

**ON THE BASIC DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN
PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC
QUESTIONING**



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2010

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Part 1: the 'as such'

When we ask scientific questions - indeed when we ask questions about anything - whether houses or cars, thoughts or emotions, matter or mind, nature or the cosmos - we imply that they *are*. Yet we do not ask what it means for *anything* that is - any 'being' or 'entity' - to 'be'. We do not ask about the 'beingness' of any being. We do not ask about being *as such*. On the other hand, we would not be in a position to ask 'scientific' questions about the specific nature of things - about *what* they are - without in some way already understanding *that* they are.

That is why the most basic 'philosophical' question asks about the nature of being *as such* rather than particular beings or entities. This basic - 'the question of being' - is no mere invention or plaything of philosophers. For the question only arises because - *for all human beings and not just philosophers* - there is always and already a *pre-philosophical awareness* of being - not simply an awareness of specific beings or entities and *what* they are but an awareness also *that* they are - an awareness of being *as such*.

We take this basic awareness *that* things are *as so obvious* however, that it never occurs to us to speak of it or to question it. Running through all 'scientific' questions about the nature of specific beings or entities is therefore a forgetfulness of an even more basic philosophical question. This is 'The Question of Being', the question of being 'as such', the question of what it means for any being or entity to 'be'.

This most basic question is not artificially *superimposed* by philosophers on the everyday experience of human beings, and nor is it a mere optional 'add on' to the types of questions asked by scientists.

On the contrary, the 'philosophical' question arises out of human being's forgetfulness of a basic *awareness* - the awareness of *being as such*. This forgetfulness is not limited to scientists, but is a feature also of many philosophers and their philosophies. Indeed it has become part of our nature as *human beings* to forget this basic awareness of *being* - the awareness *that* we are. Yet it is precisely

this awareness *that* we are that is the *pre-condition* for any questions - philosophical or scientific - regarding *what* or *who* we are, our 'nature' as *beings*.

This most *basic awareness of being* is fundamental not only to our own being but to *all* beings or entities we experience. For it would not be possible to experience or speak of any being or entity - or to ask any questions about *what* they are - without a prior and more basic awareness *that* they are - the *awareness of being as such*.

The awareness of *being as such* is quite distinct from the awareness of particular beings and their qualities. The awareness of *particular* beings arises from an 'experience' of their particular nature and qualities. The awareness of being *as such* on the other hand transcends the particularity of all beings. This awareness must therefore be regarded as more basic than any 'experience' of particular beings, and more basic *also* than any scientific questions concerning their nature.

Without these basic *philosophical* distinctions - the distinction between Being (being as such) and beings, the distinction between the awareness *that* something 'is' and the 'experience' of its particular nature - all *scientific* questions and all scientific *explanations* of the nature of things are forced down a blind alley - including questions and explanations about how things first *come to be*. The blind alley is the attempt to question and explain the nature and origins of beings or entities by reference to *other beings or entities* - the endless search to 'explain one thing in terms of another'. By constantly seeking to explain beings or entities in terms of their relation to other beings or entities however, science persistently *side-steps* the more fundamental question - the philosophical question of what constitutes the *beingness* of *any* being or entity.

This basic *philosophical* question is one that no scientific experiment can - in principle - ever answer. Its only answer lies in the recognition that *neither* specific beings or entities, *nor even* 'Being', 'beingness', or 'being as such' is the most basic or fundamental reality. That most fundamental reality is instead a basic *awareness* of being, an awareness distinct - in principle - from any and all *experiences* of specific

beings. This distinction - in principle - between *awareness* and *experiencing* is central to what I call 'The Awareness Principle'.

This principle recognises that the awareness *that* things are (their *being*) is more fundamental than any experience of *what* they are - their nature or specific qualities as *beings*. This applies also and above all to our own being. For the basis of our own being too, is an *awareness* of being - of being *as such* - and not an 'experience' of our individual natures as *beings*.

Thus far I have explained the deep philosophical reasoning, meaning and truth behind Sri Abhinavagupta's assertion that "the *being* of all things recognised in *awareness* in turn *depends* on awareness."

Yet that assertion has implications far transcending the specific type of *text* in which it occurs, and the specific historic and cultural *context* in which it was made. For it was an assertion made without reference to European thought, without elaborate arguments of the sort presented above - and also well before 'science' as we know it today had begun to develop.

Thus though the assertion expresses a form of revealed and intuitive truth, it was made without awareness of its implications in the context of today's world - a world in which science has effectively replaced philosophy, and in which science seeks answers are sought for countless questions that are not actually true questions - for they are questions of a sort that do not in any way question their own in-built *presuppositions*.

Thus the question of how the universe itself and all things first *came to be* is asked without questioning what it means for *anything* to 'be'. As a result, the question is answered by reference to something that 'was' - the 'Big Bang'. Yet 'was' is but the past tense of 'is' and of the verb 'to be'. To 'explain' the origins of the universe - of all that is or exists, of all beings or entities - without first questioning the nature of *being* as such can only lead down a false alley. Thus it is that scientists came to claim that something - indeed the entire universe - could simply *come to be* at a dateable point in *time*.

In this way science not only ignored the philosophical truth that the being of any and all things is dependent of an *awareness* of being. It also side-stepped another *basic philosophical question* - the question of the relation between *being* and *time*. For just as atheists can validly ask what existed before 'God', how 'God' first came to be - who or what 'created' Him - so can *philosophers* point out the logical circularity and paradox involved in speaking of *time as such* as something 'beginning at a certain point 'in' time.

Time *as such* can have no beginning 'in' time.

Being *as such* can have no beginning in any particular being, entity or event - including the Big Bang.

Last but not least, awareness *as such* cannot have its beginning in anything 'experienced' - in any beings, entities, events or thoughts that there is an awareness *of*. For 'experience' is awareness *of* something, and yet awareness *of* anything logically assumes and presupposes the more fundamental reality of awareness *as such*.

That is why, as Heidegger recognised, the single phrase "as such" - as in 'being as such', 'time as such', 'awareness as such' - is so central and unique to philosophical thinking, in contrast to both scientific and everyday thinking.

Through the single phrase "as such", we are able to recognise, reveal and *question* the hidden assumptions already present in scientific questions, and instead pass on to another, deeper type of questioning - one that asks questions more *basic and fundamental* than those of science.

It is this deeper mode of questioning and the more basic and fundamental questions it gives rise to that distinguishes 'philosophy' from 'science' and from scientific 'questions'.

The 'as such' as foundational philosophy:

Being as such *is not* a being.
Existence as such is not any existing thing.
Space as such is not a thing or things in space.
Time as such is not an event or process in time.
Awareness as such is not any thing we are aware of.
Experiencing as such is not any thing experienced.
Seeing as such is not anything seen or seeable.
Dreaming as such is not any thing that is dreamt.
Redness as such is not any particular red.
Tableness as such is not any particular table.

Similarly:

Being as such *is not reducible to or derivable from* a being or beings.
Existence as such is not reducible to or derivable from any entity or entities.
Space as such is not reducible to or derivable from any things or bodies in space.
Time as such is not reducible to or derivable from any processes or events in time.
Awareness as such is not reducible to or derivable from anything we are aware of.
Experiencing as such is not reducible to or derivable from anything experienced.
Seeing as such is not reducible to or derivable from anything that is seen.
Dreaming as such is not reducible to or derivable from anything dreamt.
Redness as such is not reducible to or derivable from any particular red or red object.
Tableness as such is not reducible to or derivable from any particular table.

In other words:

Being as such *is not a property or product* of particular beings.
Existence as such is not a property or product of any entity or entities.
Space as such is not a property or product of any thing or things in space.
Time as such is not a property or product of any events or processes in time.
Awareness as such is not a property or product of any thing we are aware of.
Experiencing as such is not a property or product of anything experienced.
Seeing as such is not a property or product of anything seeable.
Dreaming as such is not a property or product of anything dreamt.
Redness such is not a property or product of any thing that is red.
Hardness as such is not a property or product of any thing that is hard.
Tableness as such a not a property or product of this or that table.

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Part 2: Heidegger in Burghölzi

How then, do we begin to address and answer philosophical or ‘transcendental’ questions, questions about the nature of things ‘as such’ – whether ‘space’ or ‘time’ as such, ‘light’ or ‘gravity’ as such, ‘mind’ or ‘matter’ as such, ‘soul’ or ‘body’ as such ‘God’ or ‘human beings’ as such?

The first thing we must do is precisely to free ourselves of the preconception that just because *words* ‘exist’ for any of these ‘things’, whether everyday words or specialist scientific terms, there necessarily exist ‘things’ – encapsulated entities or beings - denoted by these words or terms. And yet space as such - like time as such, or light as such - is ‘no-thing’. To seek to inquire about and investigate it as if it were some ‘thing’ is to reduce it to the status of a mere object of scientific investigation and experimentation, and not at all to *think* its essential nature.

Secondly, we must we not fall into the error of thinking that terms such as ‘dreaming as such’ or ‘space as such’ are mere *empty mental abstractions*. For clearly there is a difference between dreaming as a state of consciousness (dreaming ‘as such’) and particular dreams or things we dream of, just as there is also a clear distinction between *particular* spaces – in a room or box for example – and space ‘itself’ or ‘as such’.

Thirdly we should not assume just because dreaming, space and time are such obvious features of our everyday experience, we therefore know what they essentially ‘are’. For one thing there is a question regarding the psycho-physical dualism that opposes the essentially subjective space of our dreams, with what is regarded as the ‘objective’ or ‘physical’ space in waking life.

Like, dreaming, space and time, sickness too, is part of human experience - yet that does no mean that the essential nature of sickness as such has been questioned. Only in recent centuries for example, did medical ‘science’ begin to see the subjective experience of bodily pain, discomfort or dis-ease as ‘caused’ by some objective ‘thing’ such as a virus or as the expression a diagnosable ‘disease’, understood as a thing or entity in itself. Before that time, physicians who ‘diagnosed’ were seen as

quacks. And today we see an ever-greater proliferation of diagnostic labels for new ‘diseases’ or ‘disorders’, all of which are seen as objectifiable things – and yet none of which recognise that *disease as such* is first and foremost no ‘thing’ but a *subjective* experience of somatic or emotional *dis-ease*. The entire medical and health industry therefore, is the application of a specific view of *disease as such* - one which assumes, without further questioning, that diseases have objective *causes* rather than subjective *meanings*. The human body *as such* is understood merely as a biological complex of genetic and neuro-physiological mechanisms rather than as a living *embodiment* and a living biological *language* of the human being - a language rich in expressive and embodied meanings.

Thus the idea of philosophically questioning what it is that constitutes the essence of the body or of disease *as such* is not a form of idle speculation based on an empty abstraction. On the contrary, these examples show just how vital such philosophical questioning is in recognising the *unquestioned* nature of so many current understandings of the “as such”. For these are understandings whose consequences are far from abstract but pervade the entirety of social life, institutions and practices - as well as playing a decisive role in *shaping* both the thinking and everyday experience of individuals. Yet even on a purely theoretical level it is surely notable that though the abstract concept of ‘energy’ is central to all its theories, physicists (much like proponents of ‘energy medicine’) cannot say what energy *as such* essentially is. In contrast, nothing could be *less abstract* and *more fundamental* to our own being and that of all beings than the awareness of *being* as such – the mystery and wonder that anything *is* at all, that there is anything rather than nothing. It was out of a sense of wonder at this primordial mystery that *philosophical* questioning first arose.

Hence the fundamental philosophical question of what it means for anything to ‘be’ in the first place. This question was approached in early Greek philosophy, but quickly obscured by an identification of being ‘as such’ with the mere constant *presence* of beings (things that are) or, in Eastern Buddhist thought, with their perpetual and co-dependent ‘origination’ or ‘arising’. The question of what constitutes that space or light in which things alone things appear to ‘stand out’ or ‘ex-ist’ was quickly occluded in Western thought. Similarly, the question of whence and whereby all

things 'originate' was occluded in Eastern thought by reducing this origination to a mere causal interplay of beings through which they arise and pass away.

Origination or 'becoming' - understood in its *essential sense* - as the 'coming to be' of all things - was thus reduced in *both* Western and Eastern thought to a mere product or interplay of things that *already are* - a type of logical circularity. Thus for centuries no further light was shed on the fundamental questions of *why* anything *is* or exists at all and *what it means* for anything to 'be' - both questions *fundamental* to any understanding of *whence or how* things 'arise' or 'come to be'. Both Eastern and Western thought remained entrapped in 'metaphysics' in the specific sense Heidegger understood it - namely as any philosophy which is essentially 'entitative' - which seeks to derive being 'as such' from a fixed structure or dynamic interrelation of already existing beings or entities of any sort (whether 'atoms', 'gods', 'tattvas', 'gunas', 'particles' of matter or 'quanta' of energy etc). Thus it has come to be that not only the scientific community, but thinkers both Eastern and Western, whether secular-scientific or religious, have long ceased to be able to question the unthought presuppositions of their own terms and propositions - regarding all such deeper questioning as a type of redundant philosophising. All the more important then, that we do indeed begin to understand again the fundamental difference between 'philosophical' and 'scientific' questioning - a difference hitherto *obscured* by the history of *both* Eastern and Western thought. THE decisive start in this direction was made by Martin Heidegger - renowned both for his deep knowledge and explorations of the origins and history of Western thought, and also for his uncanny attunement to traditions of Eastern thought - Zen Buddhism and Taoism in particular.

Like Western thought, neither Buddhist nor Taoist thinking succeeded in explicitly identifying *awareness* (Sanskrit *chit*) as logically prior to, even though inseparable from 'being'. Nor did their *practices* focus clearly and explicitly on the *cultivation* of awareness or recognise its centrality to 'enlightenment'. Finally, neither Buddhist or Taoist thinking come to the explicit recognition of all beings as individualised portions and expressions of a singular, universal and guiding *awareness*. Buddhist posited instead an absolute 'Emptiness' behind the flux of experiencing. Taoism on the other hand offered only a philosophically vague and also highly eclectic mysticism and alchemical science of 'The Way' - albeit understood as THE Way ie.

as ‘the way of things’ *as such* rather than as any particular way or ‘path’. In this sense Taoism retained a spirit of philosophical understanding in contrast to what Heidegger termed ‘metaphysical’ (entitative) understanding. The Sanskrit word *dharma* also meant the ‘way’ or ‘order’ of things as such, and not merely the structures and practices of a particular social or caste order. Awareness itself is indeed always ‘underway’, always in a process of constant manifestation. And if we listen to it in deepest silence, awareness is also constantly ‘pointing the way’, indicating to us the best possible ways to take on our own life path, those most in tune with The Way.

Just as languages are ways of speaking, so are beings also languages – ways of giving expression to different potentialities and capacities of awareness. The understanding of all beings as nothing but the ways taken by individualised portions and expressions of a singular *awareness* is central to what I call ‘The Awareness Principle’. Yet in a lecture that Heidegger gave on September 8, 1959 in the Burghölzli Auditorium of the University of Zürich Psychiatric Clinic, he already spelled out in no uncertain terms a radical new understanding of the human way of existing or being that is very much in tune with The Awareness Principle. He himself called this human way of existing ‘Da-sein’ (literally there-being) and the understanding of it ‘Daseinsanalysis’ (in contrast to ‘psychoanalysis’). What he said at the commencement of his lecture was as follows:

“Human existing in its essential ground is never just an object which is present to hand; it is certainly not a self-contained object. Instead this way of existing consists of ‘pure’, invisible intangible capacities for receiving-perceiving [being aware of] what it encounters and what addresses it. In the perspective of Daseinanalysis, all conventional, objectifying representations of a capsule-like psyche, subject, person, ego or consciousness in psychology must be abandoned in favour of an entirely different understanding. This new view of the basic constitution of human existence may be called ‘Da-sein’... To exist as Da-sein means to hold open a domain through its capacity to receive-perceive the significance of the things that are given to it, and that address it by virtue of its own illuminative openness. Human Da-sein as a domain with the capacity for receiving-perceiving is never merely an object present at hand. On the contrary, it is not something that can be objectified at all under any circumstances.”

Heidegger emphasised that the ‘there’ (*Da*) in the expression *Da-sein* (‘there being’ or ‘being there’) did not refer to presence at a specific location in space, but referred instead to a state of standing ‘outside oneself’ in an open region or domain which he called, quite simply ‘The Open’. This ‘standing outside’ is the essential meaning of the Greek derived terms ‘ec-stasy’ and ‘ex-istence’. For Heidegger the openness of space was but an expression of ‘The Open’ or of ‘Openness’ as such – with its resonance not just of ‘emptiness’ but of being open and of clearing an illuminated space - like a forest clearing - for the awareness he called ‘receiving-perceiving’. That is why Heidegger’s philosophical use of the everyday German word ‘Dasein’, though notoriously difficult to translate into English terms or concepts, could best be understood as a referring to state of ‘being in the open’ or ‘being open’ – with this *openness* of being understood as the very essence of being or ‘ex-isting’ as such.

“How does Dr. R comport himself to the table here? The table shows itself to him through space. Space is also pervious for the appearance of the table. It is open, free. A wall can be put between the observer and the table. Then space is no longer pervious to seeing the table but is open for building a wall. Without its openness a wall could not be built between them.

Therefore the spatiality of this space consists of it being pervious, being open, and its being a free (domain). In contrast the openness itself is not something [purely] spatial. The open, the free, is that which appears and shows itself in its own way. [As human beings] we find and situate ourselves in this openness, but in a different way than the table [itself].

The table is in its own place and not there where Dr. R is seated ... but as a human being Dr. R is situated in his own place on the sofa and he is also simultaneously at the table. ... He is always simultaneously here and there [where the table is].”

[Note: the German word *da* has the double meaning of here *and* there.]

What we see demonstrated in these words of Martin Heidegger and in his whole manner or way of speaking is precisely a *way of thinking* that deftly but deeply transcends those understandings of ‘existence’, ‘being’ and ‘space’ *as such* that

otherwise go unquestioned in ‘scientific’ psychology, with its objectifying concepts of a “capsule like” ‘subject’, ‘psyche’, ‘person’, ‘ego’ or ‘consciousness’ etc. He applied the same manner of thinking and philosophical questioning to medical and biological science as a whole, as well as to many other areas of scientific ‘knowledge’, not least physics itself.

Yet what of the relation between both philosophical and scientific thought and *religious* questioning and experiencing? Here Heidegger was more cautious, though firm in his belief in the need to also clearly distinguish philosophical and religious questions - however closely bound up they might be with one another. On the other hand he provided us with a clue to their relation which The Awareness Principle helps to explicate. For there is indeed *a diversity of ways* in which human beings can and do *experience* both Being and Awareness *as such* – the essence of profound religious experiencing. They do so in and *through* the essential nature of their being - understood as a capacity (Shakti) for “receiving-perceiving” which is not just open to the perception of things such as tables and chairs, but also and above all receptive to wordlessly sensed *meanings* – to that which “addresses” or speaks to them through the experiencing of different beings.

For *experiencing* itself (‘as such’) is a richly differentiated but wordless *language* of pure awareness (Shiva). From this it follows that every experienced being, as a unique portion and expression of that awareness, is also a living ‘word’ spoken by it. Hence the sayings of Martin Heidegger: “Language speaks.” “Language is the house of being.” Through these sayings Heidegger reveals how *language* as such is not, as it is ordinarily understood, a mere tool by which human beings speak and denote the ‘things’ they experience or the ways they understand them. On the contrary, language is the very matrix (Matrika) of experiencing that both *speaks us* as beings and that also *speaks to us* through every thing and being we encounter. It does so through the ‘pure’ and open realm of that capacity for a direct “receiving-perceiving” of *meaning* that Heidegger understood as the very essence of human *being*.

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Part 3: on “the theoretical comportment”

Here, drawing on Martin Heidegger’s 1918 lectures on ‘Philosophy as Primordial Science’ and on ‘Phenomenology as Primordial Pre-theoretical Science’, I seek to show why it is that Heideggerian thinking cannot - *in principle* - be fitted into the frame of scientific ‘biology’ - or indeed any form of *theoretical science or scientific theorising*. According to Heidegger, science is “...to a quite unimaginable degree, through and through dogmatic; dealing with un-thought-through conceptions and preconceptions.” (Zollikon Seminars). For though science assumes itself to be neutral and free of presuppositions, this is in itself a highly questionable presupposition.

The term ‘pre-sup-position’ is rooted in the verb ‘to pose’ or posit’. And in reality the theoretical constructs of the ‘positive’ sciences pose or posit in advance (‘pre-suppose’) the nature of their own object-domains as well the significance of all possible outcomes of scientific experimentation.

The sciences and scientific thinking in general are but one example of what Heidegger called “the theoretical attitude”. This is an attitude which *imposes* its concepts on what is most central to phenomenology – namely the nature of *pre-conceptual* and *pre-theoretical* experiencing. An example of such im-position is the way in which it is simply taken as given – presupposed – that subjective experiencing is something based on primary ‘sense data’, for example a ‘sense datum’ such as the colour brown. In his 1918 lectures, Heidegger thoroughly deconstructs this notion. Referring to the lectern before which he is standing he asks:

“What do ‘I’ see? Brown surfaces, at right angles to one another? No, I see something else. A largish box with another smaller one set upon it. Not at all. I see the lectern at which I am to speak.”

The question here is what, if anything can be said to be “immediately given” in lived, pre-theoretical experiencing:

“*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 ... What does ‘given’ mean? Do I experience this datum ‘brown’ as a moment of

sensation in the same way as I do the lectern? ... Evidently not ... 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."

"It is the general prevalence of the *theoretical* which deforms the true problematic. It is the primacy of the theoretical. In its very approach to the problem, with the isolation of sense data ... the all-determining step into the theoretical has already been taken."

This is the reason why philosophy, understood as *primordial science* - as science that is truly presuppositionless - must be 'phenomenological' science. That is to say it must be grounded in *pre-theoretical* experiencing in a way that, unlike "the theoretical attitude", takes nothing as simply 'given' in that experiencing.

"... in environmental experience there is *no theoretical positing* at all."

"*For environmental experience itself neither makes presuppositions, nor does it let itself be labelled as a presupposition.*"

This applies not only to the theoretically posited or presupposed 'givenness' of sense data as basic 'elements' of experience, but also and not least to theoretical posits such as those imposed by terms such as 'psychical' and 'physical' - and with them the entire, purely *theoretical* debate surrounding the nature of their relation.

"I experience. I experience something in a lived way. When we simply give ourselves over to this experience we know nothing of a ['psychic' or 'physical'] process passing before us. Neither anything psychic nor anything physical is given."

Thus "In the experience of seeing the lectern something is given to me from out of an immediate environment [*Umwelt*]. This environmental milieu (lectern, book, blackboard, notebook, fountain pen, caretaker, student fraternity, tram-car, motor car etc. does not consist of things, objects, which are then conceived as meaning this and this; rather, the meaningful is primary and given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension." [my stress]

"I see something brown, but in a unified context of significance 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."

Yet "When I attempt to explain the environing world theoretically, it collapses upon itself. It does not signify an intensification of experience, or any superior knowledge of the environment, when I attempt its dissolution..." [of environing meaning]

This is but “Explanation through dismemberment, i.e. destruction: one wants to explain something which one no longer has as such, which one cannot and will not recognise as such in its validity.”

“Let us again bring to mind the environmental experience: the lectern. Starting from what is here experienced I proceed to theorise: it is brown; brown is a colour; colour is a genuine sense datum; a sense datum is the result of physical or physiological processes ...”

Heidegger describes the theoretical process (in whatever way and through how many stages or alternate sequences it is presented) as essentially a process of "de-livening" (German *Ent-leben*) of experience.

Like the word *Ent-leben* the German words for ‘an experience’ (*Erlebnis*) or ‘experiencing’ (*erleben*) both derive from the German for life (*Leben*) and living (*leben*). In this sense the term ‘lived experience’ is, in German, an oxymoron – experience being first and foremost something *lived* on a pre-theoretical plane and not an object of theorisation. All the more paradoxical then, that from a set of theoretically posited and separated elements such as sense data, nerve cells, wavelengths of light etc. (all of which constitute a *de-struction* of lived, pre-theoretical experiencing) scientific theory then attempts to *re-construct* the nature of lived experience - indeed to explain or define *life itself* - as a step-by-step construction of those artificially separated elements it has abstracted *from* lived experience, thereby ‘taking the life out of it’.

What then, from the perspective of philosophy as ‘primordial’ or ‘phenomenological’ science, i.e. from out the realm of *pre-theoretical experiencing* - is ‘life’? As the German language indicates, the essence of life (*Leben*) is *experiencing* as such (German *Er-leben*) and thus nothing (no thing and no process) that is merely *experienced* and nothing that can be objectified and explained through the *lifeless* theoretical constructs and the explanations constructed from them. That is why philosophy as Heidegger understood it *can in no way be integrated* into the theoretical sciences or scientific theorising. For philosophy as phenomenology is essentially a primordial, pre-theoretical science of a sort that completely undermines the basic “theoretical attitude” of the sciences. If philosophy is essentially *primordial science* then scientific theorising is a type of *superficial philosophising* - one which remains bound to the “theoretical attitude”.

What is decisively lacking in this attitude is any recognition of the inherent unity of the two senses belonging in the word 'sense', namely 'sense' in the sense of 'the senses' and 'sense data' on the one hand and 'sense' as sensually experienced *meaning* (German *Sinn*) on the other. The environmental world of sensory experiencing in which we dwell is, first and foremost in a world of immediately apprehended and lived *meaning* and no mere collection of objects or assemblage of sense data - this is the message that Heidegger brings to the fore, inspired in part by the revolutionary 'environmental biology' of Jakob von Uexküll¹.

And since *meaning-full experiencing* (*Sinnvolles Er-leben*) is the sensual essence of life (*Leben*) itself, neither 'experiencing' nor 'life' can be reduced to or 'explained' through the theoretical frame of 'biology' as a science.

The essence of biology, is, as Heidegger remarked, nothing 'biological' in the scientific sense. Instead it is quite literally the word (*logos*) of life (*bios*). 'Life' (*bios*) understood as 'word' or *logos* – is essentially a medium of *expression* of meaning or sense - one whose most meaningful and primordial *language* is the language of pre-theoretical *experiencing* as such. Thus to split 'life' or 'experiencing' into theoretical compartments such as 'psychical' and 'physical', 'subjective' and 'objective' dimensions, is to de-liven and do violence to both. And however intellectually sophisticated and 'scientific' the attempts to then theoretically 'unify' these separated compartments and dimensions, it cannot be forgotten that the whole "theoretical attitude" is itself a *lived attitude* and an attitude *towards* life - albeit one characterised by a particularly *lifeless* mode of expression and one divorced from the *lived experiencing* (*Er-leben*) of the scientific theorist. Yet whereas the "theoretical attitude" of science is one which takes as given a set of *already signified senses* of specific words or terms (for example the terms 'psychical' and 'physical') the attitude of phenomenology is one which starts from the *immediately sensed significance* of *pre-theoretical* experiencing in the life of human beings.

Note: Heidegger and Uexküll

1. Heidegger's use of the term "environmental experience" echoes the language of the revolutionary zoologist [Jakob Johann von Uexküll](#) (1864-1944). Uexküll's use of the term 'environment' however, should not be understood in any conventional or contemporary sense. For Uexküll's principle insight was that each organism inhabits its own *unique* sensory 'environment' (German *Umwelt* or 'surrounding world'). This unique environment is not shaped by the organism's sensory apparatus alone but by the *unique meaning or significance* it attaches to different sensory 'cues'. Thus for a tick there is *simply no such thing* in its perceptual environment as a rabbit, rat, cow, sheep or human being. Instead there is simply the smell of mammalian sweat, and the tactile sense of mammalian hair and skin warmth. Whereas for the human animal, 'mammalian' is merely a *generic concept* (signifying a genus of environmentally perceptible sub-species) within the unique sensory environment of the tick 'mammalness' is a dimension of *immediately sensed significance* that allows no environmental distinction of sub-species. It *enacts* this sensed meaning or significance through dropping from a tree onto a mammal, letting itself be guided by its hair towards its skin, and then using heat cues to begin sucking blood - which it neither sees nor tastes. For Uexküll, as for Heidegger, the 'subjectivity' of an organism is not that of a 'subject' or 'I' experiencing an 'objective' environment. Instead it is a subjectivity constituted by its manner of *environmental experiencing* - the environment itself being itself a *subjective space or field of experiencing* and not a set of objects. Uexküll also echoes Heidegger's views on the basic flaw of scientific 'questioning', 'theory' and 'research':

"Research cannot possibly proceed without questions that make assumptions (hypotheses) in which the answer (thesis) is already contained. The ultimate recognition of the answer and the establishment of a knowledge-claim follows as soon as the researcher has found a sufficiently persuasive number of manifestations in nature that he can interpret as positive or negative in terms of the hypothesis. The sole authority on which a knowledge-claim rests is not that of nature, but that of the researcher, who has answered his own questions himself."

Uexküll, 1920

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Part 4: deconstructing 'brain science'

The scientific notion that 'consciousness' or 'perception' can in any way be explained through modern brain science is riddled with basic philosophical and logical contradictions which seem to pose *no question at all* to scientific theoreticians. For whilst no scientist would dream of explaining dream consciousness as the product of some particular thing we happen to *dream of*, they are quite happy to explain consciousness *as such* as the product of some particular thing we are *conscious of* – the human brain as we perceive it in waking life. And whilst it is tacitly understood that all possible things and events that we dream of emerge from and within the overall *subjective field* of our dreaming consciousness, science takes the view that the phenomena we behold in waking life are physical 'objects' separate and independent of the psychical space or field of consciousness in which they appear. Space itself is regarded as a dimension of 'physical' reality, rather than as the spacious *field of awareness* in which alone particular things can stand out ('ex-ist') as distinct phenomena we are conscious of. Light too is regarded as a 'physical' phenomenon, despite the fact that nothing can come to light *as* a 'phenomenon' (the Greek meaning of the word 'phenomenon' being something which shines forth or appears) except through the subjective light of awareness as such. Thus it is that scientific modes of explaining visual perception are, when examined from an elementary philosophical standpoint, entirely circular. For on the one hand visual perception is explained as a product of 'physical' light reflected off 'physical' objects in 'physical' space in such a way as to reach and stimulate retinal nerve receptors in the eye - in a way that is then interpreted or shaped by the brain. On the other hand, the self-same 'physical' objects from which this light is supposedly reflected are understood as subjective 'psychical' phantasms produced by the brain and projected outwards into an imaginary environmental space. Within this model lie two further logical contradictions. Firstly, how can the brain be said to create visual images 'of' things, if the very things 'out there' which are said to be represented *by* these images are themselves essentially nothing *but* images produced and projected 'out there' outward by the brain? (And among such images we include *images* of scientific instruments, scans and supposed measurements of light as mere *quantitative* wavelengths of something conceived of as electro-magnetic 'energy'). Even more fundamentally, brain science brainlessly fails

to acknowledge that the eye and brain themselves are, first and foremost, objects of visual perception – whether perceived directly or through instrumental scans and images. The circularity of brain science therefore lies in seeking to explain visual perception itself and as such by particular objects of visual perception – the eye and brain. Yet just as dreaming cannot be explained by anything we dream of, nor – in principal – can conscious perception, let alone consciousness *as such*, be explained by some particular thing we perceive or are conscious of.

In contrast to the circularities, contradictions and psycho-physical dualisms and parallelisms of brain science, a phenomenological understanding of consciousness and perception can be refined from Uexküll's essentially *subjective* model of environmental perception. All that is required is to add an *inter-subjective* dimension to this model. Then, in place of psycho-physical dualism, parallelism or 'correlation', all so-called 'physical' phenomena can be understood *inter-subjectively* – as external perceptions or 'exteroceptions' of *other consciousnesses*. By 'other consciousnesses' I mean different species-specific *field-patterns of awareness*, each of which shapes a different perceptual 'environment' or *patterned field of awareness*. All exteroception therefore, occurs within a *species-specific* field-pattern of environmental experiencing shaped by a patterned field of awareness specific to a given *species of consciousness*. The term 'species of consciousness' is necessary to avoid confusion with so-called biological species as human beings perceive them. For what human beings perceive as 'a shark', 'a sheep', 'a rock' or 'a tree' is but the exteroception of a non-human species of consciousness – a non-human *field-pattern of awareness* as perceived within the 'environment' or *patterned field of awareness* constituted by our own specifically human *field-pattern of awareness*. In contrast, the way in which a rock, tree, shark, jellyfish dog, cow or sheep experiences its own perceptual 'environment' or *patterned field of awareness* - together with the way it perceives other 'species of consciousness' or *field-patterns of awareness* within this field - is *radically different* from the way in which human beings perceive these other species of consciousness. Indeed even words such 'rock', 'tree', 'shark', 'jellyfish', 'dog', 'cow', 'sheep', 'bird', 'spider' and 'tick' etc. are names for human 'exteroceptions' of these other species of consciousness. Just as for the organism which we perceive as 'a tick' there can, as Uexküll recognised, be no differentiated perception of humanly perceived species such as rats, rabbits, sheep, cows or human beings we perceive them, so is it

true that all species perceive both their own outer form and anatomy and that of different species in radically different ways. Moreover there is the paradox that our perception of brains and sense organs themselves is a species-specific mode of perception. Our perception of sense organs and of the brain itself can be nothing but an external perception or ‘exteroception’ of those *field-patterns of awareness* that constitute our species-specific *mode* of perception - one as *different* from that of other ‘species of consciousness’ as their ‘brains’ or ‘nervous systems’ appear to us. Even terms such as ‘brain’ name a specifically *human* way of perceiving our own and other species’ field-patterns of awareness from without – exteroceptively.

Brain science is a prime example and enactment of what Heidegger called “the theoretical attitude”, an attitude which treats consciousness or subjectivity itself as a *theoretical object* - and then puts itself through theoretical hoops (and lands up in circular loops) in a vain attempt to ‘explain’ consciousness or subjectivity as *a product or correlate of its own perceptual objects* - not least the brain itself. Such is the *philosophical* ‘brainlessness’ of even the most intellectually sophisticated brain ‘science’.

The result of this ‘science’ is that the phenomenological key to understanding the nature of consciousness, perception and environmental experiencing – *intersubjectivity* – is itself ultimately reduced to a mere physical interaction of (exteroceptively) perceived *objects* in the form of anatomical sense organs, nervous systems and brains. The unacknowledged and unaware logical ‘trickery’ employed to do so was duly noted and challenged by Martin Heidegger:

“When it is claimed that brain research is a scientific foundation for our understanding of human beings, the claim implies that the true and real relationship of one human being to another is an interaction of brain processes, and that in brain research itself, nothing else is happening but that one brain is in some way ‘informing’ another. Then, for example, the statue of a god in the Akropolis museum, viewed during the term break, that is to say outside the research work, is in reality and truth nothing but the meeting of a brain process in the observer with the product of a brain process, the statue exhibited. Reassuring us, during the holidays, that this is

not what is really implied, means living with a certain double or triple accounting that clearly doesn't rest easily with the much faulted rigour of science."

Hence Heidegger's claim that:

"Phenomenology is more of a science than natural science is."

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