He emphasizes that epistemological perspectivism is trivial and boring. Only “ontological perspectivism” gets rid of the confusion of indirect realism, the hard problem of consciousness, and the “unnoticed hard problem of the physical.” But such a “strong” or “ontological” perspectivism cannot coherently be presented as the *truth* about reality. For strong perspectivism, made coherent, *belief is not representational*. Beliefs are not “made true” by “corresponding” to “objective reality.” Beliefs simply *are* the dynamic intelligible structure of an aspect of the world.

This is why Eisenhoff’s “fundamental ontology” is a “paper rose.” He understands it as a belief, which others may or may not adopt. It is a “paper rose” because it is “art.” We should not be surprised that Eisenhoff is a fan of Hesse, Kundera, and Dostoyevsky. His philosophy “should” be presented in a novel, he says. “But I’m impatient and so far do the easier thing of just putting it out there, mostly in the usual way.”

This “mostly” refers to the informal presentation through YouTube videos and papers that were initially somewhat “serious, with footnotes” but have become more like improvised lecture notes. In some cases, he’s shamelessly literary. He calls himself an “outsider philosopher,” since his “credential education” is in

math.²

I note that this informality is “coherent” (one of his pet words) with his “anti-representational perspectivism.” Since he is only offering “belief as art,” a strident, serious tone would be discordant. Eisenhoff credits Nietzsche as a primary influences, but always distances himself from Nietzsche’s lapses into megalomania and world-saving. He points at Ernst Mach persona in the philosophical first chapter of *The Analysis of Sensations* as a reflection of his own sense of himself.

He calls his “ontocubism” art, but it is “purified logical positivism” as art. Recently, he praised Ayer’s *Language, Truth, and Logic* as a great work of philosophy, if only some of it were trimmed, to make it more coherent.³

OK, so his work doesn’t even pretend to offer truth. He also suggests an *unnoticed* “hard problem of the physical.” He praises Meinong’s “so-being” as anticipating what he calls the “constituting ideality” or “logical substance” of entities. This “ideality” is not something mental inside subjects understood to be containers. It is the “categorical component” of reality, which organizes a “qualitative continuum” or “sensual plenum.” But (as he never fails to emphasize), this dyad is the result of a theoretical analysis. We live in what we only post-theoretically call the

²He has used cellular automata to create symmetric crypto-systems as works of art. His YouTube videos include digital art based on generalizations of elementary cellular automata. Rumor has it that he sometimes works as an adjunct professor.

³I expect that Eisenhoff will eventually get around to writing just that kind of book, especially if his resuscitation of phenomenism is successful in an economic or institutional sense.

“collision” of these two components.⁴

The crucial influence of Heidegger⁵ is apparent in his claim that “the world is fundamentally a forum.” This “forum” is “ontology’s necessary entity.” It is the set of conditions for the possibility of ontology. Eisenhoff builds on Heidegger’s criticism of Kant, when Kant says that is a scandal that philosophy cannot prove the external world. What Kant missed was that the concept of proof *presupposes* the crucial externality that is supposed to be supported by such a proof.

In other words, we cannot prove that we share a world through language, for such a proof would only make sense *through* the “communal subjectivity” of our being together in language. Eisenhoff grants that a “forum skeptic” is possible, but then insists that this forum-skeptic loses coherence in the performative contradiction of taken the forum for granted while *arguing* against it. This forum is a neo-quasi-Cartesian foundation. But this ground is an abyss, not unlike what Popper called the swamp at the base of science. *Perfect* mutual intelligibility is not assumed or required.⁶

Note that the “logical substance” of all entities, which is just our “co-intending” of these entities, is part of this forum. We cannot prove successful reference. We cannot prove (and do not even believe) that we can always successfully intend the same entity. Entities are “ideal manifolds” of their manifestations. Empiri-

⁴He links this to Plato’s unwritten doctrine.

⁵William James is also an influence here

⁶Derrida’s influence is also apparent here. What makes communication possible seems to make perfect communication *not* possible.

cal objects as the “logical syntheses” of perceptions *of* one and the same object. Perception is not representation. It is an articulated manifestation. The word “articulated” emphasizes the conceptual component of a perception that gives it its “of-ness.” This “conceptual” component is internal or mental. Indeed, the logical subject has no interior, is “turned inside-out like an old sock.”

So the “logical substance” is also a “conventional” substance. I recognize the “lifeworld orange” *as* an orange, which is also available to others. Unless, for this or that reason, I decided that this intentional object is instead a hallucinated orange, which would then be “private” in one sense and yet still “between-us” as an logical-intentional object. Again, we have a conception of the object similar to Meinong’s. The object is “virtual” or “conventional.” The “substance” of the object is “logical.” We *presuppose* the general success of reference or “co-intending.” If I discuss a particular absent orange, then I discuss the *same* orange that may become perceptually present. To perceive that particular orange is to “fulfill” what was an “empty” intention (this he takes from Husserl.)

Above I’ve sketched what Eisenhoff jokingly calls the “exoteric” part of his philosophy. While his radicalization of the redundancy theory of truth might already be offensive to some, the rest is “dry.” His “esoteric” philosophy focuses on persona. He has called it “dramaturgical ontology”, and it’s basically the kind of philosophical depth psychology that Nietzsche is famous for, strongly enriched by Heidegger’s discussion

of “idle talk.” The basic idea is that a person can be understood of their particular projection of an ego ideal (from Freud) or “hero myth.” For instance, a “fanboy” (who may be an old man) takes a particular philosopher as a hero. As Eisenhoff sees it, this is probably a necessary phrase. Instead of a person “escaping” from every ego-ideal, there is instead a transformation of this ideal. The “authentic” person replaces this or that “heroic” or “ideal” individual with an *abstract* ideal which is also understood to be a work-in-progress.⁷ Authenticity or appropriation involves an embrace of the singularity of one’s own existence. The artist is *born* (as genuine artist and not mere imitator) with the discovery of a new persona that may be merely implied by the novel work of art. Harold Bloom’s notion of “the anxiety of influence” is relevant. Persona emerges from a context, and has meaning within that context. Only the artist (including the philosopher) who has assimilated crucial influences is in a position to contribute *meaningful* novelty. Indeed, most “novelty” is “false” in the sense of being an accidental repetition, by those unversed in their heritage. For Eisenhoff, there is “time and chance” (luck) in a creative breakthrough. The aspiring artist prepares himself or herself for inspiration that may or may not arrive. But a complete lack of such preparation, even if combined with inspiration, results at best in an accidental repetition. To assimilate the tradition is to repeat this accidental repetition, to “restore force to the elementary words.” In

⁷Eliot’s famous essay, “The Tradition and Individual Talent” is also an influence here, and Eliot was one of Eisenhoff’s early heroes.

other words, dead metaphors must be resuscitated. So the aspiring artist's preparation is indeed creative in a local sense, in that the artist relives the inspirations that formed the canon. If the artist is lucky, the visit of inspiration will result in an extension of this canon, *if* that art is recognized and incorporated. Even without or before such recognition, the artist enjoys the achievement in a partial way, because they can "see" its value.⁸

If we apply this theory to the clash of philosophers, then "the momentum of a persona" can function to "blind" a philosopher, who "falls into a loop." Personal progress in philosophy involves the continual sacrifice of one's current personality.

Finally, it should even be emphasized that perspective is fundamental even in respect to inferential and semantic norms. The meanings of fundamental concepts are also fragmented into aspects, understood differently from different points of view. Everyone "knows" this, and yet many continue nevertheless with a *word*-centric approach. For instance, debates about "mind-independent reality" are just about pointless without co-intending of the same specified meaning of terms like "mind" and "reality." Frequently tautologies (from a POV) are presented like *discoveries*. This is not always bad, but it leads to confusion if those in conversation forget or ignore that the meaning of basic

⁸For Eisenhoff, even the crank is inspired, but scientific cranks misunderstand their art to be physically or practically or politically relevant, which mars their art. The desperate impatience of the crank for recognition betrays a suppressed sense, perhaps, of this mutilation, and therefore of their over-estimation of the value of their contribution. The genuine artist is patient, preferring the integrity of the work over a dilution that might contribute to the work's speedier recognition. For instance, Nietzsche's tone and style are offensive and/or confusing to some but inseparable from his work, for his polyphonous persona *is* the work.

concepts is even the goal itself *of* philosophy.

Eisenhoff uses “formalism” as a pejorative term for philosophers who think they can “compute” with ready-made words with static and aperspectival meanings. A “formalist” philosopher tends to be *shallow*, and this metaphor “shallow” is especially appropriate for indicating a forgetfulness of the *depth* of meanings of words, especially the most elementary and fundamental terms. What *is* philosophy ? What is a thing ? What an age takes for granted varies, but formalism tends to stack “bricks” that are just wet mud upon a more serious and disorienting investigation. Yet a knee-jerk demand for definitions does not suffice, for definitions tend to be made of words yet more elementary than the word to be defined.

Last but not least, genuine conversation involves an open-ness toward and a respect for the other. Ideally, the relationship is symmetrical, as if between rival poets who each respect the talent of the other. But asymmetrical relationships can work too, and this occurs when a younger philosopher reads the “great” philosophers. If they are both dead and great, the threat of alienating condescension (or just annoying arrogance) is muffled. Perhaps most online conversation is uselessly adversarial, useless except that one outgrows it by recognizing and then articulating its futility. One advantage of Eisenhoff’s *total* perspectivism, in this regard, is that it would be incoherent to preach it as “truth.” It’s also of little use to the tyrant or the revolutionary, though the politically earnest

might attack it *as* useless and self-serving. Just as Marxist thinkers criticized existentialism for its individualism.

I'd class Eisenhoff as a "hellenistic" philosopher, perhaps as a skeptic who "folds a paper rose," without identifying with it. Protagoras left fragments that suggest that he too might have been the same kind of radical perspectivist. The fragments aren't conclusive, but he is understood (perhaps misunderstood) to have said that everything was true. Perhaps Protagoras also believed that there was only situated belief and the transformations of that belief. If he was such an anti-representationalist, then he was misunderstood. In this case, Plato was blind to Protagoras' deepest doctrine. And Protagoras is offered only in a polemical caricature by those trapped in a representational framework.