

9 SEP 2025

NOTES

1

We meet through between-us objects. Often between-us as in between our bodies. You on that side of the table, me on this. But even my toothache is between-us, something we can both intend and try to explain. Even if located in my mouth.

The between-us object endures. It gives itself in flashes. Or rather in moments that are far from being merely ocular. We care about objects. We seek them out, flee them, ambivalently investigate them.

As flesh-and-blood people, we also our objects. I am a time-binding locus of responsibility. But also a thing in space, here or there. A synthesis of my moments, as you of yours.

Atoms are objects. Nations. Novels. Gnats. Intentionality as concept is another object. Enduring through time and between us, constituted by manifestations, by moments. The object is a logical-temporal-interpersonal synthesis of its “aspects” or “faces.”

Or rather we can say so only after a phenomenological analysis. We live without effort in the unity of objects. We can come to notice that they give themselves in moments. In the play of presence and absence. The objects undergo “adventures of change.”

Objects tend not only to be systems of “faces” but also of other objects, which are systems of their *own* faces. My hand is an object that “belongs” with my body. The page belongs to its book. Somehow we can shift our intention from whole to part. We can even intend our intending. We can intend the memory of a discussion of a particular past intention. And so on.

Some would like to declare certain objects to be the “atoms” of

reality. These atoms could be physical or psychical or something else. While such theories can have their value, I don't find it plausible or worthwhile to declare such atoms more "real" than the objects they are supposed to constitute.

2

I use many labels to hint at my own position. While I don't lean on it much, the term "panexperientialism" works. But "anti-dualist" views tend to be misunderstood. To say that "experience is reality" suggests to many that the "atoms" of the world are "monads" or "minds" or "subjects."

Now I count Leibniz as offering something related to what I call panexperientialism, but for me *subjects are not atoms*. I call various theories that postulate "atoms" for the world *ingredient ontology*.

I suggest that the world is the system of streams of experience, but these streams are chains of faces of objects. These same faces "constitute" the world. Am I saying that these "faces" or "moments" are the atoms of reality? No. I prefer a radical pluralism. *There are no fundamental objects. Nor is there a fundamental stuff.*

But isn't experience a fundamental stuff for panexperientialism? For some, perhaps. But for me this term tries to disclose the *form* or *structure* of the world.

The "moments" of objects that "constitute" streams of experience are exactly the moments of the objects of the world. They are not representational icons "inside" metaphysical subjects pictured as containers.

I take Wittgenstein to have expressed in the *TLP* what is also my understanding of subjectivity. But I borrow from Husserl, for instance, to elaborate. The flesh-and-blood person with a proper name is one more object in the world. We call other living people "conscious." What is this consciousness?

For many, this consciousness is a stuff. It is even a *mysterious* stuff. I grant that the concept of consciousness is one more object. But I suggest that we need the ontological difference (featured in both Wittgenstein and Heidegger) to make sense of this very *strange* concept.

I suggest that consciousness is exactly the “being” of the world. Another synonym is “presence.” Yet another is “time” in a special sense of the word associated with Heidegger. Consciousness as time is not clock time (a useful convention) but a fundamental dynamic “presencing” of the world.

We can analyze objects into their moments because we live in the “play” of their presence and absence. The objects come and go. I find my car in the driveway in the morning, the same old Honda, and I hope it’ll start as usual and get me to work. I see the same co-workers when I get there. But the car and the co-workers always show new “faces” to me, which involves *not* showing me other faces.

I’ve known my spouse for 30 years, and she continues to offer unexpected “moments” to me. These moments of my “experience” are moments of the world itself. Moments of her herself. Her being, as flesh-and-blood person, includes these manifestations.

“Perceptions” of objects are *pieces* of those objects. This is an object centered ontology, but more exactly it is an object *splintered* ontology. I agree with Harman on many issues, but I am (approximately) an unrepentant correlationist.

Yet subjects are not fundamental. Instead it is the stream structure that looks to me to be a fact about the world. Perception is situated. Belief too is situated.

But this situatedness should not be understood in terms internality. As if all of the world is splintered and then pieces shoved *inside* subjects. The flesh-and-blood subject is just as splintered as every other object.

On the other hand, the presencing of objects in a stream is intensely causally related to the body associated with that stream.

The conscious body is associated with a consciousness. But this consciousness is the presencing of the world itself. This consciousness considered as a stream is an “aspect” or “torrent” of “naked” reality. This reality is “naked” because the moments in the stream are not internal icons but “revelations” of objects in the world we share.

An analogy. Consider a chess board. Each square is the “face” of an object. Each row contains only faces or moments of the *same* object. Now each *column* of the chess board is a “stream of experience.” This analogy is far from perfect. The point is to see that moments of objects “constitute” streams and those objects simultaneously.

But now I should correct myself. I speak of “constitution,” but the “unity” and “wholeness” of the object is what we *live*. It is only analysis that creates (by thematizing) these “moments” as components of objects.

Sartre summarizes a similar idea that he gets from Husserl in the intro to *Being and Nothingness*. We move beyond the dualism of appearance and reality (inside and outside) by recognizing the crucial *entanglement* of time and being. Indeed, consciousness as time as dynamic presencing *is* being. Or being “is” time, but time in a special sense.

Subjectivity has been and continues to be misunderstood as a *container*, of “icons” or “qualia” understood to be “made of” consciousness as a stuff. The story goes like this. Consciousness is one kind of fundamental stuff, which is inside subjects-as-containers. And there’s another kind of stuff (“atoms and void”) that is outside these container subjects but somehow causes changes in the inside stuff. But the serious problems with this theory have been treated elsewhere.

The hard part is (or was) offering an alternative. I think Mill, James, Mach, and others have accomplished this. I don’t at all mean that the last word has been spoken. We can “tune” this solution endlessly.

I watched HBO's *Chernobyl* recently. The reactor was terribly "transcendent." It was "between" them as an object of concern and inference and perception. And it was dangerous and surprising. By "transcendent" I mean *not inside subjects*. Informally, we can say that subjects are "inside" their "experience." A flesh-and-blood person's experience is *the dangerous and surprising world from their perspective*. Radiation harms those who do not yet know it. This radiation will be revealed as having already been there. Objects are typically perceived precisely as having-been-there-already.

Phenomenalism (another name for panexperientialism) does not diminish the "transcendence" of the world. Dualism "locates" the un-manifested-so-far "potential" of the object in a "substrate reality" that is "behind the scenes." The temptation to do so is understandable, because objects often do reveal themselves as having already been there. But in my view this is just a scientific model that is already included in a sufficiently rich concept of the life. I suggest that radiation is no more real and no less real than marriages or prime numbers. We live among all kinds of objects. Whether radiation or marriage is "now playing" varies. These objects can even be entangled. In the show we see the marriage, briefly, of the firefighter preparing to go into a situation he does not understand. We see him not really worried. He is dutiful. His marriage is sketched as a happy one. The radiation, which the viewer surmises is deadly, is part of a larger situation that includes this particular marriage. And this particular marriage is understood *as a* marriage.

Later we see management (from our viewer's POV) misunderstand the situation. One of our main characters arrives, and he is presented as seeing what they can't or won't. He sees that the reactor *has* exploded but can't explain *why* it exploded. His understanding is better than that of others but lacking.

Over the season of the show, he comes to what he takes for a coherent understanding of the disaster. The viewer is also finally

given this convincing summary. Did the scientist find “the truth” ? Or did he settle his belief sufficiently so that he was willing to testify and present this belief at risk to himself ?

Where do we find “truthmakers” ? I suggest that the theory of truthmakers (and what inspired verificationism) is summarized in “seeing is believing.” But perception is personal or situated, and belief is personal or situated. As I viewed the show, the camera functioned as something like my virtual body. What I saw was controlled by a team of writers and actors and an excellent composer, etc. *Where are my truthmakers ?* I can explain and make a case for what I **came to believe**.

The problem with metaphysical realism is its denial or evasion of situatedness. Empirical objects (those that traditionally keep natural science scientific) are *experienced* objects, typically perceived objects, often measured objects. Perceived-by-someone. Perceivable in principle by many. Metaphysical realism often postulates a *mystified pseudo*-physical stuff to function as a truthmaker.

This pseudo-physical counter-empirical “true” world is the world as a philosophical god or omniscient narrator understands it. Usually implicitly, an ideal believer is projected so that “true” reality can be exactly one way and no other way. Metaphysical realism is a scientistic mutation of monotheism. I say scientistic and not scientific, but I don’t accuse metaphysical realists of intentional mystification. In my view, they are caught in an inherited presupposition that only becomes optional when it is recognized.

I suspect that many metaphysical realists are excellent at the design and analysis of technology. As I see it, this technology is subject to a “lifeworld” criterion. Metaphysical views don’t tend to matter much for practical life. So very smart people can be bad philosophers, just as they might be bad poets or painters.

On the other hand, the explicative kind of philosophy that I prefer is of far less interest to most people than either technology or religion. I include in religion the kind of philosophy that

addresses our general existential situation. For instance, stoicism offers a general orientation for life in the world. It includes some explication of the world (as religions do) but is directed toward the *total* problem of life.

Phenomenalism is related to “nonduality,” but those interested in nonduality tend to be seeking a spiritual goal. In my experience, those interested in nonduality tend to speak of intuitive leaps and are even suspicious of careful conceptual philosophy, with its skeptical and critical tendency. Mach is not discussed as a spiritual guide. J. S. Mill’s understanding of physical objects as interpersonal possibilities of sensation, however conceptually relevant to nonduality, is unknown. This makes sense. Mach and Mill are empirical secular *demystifiers*. They are critics of the superstitions of physicists and philosophers, hardly the obvious friend of mystic illumination.

But understanding phenomenism conceptually can bring intense joy to the kind of philosopher who takes pleasure in the harmonious arrangement of concepts. I’d say there’s an understand and perhaps ironic scientific “spirituality.” This is the “spirituality” of the theorist, which I’d connect to the role of the artist.

Demystification of theories that are themselves not practically relevant is likewise irrelevant. To most. I am experimenting with terms for this “technical” or “artistic” strain of philosophy. Whitehead discusses it in the intro to *Process and Reality*. It’s something like the art of telling a story of reality that leaves nothing out. But of course it has to be general. What is the general “shape” of reality ?

The relation of “mind” to “reality” is perhaps “the” problem for “technical” philosophy. Not the only problem, but a problem entangled perhaps with all of them. Let us note that this story we want to tell is constrained by experience. But also constrained, IMO, by a need to make sense of whatever this experience is supposed to me.