

1

We are in some deep waters here. I am open to letting go of "the being capable of making an intention."

In some sense, the objects are fundamental. We call "intending" something like the presence of the object in a "stream." For context, here's my latest thinking, if you want to see where I am basically coming from:

For me, explication is actually more like FOREGROUND-ING. So it "brings forth" (into "attention") what is latent or mostly unnoticed in the background. In this case, I would like to foreground/explicate our "being in the same world" through the "idea" of objects. Ideas are between us, not inside us. So "intending" is not "really" inside some subject understood as a container.

We might be able to explain intention in terms of time as "horizontal presence."

2

To me the "big thing" that happened in philosophy in the 20th century was the "dethroning" of consciousness as the correct starting point. One of the basic ideas, IMO, is that meaning is fundamentally social, not "inside" the subject conceived of as a container of "contents." You might say that it is an alternative to "indirect realism," which is basically a "two substance" theory of consciousness and the physical. This "two substance" assumption has famously given

rise to all kinds of seemingly insoluble problems. In this A. J. Ayer vid, we that even the "scientistic" (strictly empirical) logical positivists weren't happy with the two-substance theory. Precisely because they —unlike so many others — saw how "metaphysical" it was in a pejorative sense. But IMO they were still somewhat trapped in a "methodological solipsism." Though Ayer is an edge case.

One of the tricky issues is what I call the "forum." Robert Brandom is great on this. Rational conversation is ethically structured in terms of linguistic subjects understood as "processes" of keeping a belief system coherent. As rational subject, I am something like an evolving set of beliefs, aiming at the coherence of those beliefs.

So even if you want to put objects first, you have to do so within a "forum" that can't help but emphasize the objects known as "linguistic subjects." If I make some ontological claim, then I have to defend it. I understand myself to be presenting the claim TO others. So my claim (like all ideas) is between us. But, like mundane physical objects, it appears differently to different people. It may have "holes" in it that I can't see but that you can. Or maybe I "know what I am talking about" but my words are yet "properly" (ideally) parsed by others.

We see here how the very notion of translation involves a sense of "moving content" from one "vehicle" to another. That "content" is ideal or idea. But I personally don't want to mystify this ideality. Instead

I want to foreground what seems like a brute fact, namely the (imperfect) "intelligibility" of reality.

3

You might say there are two "styles" of philosophy. The "ontological" stuff is more like math. The "existential" stuff is more like literature. Sartre is a great example of someone who did both. Consider the difference in the titles alone: Being And Nothingness versus Nausea. I also try to do both. In this case, I left a little of the "existential" stuff in the picture. I had no idea that would be one of my more watched videos. It was a pleasant surprise.

A more general point might be that the great anti-realist philosophers (like Hegel and Heidegger) aren't obviously applicable to practical life. So spending time trying to make sense of them is arguably (at least sometimes) aesthetically motivated. I do think that it ties into philosophy of science. I was and am personally very interested in what makes a claim warranted or scientific. And how exactly does language "touch" the world. Not practically important, but just an itch that I wanted scratched. Then some of the more far out object oriented ontology is just poetic and maybe helps one notice the "richness" of reality.

Yes. Great points. Some thinkers would say that reality is not "pre-articulated." We "articulate" reality by means of our evolving concepts. Even Einstein thought this way, though he admitted that our most basic concepts are pretty much just "here" and very difficult to see around.

As far as predicates and subjects, Brandom makes a case that entire claims (predicate and subject) are the fundamental semantic units. This is because a linguistic subject can't be responsible for an isolated concept but for a definite assertion about the world. Concepts would get their meaning from the way such assertions were inferentially related. This plugs the meaning of concepts into a normative context. Consider the boy who cried wolf. Consider a person who calls the same marble both black and white.

For Brandom, reason would indeed be grounded in our activity in the world. If John had wings, then John could fly. But John crashed to the pavement. So John did not have wings. You can see the inferential linkage.

So I agree that there's some controlling of our own and others' action in all of this. We are primarily practical beings. For Brandom, we first use concepts in a very practical way. Eventually we learn to talk about this concept use via the invention of new concepts. We make our own rationality more and more explicit to ourselves. His work blew my mind, frankly. It was

like the last brick I needed to finish a wall. It helps explain how toothaches and promises and protons can all be in the same one world.

5

I tend to agree that the inferentialist analysis of meaning is not the whole story. Illuminating, but not the whole story.

HOW exactly we "climbed up" the ladder to "official" concept use is a great question. More or less empirical, I suppose.

Note that official concept use, according to Brandom, involves an enacting of norms. " In other words, although the parrot can identify the swatch as red she cannot then go on and use this as a reason for inferring that it is colored, that it is not green, a squirrel, etc. A parrot cannot participate in the game of giving and asking for reasons, and thus they lack the use of concepts.

Integral to Brandom's understanding of concepts is the further claim that each concept is necessarily related to other concepts, to the inferential web of premises and conclusions that connect one concept with another. As Brandom puts it, when it comes to the inferential connections that constitute conceptual content, a natural consequence is that 'one must grasp many such contents in order to grasp any.' " <https://schizosoph.wordpress.com/and-concepts/>

On the truth issue, I personally think that the only good theory of truth is actually a theory of belief. Wittgenstein's picture theory in an intra-worldly context, for instance. "True" is an adjective we apply to beliefs we share. Redundancy theory. I don't believe in a definite "pre-articulated" reality. And we can and do change our minds about the articulations we live in. We "live in" strong beliefs as if they were "true." But I claim that belief is fundamental. That "truth talk" is useful but confusing when we tackle intricate issues like this. "Truth talk" assumes an "aperspectival" reality as something already out there, while I say that inquiry tries to negotiate an rational consensus, a core set of tested beliefs—that can nevertheless be modified. People thought Newton found the source code of nature. But they just couldn't measure carefully enough to see its limitations. We could also discuss a kind of ineradicable "from-a-point-of-view-ness" in perception itself. And also in terms of belief, because no two people have exactly the same beliefs. (Or so I believe.) You might say that the vision of an already determinate-articulated "aperspectival" reality is a projection of an infinite task as if it could be and has been completed.

6

Well, I'd say that analytic statements get the most assent. So we all, in ordinary language, call them "true" or "truisms." But some philosophers have famously challenged even that. Nietzsche called our insistence on enduring things within a primordial chaos a kind

of "lie" that we couldn't live without.

That may even touch on the ideality of the thing. Is it the same thing in every regard ? Or does our insistence on grasping it the same thing enable the recognition/definition of change ? Heraclitus said you couldn't step in the same river twice. Can you intend the same river twice ? Of course I think we "have" to accept this "ideal" endurance of the "same" thing as the condition for the possibility of intelligibility. So I am inclined to agree with you on the whole.

Which, in my view, is one reason I prioritize explication rather than speculation. Wittgenstein called his profound statements "nonsense" because he knew they weren't empirical but attempts to specify or "explicate" the basic concepts that we seem to assume in order to even talk about the world in the first place. I relate to that. What is a thing ? An "ideal" identity. This "appearance" and that "appearance" at two different times are the "same" thing, even if the appearances are very different.

7

I'd say that "the tree then" and "the tree now" are NEW intentional objects constructed from "the tree."

If we discuss the unthinkable-for-anyone (which I think is reasonable), then we seem to assume that concepts are "outside" or "beyond" the individual. Otherwise, if concepts are inside some subject-as-container, we would not be a position to make such a claim.

Joe insists that he can picture a round square, and also a triangle with 2 sides. How can one prove otherwise?

But proof itself presupposes access to the SAME meanings. To the SAME relationships between those meanings. So philosophy lives or dies, in some sense, on the recognition of the "transcendence" or the "publicity" of ideas. As Husserl puts it, we can be personally relatively wrong about ideas in the same way that we can about physical objects. So the "out-there-ness" of concepts does not imply immediate agreement. Indeed, ideas are "ideal." They are "unfinalized." They are "in progress." Like that river for Heraclitus. The "same" river is never finished being further experienced and contemplated. Even if the river dries up, it can still evolve as an intentional entity in memory. We continue, for instance, to contemplate and understand Lincoln, etc.

8

I think we agree. I consider Nietzsche's statement to be incoherent.

Note that you are also invoking Brandom's "norm" of "linguistic subjects." The linguistic ought not contradict himself or herself. In some sense, such a contradiction breaks the unity of this "linguistic subject" —shatters the subject into incoherence. A challenge for all of us is that we don't always see the implications of our claims. So we can ACCIDENTALLY contradict ourselves. This comes out in dialogue. Someone

can bring to my attention an implication of my claim that contradicts another of my claims. In some sense, the "law of identity" seems to be a re-expression of the idea as such, AS a kind of definite "object" between us.

I'd say that I'm some kind of "soft" rationalist. The "ideality" of ideas is their "liquidity." But ideas are "between us" in that I myself am in some sense "constituted" by this evolving ideality. I as person am myself an unfinished ideal unity. The "same" me who is here now has an unwritten future. Even after I die, the idea of me, as "public property", can undergo transformation. The "co-intending" seems to be primary.

So I'm not "against" the "law of identity." I'd call it an explication rather than some law imposed on us from who knows where. It's something like a "brute fact" that reality has a "categorical" structure —is made of things as "ideal manifolds" or appearances "collected" by the idea of the thing.

Yeah. It was just a little of that ambiguity that haunts all conversation.

I definitely need such principles to do philosophy.

Wittgenstein's "nonsense" was just "tautology-in-retrospect" — an attempt to point out core meanings like this "principle of identity." We are trying to talk about things that are so deep and taken-for-granted that it is almost "nonsense." NOT an empirical claim, but the condition for the possibility of empirical claims, etc.

We can contrast this with theories of origin and so on. What is "under" every theory ? That's what interests me most.