

Please never worry about writing a letter that is too long. Never too much of this kind of conversation for me.

On to the whole “being is time” thing. So much mystification on this stuff, an industry of grandiose claims, parroted by today’s would-be guru from yesterday’s, like a trick for reaching bananas. Don’t matter if you understand the mantra as long as you master the technique, and every sophist knows it’s more tone and the confidence use of exotic words that prevails.

I understand better than ever that frustration of the philosopher for the sophist. The philosopher wants fellow researchers, peers, friends. The sophist wants (depends upon) a certain kind of submissive, credulous attention. First impression is that Douglas Harding, who has some powerful moments, went the sophist route. And who am I to judge, having never been offered that deal by the devil? It must be nice to have a room gather around you.

But let us return to understanding why being is time. *Entities reveal themselves only against time as horizon or background.* It might be a frisbee, a novel, or your ex-wife. We have many differing experiences of the same entity. We also consider the entity in terms of possible experience, of how it might be used, of what she might say. And this includes the experiences of others. I see one side of her, you see another. Just like objects in a room. Since I move around in rooms and see things from different angles, I can imagine your stream of consciousness, perhaps as the same aspects in a different order. Or same-enough.

Let’s say there’s a coin with a head on one side and a building on the other. You can’t see the head and the building at the same time. You have to turn the coin around in your hand, and see this and then that. But both sides are unified logically, grasped as sides of one and the same coin. A temporal synthesis, I call it. Two sides, faces, aspects, moments of the coin. Glued together by logic and memory.

And that gets us to the care structure of a life. My stream of experience is expectant, remembering, etc. I am on the way somewhere, trying to finish something, trying to make the final product present. Or fleeing something dangerous or ugly. Trying to make what is here be elsewhere, trying to put what is now in the past. James used “stream” as a

metaphor. Joyce liked rivers. The river of consciousness.

But consciousness is consciousness of things, of things embedded in a context with fringe. Consciousness is an unrolling contexture. Consciousness is nothing in itself but the “place” where things come and go. Consciousness is being is time. Time is the nothingness of all things. That’s a dramatic way to say it, which touches on existential issues (as in *Ecclesiastes*.) But time is also the nothingness of things in the sense that time is the negation of everything determinate in them. Time is the “variable” thing, the x in algebra.

But Husserl saw that thing is never (finally) given. So it’s better to say that moments or aspects appear in time. The entities which I’ve called logical syntheses of such moments are in the streams in this distributed sense. Their aspects or moments (in context) are what streams are made of. The same objects are (partially) given to a plurality of streams, and these objects are just the systems of their scattered aspects or moments. Actual and possible moments.

We are, after all, the “time-rivers” being discussed. As Heidegger saw, we are future oriented. You and me are on the way. At the moment to a further clarification of our own being, of the time that we **are**. As ontological egos. Tho maybe I should retire that phrase.

Why do I bother ? Given that such clarification is not as important as more overtly spiritual stuff ? Well I agree that it’s not of the essence like identity-driven “ethical” philosophy. What I am doing now is something a “philosopher” does when they are long out of their Nietzsche phase. It’s like math, but qualitatively conceptual.

I think I’ve made (maybe) some genuine progress in an objective sense. As in other weirdos who care about this stuff might value some of my footnotes on my influences. A matter of emphasis. A seeing of the importance of aspects, how Husserl’s analysis of the worldly object can be generalized to the world itself.

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For instance. Let’s call the world a hyperobject. By which I mean some very high dimensional object. I’m still talking about the world, the lifeworld, the familiar world in all of its richness. This world is

so rich that no one see it all. I see one aspect of the world. You see another. As empirical egos, we are **in** the world, and we **see** the world. The-world-from-my-perspective is not, however, a representation. The world-as-experienced is the world we care about and the world we talk about.

So we make the move that Wittgenstein and Mach made, to name just two. My empirical ego is in the world, but my entire stream of consciousness is the-world-from-my-perspective, which is to say a portion of the genuine being of the world. This stream of anonymized consciousness is something I call the *ontological* ego. It is the so-called “pure witness.” It helps me say this:

As empirical egos, we are **in** the world, and we **see** the world. As empirical egos, we **are** (an aspect) the world. The empirical ego is an entity whose moments play a central role in this ontological ego as world from perspective. But it’s important to see the empirical ego as a mere entity among others. However important in every other context.

We might say “there is only world.” Or that “consciousness does not exist.”

I think this is clarifying. I haven’t gone into the problems that it solves for me tho. One is the problem of the physical, more exactly of the ur-stuff that is supposed to exist outside of consciousness. Things in themselves. That kind of thing. This theory does away it, does without it. I haven’t gone into the inferentialism that helps it work in this letter, but we’ve talk about meaning enough that I’m sure you see the relevance. Toothaches are just entities in the lifeworld. Things we can reason about. Private aspects are no problem, because it is logic that intends the aspects scattered across a plurality of streams. We all know that others know the same objects more or less differently. The blind man experiences the same orange, tho without the color in a certain limited sense. So it’s fine if toothaches and daydreams show different sides or aspects to those who officially “have” them. We can still reason about them as the chorus. (I use “chorus” to joke about Greek tragedy, since I also call the world a forum, a necessarily public place in which philosophy can happen.)

More on the forum, this great stage of fools. That which scientific conversation, as such, must presuppose. Those in this place of assembly, speak there about this place of assembly. In the world, among one another, we discuss this world we share. In this language we share, bound to blurry but functional logical and semantic norms, we offer up our theories. We criticize, modify, synthesize. We work on inherited stories. We crop them, blend them, turn them inside out.

I think it's easy to misunderstand this antiskeptical point. I do not at all deny that possibility of radical doubt. I do not deny that people go mad, that people lose faith in language, in the phenomenal consciousness of others. People may fear they are dreaming. All of this seems very possible to me. The forum is only a constraint on those who have embraced the "heroic" role of the scientist. I use "ontologist" for the philosopher who is "scientific." But the labels don't matter. What matters is the second-order tradition described by Popper, the tradition of working together the constantly improve an inheritances of myths (theories.)

To be a scientist (an ontologist) is to be part of this tradition. So I can't deny the conditions that make this tradition possible **within** that tradition, **as** a scientist. I "can't" in the sense that it'd be a performative contradiction, at least, and often enough a logical contradiction.

For instance, the skeptic might claim that *communication is impossible*. But of course they are communicating this, or at least trying to, so we have at least a performative contradiction. I feel silly to even mention it, but I still run into otherwise clever people who talk a slightly less obvious form of this nonsense. It's come to be taken by the unwary as sophistication. It's all very open minded. And genuine skepticism, understood as epistemic humility, still seems virtuous to me. So my "ontological forum point" is primarily directed at what I call false humility. This is where the pseudo-skeptic proclaims a grand theory of knowledge, which they often mistakenly take to be tautological. For instance, people with just a little philosophy are seduced by the representational motif in early modern philosophy. They **assume** that perception is *representation*, that **we** (not just they) are infinitely cut off from Ultimate Reality. It sounds deep. How solemn and transcendent. How laudable the departure from anthropocentrism. And so on.

But this “tautology” is grand ontologist thesis, squeezed into a single metaphor. *They assume that perception gives an “image” and never the real thing.* This unjustified and indeed disastrous assumption is taken as obvious. And it has long been understood by those serious about such issues to have serious problems. Frankly I think we can measure seriousness well enough by how much a person has bothered to study the tradition — which is only work if the problems aren’t of interest in the first place.

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On that note, let me say that ontology is like pure math. Not practically fucking relevant for most people. Let us not pretend.

And yet the spiritual and/or existential stuff bumps up against it. And enables or disables it. If you have already decided on some version of god, your options are limited. But then I agree with Heidegger that philosophy is basically atheistic. It’s autonomous, free, critical. Or at least ontology as scientific philosophy is “atheistic.” Even if one uses “God” as a name for all that is, etc. If you have already parked your car in that garage, you don’t need philosophy. You need a telephone call with your God. Now if we are actually God (and so on), that’s different. But that’s “atheism” is the sense intended, which is really about autonomy, freedom, responsibility. Only the second-order tradition is sacred to the scientist. Only my own rational mind, which turns out to be a cooperative-adversarial group mind. Logic is fundamentally transpersonal. If this sounds mystical to Mr. Physics, then Mr. Physics has not so much as grasped the normative field within which physics means anything (is **more than** mathematical playtime or numerology.) And this is just as common as self-cancelling skepticism. The pure mathematician’s corrections of so-and-so’s pet theory are not so terribly welcome.

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You are correct that Reddit is pretty terrible when it comes to serious conversation. I suspect that people like me see its potential, pan in the creek for gold, find almost nothing, go somewhere else. So the place stays a desert. Though there is a lively scene for self-mystified nonsense. The consciousness reddit is a great example of how science gets mixed

in with mysticism. That magical white lab coat, a ceremonial robe. That silvery jargon. Donald Hoffman is a prince among that crowd, lending institutional prestige to a reheated quasi-Kantian mysticism, but thrown in come computer simulations, of course, for the age of *The Matrix*. Of course I love it as a foil for what I'm trying to do. It'd just be more fun if I was part of a little movement.