

Your last letter was reliably great. I'll counteroffer a summary of what I like to pretend to have learned from the great foolosophers.

I was once quite excited by my *decidedly nonspiritual* but relatively sudden grasp of a nondual ontology. This was like the joy of discovering how to prove a mathematical theorem. Once upon a time, I spent a few years writing math proofs, and sometimes I'd struggle for hours to find the "trick." The "trick" was just a clever approach that made everything easy. But there is no algorithm for finding a proof. So upperlevel math classes are very different than lower level classes, precisely because one moves from mostly applying algorithms to thinking creatively in

a straitjacket.

As I hinted elsewhere, ontology is dry like mathematics. A non-dual ontology is a solution to that famous problem of the relationship of so-called mind and so-called matter. The hard problem of consciousness is, to jump ahead, a problem that results from just accepting an unjustified assumption, namely that consciousness exists in the first place. This is roughly equivalent to the assumption that perception is representation. It is also roughly equivalent to the position known as indirect realism.

I said I was *once* quite excited by a “realization.” I’ve lived it for a while now (a year?) and articulated it in various ways. I’ve “mastered” it, learned to possess it. As Nietzsche puts it, it is

finally dead in my heart. It's no longer tantalizingly peripheral.

The new car smell is gone.

It's also familiar and obvious to me that this is an *old* realization. I remain suspicious vain about my own emphasis of the *aspect* approach to this issue. I've used different names for my presentation of what is mostly nothing I can claim. Here are a few: ontological perspectivism, aspectualism, neophenomenalism. As you know, I love the early work of Heidegger. So you might say I'm a footnote to Heidegger. But I'm also trying to shine some light on the genius of Mill and Mach. William James is not so neglected. Finally, I've tried to call attention to what Wittgenstein did on this topic in his TLP. Precociously correct,

that young Wittgenstein. So terse, though, that people ignore what is arguably most exciting in that early work.

Why do I go into all of this tangential stuff? I suppose I'm writing this for others who also see the quasi-mathematical beauty of the solution. I'm adding an existential fringe.

Here's the thing. If you do manage to make progress in reading the great foolosophers, you will get beyond the shallow idle-talk blurb version of these philosophers. But this, as Heidegger brilliant described, is a crust that covers up what is only therefore revealed through a more intense and serious investigation. In other words, you'll be at least as misunderstood as the great foolosophers were. For you won't have any reputational cover.

If you happen to be a successful academic, the kind who writes books that actually matter, that's great. But it's like playing in the NBA. And I should emphasize that I respect some of those successful insiders very much.

But mostly understanding the great foolosophers is its own reward, sort of like understanding some difficult but beautiful mathematics, *without getting paid for it*. As Hegel saw, philosophy is no less difficult, but blowhards delude themselves in a special way when it comes to philosophy. Yes, there are math cranks and physics cranks. And often they are also philosophical cranks. But many (almost always male) personalities are at least part-time philosophical tourists. Because it's adjacent to

politics/religion. While math and physics, if respected at a distance, are usually kept at a distance, because they are obviously difficult and relatively dry.

Clearly I am guilty of thinking I have learned something, even if I confess that my mastery or progress is useless in a worldly sense. I keep comparing it to math, but math is (for some of us) beautiful. So it is also “poetry.” I like people more who understand such things, and I hope the very few who are out there will return the favor. If I ever meet them. But I mostly read the dead and write for the unborn. My experience in the digital wilderness encourages me to think that penetrating the idle-talk is a rare accomplishment. As Hobbes says, only those who have

science can recognize it in others. An arrogant statement. But it's aimed at those with the same hard-won arrogance. And who have a sense of humor about the uselessness of the understanding they've achieved. *And* a sense of (gallows) humor about the "emptiness" of the world entire, along the lines of pseudo-Solomon in *Ecclesiastes*, but that's a different letter.

Back to "my" so-called neophenomenalism, my footnote to Heidegger's early work. To me the pieces fit together beautifully, but I'll put on psychologist hat for moment. Neutral phenomenism, which is adjacent to logical positivism, fails to scratch the spiritual/existential itch. It works for me because it fits into my gallowshumor absurdism, my pragmatic cynicism, my iro-

nism. Or whatever you want to call it. I'm an old man beyond all causes. I speculate and hope that you are in the same happy-though-sinking boat. Happy enough, whilst this machine is to us.

But others have other needs. And given the uselessness of ontology in worldly terms, it makes sense to me that a nondual ontology is neglected, except of course for the fuzzy feelgood nondualism of the lazy mystic crowd. If you've seen the nondual or the consciousness reddit, you know what I mean. Nothing personal against those people (and we can allow for exceptions), but the priority there is not on careful reasoning. The poetic storytelling element dominates, tho of course with the bad math



that crudely imitates physics. So much of bad mystic philosophy, often understanding itself as anti-scientistic, seems to smell like bad physics. So the physics envy is dominant in the imitation of approach and style.

To foreground the lifeworld theoretically is to foreground the mundane and the accesible and the familiar. It is anti-escapist in that sense. Yet all striving toward universal knowledge is arguably an attempted escape for the pettiness and mortality of individuality. But that's another letter.

That's maybe a virtue of phenomenalism. It directs us back to the richness of the lifeworld. It justifies "literature." Joyce is an *indirect* ontologist. A rose in the steel dust. Some insights

can be generated in the appropriate reader by a presentation of detail.

I've been reading Boswell's bio of Johnson lately. Also *Franny and Zooey*. Good stuff. I continue to study Joyce. Philosophy feels largely solved for me. Perhaps it's tactless to say so.

With no Cause to offer. Having admitted that it's like proving a theorem in pure math. No key to the problem of life. And, given my interpretation of the TLP as a phenomenalist text, I can naturally understand how Wittgenstein must felt. He untied a knot. Which probably felt great at first. But few understood. And it didn't much matter that they didn't understand. He was still a mortal man in the same old world. But he wanted the

traces out there for the living and those not yet born. (Like me, I wasn't born yet.) Heidegger's description of idle talk is appropriate what is often made of Wittgenstein. His actual insight is largely neglected. The language stuff is more profitable, since it can be churned indefinitely, operating in a negative, parasitic way. But we can't blame Wittgenstein for that. He seems to have tried to rebel against the banalization.

I also think of Housman's poetry. Also written as if from the grave to youths like him when he was young. Housman strikes me as an existentialist before his time, a tragic absurdist. Housman's best 20 or 30 poems are great. His personal story is worth looking into also.

I'm sending along some of my presentations of the phenomenal-ism discussed above. I'm too bored with it, you might say, to express the same stable insight yet again. Though I may find a new metaphor that enriches what has come before. Then I'll bother.