

## 1

The “hard problem of consciousness” is the hard problem of *being* — of the world’s presence.

Because this presence of the world is “first-personal”, it tends to be misunderstood as a kind of present but elusive *stuff*. The “electric meat” of the brain somehow generates this “consciousness” stuff. The brain itself is understood to have an unproblematic kind of “physical” being.

What both sides miss is that so-called “consciousness” is simply the *presence* of the world, its “thereness.” This includes the “thereness” or “presence” of the brain.

## 2

My point is *not* that “all is consciousness.” I’m even denying that consciousness is a useful concept in its usual role. There is only the world, but always from this or that perspective. I said “only the world,” but I do *not* mean only the so-called “physical.”

I’m saying (approximately) that the world is “made of” (perspectival) “experience.” But “perspectival” is meant to account for the “subjective” factor, so that “experience” is a synonym here for “world” rather than “consciousness.”

Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* is a literary presentation of this “ontological cubism.” There is no “world-in-itself” or world from no perspective or True World.

But there *is* a scientific tradition that tries to get relatively “objective” beliefs. “Objective” means unbiased. We can’t have beliefs-from-no-perspective, but we can have beliefs that we have exposed to criticism. We can continually try to improve the system of all of our beliefs. Through teamwork. We can enlarge or enhance our personal perspective, our personal understanding of the world.

### 3

What I’m presenting can be called either perspectivism or phenomenalism. Two names for the same idea. This idea is often mistaken for subjective idealism by those who don’t appreciate how thoroughly social and linked we are through the logic we share.

For perspectivism, what is often called “consciousness” by others is just the streaming of the world from a perspective. The “stream” is not mental or physical. It includes entities that get categorized in various ways. But the stream itself is just the being or presence of the world. This presence is “perspectival.”

Perspectivism can also be expressed in terms of the deflationary approach to truth. In short, we only have belief. Truth is not some property that claims do or do not have. Instead the word “true” is just a handy way to discuss beliefs.

Share beliefs get “reified” into a “truth stuff” that proves to be empty upon close examination. I can be very confident in my belief. I can swear that it is

“true.” I can say that my belief is “made true” by something out there in the world. But my belief is *already* a claim about something “out there” in an interpersonal sense. “It is true that it is raining” boils down to “it is raining.”

“Inflated” notions of truth probably result from the fuzzy belief in a world-from-no-perspective. In this default representational framework, my claim is made true (or false) by “true reality” or “the-world-from-no-perspective.”

This is an anti-empirical way of thinking. While such a fuzzy belief is harmless and maybe even useful in practical life, it leads to confusion. For instance, the “hard problem” of “consciousness” is based on the unwarranted assumption of dualism. People tend to take the division of the world into a ghostlike “consciousness” stuff and an aperspectival really real stuff for granted.

Although confusion and mystery results, the dualist assumption is not usually questioned.

4

Why do people find this dualism so (initially) plausible? Maybe because some of their experience seems shared, while some of it doesn't seem shared.

I sometimes recategorize a perception as a hallucination, perhaps because what was phenomenally present didn't make sense in the context. Or because I talked

to others and it was not phenomenally present for them.<sup>1</sup>

I learn that not everything that is phenomenally present is “real” in the sense of also-present-for-others. Typically what is also-present-for-others is what practically matters too. So the “real” is also-for-others and what-practically-matters.

This is an innocent pre-philosophical dualism. The world from my perspective is just categorized into things that are only-for-me and another kind of “real” thing that is also-for-others.

But I can talk about my hallucinations and toothaches with others. So “unreal” just-for-me things are also-for-others in a logical-intentional sense. They just aren’t “directly” or “perceptually” present for others.

I can also hypothesize about what might become present. An empirical claim is like this. I predict, for instance, a state of affairs that will be not just-for-me but also-for-others. But that claim is only empirical because it discusses perceptual presence, never a useless reality-from-no-perspective.

## 5

Then philosophers sneak in and postulate a Stuff that is behind all perceptual presence, “causing” that perceptual presence. Even though such a projection of causality makes no sense, given the absence in prin-

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<sup>1</sup>This familiar recategorization should already make us skeptical about some grand ontological distinction between “Mind” and “Matter.”

ciple of the “cause.” We can’t even *correlate* the sometimes present and the absent-by-definition.

All of the sudden *all* perceptual presence is transformed into a now-mysterious consciousness stuff. All we know or are is Mind. But the brain that is supposed to do this is of course part of the very “experience” it is supposed to create.

## 6

Phenomenalism (perspectivism) is an empirical philosophy. Even if all we have are revisable beliefs and never truths, some beliefs are better than others.

Let me emphasize that such perspectivism is itself a belief. It’s not present (in a self-contradictory way) as The Truth. It’s presented as an explication of our basic human situation that is more coherent and elucidating than various alternatives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>More detailed presentations of “aspect phenomenalism” are available in my other papers.