

How can I hint at the technical stuff, without getting into it ?

When people talk about being in love, they are talking about the **experience** of being in love. They are not (primarily) talking about oxytocin.

A puppy is not hidden behind its enthusiastic movements, the fuzzy warmth it offers to caressing hand. There real puppy is **there**. And the real puppy is so rich and multi-faceted that the puppy is not exhaustively there. There is always more puppy.

We might just focus on how the puppy exists for the eyes. I can't see "all of the puppy" at once. I can't see all "sides" of the puppy at once. I see the puppy from here, from there, in this kind of light, in that kind of light, with or without my glasses. I see always only an aspect or facet of the puppy. And yet I see the puppy. I see that aspect as the puppy. I don't usually notice that I'm seeing (in purely visual terms) a mere aspect. Because this requires focusing or intending the aspect, shifting away from the more typical experience of just looking right "through" the aspect to see the puppy.

Even just for the eyes, the puppy needs time in order to reveal itself, to show all of its sides or aspects. But we can now use aspect in a metaphorical sense. The puppy's soul or personality is also revealed only "over time" or "through time". Where would we be, where would the puppy be, as we understand it, if not for memory ? And if not for the temporal synthesis of the logic we take for granted. We automatically understand that it's the **same** puppy showing different sides of itself.

So the idea or the puppy unifies all the little aspects of the puppy that are show "one at a time.". We might even think of the puppy as the synthesis or unity of these "moments.". A blind person who loves a puppy may not prefer the more visually based aspect metaphor. Perhaps they would prefer the metaphor of a moment. The puppy reveals itself in lots of little different moments. But they are all moments of the puppy, of the same puppy that endures through time, as these moments, and (crucially) as the possibility of other moments.

We can also see, if we check, that the puppy can only show one side of itself by **not** showing another.

I hope this informal intro has made the point that entities like puppies “need time” to be what they are. Time is the “space” in which entities reveal themselves. Space is of course also the space, but perhaps this is more obvious, more “in our face” visually. Time is perhaps more elusive. We tend to “look right through” the aspect and see the temporal synthesis, the logical unity, just the entity itself. Because this synthesis, this recognition of the same object in a new aspect, is so automatic, this essay can be understood as analyzing experience, of focusing in on this or that aspect or facet of it.

## 2

To find the real artichoke, we had to pull off all of its leaves.

The world is to its aspects as the artichoke is to these leaves.

The object is to its aspects as the artichoke is to these leaves.

The world is different streamings of different aspects of the same objects of conversation. An object has a logical being that is also a temporal synthesis of these aspects which are scattered across many streams.

The point is to articulate our basic familiar situation. We have streams of “private” phenomenal consciousness. But I suggest that this consciousness is not a representation of a true reality that is “beyond experience”. Instead the world is, if we ignore the details of the structure, “everyone’s experience.”

Something like this view can be found in Advaita Vedanta. But it can also be found in thinkers like Mach, Leibniz, Mill, and others. My approach here is in the spirit of logical positivism.

## 3

–So your ontological ego is an I-centered aspect of the world. We might say streaming aspect or just stream, because we are talking about movement and flow.

–And my empirical ego or my linguistic ego is this “I”.

–Correct. Your so-called phenomenal consciousness as a whole, the entire stream of your so-called experience, is a streaming aspect of the world.

–How is this not just the stream of my experience ?

–It is, if we are careful about which ego is having the experience. The “smaller” empirical ego “has” experience. But the larger ego “is” this experience, which we no longer want to call experience.

–Because the experiencer is one more part of that experience.

–Exactly. We are trying to get beyond the paradoxical confusion of representationalism. The ontological ego (the stream) is not a representation or mediation of the world. It is just straight-out the being of the world, a genuine portion of the being of the world.

–So the big me, the ontological ego, is a piece of the world. Or “my” world is not a representation but genuine “side” of the world that is made only of such sides. The world is not more than this system of streams that we are—that we are as ontological egos. As empirical egos, we appear in lots of different streams, but at the center only of our own.

4

–Is this speculation ?

–It’s not meant to be. It’s meant to be clarification. The object we talk about is the object of experience. That’s a starting point. You might call it an axiom. But such an “axiom” is just part of the basic project of being an immanent philosopher. And that’s redundant. Let the speculators speculate, point beyond experience. As a belated logical positivist, I am making sense of the situation that we start with.

–The ontological horizon.

–The horizon or background, yes, and this is also the stage or the forum. Here we all are, talking about how it is. But that is already an important part of how it is that constrains the rest.

5

Well, Fritz, if that’s still the code name, it’s time for another one of these, a letter from your distant friend. My objection to what goes by realism and/or physicalism is that it tends to be a vaguely mathematical mysticism. I almost prefer the mystics that know they are mystics, but

I will grant the physicalist spirit a laudable motive. Way back I was like that, proud to have learned some physics, chemistry, etc. I mean I was good at that stuff naturally, and it only flattered me to think I had X-ray eyes for reality was really like, or really actually certainly was in the first place. You get this picture in your mind, of atoms or whatever, and you hold it sacred as the superhuman apathetic-divine uber-stuff. Rock bottom. Atoms and void. All else is but arrangement, or (here the theory gets lost) illusion.

Old Rorty wished that maybe he'd read more poems. Why bother with this fussy stuff? Even I feel that, but I at least am reading ancient spiritual texts and seeing whether I can filter them for mathematically pure ontological insight. Those texts may have been written even in such a mood, only to be taken primarily for ethical import, comfort, and so on. Which is nothing to complain about, though it makes my work look like guru training. I'm synthesizing a mathematical poem, a poem that expresses a belief about the structure of things, but I'm really, it seems to me, only articulating the structure we already live in without much noticing it.

Ah but it sounds so weird. Here's a quasi-mathematical version that occurred to me when I was lying in bed, unable to sleep. Each "stream" or facet of the world is a function from  $\mathbb{N}$  to the set of aspects of entities in the world as a whole. Or we can represent the independent variable (time of course) using  $\mathbb{R}$  or even  $\mathbb{Q}$ . That's a legit choice. How smoothly does time flow? And is that a question about how smoothly entities come and go? Or about expectation and dread?

In any case, **each lifestream is a sequence or continuum of aspects of entities.** The person at the center of this lifestream, but only a part of it, is heavily represented in terms of the aspects of it that appear in "its own" stream. My nose in the visual field. My hand on the kitchen knife. An itch on my back. A sad emotion felt in my belly or chest.

Do itches have aspects? Yes. All intentional objects have aspects. It might be better to say moments. I can talk about entities with others. Hence "intentional" as "intend." I can logically aim at them, encircle them, grasp them, focus on them, thematize them. Attempts to say the same thing. And this, it seems to me, is always a temporal synthesis, a logical unity. And one can let the itch ride, examine it, feel out its

moments, a bit like staring at a spatial object, as you turn it around in your hand.

Are you still with me ? An ontological ego or stream of phenomenal consciousness is a sequence or continuum of aspects or moments of entities. Which we take usually as the entities themselves. The temporal synthesis is automatic. The analysis, the shattering into aspects, is a theoretical accomplishment, a noticing of something that is usually too close.

If that's the case, then why all the noise about aspects ? Why emphasize aspects ? There are at least two reasons. First, being is time. Or "being" and "time" are attempts to name the enduring form of the world, which is the form of the stream of (so-called) experience. Why time ? Because perception cannot swallow the object. The personality of a dog is unveiled or discovered over time, through many moments. I can't see both sides of a coin at once. I need time and space to turn that coin around in my hand. I never have both faces before my eyes at the same time. That coin exists very much in the time dimension, tho we tend to forget this. Knowledge tries to constrain the future, so we look for structure, substance, unchanging essence. We think of the coin as independent of any particular perspective. But we go too far if we try to think it out of space altogether, like Kant.

OK, so consciousness is being is time. Entities are revealed only in or as moments or aspects. We might say that consciousness is nothingness. It is no-thing or rather no-aspect in particular. It is the general form, the variable aspect, in a context of flow. Being is a being. But being without beings is truly nothing. To put it in another way, a poet said once that time is the fire in which we burn. We might also say that time is the fire **as** which we burn.

Now we come to the crucial moment. How do all of us end up with a common world ? We are all streams of differing aspects of the same worldly entities. For example: I hold up a penny between us. I see heads, and I know that you must see tails. One aspect of the coin is my stream. The other aspect is in yours. We might also imagine some exotic coin, unrecognized by either of us. I see one side, and you see the other. But I can only guess at what you see, beyond my confidence that you are indeed given a side. We can each describe our side of the coin. Picture theory of language, signitive intention, etc.

So now maybe you can see how the system of all lifestreams can “hold” the world. The world’s entities are scattered across all of the streams. They have their being **as** precisely those aspects. The streams do not contain representations. They contain what the objects are made of, drops of experience called moments of aspects, tho “experience” is a bit misleading in this nondual system.

A few people have tried to follow me, and they wonder how one can fit this vision in a single stream. I tell them that we already usually grant sentience to our friends, spouses, even strangers on a good day. But more particularly, we are used to being given objects in terms of moments, aspects, facets. We remember lots of aspects, etc. So we can project our own experience on others. They “have” (are) the aspects that we would have (be) in their position—in space or a dialectical journey or a phase of their career.

How did I get here ? We can’t reject the ontological forum. So we must share a world, share objects. Any kind of illusion-bubble indirect realism looks really bad already, given this constraint. Then there are all the problems with one trying to make perception a representation of stuff-in-itself. There’s the semantic black hole of phrases that aim beyond experience. There’s the realization that the scientific image only piles on new aspects. It **never** made sense as peaking behind or around mere illusion or appearance.

Was Democritus actually a dualist ? Or was he misunderstood ? How could one defend him ? Back then I might say that our eyes aren’t good enough to see the little pieces we are made of. Interesting that Democritus made them colorless. That’d be a challenge to explain.