

I open with a quote from Michael Steinmann's *Phenomenological Perspectivism: The Interweaving of Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Ontology in Martin Heidegger*:

This letting-be-seen of logos has to be understood as an original, productive act of disclosure. The "meaning" of *logos* is the phenomenon laid open for the phenomenological gaze. Language, therefore, is not a closed system of signs, but transcendence towards the world. On the other side, the phenomenological gaze needs words or sentences to be guided toward the phenomenon. The relation between phenomenology and hermeneutics, thus, is twofold: Phenomenology is hermeneutic in its using words for the purpose of letting-see, and hermeneutics is phenomenological insofar as language means nothing without being able to let something be seen. The letting-see is a double, pheno-hermeneutical relation to the world.

We can see this double method as a form of perspectivism. The pheno-hermeneutical letting-be-seen has no fixed meaning, but must be exercised always anew. How the framework of sense is extended and how it unfolds, cannot be predetermined without actually tracing it out.

Ontology is poetic, creative. Beliefs are *created*. The meaning-form of the world is extended, enriched. But beliefs are "accountable" to what they foreground.

I see a new aspect or moment of a familiar entity.

I find words that help others see this aspect. The entity is changed in its very being by that letting-be-seen. For entities *have their genuine being* in meaning-shaped phenomenal fields. Before I helped others see this aspect, the entity was already changed in *my* phenomenal field, and so already in that sense in the world. But this new aspect can become accessible to the average anyone. It can become what Heidegger calls “interpretedness.”

1

From Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*:

Our new “Infinite.”—How far the perspective character of existence extends, or whether it have any other character at all, whether an existence without explanation, without “sense” does not just become “nonsense,” whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially an explaining existence...

From Hegel’s *Phenomenology*:

...reason is purposive activity...that substance is essentially subject, is expressed in the idea which represents the Absolute as Spirit...Spirit is alone Reality. It is the inner being of the world...

A streaming of the world has a telos or goal. It moves toward resolution and harmony, whether or not it gets

there. Not to a definite one-size-fits-all resolution-harmony, though perhaps there are general types of resolution. Toward an equilibrium, possibly a very personal solution, which can however become an ego-ideal for others. As Brandom emphasizes, the rational subject is a process of ideally coherent sense-making, and this empirical-linguistic-normative ego is embodied. This fragile flesh-and-blood sense-making process has a normative center. I am a locus of responsibility, as Sartre also saw. Bad faith is flight from our being thrown into freedom-as-responsibility.

As Nietzsche (hypothetically) puts it, existence is “*explaining* existence.” We are thrown into endless interpretation, endless sense-making. Exegesis incarnate.

2

For perspectivism/phenomenalism, there is no hidden substrate “Real” world. If “lived” existence is “purposive activity,” then so is reality, the world itself. Reason in the flesh, flesh in the world. Flesh in an “aspect”¹ of the world, an ontological ego, a located-mobile streaming of that world, following along with that flesh. This streaming field or field-like stream is meaningfully structured by the evolving and imperfectly coherent beliefs of that empirical ego. This empirical ego is flesh, though we might say that its normative center is indeed a ghost responsible for operating that flesh. A flesh that has its genuine being

¹Leibniz

only in various located-perspectival streamings of that world.

The “inner being” of the world is its meaning-form, the beliefs of a sense-making empirical ego. The world has a “plural substance.” It is “seen from” an “infinity” of perspectives. Or rather the world is “lived” by plural existence. Being-in-the-world is being-the-world, being-an-aspect-of-the-world.

Hegel’s “Spirit” is the “logical software” at the normative hermeneutic “core” of an empirical-linguistic ego. We live in an ontological forum because we are, at this our rational-conceptual core, “idiolects” of the tribal OS. *Zeitgeist* is time-spirit is the “historical I” — the person embedded in the default interpretation of the world of its time.

3

More Hegel, this time from the lectures on art:

The true content of romantic art is absolute inwardness, and its corresponding form is spiritual subjectivity with its grasp of its independence and freedom. This inherently infinite and absolutely universal content is the absolute negation of everything particular, the simple unity with itself which has dissipated all external relations, all processes of nature and their periodicity of birth, passing away, and rebirth, all the restrictedness in spiritual existence, and dissolved all particular gods into a pure and infi-

nite self-identity. In this Pantheon all the gods are dethroned, the flame of subjectivity has destroyed them, and instead of plastic polytheism art knows now only one God, one spirit, one absolute independence which, as the absolute knowing and willing of itself, remains in free unity with itself and no longer falls apart into those particular characters and functions whose one and only cohesion was due to the compulsion of a dark necessity.

I won't comment on that quote here. Let's move on:

But the determinate being of God is not the natural and sensuous as such but the sensuous elevated to non-sensuousness, to spiritual subjectivity which instead of losing in its external appearance the certainty of itself as the Absolute, only acquires precisely through its embodiment a present actual certainty of itself. God in his truth is therefore no bare ideal generated by imagination; on the contrary, he puts himself into the very heart of the finitude and external contingency of existence, and yet knows himself there as a divine subject who remains infinite in himself and makes this infinity explicit to himself.

The mortal body is a potential host for a relatively immortal time-binding corporate (trans-)personality. Idiolects of the tribal OS can “download” the gist of the *cumulative* (compacted) ontological Conversation-so-far. To “become” this “ancient” clump of bound-time

is to make one's infinity explicit — to unfold it. The words are already there in the old books, but they must be assimilated, digested. They must be liquified, mixed with one's blood. Phenomenology reactivates, unfolds, foregrounds, remembers.

This transformed subject is “divine” because it has overcome the usual alienation. This alienation is projection, as emphasized by Feuerbach. This “divine subject” often finds interrupted fragments of itself in others. It finds (for Hegel) others mostly on the way to the *same* “divine subjectivity.” It finds perhaps a few peers who are also already there. There in *enough* of the same way for mutual recognition.

This free/autonomous subject no longer primarily identifies with the mortal body, with the petty traits of the “thin client.” Sex, race, gender, looks, age, etc. This “God” (really a crucified-exalted “Christ” or flesh-god) is thrown into “the very heart of the finitude and external contingency of existence.” Alone on the cross even, with no External projected God to be lowered on the machine to save him.

In less exalted terms, we have the serene joy of the scientist, who reads the dead and writes for the unborn, untroubled by the fashionable rages of the day. We have “the better consciousness” of Schopenhauer. In dramatic terms, we can imagine a personality facing death with tranquility, not unlike Socrates. But this has nothing to do with faith in *personal* immortality. The “divine subject” is “divine” *through* his or her *identification with* the “realized” Conversa-

tion, which is intrinsically (relatively) immortal, like a flame that leaps from melting candle to new candles, which will also melt. This conversation is Ontology at the stage where it has recognized itself at the center of reality.

“Logic is ontology” because belief is the meaning-form of reality. This logic is liquid, always evolving, just like reality, thought ontology also articulates what endures throughout its modifications. The alienation with respect to a projected external-transcendent “Real” world has been overcome. In poetic terms, theology itself is God, and theology is “complete” when it recognizes this. I should say realized or complete *enough*, for sensemaking never stops. “Absolute knowledge” is not the end of inquiry but something like inquiry’s grasp of its basic character.

4

We find a less grandiose expression of this in Mach.

Further, that complex of memories, moods, and feelings, joined to a particular body (the human body), which is called the “I” or “Ego,” manifests itself as relatively permanent. I may be engaged upon this or that subject, I may be quiet and cheerful, excited and ill-humoured. Yet, pathological cases apart, enough durable features remain to identify the ego. Of course, the ego also is only of relative permanency... The ego is as little absolutely permanent as are

bodies. That which we so much dread in death, the annihilation of our permanency, actually occurs in life in abundant measure. That which is most valued by us, remains preserved in countless copies, or, in cases of exceptional excellence, is even preserved of itself. In the best human being, however, there are individual traits, the loss of which neither he himself nor others need regret. Indeed, at times, death, viewed as a liberation from individuality, may even become a pleasant thought.

Our idiolects are “proximally and for the most part” *junkyards*. We begin as stochastic parrots. As bots who know what everybody pretends to know. The “spiritual-conceptual” “contents” pass from ego to ego, from the old to the young, like an analogue of genetic material.

5

We find basically the same idea also in early Heidegger.

Coming into the world, one grows into a determinate tradition of speaking, seeing, interpreting. Being-in-the-world is an already-having-the-world-thus-and-so. ... Dasein, whiling away its own time in each case, is at the same time always a generation. So a specific interpretedness precedes every Dasein in the shape of the generation itself. What is preserved in the generation is itself the outcome of earlier views and

disputes, earlier interpretations and past concerns. ... Such a forgotten past is inherent in the prevailing interpretedness of being-together-with-one-another. To the extent that Dasein lives from ... this past, it is this past itself. ... The world with which we are concerned and being-in itself are both interpreted within the parameters of a particular framework of intelligibility. ... the “fore”-character in the structure of interpretedness shows us that it is none other than what has already been that jumps ahead, as it were, of a present time pervaded by interpretedness. Guided by its interpretedness, expectant concern lives its own past. ... Dasein “is” history.

One might argue that Dasein becoming authentic is an analogue of Hegel’s “divine subject” “making its infinity explicit to itself.” Let us recall this passage from Hegel, in the context of Heidegger’s interest in the facing of one’s own death.

[God] puts himself into the very heart of the finitude and external contingency of existence.

Christ, in Young Hegelian terms, is the “divine” in mortal flesh. A quote from David Strauss. From the end of his *Life of Jesus*.

When it is said of God that he is a Spirit, and of man that he also is a Spirit, it follows that the two are not essentially distinct. To speak more particularly, it is the essential property of

a spirit, in the distribution of itself into distinct personalities, to remain identical with itself, to possess itself in another than itself.... As man, considered as a finite spirit, limited to his finite nature, has not truth; so God, considered exclusively as an infinite spirit, shut up in his infinitude, has not reality. The infinite spirit is real only when it discloses itself in finite spirits; as the finite spirit is true only when it merges itself in the infinite. The true and real existence of spirit, therefore, is neither in God by himself, nor in man by himself, but in the God-man...

if reality is ascribed to the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures, is this equivalent to the admission that this unity must actually have been once manifested, as it never had been, and never more will be, in one individual? This is indeed not the mode in which Idea realizes itself; it is not wont to lavish all its fulness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all others † —to express itself perfectly in that one individual, and imperfectly in all the rest: it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other—in the alternate appearance and suppression of a series of individuals. And is this no true realization of the idea? is not the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of mankind as its realization, than when I single out one man as such a realization? is not an incarnation of God from eternity, a truer one than an

incarnation limited to a particular point of time. This is the key to the whole of Christology, that, as subject of the predicate which the church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea; but an idea which has an existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant. In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race, they perfectly agree. Humanity is the union of the two natures—God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible Mother and the invisible Father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature, both within and around man, until it lies before him as the inert matter on which he exercises his active power; it is the sinless existence, for the course of its development is a blameless one, pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history. It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven, for from the negation of its phenomenal life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life; from the suppression of its mortality as a personal, national, and terrestrial spirit, arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens. By faith in this Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God; that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Hu-

manity, the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species...When the mind has thus gone beyond the sensible history, and entered into the domain of the absolute, the former ceases to be essential; it takes a subordinate place, above which the spiritual truths suggested by the history stand self-supported; it becomes as the faint image of a dream which belongs only to the past, and does not, like the idea, share the permanence of the spirit which is absolutely present to itself.

To some this is just a dazzling atheism. And of course it is atheism with respect to the usual projections of an External God — which are analogous to projections of transcendent Matter. Indeed, transcendent Matter is something like the God of Deism.

6

Wittgenstein, at the time of the composition of his *Tractatus*, saw that the way that language pictures states-of-affairs is (in Heidegger's jargon) primordial. The picturing itself can't be pictured. We can try, but we usually just make the situation more obscure, which is what happened to Ayer's verification approach to meaningfulness.

This is because the world is “immediately” or “originally” meaningful or significant.

We “live together in” “logic,” though admittedly only in imperfectly congruent “idiolects” of that logic. The

“substance” of an entity is “logical.” This is why it is “transcendent.” The entity doesn’t transcend “experience” altogether, but it transcends my personal experience so far. Because I intend the object in terms of what it might be, for others as well as myself. I don’t “own” the meaning of my words. I have only seen some of this or that entity. I know it only through some of its moments or aspects. I trust that you know it through others. But, if reference succeeds well enough, I trust that you and I are discussing the same entity, which transcends us both.

An updated hermeneutic phenomenism is *not* subjective idealism. Representationalists tend to tacitly assume a self-sufficient “private language.” *They* are the subjective idealists, who merely paste on a useless “Matter,” like a short leg on a table that doesn’t help hold the table up. For *they* insist on an enclosed “consciousness,” on the self as a brain in the vat of the skull. It’s probably more charitable to say that they vaguely embrace an old belief in primary qualities, without quite making this clear to themselves. For “consciousness” “must” have access to the world-beyond-private-representation to avoid absurdity. Nevertheless, their misunderstandings of phenomenism suggest tacit assumptions of some the premises of subjective idealism.

7

So entities, even for the phenomenalist (or, equivalently, the perspectivist), are transcendent with re-

spect to particular empirical egos. Language is fundamentally social or trans-personal in its basic intention. The sense I make is communicable, because I make it in an idiolect of the tribal code.

Entities are of course not transcendent in some absolute sense, as in popular simplified readings of Kant.

If the “real” apple is the obscure cause of the brain’s generation of what I *call* an apple, then the brain I know is like the apple. Why should the Obscure Cause of what I naively call an apple and a brain be anything like an apple or a brain ?

How can Eddington’s “Table #2” be established except through the refined empirical investigation of the lifeworld table, of “Table #1”? This “second” table is of course a mere *enrichment* of the original table. I accept that the monitor I use just now is shooting photons at my retinas. The photon-shooting monitor is the same monitor that shows me these words.

8

Time shows me states-of-affairs that include aspects or moments of entities. I usually take the aspect *as* the object, take the side of my coffee mug as the mug itself. But I can thematize the side as such.

If I do so, then I can become aware that my coffee mug is only ever partially present. I can’t see all of its sides at once. To see one side is to not see all the others. To see that mug in bright light is to not see it in darkness. To see it with my glasses off (uncomfortably blurry)

is to not see it with my glasses on (nice and clear).

I can hear the same song as a child and as an old man. I of course experience that same song different, see a different “side” of it.

I need to grasp of course that all the different appearances of the coffee mug are appearances *of that mug*. The entity endures through time, as the time-spanning system of its “visits” to my phenomenal field. To my “lived existence.”

9

To sum up: Existence is embodied perspectival sense-making. Toward a vague varying goal of coherence and harmony. And this is not just a fact about the representational crust of a safely deactivated substrate. Though this “Deism” of apathetic matter does have its appeal as a metaphor suggesting the transcendence of everything human *so far*. To want to be beyond the good and evil of my contingent tribe is to want to create-discover in a profound revolutionary way. Transcendence, even the confused kind, acknowledges an infinite horizon or fringe. “Matter” is appealing as something refreshing beyond the claustrophobia of interpretedness, though its hackneyed expressions are not so exciting to those who have moved on to something richer or at least new.

The developed self especially is disidentified with its petty mortal host. Identified instead with (for instance) time-binding ontology’s discovery of itself as

the living creative essence of the evolving world. Some will call this mysticism, even as they idolize the physicists and biologists who revolutionize the world before our eyes, and not like the philosopher, before our intellects. *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.* A little joke I enjoy at the expense of those who worship the practical and wrap this worship up in pseudo-profound anti-philosophy.

Ontology, as Heidegger saw, is uncanny. The atomic self with a private language in an isolated bubble, equipped with Matter that enables eternal truth-as-correspondence is surprisingly comforting. A flight from autonomous world-creation. This is not to say that poiesis is unconstrained. I return to my beginning.

The “meaning” of *logos* is the phenomenon laid open for the phenomenological gaze. Language, therefore, is not a closed system of signs, but transcendence towards the world. On the other side, the phenomenological gaze needs words or sentences to be guided toward the phenomenon.