

### LA 3 Being and Objectivity

1 Last night and the night before I was attempting too briefly, too sketchily, too allusively, to draw you back from objects, from being ~~a~~ as object, to preconceptual activities and to the subject of those activities.

In particular, it was only in answer to a question that I had anything to say about judgement - which is a large and difficult matter of prime importance.

But if in three short lectures I am unable to give adequate answers, still the really significant step in philosophy always is finding out for oneself; and the finding out, basically, as I have been urging, is primarily a return to oneself.

One wants to know the grounds of certitude, one wants to know just how the unconditioned is reached; one is given explanations, and they raise further questions, ~~mm~~ and one remains unsatisfied.

But the basic point is precisely that being unsatisfied; for that being unsatisfied reveals the subject in his rational consciousness, in the exigence of his spiritual luminous being for sufficient reason, sufficient evidence, before he can assent agree affirm.

2 In the measure that each of you is certain that he is a subject, an empirically, intelligently, rationally, responsible subject, in that measure he is aware of the notion of being

inevitably the subject awakes to be present to himself and to have sensible objects present to him

intelligently he goes beyond the given to ask what and why and how

rationally he goes beyond his answers to these questions to ask whether his thoughts correspond to what really is so

that intelligent and rational going beyond, that intelligent and rational direction and exigence of the operations performed in going beyond, in insight and conception, in weighing the evidence and judging is the notion of being

by a notion, then, I mean first of all a tendency and exigence: in this respect the notion of being is like the tendency, weight, of heavy objects to fall or, like the tendency, elasticity, of a spring to snap back when released.

but the notion of being is unlike the weight or spring: it is not just a tendency but a conscious tendency; it pertains not to the opaque realm of substance but to the luminous realm of consciousness; it is more like hunger or thirst which not only tend to food and drink but tend consciously, tend from the unease of privation to the satisfaction of attainment

still the notion of being is unlike hunger or thirst, for while it tends and tends consciously, still that conscious tendency is spiritual

hunger is one's own hunger, thirst is one's own thirst, and their satisfaction is my particular good

but the tendency and exigence of intelligent and rational consciousness is detached, dispassionate, disinterested -- it does not aim at the satisfaction of my understanding or at the security of my certitude -- its aim is transcendent -- it would know just what is so whether I like it or not

3 We must enumerate a few more of the properties of the notion, that is a tendency and an exigence.

First, then, it is not the same as the formulated question, the question that is put in words.

The question differs from the tendency, the intention, in two manners

for it objectifies the tendency; it reveals and shows and exhibits by way of a verbal expression what the tendency is; the tendency or intention is prior; it is what is there to be expressed before it is expressed; it is what promotes my consciousness from the level of experience to the level of intelligent inquiry and investigation, and again what promotes my consciousness from the level of intelligence to the level of rational reflection, weighing the evidence, judging.

further the question expresses, not the tendency alone, but the tendency as applied -- I do not just ask -- I ask about something -- but prior to the application of the tendency to this or that set of data, to this or that thought or hypothesis or theory, there is the basic exigence, drive, desire that is constitutive of my consciousness in its intelligence and rationality

Secondly, this exigence, drive, desire is a priori

By that expression is meant that inquiry and reflection are just the opposite of seeing, perceiving, intuiting

To inquire is not to know but to desire to know; it is not to see or perceive or intuit what is there, but to go beyond whatever happens to be seen or perceived, to proceed from the known or given to the unknown that one desires to know

Questions, ~~unbiased~~ honest and sincere questions,

Questions, spontaneous as opposed to the artificial questions of examiners, exhibit ~~andymantumtandantum~~ not what we know but what we do not know, what we are trying to find out

Thirdly, this exigence, drive, desire, that I have named the notion of being, is not on the side of the object but on the side of the subject

it is not what is intended but the intending

not pensee pensee but pensee pensante (Blondel)

not noema but noesis (Husserl)

not intention intenta but intentio intendens (partly Aquin)

Fourthly, this intending being is unrestricted.

The beings that are intended, thought about, known by us, are a restricted field. We do not know  $\pi$ , we do not think, of absolutely everything.

But intending is unrestricted. Though we cannot answer all questions, still there are no questions that we cannot at least ask.

One might doubt this. One might urge that perhaps there is something so alien to our make up, so exotic, so radically different from anything we can conceive, that our notion, our intending of being does not include it. It is totally other.

Plainly, what is totally other, by definition is beyond our powers of conception.

But no less plainly this doubt, which we are actually considering, reveals that we can ask questions about the totally other; the very existence of the doubt is the proof that our intending of being is unrestr-

## 4 I have been describing the notion of being

I have said it is a tendency, an exigence, yet not unconscious as is the tendency of a weight or a spring, not sensitively conscious as is the tendency of hunger or thirst, but intelligently and rationally conscious and so dispassionate disinterested detached transcendent.

I have pointed out that this tendency is constitutive of our human consciousness, the dynamic principle that moves us from merely empirical to intellectual consciousness and from intellectual to rational consciousness, and not only moves from lower to higher levels of consciousness but also directs operations on those higher levels so that we think intelligently and judge rationally.

I have said that this tendency is a priori, that it is unrestricted; and I may add that it is concrete: questioning not only probes the universe as a whole but also every aspect of every part of it. As we intend being without knowing it, so we intend the concrete without knowing all there is to be known about each or any concrete thing.

I am speaking, then, not of some concept in your minds, not of some judgement with which you agree, not of some proposition or set of propositions you may utter, but of the basic dynamic factor that concretely and actually exists in each of us.

There is of course a concept of being, but it is being as intended; there ~~is~~ is knowledge of being, but it is being as experienced understood affirmed. But prior to being as intended or affirmed, there is the intending of being, and that is what I mean by the notion of being.

## 5 My topic is not only the notion of being but also the objectivity of our knowing

What is objectivity? To say that knowledge is objective is to say that it is knowledge of reality, that it is intrinsically related to the real.

This intrinsic relation of our knowing to reality is the intentionality of our knowing.

Nor is difficult to discover in ourselves this intentionality for, in fact, it is the notion of being that we have been describing.

Our asking questions is intending being: what is it, why is it so, is it really that, is that really the reason why it is so?

As our questions intend being, so too do our answers, for they are answers to the questions we have asked.

Immediately then our cognitional activities are related to objects, to being, by questions; mediatedly our ~~answers~~, because they are answers to questions, are related to being, to objects.

At this point I momentarily digress: I wish you to note at once the basic difference between Kant's position and my own.

For Kant our cognitional activities are related immediately to objects by Anschauung, by intuition; the categories of understanding are only mediately related to objects, and the ideas of reason are related to objects only by a double mediation; of themselves they have no relation to objects; of themselves they are purely immanent, mere thinking, without any relation to reality.

On the position I have been outlining, the immediate relation to objects, reality, lies in questioning; and behind this difference

there lies another and graver difference -- there is a profound difference between what I mean and what Kant implies a real object to be.

However, we have been digressing. To this point we shall return presently. Now we must pursue ~~xx~~ further the notion of objectivity in human knowing.

6 Besides the immediate objectivity of the intending of being, of questions, there also is the mediated objectivity of answers

By our questions we intend being, but by our answers we do not always affirm what is and deny what is not; we can make mistakes to affirm what is not and to deny what is.

What then is the objectivity proper to answers?

This question has been answered in different manners.

Empiricists stress the factor of experience: our answers are objective because of data actually given in experience.

Rationalists at the opposite pole stress the element of necessity in judgements: answers are objective ~~when~~ when there is no way of getting around them, when one can reveal the answer to be inevitable, necessary, immediately or mediately evident.

Idealists and relativists stress the element of coherence: we arrive at objective knowing in the measure that what we say hangs together, in the measure that we fully and completely understand, in the measure that there ~~x~~ are no further unexplained data that could upset our position, in the measure that we have reached a system that is comprehensive and complete and thereby excludes the possibility of revision and reversal.

Now I believe that all three answers are partly right and partly wrong, that they are right in what they affirm, and that they are wrong by what they exclude.

My reason is that human knowing is not some single operation but a compound of different operations on different levels.

Because human knowing is a compound, a whole made up of parts, there are different partial properties of objectivity in the different parts.

There is an experiential objectivity that resides in the givenness of data. It is not the whole of objectivity, just as experience is not the whole of knowing. Still it is ~~a~~ a part of the objectivity of human knowing, just as experience is a part of the compound named human knowing. (Is my hand white?)

There is a normative objectivity. It resides in the exigencies of our intelligence and reasonableness. It demands that we inquire and investigate and think and form hypotheses intelligently. It demands that ~~a~~ we reflect and weigh the evidence and judge according to the evidence. This normative objectivity is totally different from the givenness of what we experience, just ~~a~~ as intelligence and reasonableness differ from the experience of sensitive operations and from merely empirical consciousness. (Russell's postulate)

Finally, there is an absolute objectivity that resides in the virtually unconditioned that grounds judgement and is expressed by judgement.

When we reach the unconditioned, we reach what is not conditioned by the subject, what is independent of the subject; we reach not just what seems to us, what we are inclined to think, what perhaps is ~~a~~ so, but what in fact is so and would no less be so even if we never thought of it.

7 I have been presenting an account, a theory, of objectivity.  
I hope I have been clear enough for you to understand what  
I mean

I have said that the objectivity of our knowing is intentionality that this intentionality resides immediately in the intention of being, ~~and~~ that it resides mediately in satisfying the exigences of the intention of being, and that these exigences are satisfied not by a single but by a triple criterion of experiential, normative, and absolute objectivity.

But there remains the question for reflection. Is that what the objectivity of our knowing really is?

The answer to that question depends on what each one thinks<sup>k</sup> the real world to be, and what each one thinks the real world to ~~be~~ depends on his personal ~~is~~ existing.

We have come to the \$64 question. Let us attempt to clarify it.

a There are different opinions about the real world.

There is a world mediated by meaning, a world that is known by asking and answering questions. It is the world of science, literature, philosophy, history, theology. It is also I believe the world of commonsense, for I conceive commonsense as simply another mode of human knowing, another mode less explicit than science but still essentially a matter of experiencing, understanding, and judging.

Now if anyone will grant that the ~~man~~ real world is the world mediated by meaning, the world known or to be known ~~man~~ by asking and answering questions, then he will have no difficulty in accepting the account of objectivity that I have given. For the account I ~~have~~ have given is a justification of the process of ~~an~~ asking and answering questions. I have said that objectivity resides immediately in asking questions and mediately in the experiential normative and absolute elements in answers to questions.

b The trouble with my position is, however, that many are completely and sincerely convinced that the real world is not the world mediated by meaning.

For them, the world mediated by meaning is not the real world at all; it is just an abstraction from the real world; when the meanings are elaborated scientifically, then the world mediated by meaning is not merely an abstraction but, far worse, a merely academic abstraction.

What then is their real world?

It is the world of immediacy. It is first of all the world into which we were born; it is the world in which we lived until we were able to speak; it is the world on which we had to rely until we ~~a~~ reached the age of reason and were able to make at least some elementary judgements; it is the world of immediate experience, the outer world of sense and the inner world of consciousness; it is the world in which we live and the world that is invaded and enlarged by the tremendous experience of falling in love. That is human reality, and the world mediated by meaning is only its pale, ineffectual, bloodless, empty extension.

c ~~Now I believe this antithesis between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning to be genuine; it is in this antithesis that I should place the root of the philosophic critical problem.~~  
~~Further, I believe that the transition from reality as the world of immediacy to reality as the world mediated by meaning is the critical moment in the business we all have to go through of growing up, of becoming adult, of becoming mature. In other words,~~  
~~and~~

~~philosophy is the essential moment in education, and the great problem is to educate the educators.~~

c I have drawn a sharp antithesis between a world of immediacy and a world mediated by meaning, but I must proceed to note that while objectively there are two alternatives subjectively there are three.

I can hold that reality is purely and simply the world of immediacy, that the world mediated by meaning is nothing but the sum of all worlds of immediacy.

I can hold that reality is purely and simply the world mediated by meaning and that the world of immediacy is just a fragment included in the world mediated by meaning -- because I place knowing in experiencing understanding and judging, I am in no way excluded from acknowledging the reality of living and falling in love -- I can affirm them too, acknowledge them as real by meaning them.

But subjectively there is the third alternative of floating incoherently and indecisively between the two objective alternatives, of being intelligent and reasonable as long as that is convenient

and of always reserving oneself the right to fall back on the world of immediacy as our apprehension of the really real, an apprehension that is unclouded by any necessity of inquiry understanding and thought, of reflection, weighing the evidence, and judging.

That human beings for the most part should remain in the intermediate twilight zone trying to serve two masters and make the best of two worlds is what commonly is called very natural; it's what comes most easily.

But what I wish to suggest to you in your reflections is that the transition from reality as the world of immediacy to reality as the world mediated by meaning is an essential moment in the business we all have of growing up, of becoming adult, of becoming intellectually mature. When I was a child, I thought as a child; now that I am a man, I think as a man.

To this may I add that inasmuch as philosophy is concerned with the student's effecting in himself the elimination of childish notions of reality and the full acceptance of the reality known by experience understanding and reasonable judgement, in that measure philosophy has an essential role to play in education and in helping us all to solve the problems that beset our culture and our civilization.