

FRAGMENTS OF YOUTUBE DISCUSSIONS

I include only my side of a conversation about how meaning works, the “forum,” and related topics.

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’ 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 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

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.

4

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.

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.

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 in 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.

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.

8

This seems to touch on the issue of the conceptuality of animals. I wouldn't deny the possibility of some kind of nascent conceptuality in such cases. But that would seem to be an empirical issue. To investigate that issue rationally or scientifically would presuppose a full-fledged social conceptuality.

The "forum" is not projected as a speculative-mystical entity but only as an explication of the conditions for the possibility of science.

If you tacitly assume that some beliefs are warranted than others, then you assume something like this forum. Within this forum we can speculate about less developed forms of intention and conceptuality.

Is sense independent of language ? That's a tricky one. If you intend a public concept of sense, then I think not. But it does make sense, IMV, for you to intend a public concept that "points at" "how it is" for pre-linguistic beings.

9

I would suggest that any kind of scientific categorization involves more than that. We can of course investigate the mechanisms of perception. But any results of such an investigation would only be warranted with a rational forum that includes argument FOR the result. Your theory (or mine) of "whiteness perception" would have to be subject to criticism. It would have to be intelligible to others in the first place.

In short, the idea of a private science is (I claim) incoherent. Reason in its full-fledge sense is intrinsically social. A skeptic can indeed doubt this. But if they argue for it, they are lost in a performative contradiction.

Think of this way maybe. You are offering a metaphysical theory of perception and intention and signification. Why should I believe you ? Why should you believe you ? Are some beliefs better than others ? If so, how ?

I still think maybe you are interpreting the forum as a speculative or metaphysical entity. So you are offering rival metaphysical theories. But I'm trying to foreground what is taken for granted in any presentation

of any theory as a claim that deserves consideration.

For instance, you are making an interesting case against the fundamentality of this forum. But this "making a case" only emphasizes the forum it argues against, precisely by arguing against it.

Note that I don't pretend to offer some final articulation of this forum. I doubt that one is possible.

10

I'd say that surely there are causal functional relationships to be explored.

We depend on functioning sense organs for "full-fledged" perception.

I think animals with relatively simple nervous systems somehow track enduring objects. Their behavior suggests this. A few humans have been raised without culture, and I assume their survival depended on some kind of tracking and recognition of objects.

We might use "natural power" to indicate the biological basis of perception. Presumably this "natural power" is a product of evolution. At some point, language in the full sense was added to this biological basis. Not only genes but also memes were now at play. Which is the basically the idea of idea itself.

We can consider all of this within a social ideality that we mostly take for granted. I'll grant that this social ideality has its basis in biology, etc.

But I see this issue as tangential. As I said, I'm just articulating the conditions for the possibility of rational discuss. Origin stories are empirical and speculative. Interesting stuff of course. But tangential.

Now that we find ourselves in a normative social ideality, I'd argue that ontology/philosophy should take that into consideration. For instance, Democritus' theory of atoms did not account for this social ideality. It was therefore naive and incomplete. If his theory was to be warranted, he needed the space of reasons. But it's not clear how the space of reasons can be constructed from his atoms. If normativity is an "illusion" in a "consciousness" then his theory is of course not rational/warranted. It's not easy to "construct" or "reduce" normativity from the non-non

One can adopt an "absolute pragmatism." One can refuse to bother But this is just a shameless sophistry. I don't mean that in a pejorative sense. A shameless ironic sophistry rules the world. The philosophers who bother trying to make good sense of things, just for the pleasure in it, are the "fools" here.

In the context of "ontocubism," this foregrounding of the forum is offered as one of many reasons to reject the "two-substance superstition" of indirect realism. As philosophers, we have tacitly ALREADY taken a social conceptuality for granted. Kant's demand for a PROOF of the external world is accidentally hilarious in retrospect. What value could such a proof have in the first place if we weren't already in the world ? What did he imagine ? A solipsist with a private logic

proving to himself alone that there was a real world out there ? My point is roughly that logic is already "beyond me" in its essence.

11

Great question. I love Peirce. I'm not deep into his triad stuff like some people are. But his idea that inquiry is the settlement of belief was crucial for me. I connect this to the crucial "redundancy theory of truth."

I can see the connection to Hegel. If consciousness/perception is not representation and there is no "external" Truth-maker, then what we have is just evolving belief. We "live in" these beliefs as "truth" while they last. This seems correct to me. The idea of truth-maker (as opposed to the more plausible belief-strengthener) seems like one of the fundamental mystifications that haunts philosophy.

12

I agree with much that you say above.

But I'd say that the concept of truth is a mystification. What we have is just belief, which is more or less warranted. All belief is tangled up in perspective. So people can believe at different intensities, have different beliefs about which beliefs are warranted, etc.

We also don't have dualism or the "myth of the given."

Reality ("experience") is "immediately articulated." Wittgenstein's picture theory. My inferentially articulated beliefs are "grounded" by "empirical presence." As in I see my dog eat the piece of chicken. So that seeing is articulated with categories. "My dog" is a particular entity. But also "a" dog. Classified as a dog. Hence I could infer that "some dogs will eat chicken."

Note that dominant inferential norms can and do change. Note also that there is no official version of these norms. You might say that each of us carries an "idiolect" of a "distributed operating system." With no central "bank" that guarantees our inferences.

Right now, for instance, I present my own explicative beliefs as relatively warranted. They may or may not become more dominant (taken for granted by most) in the long run.

13

1. Causal/function relationships.

I mean between sense organs and perceptual presence. If you give me Novocain, I don't (as usual) feel the invasion of my tooth.

Here my point is that such functional relationships encouraged the theory that the world we experience is a "useful fiction" (hallucination, user interface) "thrown up by the brain."

2. "Full-fledged" perception is perception by humans

like us who recognize the object as a particular object, typically also as belonging to various categories. As Wittgenstein discussed. We "experience" "states-of-affairs" that can be put into words that are legible beyond our death. "The milk has gone bad." Lots of concepts in that. For instance, milk is something that CAN go bad. This particular container HAS gone bad. Note that we do not experience planes of colors and random stink. We experience unified situations.

3. For me intentional objects are primary. The concept blue is one such intentional object. It too endures through time. It is also "interpersonal." So we can use it to describe an empirical object, like a wave. Even if the wave is gone in a second, it too endures as intentional object. 100 years later, someone can discuss that wave that Jimmy saw that one day.

4. Evolution. Yes. But now you are on my page. I've been saying that origins are beside the point. What interest me is what we already take for granted when we try to do science. What are the conditions for the possibility of rational conversation ? A forum involving "interpersonal" concepts and a shared world.

14

This is where time relates to being. Knowledge of X is possible through the identity or substance or idea of X. We discuss X rationally, working out which beliefs about X are warranted. As future-oriented beings, we are largely trying to predict what X will do or become.

(I agree that we have to reason to assume perfect or certain knowledge.)

If I "experience" X, then I "experience" a moment or piece of X. I "see X from a point-of-view." I see a "side" of X at particular time. But X is a "public" object. I know that others can see the same X differently.

Why call a particular appearance of X a genuine "part" of X ? If we see the confusion in indirect realism, we also see that the only reality that X has beyond these "appearances" is the IDEA of X as the UNITY of such appearances. This idea is "open" because there's no limit ahead of time on how X might appear to others, including intelligent life from other worlds with 79 sense organs.

To say that the sensory presence or manifestation of empirical objects is "unreal" is to cancel them AS empirical objects. To project a "thing in itself" outside of a "consciousness bubble" is to do a bad quasi-physics. This "thing in itself" is, after all, ONE MORE intentional-logical entity. As the supposed "cause" of a perceptions understood as representations, it's an untestable empirical claim masquerading as explication.

I don't know how you feel about indirect realism. In my opinion, it's hard to make sense of ontocubism from "within" the assumption of indirect realism. You might say that phenomenalism was "born" as the demystification of indirect realism. My big influences are Mill, Mach, and James. As I see it, indirect realism

has always been a broken theory. But it piggybacks on the undeniably practical notion that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," etc. Certain "primary qualities" were projected beyond all possible experience into a mystified incoherent status. The correct way to approach this, in my opinion, is to understand that some perceptual presence has been prioritized as especially practically relevant. So weight and size, through careful measurement, become relatively independent of any particular observer. But removing all possible observers leaves us with a paradoxically empty object. I think one has to see this serious problem with dualism to appreciate the rival approach of phenomenism.

15

Your comment got cut off.

I think it's easy to misunderstand my "phenomenalism" as a kind of subjective idealism. I think the world is VERY real. I don't adopt a theory of "consciousness" stuff. Indeed, the world is "more real" in some sense than linguistic subjects who are in that world and part of it.

I also very much believe in the physical. But the issue is making sense of the physical. I insist that objects MUST be "transcendent" or "between us." More strongly in fact than indirect realists who postulate a hermetically sealed bubble of "consciousness" stuff.

Just to be clear, I don't believe in "one substance." I

like radical pluralism. There are all kinds of things. So my position is more like anti-dualism. It is associated with the term "neutral monism", but this name can be misleading. The main thing is that phenomenism doesn't "double the world" and create some gap between an internal image and the real thing way out who knows where.

For what it's worth, I think indirect realism is inspired by a completely practical and legitimate distinction between relatively "internal" and relatively "external" things in the world. My daydream may be a public intentional object, but it's a very different practical matter than a used tire. We need not reject these important practical distinctions. But I still think it's illuminating to see that ALL objects, as speakable, are already "public" in the space of reasons.