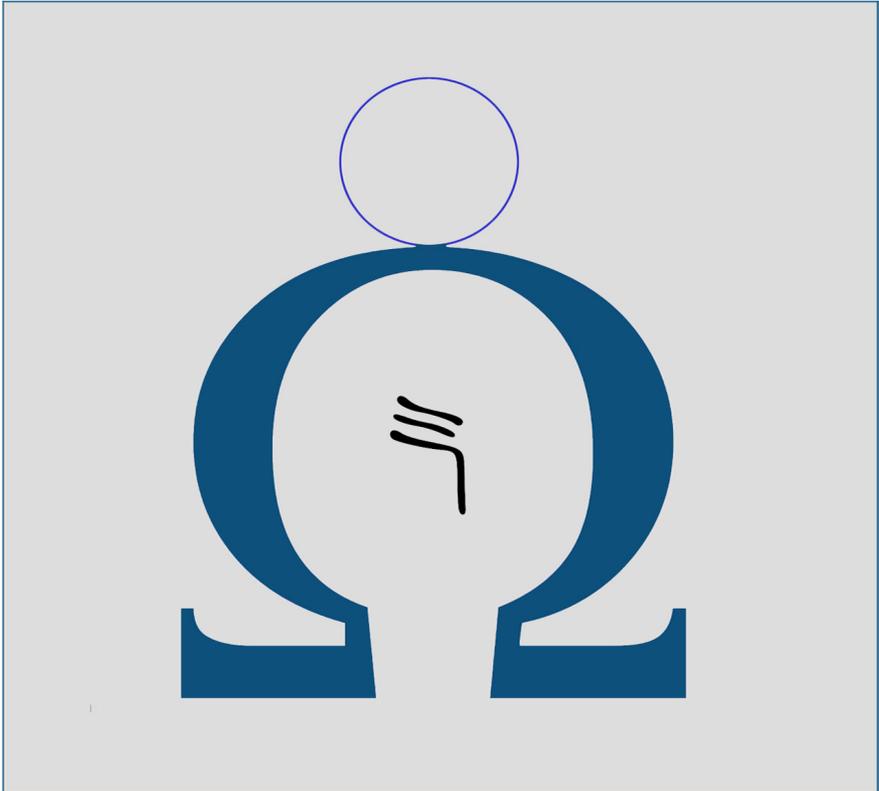
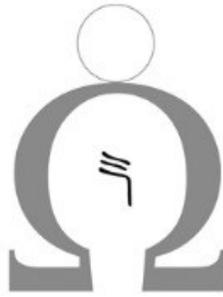


WIM VAN DEN DUNGEN

---



**CRITIQUE of a METAPHYSICS  
of  
PROCESS**



**C**RITIQUE OF A  
**M**ETAPHYSICS OF  
**P**ROCESS

by

Wim van den Dungen

2021

Initially published in 2012 by Wim van den Dungen as *Critique of a Metaphysics of Process* at : [www.maat.sofiatopia.org](http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org)

© 2020 Wim van den Dungen

All Rights Reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form whatsoever without permission from the publisher.

First edition in 2020  
Second edition in 2021

POD Publication  
Published for Taurus Press  
by LULU.com

ISBN : 978-1-67810-151-0  
BISAC : PHI013000  
Philosophy / Metaphysics



TAURUS Press

Be empty, that is all.

Chuang-tzu

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them : the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

Kant, I. : *Critique of Practical Reason*,  
Conclusion.

'Creativity' is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is the ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity.

Whitehead, A.N. : *Process and Reality*, 31.



# Table of Contents

Preface	1
Chapter 1   Metaphysics and Science	5
A. Three Styles	7
1 The Issue of Style	7
2 Deriving Style from Objects	8
3 Imaginal Style	10
4 Creative Unfoldment	15
5 The Style of Process Metaphysics	19
B. Opposition, Reduction, Discordant Truce	19
1 The Axiomatic Base	23
2 Monism, Dualism or Pluralism	26
3 Critical Epistemology	28
4 Conflictual Model	30
5 Reductionist Model	31
6 Metaphysics and Criticism	31
7 Discordant Truce	33
8 The Objectivity of Sensate Objects	35
9 The Subjectivity of Mental Objects	37
10 Direct and Indirect Experience	39
C. Towards a Critical Metaphysics	40
1 Sapience in Kemet	40
2 Particulars of Greek Thought	45
3 Monotheism and Modern Philosophy	49
4 The Fundamental Question : Being or Knowing ?	53
5 Precritical Metaphysics : Being before Knowing	55
6 Critical Metaphysics : Knowing before Being	55
D. Valid Science and Critical Metaphysics	57
1 Transcendental Logic of Cognition	58
2 The Correct Logic of Scientific Discovery	59
3 The Validity of Scientific Knowledge	60
4 The Maxims of Knowledge Production	63
5 Metaphysical Background Information	64

E. Thinking Metaphysical Advancement	66
1 The Mistake of Absolute Relativism	67
2 Logical Advance	68
3 Semantic Advance	69
Chapter 2   Immanent Metaphysics	71
A. The Limit-Concepts of Reason	79
1 Finite Series and the Infinite	79
2 Modern Limit-Concepts : Soul, World, God	80
3 The Copernican Revolution	81
4 The Linguistic Turn	83
5 The Limit-concepts of the Real and the Ideal	84
6 Metaphysical Limitations	85
B. Diversity and Convergence in the World	89
1 Horizontal Variety, Display and the World-Ground	89
2 Vertical Unity, Intelligent Focus and Clear Light*	89
C. Allying Science and Metaphysics	90
1 The Alliance of Form	90
2 The Alliance of Contents	91
3 Empirical Significance and Heuristic Relevance	92
D. Limitations of Speculative Discourse	93
1 Logical Limitations	93
2 Semantic Limitations	93
3 Cognitive Limitations	94
4 Epistemological Limitations	94
Chapter 3   Transcendent Metaphysics	97
A. Jumping Beyond Limit-Concepts	98
1 Epistemological Transgressions	99
2 Ontological Transgressions	101
3 Transgressive Metaphysics	103
4 Deconstruction and the Margin	104

B. Conceptuality and Non-Conceptuality	104
1 Conceptual Thought	105
2 Ante-rational Regressions	106
3 Meta-rational Transgressions	107
4 Direct Experience and Cognitive Nonduality	108
5 The Epistemological Status of Nonduality	110
C. Irrationality versus Poetic Sublimity	111
1 Features of Irrationality	111
2 Transcendence and Art	113
Chapter 4   Ontology	115
A. Defining Ontology without Being	115
1 Place of Ontology in Metaphysics	117
2 Objects of Ontology : What is There ?	118
3 Monist, Dualist and Pluralist Ontologies	121
4 Failures of Materialist and Mentalist Ontologies	122
5 Voidness and Interdependence	123
B. Perennial Ontology ?	125
1 Nun and the Pre-Socratic Ground	126
2 The Logic of Being and the Fact of Becoming	128
3 Greek and Indian Concept-Realism	130
4 The Tao	131
5 The Dharma Difference	133
C. Against Foundation and Substance	134
1 The Definition of Substance	135
2 The Münchhausen Trilemma	136
3 Avoiding Dogmatism and Skepticism	137
D. Conventional Appearance	137
1 What is Truly There ?	138
2 Concepts, Determinations and Conditions	140

3 Valid but Mistaken Appearance	141
4 Appearance, Illusion and the Universal Illusion	143
<b>E. Ultimate Suchness/Thatness</b>	<b>144</b>
1 The Katapathic View on the Ultimate	145
2 The Apophatic View on the Ultimate	146
3 The Non-Affirmative Negation	146
4 Ending Reified Concepts	147
5 The Direct Experience of the Ultimate	148
<b>F. The Ontological Scheme</b>	<b>149</b>
1 Event and Actual Occasion	149
2 Efficient and Final Determinations	151
3 The Three Operators	152
4 Aggregates of Actual Occasions	154
5 Individualized Societies	154
6 Panpsychism versus Panexperientialism	155
7 The God* of Process Ontology	157
<b>Chapter 5   Mental Pliancy</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>A. Definition of Mind</b>	<b>166</b>
1 Awareness, Attention and Cognizing	166
2 Attending Objects of the Mind	171
3 Cognizing Clarity	174
4 The Luminous Clear Ground of the Mind	178
<b>B. The Continuum of the Mindstream</b>	<b>180</b>
1 A Non-Spatial Continuum	181
2 Symmetry and Symmetry-Break	184
3 From Happiness to Peace	186
<b>C. The Non-Physical Domain of the Mind</b>	<b>189</b>
1 Physical and Non-Physical Domains	190
2 Upward Causation	191
3 Downward Causation	192

D. Ego, Self and Selflessness	193
1 Defining the Self	194
2 The Two Foci	194
3 Prehending the Selfless Mindstream	197
E. Closed and Open Minds	198
1 The Logic of Self-Cherishing Affliction	199
2 Ontologizing the Self	201
3 The Closed Entropic Mind	204
4 The Mind of Enlightenment	206
5 The Open Negentropic Mind or Pliant Mind	208
Chapter 6   Conventional Truth	211
A. Conventional Truth : Valid but Mistaken	211
1 The Validation of Knowledge	212
2 The Relevance of Authority	213
3 The Significance of Experimentation	213
4 The Worth of Conventional Truth	214
5 How Conventional Truth Fails	214
6 Substantial Instantiation in Conventional Truth	215
B. The Argument of Illusion	216
1 The Argument from the Senses	217
2 The Argument from the Rational Mind	217
3 The Argument from Speculative Reason	218
4 The Argument from Consciousness	219
Chapter 7   Speculative Thought	221
A. Speculating on the Subject	222
1 The Identity System	222
2 Desubstantializing Identity	223
3 From Ego-Circularity to Bi-Modality	223
4 Selflessness : Clearing the Ontic Self	224
5 The Immortal Nature of the Clear Light* Mind	225

B. Speculating on the Object	226
1 The Object of Creative thought	226
2 Process : Clearing the Ontic World-System	228
<b>Chapter 8   Preparing Ultimate Truth</b>	<b>231</b>
A. Defining Ultimate Truth ?	233
1 Primordial Ground : the Undifferentiated	233
2 Unbounded Wholeness : the Absolute	236
3 Things As They Are : the Non-Deceptive	237
4 The Duality of the Simultaneous	237
B. Conceptual Fallacies	238
1 Against the Ontology of the One Truth	238
2 Against the Ontology of Awakening	239
3 The Case of the Unity of the World-Ground	240
C. Generating the Right View	242
1 Identifying the Culprit	242
2 Eliminating Concepts with Concepts	243
3 Contrived Realization of Full-Emptiness	243
4 Uncontrived Uncovering of the Clear Light*	244
<b>Chapter 9   Ultimate Analysis</b>	<b>245</b>
A. Conventional and Ultimate Analysis	246
1 Conventional Analysis	246
2 Ultimate Analysis	247
3 The Dangers of Ultimate Analysis	248
B. Presuppositions of Ultimate Analysis	249
1 The Rules of Formal Logic	250
2 Identity	250
3 Duality and Negation	251
4 Excluded Third	252

C. The Primitives	252
1 The Logical Operators	253
2 The Quantifiers	253
3 Objects	254
4 Differentiating Object $\exists A$	255
5 The Apprehending Self	258
D. The Six Instantiations	260
1 Instantiation	260
2 Logical Instantiation	262
3 Functional Instantiation	263
4 Conventional Instantiation	265
5 Substantial Instantiation	268
6 Ultimate (or Absolute) Instantiation	270
7 Mere Existential Instantiation	271
E. Process Persons	272
1 Establishing Ontic Identity	273
2 $\exists!S^f$ not Identical with Mind or Body	275
3 $\exists!S^f$ not Different from Mind or Body	275
4 No Ontic Identity Found	276
F. Process Phenomena	276
1 Establishing Ontic Sensate Objects	277
2 $\exists!S_A$ not Identical with its Parts	277
3 $\exists!S_A$ not Different from its Parts	277
4 No Ontic Sensate Object Found	277
G. Conclusions	278
1 Main Problems of Substantiality	279
2 Non-Substantiality	279
3 Dependent Arising and Process	280
4 One Object with Two Epistemic Isolates	280
5 Simultaneity : No Two Worlds, No Two States	281
H. Full-Emptiness	282
1 The Fullness of Earth	282
2 The Emptiness of Heaven	282
3 Pansacralism	283

Chapter 10   Operators of Existence	285
A. The Question of Questions	286
1 Nothingness : Relative and Absolute	287
2 Nothingness : Passive and Active	287
3 Nihilism of the Void	288
4 Active Nothingness : Potentiality and Virtuality	289
B. Operating Something	291
C. Matter : Hardware	294
1 Introducing Matter	294
2 The Quantum Plasma of the World-Ground	297
3 The Beginning of Conventional Spacetime	299
4 Elementary Particles, Fields, and Forces	301
D. Information : Software	303
1 Introducing Information	303
2 Information : Informing and Informed	305
3 Informed Information	307
4 The Matter - Information Bond	308
5 Life as Complexification	309
E. Consciousness : Userware	310
1 Introducing Consciousness	310
2 Meaning and Intent	313
3 Evolutionary Panexperientialism	316
4 Spiritual Features of Consciousness	317
Chapter 11   Special Metaphysics	319
A. The Operator of Matter	321
1 Absolute Space and Absolute Time	323
2 Objective Probabilism	323
3 The Observer Makes Real	323
4 Physical Reality is Non-Local	325
5 Mass and the Higgs Field	326

B. The Operator of Information	331
1 Information as Influence	331
2 Information as Communication	332
3 Information as an Ontological Operator	334
C. The Operator of Consciousness	338
1 Mind in the West	338
2 The Deep Mind	339
3 Mind in Buddhism	349
D. Metaphysical Cosmology	354
1 From Steady-State to Big Bang	356
2 The Expanding Universe	357
3 The Big Evaporation	359
4 The Big Crunch	363
5 The Big Bounce	364
6 Hylic Pluralism	365
7 The Order of the Multiverse	369
E. Metaphysical Theology	373
1 Fundamental Theology	373
2 Demarcations	374
3 Pertinent Definitions	377
4 The Dharma Distinction Again	383
5 The Direct Experience of the Divine	385
6 Visionary and Mystical Consciousness	388
7 The Process God*	390
About the Author	398
Author Biblio	399



# Preface

Metaphysics, like God, is said to have died. Feuerbach, Comte, Nietzsche, and Carnap took care of that ! Sure, with them, *a certain kind* of metaphysics disappeared. They all died. Did the 'God of the philosophers' ?

Metaphysics as science *before* science was unmasked as delusional. The possibility of knowledge and its growth depends on the incontrovertible rules of knowledge (*Regulae*, 2016), not on an ontology dreaming up, to justify the possibility of knowledge, its version of what exists.

Criticism, rooted in neo-Kantianism, insists on the *preliminary study* of the cognitive apparatus, leading to an acute and refined awareness of the limitations of conceptual rationality. Unveiling the mental factor causing 'ontological illusion' (Kant), the substance-obsession of the conventional mind and its 'dream of Being' may cease.

Strict nominalism, advancing that our general concepts are mere names, is the standard of critical epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, together with normative philosophy. Foundational metaphysics is rejected, critical realism and idealism embraced.

Greek concept-realism (Platonic or Peripatetic) is found to be substance-driven, based on an essentialist ontology and onto-theology, a mummification (Nietzsche) of what is at hand.

By way of logic, this essence (*eidos*) or substance (*ousia, substantia*) cannot be found, as Nāgārjuna (*nirsvabhāva*) and Ockham (*terminus conceptus*) already indicated. Nor does experience point to it.

Untestable speculative ideas prove to be an intrinsic part of the background of any possible scientific paradigm, as is the *ceteris paribus*-clause and the opportunistic logic of the research-cel (Knorr-Cetina).

Science produces *valid* conventional knowledge, thereby solely led by argumentation and experimentation, in other words, by theories and facts, nothing more. However, both in the theory-constructing phase and in the testing phase of any hypothesis, untestable speculation is at work, which is inevitable.

Critical (immanent) metaphysics operates creative (totalizing) concepts that are arguable, not testable. It is always 'near' science. Its speculations change and adapt, fulfilling their heuristic function, guiding scientific investigation with an arguable generalist view. Invalid metaphysics is the absence of good arguments, or worse, the presence of faulty logic (irrationalism).

Even if we would like to eliminate such theoretical philosophy, metaphysics is here to stay and belongs to the background of every possible scientific endeavor. To eliminate it is like cutting the branch on which one is sitting or, worse, pretending there is no fall.

My preoccupation with metaphysics resulted from numerous studies of hypotheses lying at the periphery of the physicalist paradigm and the felt need to generate a framework to understand the world and its ground better. It is realized by a thoroughly panexperiential approach, rooted in process ontology and a tripartite division of its operators : matter, information, and consciousness.

Two extremes are avoided.

On the one hand, reductionist or eliminative physicalism, the conviction that mental processes are *only* neurological happenings defined by physical law (ontological materialism), is rejected. While the importance of matter is pertinent, operators featuring activities at work *outside* the confines of subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, forces, and fields will not *a priori* be rejected. While physicalism may accept the presence and influence of the mind (emergentism), downward causation (the mind changing the brain) is typically excluded, undermining the self-determination of the mind, the fact it may function in its own right, on its plane, with its peculiar characteristics, and even independent of coarse states of matter.

On the other hand, a return to mentalism (ontological idealism) must also be avoided. While the mind is supposed to exist in its own right, it does not constitute, generate, or produce states of matter. It is not the case that the mind creates nature. Critical idealism also breaks away from the closed-up concept of mind, one in which solipsism lurks behind the corner. The mind is not only 'my' mind because of my own inner, intimate life, but also because of a member of a community of sign-interpreters naming 'me.' The substantial ego of Descartes, the monad of Leibnitz, the formal, '*Ich Denke*' of Kant and, to a lesser degree, the transcendental ego of Husserl, retain too much of the ontological (ontic) determination of the mind. From a critical perspective, the ego is open, communicative, and impossible to maintain without the other.

Instead, and based on the identification of the *actual occasion*, three independent domains are pinpointed : matter (comparable to hardware), information (analogous to software), and consciousness (similar to userware). In each of these, a dominant actual occasion is at hand. Thus they constitute three distinct domains of operations. The dichotomy between matter (*res extensa*) and mind (*res cogitans*) advanced by rationalism (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) is turned into a *trichotomy*, while Cartesian interactionism is replaced by an interaction between, on the one hand, matter and information (brain), and on the other hand, consciousness (mind). While, *in abstracto*, matter and information may be distinguished one from another based on their distinct operations and logical features, *in concreto*, even a single hydrogen atom is co-defined by architecture and principles of order.

The 'odd' factor is consciousness. These sentient operations refer to awareness, use, choice, and meaning and cannot be reduced to anything else nor eliminated.

This *Critique of a Metaphysics of Process* aims to provide the necessary *demarcations* between science and metaphysics, between valid and invalid metaphysics, and between immanent and transcendent metaphysics, thus clarifying their role in speculative thought.

Succinctly put, this means establishing borders between various domains of knowledge.

Science is testable and arguable, while metaphysics is not testable, only arguable, implying only logical criteria decide. These do not necessarily call for completeness and consistency (Gödel), but *coherence* and a para-consistent approach of inconsistency. In all cases, irrationalism has to be avoided, i.e., the systematic deployment of Trumpian nonsense ; in other words, an intentional excessive and ostentatious destructive approach to the sense of truth informed by egology. Facts define the divide between science and metaphysics. They are a Janus-faced hybrid, consisting of a *theory-dependent* face and, so must we assume, a *theory-independent* one (critical realism).

Subdivide metaphysics itself into two strands, defined as 'immanent' and 'transcendent.' Immanent metaphysics seeks a *totalizing perspective*, speculation about existence as a whole (or *sophia*). It does never exceed the limits of the world. Its ontological building block is given as the 'actual occasion,' building a strict nominalist *process*-ontology devoid of substances, essences, or a self-existing 'core' existing from its own side. The actual occasion itself exists as a differential extension organizing two vectors : an *efficient vector* defining the material momentum and a *scalar vector* establishing the operations of information and consciousness. On a larger ontological scale, these features of every actual occasion return as the domains of matter, information, and consciousness, the 'cosmic' operators of the world. They return as the primordial constituents of the world-ground, a sufficient but not *self-sufficient* underlying determinant of the possibility of the next moment of the world. This world-ground is the infinite realm of primordial matter, primordial information, and primordial sentience (God\*).

Transcendent metaphysics aims at infinity and moves *beyond* the limit-concepts constituting the world. It seeks to understand the world-ground and deems this possible. However, transcendence cannot be an object of *conceptual elaborations* and falls *outside* the domains of reason (formal and critical thought) and hyper-conceptualizing creative thought. Hence, only immanent metaphysics, staying within the limitations imposed on thought by its preconditions, can be valid or invalid. Transcendent metaphysics is not within reach of conceptuality. However, this does not preclude the direct but the ineffable experience of absolute reality (or *gnosis*), nor the latter's impact on reason.

Wim van den Dungen  
Brasschaat  
March 2020



# Chapter 1 | Metaphysics and Science

In this first chapter, the general contours of the present critical metaphysics of process are at hand. Starting with an investigation of style, i.e., the acceptable way to express speculative thought, the fundamental principle of process metaphysics defining its axiomatic base reflects a choice for a *single principle* or monism, grounding the further elaboration of the system. This central choice is limited by criticism, probing for the limitations of all conceptual cognitive activity. These demarcations are harmonized with the speculative, totalizing intent (cf. *Book of Lemmas*, 2016). Rejecting conflictual and reductionistic epistemologies, the deep-seated polar structure of the cognitive spectrum is affirmed in accord with transcendental logic. Apprehending sensate and mental objects, the subject of experience is an object-possessor. Both of these objects are established, and their distinct properties are acknowledged. Such *distinction* does not lead to ontological *difference* but merely to ontological distinctness.

To circumambulate process metaphysics, a few significant historical vantage points are discussed and criticized. The core problem being the *uncritical* reification of the object and/or subject of experience, turning them into hypostases or realities (idealities) underlying thought. Once this is out of the way, the thinking process again reopens the door to science. Then and only then can metaphysics become the ally of valid empirico-formal thought. Making metaphysics and its speculative activity depend on conventional knowledge. Its apprehension of what exists (either in sensate or mental terms) fulfills its role as a theoretical philosophy 'next to' the domain of science, thus fructifying it. Studying why metaphysics cannot be eliminated from science enhances its status as a discipline necessary for advancing knowledge. It raises the question of the advancement of metaphysics itself, i.e., its ability to increase its logical, semantic, and pragmatic relevance, if not significance. This elucidation of the advancement of metaphysics is aided by the crucial distinction between speculative activity remaining within the boundaries of the known world or *immanent* metaphysics and theoretical philosophy leaving these boundaries behind, as in *transcendent* metaphysics. While the former can be validated, the latter can not. Valid transcendent metaphysical inquiry will prove impossible, leading to a hermeneutics of sublime poetry. Finally, having established immanent metaphysics and its validation through proper arguments, the fundamental move favoring monism is applied to the most general questions : What builds all possible phenomena ? What do all objects have in common ? It calls for an ontological scheme rejecting both materialist (physicalist) and spiritualist (mentalist) metaphysics. Physical objects nor mental objects *constitute* phenomena. Instead, *momentary actuality* is introduced as the ontological principle, bringing process metaphysics close to the fundamental realities of physics, cosmology, and psychology, namely the collapse of the wave function in quantum mechanics and the reality of moments of consciousness.

Because all possible metaphysics is irrefutable in terms of testability, it has been driven out of the domain of science, encompassing all valid empirico-formal statements of fact. This demarcation, once deemed sufficient to eliminate metaphysics altogether, is, however, problematic. Indeed, every experimental setup and valid scientific theory cannot be adequately articulated *without* untestable metaphysical concepts animating its background.

Consider post-Kantian criticism of metaphysics, in particular, positivism (Comte) and neo-positivism (Carnap). Here we have two radical departures from metaphysics blatantly failing to deliver. In the former, metaphysics belongs to the second stage after theology (the first stage) and before science (the third stage). The supernatural powers described in the first stage are transformed into abstract notions or entities hiding behind empirical phenomena. The abolishing of sensate objects by theological or metaphysical entities is being rejected and replaced by the positivism of *empirical phenomena*.

Neo-positivism radicalizes this view. For Carnap, metaphysicians are described as musicians without musical skills ! Metaphysics cannot convey any cognitive insight but only emotional appeal, which is inadequate. Hence, as they are not tautological nor validated by direct (sensory) experience, metaphysical statements are necessarily pointless, merely conglomerates of meaningless strokes or noise.

These approaches, haunted by headaches caused by fifteen centuries of Catholic dogma and four centuries of conflicting metaphysical inquiries, forgot the crux of the matter : the distinction between sensate and mental objects cannot be defined on sensate grounds alone and so must refer to mental objects validated by way of argument only, not by 'positive' data. Hence, not all valid knowledge is rooted in sensation.

Metaphysics is an unavoidable *vis a tergo* to befriend with caution, but impossible to rule out, except at scandalous and hence unacceptable costs. Moreover, although they cannot be as precise as scientific thinking, speculative activities compete in terms of the soundness of their arguments, coherence with other theories, heuristic appeal, fruitfulness, elegance, and simplicity.

The question is not how to eliminate speculative thought but how to bridle it in such a way as to speed up the advance of science. The era of cooperation between both has finally dawned. Moreover, besides assisting science, metaphysics also (and foremost ?) directs the mind to its greatest unity, extent, and harmony.

No doubt, these carry the springboard to the highest pursuit : the direct prehension of ultimate truth. Thus prehending full-emptiness, one simultaneously cognizes the emptiness of all possible objects and the fullness of the interconnections between all possible things resting in the bosom of nature. Sure, this moves beyond the best possible apprehension (*sophia*).

## A. Three Styles

### 1 *The Issue of Style*

**a** Put in general terms, 'style' is how an issue is addressed, its dynamism of expression. Style is characteristic of a particular subject matter, but also a person, group of people, or historical period. Insofar as texts are concerned, different styles call for different kinds of writing.

**b** Stylistic choices are defined by the way the author wishes to convey meaning. Although style ideally does not affect truth and contents of what is communicated (the logico-semantic value), but mostly how language effectively *persuades* (the rhetorical value), style nevertheless directly impacts how information is understood. It implies the latter may conceal the former, which may be part of the author's intent.

**c** In literary criticism, a central line is drawn between non-fiction and fiction. Writing for emotion's sake can be found in poetry, fiction books, novels, short stories, plays, etc. In non-fiction, boredom is not an issue but must, if possible, be avoided.

**d** Exposing style identifies expository, descriptive, analytical, academic, technical, persuasive, and narrative writing.

**d.1** Expository writing focuses on a known topic and informs the reader by providing the facts.

**d.2** Descriptive writing uses lots of adjectives and adverbs to describe things, conveying a mental picture.

**d.3** Analytical writing organizes the exposition through a rigid logical structure enabling the necessity of the truth value of what is conveyed to the surface.

**d.4** Academic writing takes a third-person point of view and brings in deductive reasoning supported by facts to allow a clear understanding of the topic to emerge.

**d.5** Technical writing elucidates detailed technical information about the issue at hand.

**d.6** Persuasive writing provides facts and arguments to promote a view having the ability and power to influence its readers.

**d.7** Narrative writing enumerates events that have happened might happen or could happen.

**e** Philosophy has always adapted its stylistic choices to its audience. Down the ages, a multitude of styles have been used and meshed together. Some philosophers use fictional styles (the poetry of Parmenides, the dialogues of Plato, the meditations of Marcus Aurelius,

Descartes and Husserl, the literature of Nietzsche). In contrast, others focus on the academic (Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Kant), the analytical (Spinoza, Wittgenstein I, Sartre), the descriptive (Heidegger before '*die Kehre*'), the technical (Russell, Quine), etc.

**f** Using different styles to formulate two similar utterances makes the reader wonder whether these different styles intend to carry additional meaning. If not, it inevitably opens the text to meaning-variability and unexpected turns, and creativity.

**g** Insofar as philosophy is at hand, two major styles emerge : the *object-dependent* and the *imaginal*. The style is derived from objects in the former, leading to academic, analytical, technical, and descriptive approaches. In the latter, a more profound sense is conveyed by triggering the reader's imagination, calling for fictional, persuasive, and narrative writing.

**h** In the present text, object-dependent and imaginal styles are combined. The former brings in a logical structure, whereas the latter, taking advantage of the unavoidable incompleteness, inconsistency, and ambiguity of any analysis, invites the imaginal function of its readers. This combination gives birth to a very particular, somewhat independent style, identifying and opening new perspectives. This choice is rooted in neurophilosophy, avoiding hemispherical lateralization and taking in the advantages of the neuronal bridge between the two sides of the *neocortex*.

## 2 Deriving Style from Objects

**a** When the mind of the Renaissance, still imbued with a Medieval spiritual mentality, was pressured by the different intent of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, it slowly made a place for the scientific world view. As a result, philosophy tried to derive its style from objects. Empiricists would cherish sensate objects, rationalists mental objects. In doing so, one hoped metaphysics, particularly the address of *totality*, could be retained without ridicule. Theology, the address of *infinity*, was deemed without an object.

**a.1** In 1666, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the Prime Minister of King Louis XIV, founding The French Academy of Science, interdicted astronomers to practice astrology. At the forefront of scientific developments in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Academy aimed to encourage and protect the spirit of French scientific research. It heralded the official end of the Hermetic Postulate : 'that which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracles of the One Entity.' As a result, all things 'occult' were relegated outside the mainstream, turning them into an interest of chamber scientists (like Newton and Goethe). Far gone was the idea that nature is an interconnected pattern, a living tissue of visible and invisible spiritual forces influencing humanity and the stars.

Instead, the material world became a clockwork of *disjecta membra*, a *nature morte* devoid of *telos*, *causa finalis*, or internal purpose.

**a.2** When A is rejected,  $\neg A$  need not necessarily be embraced. Of course, silly superstitions are not valid science, but the intent of what is said is more important than how things are said. Despite its spiritualist setting, the Hermetic Postulate aimed to underline the *interconnectedness* of all possible natural phenomena. Today, this metaphysical dream of the Ancients is again emerging in the mathematics and experiments of the new physics, albeit without the 'machinery' of the spiritual agents serving the God of Abraham. Does throwing the child out with the bath-water lead to finding the child again? Rejecting something often makes one dependent upon what was rejected. Far more difficult is finding a middle path between the extremes and keep to it.

**b** Hand in hand with the rise of modern science, four metaphysical ideas became prominent :

**b.1** objectivism : the objects of science exist independent and isolated from the mind apprehending them 'out there.' They possess a nature of their own, one having characteristics abiding inherently as their essence, substance, or inherent core ;

**b.2** realism : these independent objects of science existing on their own in the 'real world out there,' exert an influence known by the human mind by passively registering this outer activity and in doing so acquiring knowledge about reality ;

**b.3** universalism : the objective, real knowledge thus gathered is the same in every part of nature, i.e., scientific knowledge has closure ;

**b.4** reductionism : all phenomena of nature can be reduced to physical objects and their interactions. There is only matter and what emerges from it.

**c** Insofar as this modern version of science, to be labeled uncritical, materialist, and thoroughly European, gained prominence and became the spearhead of the tinkering harnessed by the Industrial Revolution, bourgeois philosophers either rejected reason (as in the Protest Philosophy of the Romantics) or considered, to avoid the shipwreck of traditional substance-metaphysics, an object-dependent style as the only way out. Enthused by these developments, they tried to exorcise speculation's core task: totality and infinity. They tried but failed.

**d** An object-dependent style fosters analytical, academic, and technical writing. In doing so, it merely copies the itinerary of materialist science and the industrial approach. Analysis does not necessarily call for synthesis. The academia may replace the authoritarian systems of old, safekeeping the dogmatics of the paradigmatic core. The Bellarmine-effect is, therefore, their greatest foe. Technical writing forgets the underlying first-person perspective, concealing it by the illusion of presence, adequacy, and efficiency. Modern science makes a place for

hyper-modernism and globalism, a modular and multi-cultural view moving out of the European fold, embracing Eastern thought.

The tragedy of exclusivity leads to the negation of totality, to the inflation of details at the expense of a regulating unity.

**e** By itself, object-dependent writing is not problematic, but its *exclusive* use is. No system can prove its completeness, eliminate all inconsistency (as Gödel proved), and provide absolute predictability (as Newton proposed). Knowing this, one may still use a clock, but never without accepting the irreducible margin of error, the principle of indeterminacy (Heisenberg) ruling all possible physical objects.

Language imperialism needs to be abandoned, complementing word with a picture, seriality with parallelism, denotation with connotation.

**f** In the 19th-century, despite Kant, materialist science and its ill-advised youthful successes continued to gain ground. Misunderstanding the intent of the Copernican Revolution, showing how objects merely appear and so conceal their truth, criticism was not assimilated. Despite his best efforts, his three *Critiques* were deemed a form of contradictory idealism, feeding the brontosaurus of German Idealism, turned upside down by Marxism. Instead of grasping them for what they are, namely a new understanding of science per se, Kant's work was rejected as an incomplete attempt to pour new wine into old bottles. During his lifetime, the titanic, solitary effort of the master of Königsberg could not be completed. It is possible to reconstruct his work in such a way as to avoid the inevitable traps he fell for. In doing so, objectivism, realism, and reductionism are unmasked as fatal errors of a *perversa ratio*.

Do not think this perverted, sterile rationality to be grave bound. Today it haunts the Western mind as a zombie, draining the life force out of scientific novelty. A resurrection of the organicism of the spirit of the Renaissance is at hand. If not by choice, then by the tidal wave of dissatisfaction and alienation, both in culture and ecology.

### 3 Imaginal Style

**a** Consider the millenarian tradition of the proto-rational sapiential discourses of Kemet, the golden verses of Pythagoras, the 'dark' sayings of Heraclites, the fragment of Anaximander, the *Two Ways* of Parmenides, the poetry of Xenophanes, the dialogues of Plato or, at the far end of this series, Boethius' *De consolatio philosophiae* and discover the varying impact of the imaginal on philosophical speculation in Antiquity, and this from the start of speculative writing (cf. the *Pyramid Texts of Unas*) until the end of Late Hellenism. Exceptions, such as the vast scholarly corpus of Aristotle and the *Enneads* of Plotinus, are indeed rare, for even Augustine was tempted to exchange a rather academic and argumentative style for a more literary one (as in his *Confessions*).

Of course, authors (like Plato and Boëthius) may choose literary devices like dialogues to convey proper arguments. Philosophy was not yet

divorced from the various other topics of high education, as the division of learning in *trivium* and *quadrivium* demonstrates. Indeed, *philosophia* was envisioned as uniting all branches of knowledge, nourishing the Seven Liberal Arts, the study curriculum in both Classical and Medieval times. With the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, the authority invoked by the Peripatetic tradition culminated. It opened the gates for a flood of genuinely dull but highly significant philosophical works in an object-dependent style (Abelard, Duns Scotus, Willem of Ockham, Cusanus). In many ways, the works of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant are still part of this mentality.

Each time we overestimate the potential of something, we are bound to discover weakness and frailty. Each time we reduce grandeur, we invoke surprise. When both Heaven and Earth are considered beforehand, what can go wrong? The answer to any query comes along as soon as we are ready with the question.

**b** An imaginal style is literary, i.e., creative writing with recognized artistic value. It does not try to eliminate connotation to promote denotation. Syntax never supersedes semantics. It may even invite and manipulate ambiguity to indulge in semantic wealth, not avoiding redundancy. The works of Nietzsche are perhaps the best example history has to offer, but Kierkegaard and Heidegger should also be noted. Of course, these are large-scale works of literature, not aphoristic counterpoints.

Object-dependent style depersonalizes. In doing so, it objectifies what remains embedded in the subjective. Imagination personalizes. In this way, it subjectifies what cannot do without objectivity. The far extreme of the subjective becomes objective. Too much objectivity betrays a subjective intent. Both are not contradictions but complementary.

**c** Practically speaking, the distinction between an object-dependent style and an imaginal style is not clear-cut. Writers as Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, but also Schopenhauer, Bergson, and many others offer a mix. However, examples of a strict object-dependent intent do exist.

Consider Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677), Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867), Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934); Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), etc.

**d** A neurophilosophical definition of the imaginal style focuses on how the *neocortex* processes information projected by the *thalamus*. It does not mean that people can be divided into 'left' versus 'right' brain types. Both hemispheres process information. However, it is clear lateralization is mostly in effect. In the West, with its emphasis on language, the hemisphere processing linguistic processes dominates. In the East, with its emphasis on image, icon, metaphor, and spatiality, the right is prominent (in the right-handed). Here are some of the features of the left and right hemispheres, respectively.

<b>Two Metaphysical Styles</b>	
object-dependent	imaginal
linguistic	kinesthetic
propositional	visual
discrete	diffuse
analytical	synthetic
verbal	visuospatial
discursive (logical)	presentational (melodic)
digital	analogical
specific features	broad features
deliberate	totalizing
denotative	connotative
literal	metaphorical

**d.1** Only recently has the importance of this division been understood. The *neocortex* or 'human brain,' a folded sheet of ca.11 m<sup>2</sup> with ca. 20 billion neurons, is divided into two hemispheres connected by the corpus callosum, an axonal bridge continuous with cortical white matter, consisting of ca. 200 million nerve fibers. The right hemisphere is typically subdominant, whereas the left, containing the speech areas of Broca and Wernicke, is often dominant.

**d.2** To define the typical left hemisphere as 'dominant' because it processes language reveals a prejudice mainly at work in the West. The right hemisphere may indeed be deemed 'dominant' over the left in terms of the analysis of geometric and visual space, the perception of depth, distance, direction, shape, orientation, position, perspective, and figure-ground, the detection of complex and hidden figures, visual closure, *Gestalt*-formation, synthesis of the total stimulus configuration

from incomplete data, route finding and maze learning, localizing spatial targets, drawing and copying complex figures and constructional tasks.

**e** Although in disciplines like logic, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, the use of imagination is not wanted, in the context of metaphysics, the advantages of an imaginal style outweigh the precision necessary in the realm of the normative rules (cf. *Regulae*, 2016). The totalizing intent, aiming at broad features synthesizing the general characteristics of all possible phenomena, does call for a more diffuse band. As those parts of the spectrum invisible to the naked eye are also presented, the connotative associations of the semantic field cannot be missed. Hence, to further meaning, metaphor and analogy are indispensable.

Metaphysics is a marriage, and in every marriage, compromise is at work. If a compromise would only have clear-cut terms, it would not last, and nobody would stay married. Of course, without trust, no grey areas can abide.

**f** Just as Heidegger before him, Derrida understands traditional metaphysics as a philosophy of presence, a logocentrism placing the *spoken word* at the center with writing as perfect conservation or fixation *after* words have been spoken (de Saussure). The audience is absent, while in spoken language, the sign immediately vanishes to the advantage of the speaker. With his metaphors, Heidegger did not move outside the *clôture* of the metaphysical traditional starting with Plato. His words still try to capture the nature of phenomena in a discourse pretending to be a fixation of what Heidegger 'said about things'.

**f.1** The conservation of the spoken meaning by written words is deceptive. Logocentrism is mummification leaving out important elements. Trying to fixate the 'heart' of the matter, other vital organs of what was actually said are removed. The spoken word is deemed primordial, and the written word is derivative. In all cases, this derivation is a bleak representation of the original intent. So logocentrism fails to deliver. The spoken word is, therefore, stronger but also transient.

The spoken word is like eating cucumber soup ; it has tone and taste. However, the activity is ephemeral. The written word is like reading the recipe ; it is dry and tasteless. It may help to make a similar soup again.

**f.2** So, to tackle the pretense of presence advanced by logocentrism, *thinking absence* is called in. This by considering how one cannot, compared with the spoken word, recuperate the autonomy or exteriority of the written word by speech. Consider these two French words : 'différence' and 'différance.' The first, written correctly, means difference, while the second, miswritten with an 'a,' sounds, when spoken, precisely the same as the first, but in fact, it does not exist and so means nothing ! So the difference between them is only revealed by the text, not by the spoken word. The spoken word is protected from these letter-based manipulations. The text has its own 'power' of misrepresentation, i.e., advances meanings not available in the spoken

words. Grammatology wants to address this issue and deliver the tools to identify the *false exists* at work in the text.

**f.3** Metaphysical texts, in whatever style, are deceptive. However, one cannot define their illusions from without, observing them from an Archimedean vantage point. Nietzsche tried to do this by first identifying metaphysics as Platonism and then developing an alternative. By identifying metaphysics as logocentrism, it becomes clear the battle with the illusion of presence in metaphysical texts has to happen *in these texts themselves*, not from a safe, matinal outside perspective, for such a proposed haven is itself logocentric and does not exist.

**f.4** Metaphysical systems tend to invoke words transcending the possibilities of conceptual thought. These transgressions are posited as 'exits,' while they are *false doors*. These doors exceed the limitations of the system and/or the borders of conceptuality, and these excesses are vain. Next to every text, a 'margin' has to be drawn. In this cleared space, the false doors or 'transcendent signifiers' are (a) marked by adding an 'asterisk' (\*) to them, and (b) identified as deceptive ways to provide the system with illusionary openings allowing it to move out of itself and ground its text in something beyond the text, and this while there is only text. For example, in the present critical transcendent metaphysics, the word 'God' is replaced by 'God\*,' thus indicating 'God' has been *deconstructed*. In this way, no new term needs to be invented (leading to a mere cosmetic manipulation). The drawback is this : the deconstruction remains somewhat dependent on what is deconstructed.

At some point, after tiresome journeys, every enduring traveler returns home. Then the road can be retreaded at a lighter pace. Eventually, one no longer walks but flies. Then the activity of traveling itself is walked through. No longer moving, things come to the traveler.

**g** It is crucial to thoroughly criticize the way transcendent metaphysics seeks to ground any speculative endeavor in a reified ground *outside* the system of thought. Distinguishing between immanent and transcendent identifies the primary false door of metaphysics, introducing non-conceptuality through concepts (like 'intellectual perception,' 'intuitive knowledge,' or 'prehension'). However, immanent metaphysics is not without logocentrism, i.e., the vain conviction object-dependent writing can be a philosophy of presence exceeding the fluidity of the spoken word. Among many other things, like metaphorical elucidation of denotations, an imaginal style will therefore also try to correct this pretense of the text by pointing to the vain constructs of denotation, promoting the absolutism of the text at the expense of the direct but fleeting experience of the spoken word and introducing void words arising only as a result of logocentric manipulations of letters.

Systems want to protect themselves from their collapse. However, they are not like houses firmly erected on solid ground, but like trees with their roots up in the sky. Seeking where we fail, we become firm. Trying to avoid being hurt, one invites putrid wounds.

**h** The two proposed styles complement each other. Neither of them holds the promise to eliminate the false doors exceeding the system and put down by the text fixating speculative activity. Insofar as this activity is oral, it cannot deceive in this way. Oral traditions have existed in the past, and so one cannot reject this *a priori*. Maybe this is indeed the best way to preserve an authentic metaphysical intent. In literary culture, an imaginal style introduces metaphor to elucidate denotations but also (and foremost) tries to identify the presence suggested by the latter as a *fata morgana*. In the immanent approach, this happens by identifying the meaningless 'letters' introduced by the text. Insofar as metaphysics as a whole is concerned, this takes place as a process of identifying the false exits leading to a positive, kataphatic transcendent metaphysics. Such a guard only allows for a non-affirmative negation, a *via negativa* leading to an apophatic view on the transcendent, one underlining the ineffable or un-saying nature of what lies beyond the realm of possible conceptual thought. If anything positive can be said about this beyond, then clearly such letters are, at best, sublime poetry. Apprehension is conceptual. Prehension non-conceptual.

#### 4 Creative Unfoldment

**a** Historical perspectivism, developed by Nietzsche, promotes the view all ideations (both sensate and mental) take place from particular perspectives. The world is accessed through perception, sensation, and reason, and this direct and indirect experience is possible only through one's individual perspective and interpretation. A perspective-free or interpretation-free objectivity is rejected. Hence, many possible conceptual schemes, or perspectives, determine the judgment of truth or value. No way of seeing the world can be taken as absolutely 'true.' At the same time, it does not necessarily propose the validity of all perspectives.

This inflation of the subject at the expense of the object leads to less personal fulfillment and happiness. The more we are preoccupied with our perspective, the less pliant the mind becomes. The less pliant the mind, the more dissatisfaction with conventional reality.

**b** For historical perspectivism, rejecting absolute objectivity means no objective evaluations transcending cultural formations or subjective designations. Experience, always originating in the apprehension of sensate or mental objects, is always particular. There can be no objective facts covering absolute reality, no knowledge of the ultimate nature of phenomena, no logical, scientific, ethical, or aesthetic absolutes. The *constant reassessment of rules in accordance with the circumstances of individual perspectives* is all that is left over. What we call 'truth' is formalized as a whole shaped by integrating different vantage points. It is a conventional truth, a transient intersubjective consensus.

From which perspective did historical perspectivism arise ? If all experiences merely depend on individual perspectives, then this perspectivism escapes the proposed relativity as a view encompassing

all perspectives. As self-defeating as radical relativism, historical perspectivism is an exaggeration, an extreme unwarranted by the normative disciplines of transcendental logic, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, discovering the principles, norms, and maxims we must accept to be able to conceptualize cognition, truth, goodness, and beauty. A significant category mistake is made by rejecting the rules of normative philosophy, a set of principles, norms, and maxims a priori. While facts validating empirico-formal propositions of science are indeed Janus-faced, simultaneously showing theory-dependent and theory-independent facets, the transcendental meta-logic of thought, the norms determining valid knowledge, right action, and sublime art are universal and necessary, i.e., *a priori*. It is not the result of any description (of logic, epistemology, ethics, or aesthetics) but merely the outcome of what is necessary to think the possibility of these crucial domains of human intellectual effort.

In all cases, we stay dependent on what is rejected. Perspectivism is correct in identifying (inter)subjective vistas but –in a verbose mode– cannot sustain its intent without relying on some object. In the absurd extreme, this object is the absoluteness of perspectivism itself ; merely a *contradictio in actu exercito*.

**c** While conventional truth can only be known in the context of subjective and intersubjective experiences, critical perspectivism challenges the claim there is no absolute truth. Firstly, within the domain of conventional knowledge, transcendental logic and norms pertaining to truth, goodness, and beauty are found. Together these form the normative disciplines of normative philosophy. These norms are unearthed by reflecting on the conditions of truth, goodness, and beauty. What is thought ? What is a cognitive act ? What is the concept ? How to validate knowledge ? How to produce valid knowledge ? How to act for the good ? How to fashion beauty ? Secondly, valid knowledge can only be identified if this truth-seeking cognitive act is regulated by the Ideas of the Real (experiment) and the Ideal (intersubjective argumentation), organizing correspondence and consensus.

Moreover, the possibility of the direct prehension of absolute reality (*gnosis* instead of *sophia*) depends on the extent individual perspectives are eliminated. As the concept always involves such a perspective, only conceptual thought is barred from this. Intuitive, nondual cognition is not rejected beforehand. It is non-conceptual and can only be prepared by 'purifying' the conceptual mind, i.e., thoroughly ending its addiction to substance-obsession (reifying object and/or subject of knowledge).

Valid empirico-formal statements are true in a conventional sense. Absolute truth, the emptiness of all phenomena, can be conceptually approached by way of ultimate analysis. The direct experience of this truth is possible but ineffable. Although the object of un-saying, this nondual prehension directly impacts what is done, said, and conceptually thought. It, therefore, modifies our experience of the conventional world. Hence, it is not trivial or insignificant, entirely on the contrary !

**d** Critical perspectivism accepts the theory-ladenness of observation and cherishes the critical distinction between perception and sensation. Three fundamental perspectives are given. These are called 'for me,' 'for us,' and 'as such.' The first-person perspective ('for me') belongs to the intimacy of the observer. Nobody shares two identical reference-points. Position and momentum are unique for every point. So is the available information one has and the clarity of one's conscious apprehensions (sentience). The third-person perspective ('for us') is the paradigmatic, shared, transient, conventional, intersubjective view of a community of sign-interpreters. It is valid (working) but mistaken. While efficient, it does misrepresent objects. Viewing them as independent and existing from their own side conceals their true, absolute nature or emptiness.

The absolute perspective ('as such') refers to how things are in themselves, without a conceptual overlay, i.e., empty of inherent existence (Tsongkhapa).

**d.1** This absolute truth is not some super-object grounding or underlying objects. It is the ultimate nature of every conventional object. Therefore one can only epistemically isolate emptiness, for, in every particular event, the absence of inherent existence is simultaneous (or united) with the interconnected and interdependent nature of all the elements constituting this actual event.

**d.2** The ongoing unity of emptiness (absence of essence) and interdependence is called 'full-emptiness.'

The second-person perspective opens up, fructifies, and shares two first-person perspectives ; it extols the truth, goodness, and beauty of personal love. Extremely rare, this love is often replaced by an act of mutual masturbation. When the cuddling is over, the other person is dropped like an empty can to be filled and consumed repeatedly.

**e** An idiom is the style of a particular writer, school, or movement. Let critical perspectivism be the adopted idiom of this process metaphysics, encompassing and integrating the rather 'technical' methods of object-dependent and imaginal writing.

**e.1** Uttering 'grand stories' is finished, revealing the awareness no independent substance can be identified. Sensate nor mental objects provide us with an inherent own-nature, an essence independent from other objects, self-powered and autarchic. Process-based phenomena cannot be grounded in a self-sufficient ground outside conceptual thought. Hence, the fake grandeur of previous ontological schemes is their pretense to conceptually represent the absolute nature of what is, the suchness of all possible phenomena.

**e.2** Accepting perspectives, we divide sensate and mental objects and grasp the events happening on the sensitive areas of our senses as not identical with the thalamic projection on the *neocortex*. Although sensate objects have a perceptive base, each apprehended object is the product of perception and interpretation (or perspective).

**e.3** Facts are hybrids. On the one hand, they are theory-independent and, so must we think, correspond with absolute reality. On the other hand, they are theory-dependent, arising within the perspectives or theoretical connotations of an inter-subjective community of sign-interpreters. Because conceptual knowledge is validated by way of test and argument only, one cannot eliminate these signs (in the form of ideas, notions, opinions, hypotheses, or theories) without invalidating epistemology. However, accepting the theory-ladenness of observation does not eliminate the necessity to think facts as always dealing with something extra-mental.

**e.4** While keeping immanent metaphysics distant from transcendent speculations, an absolute perspective is not rejected. Against Plato, this is not a 'substance of substances,' but the ultimate property of every actual object, namely its lack of inherent existence. While impossible to cognize conceptually, this absolute nature of all phenomena is not *a priori* deemed outside the cognitive realm, for this ultimate property can be prehended. Absolute truth is part of a non-conceptual cognitive act. Here we move beyond Kant, who rejected the cognitive relevance of any faculty beyond reason.

**e.5** The two styles, providing stylistic dynamism to the idiom, bring in the variations necessary to keep the text open and unfolding. They do not interpenetrate but form a counterpoint running through the text.

**e.6** To allow the reader to identify false doors, meaningless letters, or collections of letters, the distinction between world-bound (totality) and world-transcending speculation (infinity) is maintained throughout. Moreover, immanent metaphysics itself is scrutinized, dividing limit-concepts from actual infinities, regulation from the constitution, and architect from creator.

Mistrusting written words while composing a story or a system, accepting subjective bias given the first inklings of conceptual thought, keeping the dynamic nature of conventionality intact, invite the reader to find his or her path to absolute truth, retaining the Socratic intent.

**f** Creative unfoldment gives way to unforeseen momentary interactions born out of ambiguity, redundancy, and free associations running parallel with the object-dependent channel. Because of this structure, it does not involve automatic writing but uses a surrealist psychic mechanism, a 'waiting' birthing unexpected encounters bearing novelty. So metaphysics is also a work of art.

To wait involves a total awareness of the prevailing situation we find ourselves in, hand in hand with the intervention of the most unlimited freedom ready to move us and bring about novelty. Freedom is this total openness to what is possible, negating and denying what is thought impossible.

Our limitations are, to a vast extent, self-imposed.

## 5 The Style of Process Metaphysics

**a** Natural languages resemble the objectifying convictions of their users. Nouns, and the adjectives qualifying them, refer to objects existing apart from other objects. Verbs, and the adverbs qualifying them, refer to actions between these independent, self-contained, self-powered, separate entities.

**b** Awareness of full-emptiness, embracing the process-nature of all possible objects and their interdependence, understands nouns as *momentary labels* projected on the ongoing stream of actual occasions. These moments do not exist on their own, constituting the stream, but are interconnected with all other moments of the stream. Therefore, the unit of the stream is the *differential moment*, i.e., an infinitesimal interval 'dt,' an instance, droplet, or isthmus of actuality. The differential moment has architecture, a capacity to shape novelty in what, without this, would only be an efficient transmission of the probabilities of momentum and position (unqualified by architecture and sentience).

**c** Seeking a language to express process is not like wanting to find a new kind of speech. Nor is it a meta-language counterpointing natural languages. Attending speech and being attentive to conceptual anchors leading to reification and enduring (eternalizing) architectures does not call for a particular verbal or written discipline. It merely accompanies the intent of every speech-act. In texts, therefore, a recurrent undermining of essentialism is at hand.

In seeking to meet the king, process philosophers only experience his kingdom. They never meet him face to face. Relinquishing the seeking itself is the end of philosophy and the beginning of mysticism.

**d** The 'I-am-telling-You'-approach of historical process metaphysics invites the reader to develop his or her arguments. The basics are given, but the text's unfoldment in the readers' minds is left open. More than a passive recorder of what is meant, the auditorium is a co-creator of and a contributor to the creative unfoldment of the text. Hence, mere words exceed the text and bring about outspoken reactions. This coalescence may turn it into a cultural object : a tissue of interconnected seeds and their recurrent fruition.

### **B. Opposition, Reduction, and Discordant Truce.**

To apprehend how all things hang together in a comprehensive way, forming a Gestalt or mandala of possibilities and their relationships, and trying to affirm this coherently, accommodating a reasonable view of the world, seeing it as a whole, may satisfy the metaphysical instinct. However, generating an articulate worldview is not without methodological problems. The most basic of these is not the coordination of all possible domains of knowledge necessary to make this integration happen (leading to a compromise between attention for parts and the whole), but the *choice of axioms*, i.e., propositions not susceptible of

proof or disproof, but assumed to be self-evident and so above all suspicion.

Besides its Axiomatic Base, a metaphysical project, in every case Herculean, may choose one of the following methods :

1. comparative : first, a series of basic concepts like 'being,' 'life,' 'time,' 'consciousness,' 'group,' 'energy,' etc. are chosen and, to arrive at a global view, the history of these compared. One replaces the mandala of one single domain of knowledge with the study of a single foundational concept of that domain. This approach, found in academic courses on metaphysics, is necessary but rather atomistic and so merely a preparation for more serious work ;

2. subjective : here, a single person gives way, possibly in an imaginal style, to what he or she knows, beliefs, and/or feels, bringing a small area to a very high level of articulate consciousness. Although highly subjective, this will –given this person's information is not too restricted– serve to prepare a more in-depth and more extended view ;

3. synthetic : finally, one tries to erect a worldview using all relevant information available within a given time frame. Historical examples of this method are the *corpora* of Aristotle and Bacon. At present, the interval would extend between the Age of Enlightenment and postmodernism. Such synthetic activity depends on the number of knowledge domains integrated and the validity of the assembled information. These synthetic efforts are never 'finished' but merely represent the best possible global picture available. It needs to be corrected and completed by succeeding generations. Grasping how both an extensive treatment of details and a comprehensive global construction will not eliminate all possible lack of clarity, one realizes a complete synthesis will never be arrived at. Some terms may remain foggy or incoherent. Of course, a sincere author tries to do away with these 'inadequacies' as much as possible ...

Nevertheless, the brontosauric aims of both analytical philosophy (focusing on details), as put into evidence in the *Principia Mathematica* (1910), and grand speculative stories like *Sein und Zeit* (1927) are bracketed. Indeed, these efforts remained incomplete ... However, in a world knowing Gödel, is completeness wanted ?

Given that criticism nowadays needs a global perspective, constructing such a synthetic metaphysical worldview is not a 'modern' endeavor restricted to Western culture (as it was in the past). Still, it is necessarily multi-cultural and so hypermodern or globalists, incorporating the best of both Western and Eastern views. Because it no longer lingers to merely deconstruct modernism, relinquishes its radical relativism, and tries to erect an 'open' grand story, it also supersedes postmodernism. The latter remained too destructive and skeptical and so infertile, barren.

Indeed, skepticism and dogmatism are to be avoided.

Only criticism, as the articulation of clear demarcations (Popper), truly advances knowledge. As will become apparent, radical postmodernism was also unable to reach its goal : to eliminate metaphysics !

Let us point to six sources aiding the construction of a contemporary totalizing worldview or a critical immanent metaphysics :

1. science : valid empirico-formal propositions point to facts all possible concerned sign-interpreters for the moment accept as accurate. They form the current paradigm, featuring a tenacious, regular knowledge-core, a co-relative field containing all domains of scientific knowledge and at its fringe a periphery touching semi-science, proto-science, and metaphysics. At hand is the production of provisional, probable, and coherent empirico-formal, scientific knowledge held to be true. The core sources of knowledge are experimentation and argumentation ;

2. ethics : if science aims at knowledge and truth, ethics is primarily concerned with volition (the source of action) and the good. Here we articulate judgments about the good (the just, fair, and right), providing maxims for what *must* be done. The core sources of this right action we seek are objectively duty and calling and subjectively intent and conscience

Accommodating valid conventional knowledge or science, metaphysics is aware of ethics's normative principles, norms, and maxims. The reason is apparent : as soon as anthropological issues arise, one cannot speculate without considering the rules covering right action ;

3. politics : ethical concerns lead to views on the organization of just, fair, and right societies. Worldwide democracy is gaining ground for the right of individuals to decide what happens to them in society is a logical extension of critical ethics. Because tyranny and dictatorships, whether religious, nationalistic, elective, or otherwise, contradict the normative rules of ethics, they must eventually crumble. No metaphysics can be unaware of this. The core source of a good society is the educated choice of its people. Of course, democracy can be organized in many ways. In the West, a strong opposition is deemed necessary to fuel debate and guarantee various opinions circulate. It is a Greek streak. In the East, a common goal for the betterment of the majority is deemed more important than opposition, debate, and regulated conflict, often infringing respect (despite Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, the East favors Confucianism). Clearly, speculating on the actual meaning of human life cannot be done without incorporating politics ;

4. economy : ethics and politics need a system to organize the scarcity of material goods and services just and fair. Solving the energy problem is the source of an adequate solution satisfying the needs of all sentient beings. Only green energy is a viable solution, for humanity can no longer plunder nature without severe and very costly retributions. Technology links the economy with science. Bridled by ethics and democracy, these then lead to an efficient and ecological (sustainable)

economy. Speculating on how the interaction between science, ethics, and politics can be used to satisfy needs by way of goods and services calls for the economy and its laws ;

5. art : judgments pertaining to what we hope others may imitate, namely the beauty of excellent and exemplary states of matter, are objectively based on sensate and evocative aesthetic features and subjectively depend on one's aesthetic attitude. Its source is feeling, and its aim is the beautiful. A functional, global democracy organizing an efficient economy and taking advantage of valid science is not enough. Human beings seek to express their feelings in ways others like or dislike to imitate. A metaphysics has to incorporate the beautiful in terms of harmony, unity, symmetry, and asymmetry. Not only because human beings love beauty, but also because (a) nature is an architecture of symmetry and symmetry breaks and (b) a hypermodern process-based understanding of the Divine integrates concepts like harmony, unity, and probabilities leading to these (Whitehead, Hartshorne) ;

6. religion : insofar as the Divine is part of our immanent metaphysical inquiries about the world, it cannot be more than a *spiritus mundi* remaining, as the Stoic '*pneuma*,' within the order of the world, never transcending worldly possibilities. Then, the Divine does not transcend the world but merely defines its outer limit. Not explaining nature from without helps to understand its *conservation* and *design*, leading to the concept of the 'Architect of the World.' To connect the world's order with the idea of something outside the world, to not exclusively define immanence by way of limit-concepts, but envisage *actual infinities*, is to move our religious attitude outside nature, moving beyond the world, transcending it. Logic teaches such a transcendent signifier cannot be conceptualized. However, can it be cognized ? The possibility of a '*cognitio Dei experimentalis*' (Thomas Aquinas) is affirmed but can never be 'proven.' Why ? Because it cannot be conceptualized.

Such mystical experience is ineffable, the object of *un-saying*. Of course, an immanent conceptualization of the Divine is an authoritative source of inspiration for metaphysics. Besides being the object of personal experience, it can be backed by arguments (like Ockham's argument of conservation, Pascal's wager argument, and the argument of design).

Transcendent metaphysics can be sublime poetry, and sublime poetry may influence the conceptual mind. Thus direct perception has an indirect role to play.

These six sources are used to develop an immanent metaphysics of process calling for (a) a comprehensive, *totalizing* metaphysical worldview incorporating both natural and social realities, and this in tune with (b) a logical study of language and science, making room for (c) the expression of direct prehension and nondual, non-conceptual cognition. Of course, it will be impossible to cover all possible speculative objects. Not only because all known objects form a very vast body of knowledge, impossible to fully and entirely synthesized by a single mind, but also because new objects are not to be excluded. *A priori*, these

cannot be covered. Also, it is inevitable that some areas will receive more attention than others. The metaphysics discussed here focuses on existence, cosmogenesis, biogenesis, sentience, anthropogenesis, and the question of the Divine.

In general metaphysics, the idealized totality presents itself as an *organic unity* and *pluralistic integration of process*. An ontological scheme is developed. In its application, as in specific metaphysics, phenomena relevant to the details of the totalized view are integrated. These cover what exists, the cosmos, life, and consciousness.

### 1 *The Axiomatic Base.*

**a** The five postulates advanced by Bertrand Russell in his *Human Knowledge* (1948) can be summarized as follows :

1. the world is composed of more or less *permanent* things. A 'thing' is a part staying invariant under certain operations and constant during a specific time with respect to certain properties ;
2. causes and effects of events remain restricted to a *specific part* of the previous or succeeding total state ;
3. causality diffuses *continuously* (with contiguous links), so there is no *actio-in-distans* ;
4. if structurally similar complex events are ordered in the vicinity of a central event acting as a center, then they belong to the causal series pertaining to that center ;
5. if A looks like B and both were observed together, one might suppose that if A is again observed and B not, B will nevertheless be there.

The first postulate affirms things are more or less permanent. Russell was aware things changed, but he refused to impute impermanence as one of the cardinal signs of existence. Permanency, invariance, and constancy are given preference over impermanency, variability, and change, or, more precisely, process-based creativity or novelty. Was this Russell's Greek bias ? Process thinking does not posit permanency but advances the cycle of arising, abiding, and ceasing, i.e., the dependent-arising of phenomena (*pratītya-samutpāda*).

The world is composed of emerging actual occurrences. These stay around for a while and then cease to exist as such, entering into the creative advance of succeeding actual occurrences and their togetherness as events, objects, entities, things ...

The second postulate, besides limiting determinations and conditions to causality, restricts the spatiotemporal influence of causality. Of course, as chaos-theory proved, small causes may have enormous effects (cf. the Butterfly-effect of chaos theory).

The third postulate conflicts with quantum mechanics, for its non-locality underlines the absence of Einstein-separated events in the realm of physical reality.

The fourth postulate connects structural similarities with causality, while the fifth postulate turns the psychological mechanism of habituation into a source of knowledge. It can only be realized if A and B are indeed deemed permanent. Adding 'more or less' does not change this. These postulates show what happens when the Axiomatic Base is too narrow, too much concerned with identifying identities and less with grasping how 'things' emerge out of the sea of an ongoing process.

Russell considers realism, with its adjacent notions of permanency and direct sensuous access to objects, as the hallmark of sanity. Is this not like confirming suffering ? Only those who know they possess nothing can never lose anything. The root cause of this dissatisfaction is superimposing static concepts on fundamentally transient phenomena. This essentialist fallacy, accepting objects must have some unchanging core, makes us cling to the same thing even if nothing stays identical.

**b** The First Postulate, articulating the fundamental conviction, is : there is a world, a universe, or, in other words : all possible phenomena. All what is actual exists. This broad outlook aims at maximal totality, a system encompassing all possible systems.

The Second Postulate affirms the totality of the world has a world-ground. It is the *sufficient* ground of the world, i.e., no deeper level can be found. This ground is, however, not substantial or *self*-sufficient. The crucial difference here lies between a *self*-sufficient reified ground and a process-based, non-substantial sufficient ground.

The Third Postulate defines the building blocks of all that exists in the world as actual occasions.

Thinking there is some better 'world' outside the world makes us hope to attain it and fear not to. However, accepting the existing world is all we have, brings one to care for every moment.

**c** The world is the totality of all actual phenomena, the set of all concrete actual occasions, events, entities, and things part of the world.

<b>WORLD-SYSTEM</b>	world	concrete actual occasions, events, entities, and things given by experience
	world-ground	sufficient ground, process-based abstract formative potentiality

**c.1** As a set of formative elements, the world-ground is merely the sheer possibility of the world. The world-ground is then the possibility of the next moment of the world itself. World and world-ground define the

world-system. As the ground of the world is merely the possibility of the world, then the actualities of the world are not determined by a substantial transcendent origin outside the world ; they are not otherworldly.

**c.2** There is no transcendent *self*-sufficient ground 'outside' the world. The world-ground is a set of ontological principles concerning the primordial and the pre-existent. These are merely formative elements necessary to think the next moment of the actual world in process thought. They do not stand alone, neither do they act as 'creative' principles bringing forth the world, although a kind of generation may be considered. They are a set of process-based roots drawn -by reversal- from the domains of actuality characterizing the world, namely matter, information, and consciousness. The hermeneutical circularity is necessary to eliminate any hint of an ontological divide between the world and its ground. Nevertheless, the world is finite and relative, the world-ground infinite and absolute.

The world-ground is the servant of the world ; it does not create it. But one may say the world is generated or constructed based on the world-ground.

<b>WORLD-SYSTEM</b>	world	traditional : the ongoing modifications of the substantial constituents of all things
	text	critical : concrete actuality made likely by the sufficient primordial ground of process
	world-ground	traditional : Godhead creating the world out of nothing
	subtext	critical : the sufficient, process-based ground : the primordial possibility of change

**c.3** Imagine an absolute substance 'outside' the world, a substantial, *self*-sufficient world-ground indeed causing the world to come into existence *ex nihilo*. Then, the world would depend on something eternal existing from its own side. As in Platonism, the world would be divided into two ontological layers : a perfect world of static eternities and an imperfect world of relative becoming. This view is firmly rejected. In actuality, *there is only the world and nothing else*. Moreover, as ultimate logic makes evident, a substance cannot be found.

**c.4** The 'transcendent' speculations of critical metaphysics do not aim at an absolute *self*-sufficient, *self*-powered substance acting as world-ground 'outside' the world but target an ultimate nature that is the property of every actual instance of this totality. The 'transcendence' posited is not beyond, above, outside, or next to the world. The world-

ground, being a *formative abstract*, has no worldly spatiotemporal characteristics. Traditional reified (essentialist) transcendence is not at hand. The object of this transcendent metaphysics is not an eternal, *self-sufficient* 'entity of entities' or 'substance of substances.' The transcendence aimed at is not a monotheist God 'explained' by Greek concept-realism (Platonic or Peripatetic) ! Suppose a transcendental signifier can be identified (albeit by the thorough application of the non-affirmative negation eliminating substantial instantiation – cf. infra).

In that case, this ultimate reality is not a substantial, *self-sufficient* world-transcendent ground. Absolute reality, as the sufficient ground of every possible phenomenon, is actualized by every phenomenon. The absolute exists relatively.

Platonic ontology betrays the deep aristocratic discontent with change, impermanence, and seemingly disconnected variety. Wherever it creeps in, cherishing others is eclipsed by the rubble of the few.

<b>WORLD-SYSTEM</b>	world	finite, spatiotemporal, concrete, actual, relative, conventional
	world-ground	infinite, non-spatiotemporal, abstract, formative, absolute, ultimate

**d** Traditional transcendent metaphysics affirms its object to exist as a substance with inherent properties and not part of the world. However, how can this onto-theology be ?

If this self-powered supreme and infinite object are conceptualized, then an affirmative negation is at hand, i.e., positing something outside, above, beyond, or next to the actual world. Such an object should be obvious, but cannot be found, is lacking !

Onto-theology always leads to the antics of Baron von Münchhausen.

*2 Monism, Dualism, or Pluralism.*

**a** The axiomatic choice for monism is in tune with the need for unity, simplicity, elegance, and comprehensiveness. The monad does not move beyond itself but privileges a *single principle*. Alteriority is not a different ontological entity in this monarchic continuum but a mere replication of the existing principle.

It implies that all things are interchangeable, for although *ontological distinctness* may be accepted, *ontological difference* nowhere occurs.

Can everything be explained by the privileged monad ? If so, then by Ockham's Razor, we must keep it simple. However, if a single case can be found where the principle does not apply, then *a fortiori* monism is wrong.

**b** Duality, with its powerful reflective capacities, introduces otherness as a new ontological entity. The power of duality is felt in logic and epistemology. Reflection on the structure of thought itself reveals a binary structure erected on the principles of the transcendental logic of thought itself, namely the crucial and necessary divide between a transcendental subject and a transcendental object. The armed truce between object and subject can also be felt in epistemology. Both theory and experimentation are necessary to arrive at valid knowledge, and observation is not a passive, merely registering process.

On the one hand, Descartes was correct in emphatically making the difference between the extended and the non-extended, between matter and mind. On the other hand, Cartesius was wrong to reify the difference, shaping an ontological dualism. Although both are *distinct*, they are not *different*. This crucial distinction leads back to monism.

**c** Non-monists logics introduce more than one fundamental ontological principle (a duality, triplicity, quaternio, etc.). Ontological dualism posits two independent substances : matter versus mind. By a trinity of factors, a logical closure ensues, for by adding a third principle, a *tertium comparationis*, duality is no longer 'locked' in singular division, no longer the 'nature morte' of the 'dead bones' of formal logic (Hegel) but indeed becomes an 'unlocked,' plural process capable of thinking the manifold.

In many ways, triadism is well equipped to deal with manifolds and their processes. Of course, this pluralism merely multiplies the difficulties. If it is unclear how two substances may interact, how to explain an ontological triad or anything beyond two ontological principles ?

By the multiplication of principles, one does not solve the problem of unity, quite on the contrary. The monad can only systematize unity. Ontological elegance, coherence (orderly relation of parts), and simplicity are born out of the monad and nothing else.

**d** To couple monism with essentialism introduces a single ontological substance. The monad is then positioned as independent and self-powered and turned into a static self-sufficient ground existing from its own side, inherently. Such an approach has difficulty explaining the manifold's multiplicity, variety, differentiation, complexity, richness, and interconnectedness. Hence, the ongoing changes, productions, and novelties transpiring in nature cannot be explained.

In traditional theology, the Divine was turned into an idol in the image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Greco-Roman rulers. It has sterilized religious thought. The challenge at hand is to accept a universal cognizing luminosity, a mind of Clear Light\*, without the dogma of an aboriginal, unmoved, inherently existing transcendence, at whose fiat the world was created and whom it must obey to avoid punishments. To remove such paternalistic substantialism from theology is the only way forward. God\* is not above, beyond, next to the world. Not part of the world, God\* can be said to be 'with' the world.

**e** Thinking a single dynamic principle is the solution sought. Because of the monad, all phenomena fall under the same ontological principle, leading to the absence of ontological rifts. Avoiding essentialism brings in maximal interchangeability, knitting the various textures of existence together, thus interlacing the fabric of nature and accommodating the organic, interdependent whole.

Dynamical monism may accept the presence of a supreme dancer, a sublime movement executed with Divine grace. Such perfect symmetry transformations, the 'holomovement of holomovements' of God\*, continuously have other actual occasions as a reference frame. The absolute is present as an ultimate differential in every point of nature, in every concrete actual occasion of the world.

### 3 Critical Epistemology

**a** Before Kant (1724 – 1804), in the pre-critical era of Western philosophy, *being* defined (conceptual) *knowing* (*Book of Lemmas*, 2016). The question of the capacity of our human cognitive apparatus was answered by referring to ontology, introducing one, two, or more ontological principles first. As a result, the self-evident, 'natural' limitations of cognitive activity were either exceeded (as in dogmatism) or narrowed down (as in skepticism).

The drama of conceptual cognition exaggerates or moves to extremes, making something more noticeable than necessary. It makes one seek a *hypokeimenon*, an underlying substance, or ultimate thing. This illusion is then carried through, a tragedy turning into a farce.

**b** The word 'criticism' derives from the Greek '*kritikós*' or 'able to discern.' In turn, this leads to '*krités*' or a person who offers *reasoned discernment*. Criticism defines borders, frontiers, and waymarks.

**b.1** These demarcations do not negate anything (as does skepticism), nor do they affirm (as does dogmatism), but merely posit distinctions enabling us to remove entanglements and create open spaces or clearings offering breathing-spaces between otherwise ensnared objects. Because of these, differences and distinctions are possible.

**b.2** Hence, this *Critique of a Metaphysics of Process* intends to discern the place of a critical metaphysics based not on substance but on process, not on fixating (the eternal or the void), but on thinking constant change and therefore impermanence. It identifies metaphysics by outwardly demarcating it from science and inwardly defining its primary targets, totality, and infinity, or, in other words, the conventional wholeness and the ultimate suchness of it all possible phenomena, the world and the world-ground, respectively. Executing their perfected perfect styles of movement, ultimate dancers simultaneously portray the impermanence of constant, interdependent change, as well as the continuous and 'pure' (or dereified) kinetographic style of their holomovements.

**c** Critical epistemology answers the question how conceptual knowledge and its advancement (production) is possible ? It does not base this analysis on some previously given ontological ground. Reality (accessed through the senses) nor ideality (apprehended by the mind) are deemed pre-cognitive things triggering the possibility of knowledge. The latter is given by the groundless ground of knowledge itself, the 'Factum Rationis.' Hence, the mode of analysis is transcendental ; its object is the structure of the cognitive apparatus, and its subject the reflective activity of the knower, bringing out the principles, norms, and maxims of (valid) knowledge by merely disclosing the rules already given in every cognitive act, i.e., what is going on as soon as thought is afoot.

The rational mind is not only formal but also transcendental. It produces valid empirico-formal propositions and the structure of conditions (on the side of the knower), making it possible for such propositions to be produced.

Critical metaphysics differs from all previous speculative systems in its radical abandonment of substantial thinking of grounding the mind *a priori* in anything except in the groundlessness of the mind itself.

**d** Critical epistemology is not a *descriptive* activity. Why not ? There is no vantage point *outside* knowledge, empowering us to watch knowledge as such. The possibility of knowledge is apprehended *while knowing*. The principles, norms, and maxims are unveiled *in the cognitive act itself*, which is by *reflection*. These rules cannot be negated without negating the negating activity itself. Doing so always entails a *contradictio in actu exercito*. Hence, epistemology is a *normative* discipline, and its rules are those being used by all possible thinkers of all times.

Valid science must be about experimentation (testing) and dialogue (with dissensus, argumentation, and consensus). Valid metaphysics must argue a totalizing worldview embracing the infinite.

**e** Positing an Archimedean point outside knowledge grounding knowledge is a pre-critical strategy ontologizing the possibility of (conceptual) knowledge. This presupposes the presence of an unchanging (fixating) ground outside knowledge. Per definition, such a ground cannot be knowledge at all !

**e.1** Such an incorrect view calls for a dogmatic ontology, one placing 'being' before 'knowing.' As such, pre-critical thinking is merely an elimination of the necessary tension or *concordia discors* between the knower and the known, between the subject and the object of thought, either involving the affirmation of the Real or of the Ideal. In the former case, extra-mental reality is deemed a real self-sufficient ground for the possibility of knowledge. In the latter case, mentality itself is considered to be the underlying ideal self-sufficient ground.

**e.2** Both ontological realism and ontological idealism generate inconsistent answers to the fundamental question of epistemology and

so pervert a reasonable solution to the problem of conceptual knowledge and its validation and production.

Totalizing knowledge and proposing a comprehensive worldview does entail a close interaction between critical metaphysics and science. It is to fructify speculative activity with current physics, cosmology, biology, anthropology, psychology, etc.

#### 4 *Conflictual Model*

**a** Because of the inflation of (mythical and theological) metaphysics in pre-modern times, modern philosophy has invoked a radical conflict between speculative activity per se and scientific thought. It created a division between scientific knowledge and non-scientific opinions. While the latter is accepted as valid in their private sphere, they play no role in the domain of science. The latter is a privileged language game dealing with the objects of public life, while the former is merely out of personal interest and so considered highly subjective and intimate.

One cannot push away all possible speculative activity. Only invalid metaphysics must be abandoned, not metaphysics as such.

**b** The tensions between organized religions and science, between faith and valid knowledge, between 'alternative' (peripheral) and paradigmatic interests, etc., reflect the conflict between paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic knowledge.

Two crucial cultural objects arise : on the one hand, an 'ideal' religious faith based on 'grace' (the use of speculation without science) and, on the other hand, 'real' scientific facts based on experiments (or science without metaphysics). Merely talking over each others heads, they behave as deaf men arguing.

History put asides, science cannot divorce metaphysics.

**c** The conflictual model, feeding an insurmountable conflict between science (the valid empirico-formal propositions forming the paradigm) and pre-critical metaphysics, inhibits speculative activity. Indeed, trying to remove the so-called 'infection' caused by this wrong kind of metaphysics paralyzes theoretical philosophy. Resignation is the outcome.

In this way, giving up the attempt to articulate a totalizing view of the world, the treasure-house of cultural objects impoverishes. Reducing the heuristic impact of speculation in this way decreases the production of knowledge. It also plunges epistemology into darkness, for the unavoidable role of *metaphysical background information* in both testing, theorizing, and arguing is poignant.

The *Gestalt* switch invoked by the 'cube' of Wittgenstein (*TLP* 5.5423) shows attention defines observation.

## 5 Reductionist Model

**a** The reductionist goes a step further and tries to ban metaphysics from the arena of thought entirely. Only science has anything to say about the world, and all non-scientific entries are worthless and so to be disposed of. There are no two distinct sources of truth, but only one, namely science. Logical positivism is an example of this approach.

Radicalizing against the flow of irrationalisms, one tends to overreact and propose a silly solution emitting a flair of intelligence. Irrationalism cannot be avoided, only handled properly.

**b** One may also try to cancel out metaphysics by pretending to have access to an absolute knowledge, one needing no further speculation. This Hegelian approach is a super-Platonic strategy. It fails because it presupposes a Herculean conceptual capacity conflicting with a critical reflection on the possibilities of conceptual knowledge. As will become apparent when analyzing the nondual mode of cognition, this only works if and only if this absolute knowledge is ineffable, thus canceling out its direct conceptual involvement. One may also invoke the supremacy of scientific knowledge, claiming it is free from any dealings with metaphysics. It also fails because both theory and experiment always presuppose metaphysical background information.

Why cut the branch upon which one sits and then be sorry one falls ?

**c** The escalation from conflict to reduction increases the intensity of the attack and decreases any possibility of a constructive return.

Intelligence can change its mind.

## 6 Metaphysics and Criticism

**a** A frontal attack of metaphysics, trying to remove it from thought, only manifests how metaphysics remains present in the attacker. The *intentio recta* battling metaphysics in the open field unveils it as an *intentio obliqua* surreptitious at work in the would-be eliminator. To argue an untestable totalizing view is, therefore, a *vis a tergo* one cannot escape.

Like the eye cannot see itself, science has a blind spot filled in by metaphysics. One tries to escape only to return. Let us accept this and move on.

**b** Criticism does not try to animate the conflict with metaphysics, nor does it want to eliminate it. It accepts the abyss between science and metaphysics but tries to bridge it. Metaphysics, the speculative integration of the totality of phenomena born out of infinity, is capable of being supported by arguments but cannot be put to the test. The latter distinguishes it from scientific statements, both arguable and testable.

**c** Aware metaphysics is part of every possible cognitive activity, criticism merely tries to find the rules covering its use. Negatively, it criticizes metaphysics as an ontology or archaeology of the normative disciplines. Epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics must *not* be rooted in a self-sufficient ground outside knowledge preceding it. Doing so cripples the understanding of how knowledge and its production are possible. This leads to unworkable antinomies and paralogisms, as Kant showed. Positively, a rehabilitation of metaphysics is at hand. Critical metaphysics acts as a heuristic or teleology of science, advancing speculative notions, concepts, and systems. As an 'ars inveniendi,' it inspires science to move beyond the periphery of its current paradigm, but never without asking it to relinquish its two wings : experiment and argument.

**d** The distinction to be drawn then is between pre-critical and critical metaphysics. The former is a mythical and theological speculative format, invoking being to explain knowing and multiplying entities. The latter is a totalizing picture of what exists as emerging out of infinity. It conveys an awareness of the limitations of knowledge. Nevertheless, metaphysics is deemed able to serve as a heuristic of science. It tries to find a single founding principle and argues the totality of phenomena (the world) made possible by the set of infinite possibilities (the world-ground).

Without a single unifying principle, the unity of the manifold cannot be thought of.

**e** As a philosophical discipline in its own right, critical metaphysics encompasses both *totality* and *infinity*. Pre-critical, dogmatic, foundational metaphysics, positing a self-sufficient, substantial ground *before* the ultimate analysis of the possibilities of cognition and the cognizer, asks us to suspend understanding to the advantage of systems of substances *a priori*. This attempt reifies infinity, turning into a 'substance of substances.' Not so here. Critical (immanent) metaphysics asks about being, cosmos, life, and sentience, advancing arguments to comprehensively understand the world.

**e.1** These answers help to clarify the fundamental questions posed by the human being : 'Who am I ?,' 'From where do I come ?,' 'Where am I going to ?' The first question being the foundation of the foundation : without knowing myself how to understand anything ? This 'I' refers to a subjective sentient and luminously cognizing center of consciousness and *a unique objective observation point*.

**e.2** Using the realized totality as a stepping stone, critical metaphysics ventures at the periphery of paradigmatic conventionality and explores infinity. First, as a series of asymptotic limit-concepts of the world, next as an actual infinity, infinitely totalized as an absolute consciousness (God\*). The world-ground does not transcend the totality of all actual phenomena but is understood as a set of formative. Discordant with ultimate logic, the Pharaonic (Platonic) intent is rejected. The absolute exists conventionally ... God\* is the universal, one consciousness

valorizing the possibilities of the materiality and creativity of the world-ground, and the *sole abstract actual occasion* moving along with the world. God\* functions as a facilitator, as a bridge between what is possible and what is concrete, touching both.

### 7 *Discordant Truce*

**a** Transcendental logic dictates the principle of rational, conceptual thought. It may be called the *concordia discors*, the discordant concert, or armed truce of the *Factum Rationis*. Duality is its architecture.

**a.1** On the one hand, all possible cogitation has contents, i.e., an apprehended object of knowledge or the known. On the other hand, cogitation implies a thinker, a subject of knowledge, or a knower. Nevertheless, both radically distinct interests are necessary and always joined, forming a bound, entangled, bi-polar system.

**a.2** In epistemology, these two make out the simultaneity of two state-vectors : the vector of the subject of knowledge, its languages, theories, and theoretical connotations and the vector of the object of knowledge, its physical apparatus, tenacity, inertia, and, so must we think, factuality and actuality. A fact is the resultant vector-product.

Knowledge must be about something extra-mental. Neither is it possible for knowledge not to be known by a knower.

**b** The armed truce between subject and object of all possible thought and the groundless ground of all possible knowledge go hand in hand. Knowledge cannot be exclusively grounded in either objective or subjective conditions because knower and known form a pair and so cannot be reduced to one another.

**b.1** Suppose we reduce the subject to the object, then the latter grounds the possibility of knowledge (as in ontological realism). Suppose we reduce the object to the subject, then the latter constitutes the possibility of knowledge (as in ontological idealism).

**b.2** Because we keep both sides of the transcendental spectrum at the same level, stressing their interdependence and co-relativity, knowledge can only be grounded *in knowledge itself*.

**c** Shocking confrontations between object and subject of knowledge are inevitable and necessary. They cannot be avoided because the tensions between knower and known are ongoing. They are necessary because, without these confrontations, experiments cannot be adjusted by theory, and facts cannot falsify theory.

In the research-cell, the interests of both experiment and discourse play out in the continuous process of communication between, on the one hand, everything dealing with the test apparatus and, on the other hand, all formal and informal theoretical processes (calling for opinions, conjectures, argumentations, refutations, hypothesis, and theories).

**d** For over two millennia, concept-realism was uncritically accepted. Concepts were deemed to be reliable copies of reality.

**d.1** In Platonic concept-realism, one cannot avoid asking the question : How can another world be the truth of this world ? The ontological cleavage is unacceptable. On the other side, Peripatetic thought summons a psychological critique. How can the human soul possibly know anything if not by this remarkable active intellect able to make abstractions based on a manifold of independent observations ?

**d.2** Both reductions are problematic. Because they try to escape, in vain, the *Factum Rationis*, and so represent two excesses denying the *concordia discors* of all possible conceptual thought, they form an apory. Plato, being an idealist, lost grip on reality (positing an outerworldly substantial ideal). Aristotle, the realist, did not fully clarify the mind (positing an abstracting active intellect). Composite forms of both systems did not avoid the conflicts, although they conceal them better. The crucial tension of thought was not solved by Greek concept-realism, crippling our understanding of formal rationality. This pollution endured until Kant broke the chains we had put on ourselves ...

To attribute existence to concepts, be they related to sensate objects or instead refer to mental objects, is to step *outside* the duality of the object-subject relationship, claiming to oversee it and decide the ground of knowledge is either objective reality (the senses) or subjective ideality (the mind). Existence only instantiates a set of features attributed to a concept but adds nothing of its own. Eliminate the properties contained in the set, and the object imputed vanishes.

**e** When reason, understood as a stream of conceptual, discursive cognitive acts, is critically watchful and so not deluded by ontological illusions, the ideas of reason (the 'Real' and the 'Ideal') are *not* turned into ontological hypostases but operated as regulative principles holding a hypothetical (not an apodictic) claim. In that case, conceptuality, in tune with the *concordia discors*, entertains a conflictual interest willingly. On the one hand, it seeks unity in various natural phenomena (the multiple is reduced to a type). On the other hand, to guarantee the growth of knowledge, reason wants heterogeneity (the unique, not repeatable, and singular).

**f** Besides the discordant truce between the objective and the subjective conditions of all possible knowledge, another *concordia discors* can be identified, namely between paradigmatic science and critical metaphysics. Science is the theoretically organized system of valid empirico-formal propositions or *statements of fact*. Metaphysics is the speculative activity aiming to understand the totality of the world.

**g** Paradigmatic science has a hardcore, a set of statements deemed valid conventional knowledge, held by all involved sign-interpreters as true. The objects involved put down a *high probability of recurrence* and hence the *highest possible relative predictability*. The architecture of valid

conventional science unfolds around this tenaciously kept paradigmatic core, covering matters objective and intersubjective. At its periphery, we find the beginning of non-science or fringe science. Critical metaphysics proves not all non-science is nonsense.

**g.1** On the one hand, science is both argumentative and factual. Critical metaphysics is only theoretical, and this is in a speculative way. On the other hand, all sensate objects coming into consciousness through the senses are already compounded objects and so have already been subjected to interpretation.

**g.2** So every observation of fact cannot do without the observer and his or her mental frame or view. A critical minimum of metaphysics is needed.

**h** 'Speculation' is knowledge not based on fact but only on argumentation. It refers to theoretical philosophy, moving beyond the physical, and to '*speculum*,' the Latin for 'mirror,' from '*specere*,' or 'to look at, to view.' The last points to the totalizing, universalizing, all-encompassing, globalizing streak of all sound and valid metaphysics. It involves an *intelligent worldview*. Although critical metaphysics is not factual, its theoretical, intellectual structures are arguable. Validation is in the line of the kind of language used to convey the metaphysical view at hand. The sheer power of the combination of its chosen logic and rhetoric certainly plays a role, but not more than compass and depth.

Per definition, critical metaphysics is multi-cultural and global, with a comprehensive worldview integrating as many as possible cultural objects, sensitivities, and *dadass*.

## 8 *The Objectivity of Sensate Objects*

**a** The subject of knowledge, the knower, is an object-possessor. A subject without an object is as nonexistent as a square circle. So the very act of cognition implies this duality.

Although duality is not unity, dual-unions do occur.

**b** Two and only two kinds of objects are possessed by the knower ; sensate and mental objects. Their difference is not ontological, for both are actual occasions, events, or aggregates of events.

**b.1** These two objects do have distinct sources. Sensate objects depend on the correct functioning of the five sensory systems, while mental objects depend on the field of consciousness and its center, the knower.

**b.2** At the bottom level of perception, sensate objects are extra-mental. Still, at the top level of sensation or conscious sentience, these naked perceptions themselves, through neurophysiological code, labeling, and interpretation, have become part of the mental world. However, they remain objects with particular features derived from perception, distinct from objects imputed by the activity of the mind alone.

To accept the senses is to accept that we do not sense what they perceive. To accept the mind is to accept concepts that do not perceive.

**c** Sensate objects are perceived by the senses, processed by the latter, transported to the *thalamus*, and projected onto the *neocortex*. The latter computes the identification and naming of these afferent impulses. It turns them into sensate objects part of the field of consciousness for the knower to be observed. Hence, perception and sensation differ by their measure of interpretation.

**c.1** Biologically and epistemologically, interpretation cannot be eliminated from the realm of conceptual thought. While it can be reduced, sensate objects are always processed naked perceptive data.

**c.2** Sensation and interpretation are simultaneous. The former arises as a result of stimuli influencing the sensitive surfaces of the five senses, the latter by the ongoing activity of mental processes with their particular objects and semiotics.

**d** Objectivity is guaranteed because sensate objects depend on what happens at the sensitive surfaces of the five senses. Epistemologically, we must accept facts also carry the input of the world 'out there.' Suppose we do not, then our knowledge is no longer knowledge *about* something but merely an intra-mental (intersubjective) phenomenon. The *concordia discors* is left for a reduction of the object of experience to the subject of experience (as in ontological idealism), leading to a corrupt form of epistemology, one misrepresenting the possibilities of knowledge and its production.

Reality nor ideality is a problem, but their reification always is.

**e** Objectivity is the tenacity with which sensate objects appear solitary, independent, and separated from other objects. Physical reality defined by physics implies a something which is not thought, with relations not requiring they are thought about. This approach of nature defines the latter as exclusively constituted by the extra-mental, by the theory-transcendent aspect of facts. In the physicalist and materialist view, sensate objects are 'real' because they are independent and separate from nature being thought about. Although objectivity is stubbornly unyielding, not a single permanent sensate object is found, for every object is fundamentally a differential moment and so in process rather than revealing ipseity, own being, own becoming, own-form, intrinsic nature, or substance from its own side.

Hence, objectivity is always relative to the interval at hand, and this unveils conscious choice. Also, spatially, subjective expectations trigger new objective perspectives.

Reality and ideality are not to be avoided but merely act as the two regulative ideas bringing, by way of correspondence and by way of consensus, respectively, the two methodological sides of the process of knowledge-production to greater unity.

**f** Without sensate objects, true conventional knowledge, i.e., the valid empirico-formal propositions of science, cannot be articulated nor validated. They, so must we assume, provide the elements not dependent on mental objects. These are not substances but the ongoing actuality of phenomena. However, although facts appear as constituted of elements independent of the mind, they are also constituted by theories depending on opinion, intersubjective testing, conjecture, and argumentation, yes, even on implicit or explicit metaphysical background information ! Sensate objects are, therefore, only seemingly stable and inherently self-identical. To not grasp this is to break away from the *concordia discors*. It is plunging reason into the scandal and folly of a '*perversa ratio*,' like the one promoting, by lack of spirit, the '*nature morte*' of a dying universe without rebirth.

When moving to the extreme of objectivity, invoke subjectivity !

**g** Natural science's particular concern with concepts about nature not requiring they being thought is not an ontological choice (as in ontological realism found in materialism and physicalism), but an epistemic interest or methodological concern. Natural science wants to isolate the 'hard facts' as clear as possible, meaning independent of the necessity of their appearance in fields of consciousness in order for them to function. The conditions and determinations of a physical object call for the calculation of the probability of some sensate object to manifest properties. The latter reflects, so we are bound to assume, the interconnectedness between nature, stimulating the sensitive surfaces of the five senses. The recurrence of the form of definiteness at hand identifies the activity of nature as homogeneous.

**h** Because all phenomena are actual occasions, and natural science can enlarge its perspective and integrate other families of actual occasions like information and consciousness. Together with matter, these three represent the hardware, software, and userware to be studied by natural science.

Redefining 'phenomenon' as 'actual occasion' breaks away from the identification of the object of natural science with matter. Code, symbols, and information (form), as well as autoregulation and conscious observation (contents), are part of this new science of nature.

### 9 *The Subjectivity of Mental Objects*

**a** Sensate and mental objects are those possessed or apprehended by the mind, appearing in a field of consciousness with the cognizer, the knower at its center. Sensate objects only appear when the five senses convey their perceptive information correctly to the brain, offering it (by way of interaction) to the mind and its knower. During sensory deprivation (*pratyāhara*), only mental objects appear. One 'observes' with the 'inner sense' of consciousness itself. In ordinary waking, both objects always overlap and mingle. Only with analytical attention does one notice their distinctness.

**b** Subjectivity is guaranteed because sensate objects themselves can only be constituted if and only if the data projected on the *neocortex* by the *thalamus* is *interpreted*. Furthermore, the latter is not merely a computation of the *neocortex* but also involves the impact of the mind, independent of the brain, namely through *interaction* by way of (re)evaluating the brain's propensity-fields (Popper, Eccles).

**b.1** Hence, everything smelled, tasted, seen, heard, or touched is already a 'thing-for-us' (cf. Kant's '*das Ding-für-uns*') ; already an appearance of something, not the thing itself !

**b.2** This Copernican Revolution reveals the core inspiration of the transcendental level of mind : to unveil, discover, or reveal the mechanism of the mind enabling us to impute sensate and mental objects. The presence of these intra-mental operators makes it clear sensate objects merely appear as independent of the mind, and this in a very striking and convincing way. It is the quest leading to the sublime : how can something appear so strikingly different than it is ? Illusion (*māyā*) is a truth-concealer, for it poisons the mind to believe a rope is a snake. Like a hallucinogenic, it makes us believe a one-winged bird truly flies.

**c** Subjectivity is the invisible, intangible, non-physical, nonspatial, temporal impact of valuation, reassessment, autopoiesis, auto-structuration, and conscious (sentient) choice on the contents of consciousness, i.e., on both sensate and mental objects appearing in its field and apprehended by the subject of experience, the knower, and this at every differential moment of the actual stream of consciousness *hic et nunc*, i.e., in every instance of its temporal ongoingness and creative advance from its beginningless past to its endless future. The subject of experience, the knower, depends on the known. The known depends on the knower. In each actuality, both are simultaneous.

**d** Without mental objects, no thoughts, opinions, conjectures, hypotheses, or theories could be articulated. Refuting them would also be impossible. This fact is as important as the tenacity of sensate objects, contributing to the grand spectacle of illusions offered by the conventional world and its suffering.

**d.1** Both tyrannies of reification work together to cage our understanding, forcing it to prostrate before the idol of the Ideas of the Real or the Ideal. Although theories appear in an intersubjective context shared by all involved sign-interpreters, theoretical constructs, connotations, concepts, and words do not replace naked perception and the data derived from that. Idealism or the eternalism of the subject must be avoided as hard as realism, the eternalism of the object.

**d.2** Also, the negation of anything objective and/or subjective having any functional relevance whatsoever (annihilationism) is to be rejected. Keeping the *concordia discors* ever alive is accepting both objective and subjective conditions of conceptual knowledge, giving both an equal share in the production of knowledge.

## 10 Direct and Indirect Experience

**a** Experience, from the Latin '*experientia*' or 'knowledge gained by repeated trials,' the compound of 'ex-' or 'out of' + '*peritus*' or 'experienced, tested,' is what is available through observation. This is apprehending, positing, or imputing sensate and/or mental objects in the field of consciousness of the knower. Direct experience is the subjective apprehension of objects here and now. Indirect experience is intersubjective.

**b** It could be argued that consciousness itself is a mental object. However, a *prise de conscience* is different from merely a receptive sentient field with an apprehending center, for it involves attention, intention, introspection, autoregulation, etc. These point to the particular dynamic characteristics of sentience, related to the inner, cognizing luminosity of the mind itself. The knower is not a passive mental object but the transcendental 'I think' that enables the processes of the empirical ego to occur. It is of all times and necessarily at work in every cognitive act. The knower takes an active part in every cognitive act.

Empirical ego, transcendental ego, creative self, and selfless nondual prehension are the levels of consciousness, its degrees of freedom.

**c** Direct experience is gained in the context of reality-for-me, from the vantage point of the first person. Its objects appear when the knower is alone (the set of observers = 1). Shared by a potentially relevant but insignificant group of observers, direct experience may turn into second-person knowledge (the set of observers = 2). Only when after considerable experimentation a significant number of involved sign-interpreters deem it so, direct experience may become fact, i.e., a third person (the set of observers > 2) item of valid conventional knowledge. At the very moment a fact is produced, the experience becomes indirect and, therefore, intersubjective.

**d** Indirect experience involves a sharing of objects by at least more than two observers. Relevant indirect experience is limited to a small group of observers, while significant indirect experience implies high probability objects, namely those highly recurrent. The last call for a process of validation involving repeated testing and discourse.

**e** Direct experience, rooting our personal sense of reality, remains, from moment to moment, the cornerstone of the *existential conditions* we find ourselves in. It is the actual mindstream or stream of consciousness with its fleeting moments of sentient activities. This mindstream determines our happiness or misery. The ongoingness of our loneliness gives definiteness to this passage of time and the connections between events correlated with it. Although highly subjective, this intimate knowledge, this direct, living knowledge co-determines how we perceive the knower and the known. Both intimate direct experience, the cultivation of attention and autoregulation, and direct outer experience, the science and art of observation, are pivotal in our inner life.