

Let's focus first on the human situation. At the center of every streaming of the world, there's a person. It's as if this streaming of the world is the stream of their experience. The default representational ontology of course interprets this neutral phenomenal stream as a stream of phenomenal *consciousness*. This goes back to Descartes, at least, but it's implied by Democritus. Somehow “atoms and void” cause “consciousness” or “sensation.”

Blouin asserts that ontological phenomenism is essentially immaterialism, the rejection of “atoms and void” stuff “behind” consciousness. He writes this in an essay about Husserl, as part of the goal of presenting Husserl as an ontological phenomenist. Which is fine. But Husserl's own use of “consciousness” — probably necessary at the time — is likely to confuse. Because (ontological) phenomenism rejects “consciousness” in the same way and for the same reason it rejects “matter” (whatever is supposed to play the role of “atoms and void.”)

So I'd say that phenomenism is essentially *antirepresentationalism*. The phenomenal stream is not, as in subjective idealism, consciousness freed from the delusion of something beyond it. Instead we end up with might be called “subjectlike substance,” but it is not independent of the (rest of the) world. Indeed, such streams, taken together, *constitute* the world.

As discussed elsewhere, entities are “shattered” into “moments.” The moments of the same entity are scattered over a plurality of streams. And over time itself. The entity endures through time because we synthesize these moments. Let me remind the reader that I use/used aspects, a visual kind of moment, to lead up to the more general term “moment.” Because the “aspect” metaphor is a good “disposable ladder” to the more abstract notion of moment.

We see the aspects of a spatial object *as* its aspects. Mach writes about his same writing desk looking different at different times. The light changes. The desk gets stained. But it’s the same desk. But Mach doesn’t expand on what’s involved in this sameness of the same desk. He doesn’t notice or discuss what it means for us all to be in a language together, to share in the same way of synthesizing moments into entities.

I like the software metaphor for this. Wittgenstein talk about “forms of life.” He sees that logic is the essence of the world — what Heidegger describes as its immediate significance. The point is that the world is “immediately” given in terms of entities. We find ourselves in a world of tools that we know how to use. Screwdrivers, faucets, and doorknobs. We usually just take the aspect to *be* the object. We have to intend the aspect *as such* or “thematize” it in order to realize that the screwdriver is (also) the logical synthesis of its aspects or moments.

In hand, being used, it has a different kind of being. But this essay leaves most of Heidegger's brilliant insights in the background. My goal is to help others see the *phenomenalistic basis* of phenomenology. That involves the "destruction" of representationalism. I have to make this default indirect realism "visible" to the people constrained by it. It is so relentlessly *taken for granted* that it's not, for most, a conscious or considered ontological position. Then I have to show why it's absurd and it was nevertheless tempting in the first place. How did philosophers fall into such confusion? They misread an important clue and took a wrong term. That is where the "aspect" metaphor comes in.

### 3

We can talk to one another because we run "idiolects" of the same software. We can participate in scientific rationality because we share certain logical and semantic norms. To argue for anything as a rational person is to presuppose the "forum" necessary for such an argument to make sense or have force. We have to share a situation. Without a shared situation (a shared world), discussion is pointless. And of course impossible. My words have to be in your world and yours in mind. And we have to be talking about the same thing in order to agree or disagree about it.

Many philosophers haven't noticed this "background." They take the foreground (the thesis they want to assert) for granted. But the foreground depends on the background to make any sense. I've used "forum"

and “background.” We can also use “horizon” as a metaphor for background. We end up with an ontological forum or an ontological horizon. The “forum” metaphor emphasizes its participants. The rational tradition is both cooperative and adversarial. We are rivals and yet friends, because the criticism and synthesis of current beliefs leads (we hope) to yet better beliefs. And so on.

This ontological forum is ontology’s “necessary” object. The mere existence of ontology implies the conditions for its possibility. This is a strong anti-skeptical point. We can safely rule out theories that imply the impossibility of theory. For instance, it’s absurd to seek a proof for the “external world.” Because the idea of proof invokes norms that transcend the person who might nevertheless argue that he is trapped in a bubble of representation. There’s no reason to *want* a proof of the external world unless one already takes the forum for granted. This forum is the “essence” of the “external world.”

One aspect of the forum is our sharing in a language (logic in the broad sense.) This is one way to understand “being with others” as discussed in Heidegger. As a person, and not “just” an animal, I am especially inherited software. Such software is fundamentally sharable or “impersonal.” I “live out” these inherited norms, which I pass on and absorb through my interactions with others. Even as the last survivor of global nuclear war, I am still “being with others” in the sense of being this social software. Mach powerfully anticipates Heidegger on this point.

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.

The ego or person is one more entity that endures through time as the synthesis of its moments. Successful scientific ideas are “copied” into the “software” of others. Idiolects of this software constantly update themselves and others in this way. The person is, among other things, an organized set of beliefs, held to the norms described so brilliantly by Robert Brandom.

Feuerbach is another first-rank thinker of this issue. Personal vanity demands a personal immortality. But personal immortality is pointless for those who grasp that personal development is a depersonalization. Here’s Mach again:

This content, and not the ego, is the principal thing. This content, however, is not confined to the individual. With the exception of some insignificant and valueless personal memories, it remains presented in others even after the death of the individual. The elements that

make up the consciousness of a given individual are firmly connected with one another, but with those of another individual they are only feebly connected, and the connexion is only casually apparent. Contents of consciousness, however, that are of universal significance, break through these limits of the individual, and, attached of course to individuals again, can enjoy a continued existence of an impersonal, superpersonal kind, independently of the personality by means of which they were developed. To contribute to this is the greatest happiness of the artist, the scientist, the inventor, the social reformer, etc.

4

I've said that the phenomenal stream is "subjectlike substance." In the previous section, I hope I've shown that this subject is (largely anyway) an "idiolect" of the "tribal software." The thing that says "I" is primarily a "we" in that it has inherited the logical norms it needs to *mean* "I." When I speak to you, the operating system is speaking to itself. Each idiolect is relatively complete. It can function in a person alone in the woods. And, as mentioned above, the forum-as-rational-tradition implies an adversarial style of cooperation. Brandom writes about this so well that I'll refer readers there for more detail.

So each phenomenal stream is structured by the beliefs of the person at its center. Wittgenstein expresses this in the TLP. This is a key point of the "ontological

phenomenalism” that “comes with” the perspectival phenomenism I’m presenting. The redundancy theory of truth “falls out of” such perspectivism. And we find that too in the young Wittgenstein.

These phenomenal streams are also “substance” in the sense that together they constitute the world. Each stream is a streaming *of* the world. A located or perspectival streaming. Each stream is an “aspect” of the world. A strange, streaming aspect. “Aspects of the One.”

In the old language, we might say that the world is exactly all the streams of experience of sentient organisms. And this isn’t wrong, but “experience” suggest an experiencer who is “outside of” the experience. Which we do not have in this case. The person is one more entity, as in Mach, albeit an especially important one. The center of this or that stream. But to identify the stream and the person results in confusion. The person’s own being is scattered over many streams. I, as an entity that can be seen and discussed, am not just an entity for myself. And “my” stream includes moments of other persons.

The point is that there is no official or real world behind all of these person-centered belief-structured “aspects” or “streamings” of that world. The entities of the world are scattered through these streams and beliefs. A stream is not simply a string of aspects. It is an unrolling “contexture” in which such moments or aspects are embedded. I refer readers to Husserl or Heidegger for an emphasis of the richness of this

lifeworld.

We don't have "things in themselves" in a single "true" material-spatial configuration that *cause* a plurality of aspects. We have only our shared software (our logic) that allows us to synthesis the moments of objects. The entity is the logical-temporal-interpersonal synthesis of its moments. The world is the synthesis of its person-centered streamings. Entities are shattered in one way. The world in another. The aspect metaphor is used twice. This key unlocks phenomenalism.