

## 1

Objects are “shattered” over time and a plurality of first-personal worldstreamings. Each of us, as a person, is at the center of such a streaming, as if the world streams “through” our mortal flesh. This person, this flesh, is, however, more of the world that streams. Substance is subjectlike. The postulate of non-subjectlike-substance (of generalized matter as an update of atoms-and-void ) is a useful fiction, mistaken by self-contradicting ontologists for an absolute substrate, for the truly real, as if the world didn’t hang together like a continuum.

## 2

The world hangs together, and yet the world is also a plurality of first-personal streamings. It is our logic (our meaningful analogical conceptuality) that glues it together. You and I see the same sun differently. You and I see different “sides” of the same person, different aspects or adumbrations or profiles. The basic and yet dominant mistake is to take these aspects as somehow other than the genuine object. For the representationalist (the indirect realist, the dualist), the genuine object or entity is “behind” these adumbrations. The real object, they say, must have a definite size, a determinate existence somehow apart from our perceptions of it.

## 3

What they get right is that the thing is always more than what I have seen of it. It is also what others have seen of it. This, however, is not yet enough. The future is what we care about. It is how you or I or those unborn might see the object that also matters, that perhaps matters most.

4

Of course objects are not only for the eyes, not only seen. We merely *start* with Husserl's analysis of the spatial object. Then, by analogy, we understand things in general, including those which have nothing to do with the visual.

5

But let us continue with the seen spatial object. If it is not "behind" its aspects or perspectival appearings, what or where is it? It is the temporal synthesis of all actual and possible aspects. This temporal synthesis is also a logical and an interpersonal synthesis. We again lean on Husserl's insight into what it means to intend an object in the world. Ontology, as a rational enterprise, presupposes that we discuss a shared world, in the most minimal and therefore general sense of a world. We rationally codetermine the essence of our situation. That's one approach, where we merely point out the performative contradiction in denying our ability to intend the same object. To deny this is to deny the possibility of communication and therefore of the denial itself.

6

But we can also just check. I mean *the* Eiffel tower, not my private concept of it. We discuss who will pay *the* bill just dropped off by the server. To be sure, I can also intend my private concept of this or that, and you can understand me. So this "private" concept is also a thing of the world, an entity that can play a role in inferences. Indeed, it's hard to conceive of phenomenology without this ability to also intend entities that are "private" in terms of differential access.

This issue has also misled philosophers. As James so eloquently explains:

In this room – this lecture-room, say – there are a multitude of thoughts, yours and mine, some of which cohere mutually, and some not. They are as little each-for-itself and reciprocally independent as they are all-belonging-together. They are neither: no one of them is separate, but each belongs with certain others and with none beside. My thought belongs with my other thoughts, and your thought with your other thoughts. Whether anywhere in the room there be a mere thought, which is nobody's thought, we have no means of ascertaining, for we have no experience of its like. The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousness, minds, selves, concrete particular I's and you's.

Each of these minds keeps its own thoughts to itself. There is no giving or bartering between them. No thought even comes into direct sight of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law. It seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not thought or this thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned. Neither contemporaneity, nor proximity in space, nor similarity of quality and content are able to fuse thoughts together which are sundered by this barrier of belonging to different personal minds. The breaches between such thoughts are the most absolute breaches in nature. Every one will recognize this to be true, so long as the existence of something corresponding to the term 'personal mind' is all that is insisted on, without any particular view of its nature being implied. On these terms the personal self rather than the thought might be treated as the immediate datum in psychology. The universal conscious fact is

not 'feelings and thoughts exist,' but 'I think' and 'I feel.' No psychology, at any rate, can question the existence of personal selves. Thoughts connected as we feel them to be connected are what we mean by personal selves. The worst a psychology can do is so to interpret the nature of these selves as to rob them of their worth.

In other words, it's a basic fact that the world is given as a plurality of in-some-sense isolated streams. But each features the same objects, and yet differing aspects *of* those objects. So you and I can talk about the same book (*Watt*) without seeing it the same way — without seeing the same “side” of it. It shows one face to you and another to me. But we know that we *intend* (are discussing) “one and the same” book.

## 8

Let us move beyond the original visual example of the spatial object. We might consider how the same piece of music gives itself differently in different performances. Or perhaps I listen to the same recording at different times in my life. In either case, we have identity and difference. Now we should speak not in terms of faces or sides but rather of *moments* of that piece of music. The same sonata is “shattered” into such moments, but grasping *as* the same piece of music anyway is a logical-temporal synthesis of those moments. The music is not hidden behind such moments. Indeed, each moment is a giving or presentation of that piece of music. So the music is not behind its moments, and yet, as the synthesis of all of them, potential and actual, it exceeds or surpasses or transcends each of them. This is Husserl's version of transcendence, which is still immanent in an important sense.

## 9

For Kant, reality is essentially and absolutely hidden. For Husserl and other neutral phenomenologists, it's only partially hidden in

the sense that it is never done showing itself. I will never see all of it, nor will you. But the “sum of sentience”, which we can only project or imagine as a potential infinity, is being itself. Some have called this “panexperientialism.” This echoes James’ conception of “a world of pure experience.”

## 10

My only objection to this label is that it might mislead some to mistake *neutral* phenomenism for idealism. The young Wittgenstein makes the difference clear in his *TLP*. While the empirical ego exists in the usual way, there is no quasi-mystical “pure witness” or “transcendental ego.” Or, rather, the proper understanding of such an “ego” or of “witness consciousness” is that it names the neutral world-streaming in its entirety. A “stream of consciousness” is a “stream of world.” There is *only* (the) world, and this world includes toothaches no less than tarantulas, promises and prime numbers no less than protons. Indeed, all such entities are inferentially-semantically entangled.

## 11

Entities are shattered, their moments spread out over time and a plurality of firstpersonal continua. Each continuum (each continuous worldstream) is an unrolling context in which such moments of these entities are embedded. Then the world itself is shattered, in a different way, into these streams or continua. Substance is subjectlike. The worldstream that I call “mine” is *itself* an aspect or face of reality as a whole. The world itself, as a sort of hyperobject, is shattered. “Aspects of the one.” Because the aspect analogy is used twice, in related but different ways, this twist on neutral phenomenism might be called *aspectualism*. It is a “double generalization” of Husserl’s beautiful analysis of the spatial object.

For it is the characteristic feature of nature and every-

thing that falls under this title that it transcends experience not only in the sense that it is not absolutely given, but also in the sense that, in principle, it cannot be absolutely given, because it is necessarily given through presentations, through profiles... The thing is given in experiences, and yet, it is not given; that is to say, the experience of it is givenness through presentations, through “appearings.” Each particular experience and similarly each connected, eventually closed sequence of experiences gives the experienced object in an essentially incomplete appearing, which is one-sided, many-sided, yet not all-sided, in accordance with everything that the thing “is.” Complete experience is something infinite. To require a complete experience of an object through an eventually closed act or, what amounts to the same thing, an eventually closed sequence of perceptions, which would intend the thing in a complete, definitive, and conclusive way is an absurdity; it is to require something which the essence of experience excludes.

Husserl understands the object as many-sided. What his realization implies is that *reality itself* is many-sided. Each streaming of the world, each personal continuum, is a “side” of reality, and these “sides” are “glued together” by the logic we share, by the logic we *are*. If “culture” is a “virus” that leaps from mortal host to mortal host, then you and I are more virus than host, inasmuch as we live and perform the ontological tradition.

## 12

Logic is a temporal synthesis. Knowledge is the attempted nullification of both personality and time. The “Conversation” is accumulative and self-referential. There is, in a certain sense, only one time-binding “Philosopher.” If this echoes theology, it might also be said that theology creates God in the image of the human essence. Feuerbach explains this in his “Philosophy of the Future.”

The essence of speculative philosophy is nothing other than the rationalised, realised, actualised essence of God. The speculative philosophy is the true, consistent, rational theology.

Taken as an intelligible (*geistig*) or an abstract being, that is, regarded neither as human nor as sensuous, but rather as one that is an object for and accessible only to reason or intelligence, God qua God is nothing but the essence of reason itself. But, basing themselves rather on imagination, ordinary theology and Theism regard him as an independent being existing separately from reason. Under these circumstances, it is an inner, a sacred necessity that the essence of reason as distinguished from reason itself be at last identified with it and the divine being thus be apprehended, realised, as the essence of reason. It is on this necessity that the great historical significance of speculative philosophy rests. The proof of the proposition that the divine essence is the essence of reason or intelligence lies in the fact that the determinations or qualities of God, in so far as they are rational or intelligible and not determinations of sensuousness or imagination, are, in fact, qualities of reason.

“God is the infinite being or the being without any limitations whatsoever.” But what cannot be a limit or boundary on God can also not be a limit or boundary on reason. If, for example, God is elevated above all limitations of sensuousness, so, too, is reason. He who cannot conceive of any entity except as sensuous, that is, he whose reason is limited by sensuousness, can only have a God who is limited by sensuousness. Reason, which conceives God as an infinite being, conceives, in point of fact, its own infinity in God. What is divine to reason is also truly rational to it, or in other words, it is a being that perfectly corresponds to and satisfies it. That, however, in which a being finds satisfaction, is nothing but the being in which it encounters itself as its own object.

Ontological inquiry discovers that ontology is not only its own

necessary but even its central object. It finds itself at the center of its own web. "Theology is God."

Is this the height of blasphemy ? Or the completion of theology via its self-recognition ?

If neutral phenomenism recognizes the subject-like-ness of substance, it might still offend the idealist who insists on a mystified and obscure reification of the subject (of consciousness) as a defense against the threat of secular naturalism. On the other hand, the physicalist attached to a unnoticed mathematical mysticism might object to the recovery of the lifeworld in all its "unclean" analogical ambiguity.

Personally I'm more on the atheistic humanist secular side. Existentialism. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus, Housman. While neutral phenomenism "recovers the lifeworld", most people never lose it in the first place. In many ways this neophenomenism or aspectualism justifies the neglect, by most, of all the bad ontology it corrects.

What most people want is an orienting myth that they experience as the unvarnished truth. *Believer us from evil*. This is not something to complain about. A relatively "pure" theory is necessarily a "parasite" on the myths that hold groups together, motivating them to expand and replicate. The "pure math" of an especially rational ontology, one that is impractically sensitive to rational norms, will always be marginal. Mill is most interesting ontologically for his phenomenism, but it is his ( also excellent ) political books that are much more acknowledged and accessible.

To me the neutral phenomenism sketched here and in similar informal essays is a genuine solution to the "problem" of "consciousness." It's as if the pieces of a difficult jigsaw puzzle have finally been put together without absurdity. But it took me years to understand this ancient solution (I include a secular interpretation of ancient nondual thinkers.) Presented in English and German in the 19th century, it remains neglected, probably because it offends both the religious and those insist on some kind



of reassuring substrate, even if its only atoms and void.