

–What is neophenomenalism ?

–That name may be silly. I don't know. But I think phenomenism is a misunderstood and under-appreciated tradition, and it tends to be described from the outside, by people who don't see the nondual point.

–Is neophenomenalism or whatever you end up calling what you are working on mystical ?

–No. I realize that “nondual” is often used by folks interested in mysticism, whether they know it or not. My own approach is closer to that of the logical positivism movement. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* is not far from my own view.

–Can you sum it up in a sentence or do, before we proceed ?

–Sure. Reality is the system or plurality of all streams of what some people mean by “consciousness” or “experience”. But this use of consciousness has to be understood as synonymous with being, because the so-called “experiencers” are themselves just entities in the stream, however intensely central they happen to be.

–This sounds like idealism.

–I get that. But one can also phrase my approach this way: consciousness does not exist ! There is only the world, which is given in/as streaming aspects. These aspects (streams of so-called experience) do not represent the world. They are aspects or adumbrations of the world, and the world is “made” of its aspects like a flower is made of its petals. It is there logical unity, their temporal synthesis. That petal/flower analogy is not perfect. But the point is that so-called consciousness is really the being of the world, the being of an aspect of that world. At the center of each aspect is an empirical ego, and we all can and do talk about the same objects in our shared world, though different aspects of these objects appear in the streams that we as *ontological* egos **are**.

–What, if anything, is new in your project ?

–I can name 5 or 6 of my favorite thinkers who all articulate the nondual breakthrough. But they almost always only address the singular

subject, basically as described above. But they only dissolve the local subject. Their work **implies** a conception of reality as a whole, a “big picture” of all that is. We have to account for a plurality of so-called subjects who all share the same world. Philosophy is only possible if we share the world. That, by the way, is one of the serious problems of indirect realism, which is that it imagines the subject stuck in a realm of private representation, of illusion basically.

–You said “almost all.”

–That’s correct. Because Leibniz says something very close to what I’m getting at in his *Monadology*. And Schrödinger also does this, briefly, in his *My View of the World*. But they say very little on the matter. Though they say well what they do get said.

–How does Leibniz put it ?

–Here goes, from section 57 : *And as the same town, looked at from various sides, appears quite different and becomes as it were numerous in aspects ; even so, as a result of the infinite number of simple substances, it is as if there were so many different universes, which, nevertheless are nothing but aspects [perspectives] of a single universe, according to the special point of view of each Monad.*

–Can you unpack that for us ?

–I read “simple substance” as a “streaming of the world” or “stream of (so-called) experience.” Leibniz sort of gives us both options. He even almost accidentally explains why indirect realism was and still is so tempting. In one sense, we all live in a private version of the world. So there is a different world for every “soul” (stream). But this interpretation cannot work, because logic is transpersonal and philosophy/science presupposes the forum of space of assembly which enables it. So these private worlds are a single world given in a plurality of aspects, one per “soul.” What I call the “ontological ego” (for now) is that streaming aspect of the world considered as a whole. Then the empirical ego is the familiar entity at the center of that stream, whose nose is always in the picture.

–So the town is also a metaphor for the world ?

–Yes. I think it is friendlier to the imagination. You can come toward a town from many directions, see it even from different altitudes. There

are also lots of walls that cast shadows, obscuring one another. It's like playing GoldenEye on the N64. You can't see through walls. You have to walk around them. The world is not revealed all at once.

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–Is this where Heidegger enters the picture ?

–This is just one place. His recognition of the environmental, the equip-mental nexus, all of it is brilliant. He is the great describer of the “un-rolling contexture” of the stream. But I think you refer to what I'd call a critique of *temporal* presence. Which is really already in Mill, though not at all with the same emphasis. It's one of those things you find in an old text when a later text reveals the importance of the theme.

–How is it in Mill ?

–He saw that “matter” or stuff was the **possibility** of sensation. That the world is primarily possibility. Most of it is not present. I carry something like a bubble of disclosure or the realized possibility of sensation around me, actual sensation. Though of course I'd follow Heidegger and insist on the significance of the lifeworld. It's not given immediately as sensation. Sensation is a sophisticated theoretical term. But I don't hold this against Mill, because he had his eye on the ball. His task was to fix Berkeley.

–Strip out all of the God stuff ?

–That for sure, and also Mill added the crucial theme of possibility, which also hints at the inferentialism to come, which I include anyway from Robert Brandom.

–OK. But let's talk about why a critique of temporal presence has value.

–Basically it's a matter of describing the enduring structure of the flux of experience, the shape of that flux. To me it's interesting that spatial objects are never done giving themselves, aspect by aspect, moment by moment. Time is revealed to be absolute fundamental. As fundamental as space. Time is not basically mathematical or a matter of counting. You might say (to overstate it for emphasis) the being **is** time. That entities are only there in this spread out way. The future is open for us. Possibility is fundamental. But all of this is easily obscured if you think a human being is just an object among others, and not also the

“host” or “center” of an aspect of the world, which is to say the very being of the world, a genuine part of it, and not an epiphenomenal representation.

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–If you’ll forgive the bluntness, how confident are you about this grand ontological thesis ?

–I mentioned that the future is open, so I know, even in terms of my own theory, but this theory is itself cannot be some final description. I also know that there are some tricky issues, such as making sense of the presentient past in terms of the theory. But I am confident (whether I should be or not) that there’s something here that’s worth wrestling with. I have met a few people who seem to relate to some or even most of it, but mostly I feel not even understood. And that makes sense, because I sure didn’t start here. And my approach is an odd fusion of rationalism and phenomenism.