

A great passage from an early Heidegger lecture:

What is immediately given! Every word here is significant. What does 'immediate' mean? The lectern is given to me immediately in the lived experience of it. I see it as such, I do not see sensations and sense data. I am not conscious of sensations at all. Yet I still see brown, the brown colour. But I do not see it as a sensation of brown, as a moment of my psychic processes. I see something brown, but in a unified context of signification in connection with the lectern. But I can still disregard everything that belongs to the lectern, I can brush away everything until I arrive at the simple sensation of brown, and I can make this itself into an object. It then shows itself as something primarily given. It is indisputable that I can do this.

Only I ask myself: what does 'given' mean here? Do I experience this datum 'brown' as a moment of sensation in the same way as I do the lectern? Does it 'world' in the brown as such, apprehended as a datum? Does my historical 'I' resonate in this apprehension? Evidently not. And what does immediately given mean? To be sure, I do not need to derive it subsequently like an extraworldly cause; the sensation is itself there, but only in so far as I destroy what environmentally surrounds it, in so far as I remove, bracket and disregard my historical 'I'

and simply practice theory, in so far as I remain primarily in the theoretical attitude. This primary character is only what it is when I practice theory, when the theoretical attitude is in effect, which itself is possible only as a destruction of the environmental experience. This datum is conceived as a psychic datum which is caused, as an object, albeit one which does not belong to the external world but is within me. Where within? In my consciousness? Is this something spatial? But the external world is spatial, the realist will answer, and it is my scientific task to investigate the way in which something psychical can know the space of the external world, the way in which the sensations of various sense organs work together, from external causes, to bring about a perception of space.

But presupposing that realism could solve all these (to some degree paradoxically posed) problems, would that in any way amount to an explanation and justification of environmental experience, even if only a moment out of it were 'explained'? Let us illustrate this from the moment of spatial perception, an environmental perception. In the course of a hike through the woods I come for the first time to Freiburg and ask, upon entering the city, 'Which is the shortest way to the cathedral?' This spatial orientation has nothing to do with geometrical orientation as such. The distance to the cathedral is not a quantitative interval; proximity and distance are not a 'how much' ; the

most convenient and shortest way is also not something quantitative, not merely extension as such. Analogue to the time-phenomenon. In other words: these meaningful phenomena of environmental experience cannot be explained by destroying their essential character, by denying their real meaning in order to advance a theory. Explanation through dismemberment, i.e. destruction: one wants to explain something which one no longer has as such, which one cannot and will not recognize as such in its validity.