

PERSPECTIVISM (30 SEP 24)

1

1. Consciousness is not a ghost-like stuff that exists “beside” and somehow “emerged from” a non-ghost-like stuff. It is instead the “first-personal” streaming or the perspectival “presence” of the world.
2. “Physical” things are part of this streaming of The-world-from-a-perspective. “Consciousness” is (includes) the “presence” of “physical” things.
3. In other words, consciousness is The-world-from-a-perspective.

2

Joe’s “consciousness” is (the being of) Our-world-from-Joe’s-perspective.

Joe’s “consciousness” is a “time-like” “streaming” of Our-world-from-Joe’s-perspective.

Joe is not his “consciousness.” Joe is another thing in the world. Joe appears not only in “his” “consciousness” but also ours. Joe (his living talking body) can be perceptually present in Our-world-from-my-perspective and/or in Our-world-from-your-perspective and so on.

Yet Joe’s streaming of our shared world — his “consciousness” — is largely a function of the position in

time and space of Joe's eyes, ears, and so on. The ordinary "physical" objects that are perceptually present in Our-world-from-Joe's perspective are always near Joe's eyes, ears, nose, skin, etc.

3

Joe does not generally experience these perceptually present "physical" objects as "internal." He may occasionally decide that he "hallucinated" — that something perceptually present for him was not also perceptually "available" for others. But even then the hallucinations are "out there." Just "not really" in the sense of "just for me."

Our-world-from-Joe's-perspective includes daydreams, an interior monologue, etc. These entities are present (for Joe) but not perceptually present.

We tend to call entities "real" or "physical" when they are reliably perceptually present to anyone whose sense-organs are close to these entities in time and space.

Such entities remain perceptually available even if Joe dies. Their existence does not depend on Joe in particular. We understand the existence of "physical" objects to depend on no *particular* "consciousness" or "first-personal streaming of the world."

4

How should we understand this at least *relative* independence of “physical” objects from any particular “consciousness” ?

“Physical” objects are declared “real” because they are reliably perceptually present for those who are near them, with the appropriate functioning sense organs, in time and space.

In other words, “physical” objects are those which are potentially perceptually present to anyone who happens to be around.

The meaning of “physical” depends on no particular “consciousness” but rather on perceptual presence *in general*.

If you *assume* that “consciousness” is a non-physical *stuff*, this last claim might sound like subjective idealism. The points made so far might be misunderstood to say this : “Physical” things are “really” “made of” “non-physical” “consciousness” stuff.

5

Perspectivism is *less* idealistic, however, than the indirect realism it challenges. For perspectivism, “consciousness” is not a subjective “dream” but rather a *perspectival* streaming of the world itself. The perspectival character of perceptual presence is misinterpreted by subjective idealism to imply the existence of a metaphysical subject.

Indirect realism accepts some version of the metaphysical subject, calling it “consciousness,” and understanding it to be representational. This “consciousness” is populated with private mental images of things. These images are not the things themselves.

Perspectivism is closer to naive realism than it is to subjective idealism : What is called “consciousness” is just a perspectival streaming of the actual being-as-presence of “physical” objects.

6

Physical objects show different “sides” of themselves over time and to different people. Perceptual presence is also conceptually organized. I perceive a chair, not a meaningless arrangement of colors.

Typically I perceive that chair as also perceivable by others. The chair will be differently perceptually present for others whose eyes, for instance, are farther away from the chair than my own.

We are able to intend or refer to the same chair as an enduring interpersonal possibility of perceptual presence. We can also reason about the chair. We can put on our physics hat and think of the chair as an arrangement of molecules.

We can talk about the chair with those for whom it is never perceptually present. For them it is only “intentionally” or “logically” or “semantically” present. They understand it of course to be potentially perceptually present, for this is the meaning of a “physical”

object.

The “substance” of an entity is “logical.” We can imagine conversing with rational Xenonians from another galaxy with very different sense organs. They are able to speak English with us through technology we don’t understand. We become convinced that humans and Xenonians are able to intend and discuss the same objects. We don’t know or need to know how exactly such physical entities are perceptually present for them.

In the same way, a person born blind can understand that an apple is perceptually present for a sighted person in the same room. The person with sight could direct the blind person to the apple. For the blind person, a “logical-intentional” apple was initially present, and finally that same “logical-intentional” apple becomes perceptually *as well as* semantically present. The blind person doesn’t need to understand how that silent-apple-at-distance was perceptually present for the sighted person.

7

If there is an “apple in itself,” it is perhaps the “logical-intentional” “core” of that apple. We can imagine a sci-fi scenario of thousands of intelligent lifeforms with very different sense organs, all able to understand that apple as potentially perceptually present for others, though perceptually present in different ways that can only be guessed at, if even that.

What matters is that they are talking about the same

thing, the same apple. All these intergalactic varieties of possible perceptual presence are organized and unified “logically.” The “logical core” of this apple “transcends” any *particular* variety of perceptual presence. The apple would not be a “physical” object, however, if it transcended not only all actual but also all possible perceptual presence.

Perhaps this “logical transcendence” tends to be misunderstood to involve a kind of “substrate Stuff.” This “substrate Stuff” is understood to be outside of and other than a “consciousness stuff.” The “truly physical” is put completely beyond perceptual presence. Then perceptual presence is no longer part of the being of the physical thing but only a state of the “consciousness stuff.”