

«13» These assumptions of separation and connection provide an illustrative example of the relative differences between diametric and concentric spaces as spatial frames for cognition. Diametric and concentric structures are necessary spatial-relational conditions for framing the two different constructions of Gilligan's moral reasoning process. These spatial preunderstandings go beyond binary splits such as mind/body, where distinction can be recognised without being division or reduction to monistic relations of identity.

«14» These proposed diametric and concentric spaces are argued elsewhere to be precognitive frames for understanding, relational horizons within which cognition is shaped (Downes 2012, 2015), pertaining directly also to perception in Jakob von Uexküll's *Umwelt* (Downes 2010b), sought by Werner (§64). A related argument is that much of the information processing paradigm of cognitive science is trapped by Cartesian-Newtonian spatial assumptions of passive space as mere non-entity, including in understandings of schema-based explanations (Downes 2010a) and Alan Newell and Herbert Simon's problem-solver computational models (Downes 2006, 2010a, 2010c). A wider argument for the importance of diametric and concentric spaces seeks also to challenge traditional understandings of metaphysics (Downes 2012, 2013), so interrogation of prior spatial preconditions for understanding may need to go further than being rooted in metaphysical assumptions.

«15» Other entailments of the relative differences between concentric and diametric spaces than assumed connection and assumed separation include those highlighted by Lévi-Strauss (1963, 1973). These are diametric structures as mirror-image inverted symmetry and relative closure of non-interaction between foreground and background; in contrast, concentric spatial relations offer symmetry as unity rather than inversion (Downes 2012) and a more open structure with background rather than diametric spaces.

«16» Werner cites von Glasersfeld (1991) on the need to challenge categories of space and time as objective realities (§18). Diametric and concentric spaces are argued to be irreducible to simple subjectivism or objectivism (Downes 2012); moreover, they

do not hinge on Lévi-Strauss's structuralist commitments (Downes 2012, 2013). This invites a wider discussion about metaphysical understandings of truth locked into subjectivist-objectivist frames of understanding (Downes 2012).

«17» Werner's questioning of the roots of radical constructivism, to seek pathways removed from remnants of Cartesian metaphysics, is to be welcomed. These aspects of his argument can gain support through this spatial questioning of prior background diametric and concentric structures of relation that frame cognitive constructs, as prior spatial preconditions as constructions for both thinking and perception.

Paul Downes is a senior lecturer in education (psychology), Dublin City University, Ireland. His most recent books are *The Primordial Dance: Diametric and Concentric Spaces in the Unconscious World* (2012) and *Access to Education in Europe: A Framework and Agenda for System Change* (2014).

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Transcendentalism Guarding Constructivism: The PL-Metaphysics of Hegel and Naturalists

Diana Gasparyan

National Research University Higher
School of Economics, Russia
anad6/at/yandex.ru

> **Upshot** • I expand the notion of PL-metaphysics by introducing the approach of Hegel, who I regard as the chief PL-metaphysician. Also, I propose another substantiation of the division of metaphysics, namely, the criterion of the transparency/opacity of system settings, which I consider the most symptomatic for the differentiation of epistemologies, and believe plays the key role in understanding the status of constructivism itself. By applying this criterion, we can differentiate transcendentalism and naturalism as two substantial epis-

temological meta-programs and show that constructivism will still remain a part of the transcendental program, even when there is an orientation towards PL-metaphysics, while Hegel's version of PL-metaphysics will be considered a part of naturalism.

"Subjectivism can be overcome only by the most consistent and all-embracing subjectivism (the transcendental)."
(Edmund Husserl 1962: 253f)

«1» There is no doubt that in his target article, Konrad Werner conducted important research, the results of which can assist the endless disputes between realists and constructivists to make progress, showing the fly how to exit the bottle (to use Ludwig Wittgenstein's well-known metaphor from 1953).

«2» Here I focus on the definition of ontology (Werner prefers the term "metaphysics"), which can be considered quite helpful for the discussion of problems of perception in the framework of epistemic constructivism. When contrasting PL- and DL-metaphysics, Werner apparently assumes that the former has advantages over the latter, which, constituting a basis for various kinds of dualisms, has created more problems than offered solutions. Indeed, PL-metaphysics ultimately looks very promising as far as epistemic optimism is concerned, while DL-metaphysics sooner or later leads to epistemic pessimism.

The disappearing subject

«3» It is quite understandable why the subject-object paradigm was in need of revision: despite its apparent simplicity, this model is known to have many paradoxes. For example, if we were to analyze the classical philosophical definition of reality, we would discover a surprising paradox. Reality is defined in such a way that it does not depend on the subject by definition. But in such a case, the subject does not depend on reality either and does not belong to it. Which in turn means: the subject is unreal. As soon as we separate reality from the subject (and this is what classical metaphysics does), the subject vanishes.

«4» However, following Werner's logic, this method is not typical of the entire meta-

physics school, but only of its DL version. In contrast, the PL version helps avoid this paradox by proposing not to isolate radically the subject from an object.

Hegel and the birdlimed twig

« 5 » It seems reasonable to say that Hegel proposed the most systematic model of PL-metaphysics (perhaps even more accurate than those introduced by Plato or Leibniz). The fundamental premise of Hegel's "phenomenology of spirit" goes like this: the world taken entirely is simultaneously subjective and objective (substantial), i.e., the entire world is given to itself in its entirety as an identity of an object (substance) and the subject. Applying Hegel's terminology, we would call this identity the Absolute, i.e., a subjectivised being. The Absolute does not have and cannot have anything "beyond it," for there is nothing outside of it. Here, we are referring to the thinking cognizing (perceiving) the being, on the one hand, and the being cognized (perceived) by thinking.

« 6 » Hegel's central idea, in which he criticizes all possible dualisms of strictly subjectivist philosophical schools, and, therefore, of epistemic pessimism, is that any perception (from the first stage of the process) is proportionate to the reality it is handling, otherwise it would not be able to process anything. How, in essence, is any philosophy of subject developed? There is (supposedly) some reality, which someone or something approaches and perceives / cognizes and, depending on their inherent specifics of perception / cognition, forms their own world ("reality" for themselves). Hegel points out that if the world of the perceiving entity (and, therefore, the perception) was indeed absolutely alien to the world of reality, they would never intersect (even at the point of observation).

« 7 » Hegel's notion can be exemplified as follows. Let us assume that a group of earthlings departs for Mars to study the planet. There is a microscope among their equipment, through which they hope to see Martian germs. But through the microscope from Earth they can see only germs from the planet Earth, while for the observation of Martian germs a special microscope from Mars would be required. In other words, the apparatus of perception is always adapted to the perceived beforehand and in this sense,

the instrument (within the limits of the subject) and the material (an object) are elements of the same reality. In Hegel's word:

“However much we were just supposed to bring the absolute a bit closer to us by means of the instrument and not have the instrument change anything in it at all, perhaps similar to the way we would ensnare a bird on a twig covered in birdlime, the absolute itself would nonetheless almost surely cast scorn on this ruse if it were not both in and for itself already there with us and wanted to be there.” (Hegel 1977: 69)

« 8 » Hegel's conclusions are easy to understand. Since (a) the truth is only in the Absolute (the same as the truth can be only absolute), and since (b) the Absolute is subjective by nature, then (c) our perception is (from the very beginning) an element of reality and, moreover, of the absolute reality, beyond which nothing exists.

« 9 » With this approach, the task of cognition is materially simplified. From now on, we should only be concerned with the task of verification in the full sense of this word, so that all we have to do is to engage in a...

“simple observation because consciousness conducts self-verification. For consciousness is, on the one hand, a realization of an object, and on the other – realization of itself: realization of what is the truth and acknowledgement of the fact of having knowledge of what is the truth is.” (Hegel 1977: 211)

« 10 » Werner mentions Husserl's methodology as an example of PL-metaphysics. I completely agree with him: the similarity of Hegel and Husserl's methodologies is obvious. Phenomenology is a science about the "consciousness-contemplating-essence"; it emphasizes that contemplation should be done with precision, and namely, with a pure description of the contemplated object because that which we actually see is what is present in reality. Husserl's division between perceived and non-perceived (phenomena and noumena) is blurred due to the core phenomenological principle of intentionality. In accordance with this concept, consciousness does not exist until it is engaged by objects, and a subject does not exist until consciousness recognizes it. With such an

approach, cognition turns into contemplation, just as in Hegel's works, or even into a direct recognition of essences, which is successful because a subject is no longer separated from an object by an impermeable wall of its own subjectivity.

Transcendentalism vs. naturalism

« 11 » Does the approach described above mean that there is a real alternative to various subjectivist metaphysics? If so, how well will this approach work for constructivism?

« 12 » Werner proposed basing constructivism on the platform of PL-metaphysics. I, however, think that this would not make much of a difference. In any case, the focus will still be on a subject and it will be linked not so much to the resolution of the issue about the participation of a subject in the development of the world, as to the problem of the subject's blind spot.

« 13 » In this sense, the fundamental difference and even intense opposition between metaphysicians will concern the DL/PL-metaphysics and even more so, transcendentalism / naturalism.

« 14 » Without going too much into details, the difference between naturalism and transcendentalism can be described as follows. Naturalism assumes that the world is completely exhausted by that which is given, and that everything given is epistemically accessible. In contrast, transcendentalism postulates that the world is created such that the given is always a result or a consequence of some system requirements (which I call "constructs" below) for the organization of reality, which themselves do not belong to this reality and cannot be found in it: that through which reality is created is not a part of it.

« 15 » Plato's concepts of beauty, courage, fairness, etc., Aristotle's categories of essence, quality, quantity, etc., Immanuel Kant's categories of space and time, etc., are examples of such *constructs* (which are also sometimes called "transcendental forms" in classical philosophy). In more recent contexts, Wittgenstein approached this topic more closely than others, having identified the laws of logic, values, subject and sense as being transcendental. There are other possible similar constructs, but they should be introduced and justified separately. There-

fore, in this text, I limit myself to only the well-known examples from the history of philosophy and a description of the common underlying theoretical principle.

« 16 » It is important to understand that the rule described in §14 above works regardless of who or what plays the role of the creator of the existing reality. If the world is somehow set, fundamental constructs of this setting will not belong to the world, at least under the same conditions under which exists that which is generated by constructs. The constructive flip side of the world will not be a part of the world and cannot not be found in the world.

« 17 » At the same time, it is important that these constructs are not something uncognized or unrevealed. Indeed, on the contrary, they are given explicitly and we are well aware of them; they are mostly strictly functional and operational (the essence of a construct); they can be operated, but cannot be recognized subjectively (objectified), which (if it were possible) would allow them to be spoken about from a third-party view or make them universally observable.

« 18 » And it is not compulsory to connect this organizing activity with a subject as is traditionally done in different versions of philosophy of subject: (a) transcendentalism of the Kantian type established a link between the system requirements for the formation of reality and a subject, but this link is not mandatory; (b) in Plato or Wittgenstein's philosophic teachings, system requirements are not linked to a subject; instead, they are non-biased terms of the existence of the world, and just not manifested in it. Those are, for example, Wittgenstein's logic and Plato's values. They represent those constructs through which and in which the world comes to existence, but they lie beyond this world just the same as other objects or facts. The core concept of transcendentalism, which can be represented in the versions of dual ontology (Kantian transcendentalism) and homogeneous ontology (Plato's transcendentalism), is reflected in this statement. Objective knowledge about these constructs cannot be formed; they cannot be defined (Plato); we cannot define them verbally, but can show them (Wittgenstein).

« 19 » The constructs we are talking about always answer the question "how,"

and not the question "what." In this case, we are talking about two levels of description of reality: objective and non-objective ontology from the first and the third party views (Baker 2011), facts and values, sentences, and the laws of logic (Wittgenstein 1921).

« 20 » Related to this, Wittgenstein quoted the famous metaphor of an eye, which does not see itself when observing something:

“Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?

You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do *not* really see the eye.

And from nothing *in the field of sight* can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye.” (Wittgenstein 1922: 5.633)

« 21 » We can reinforce this metaphor with one simple example: a movie technician who shows a movie in the movie theater cannot appear in the movie as one of its characters or participants, just as we cannot see the flammable film and watch the movie at the same time. In other words, the rules in compliance with which the world is organized are not present in the world itself.

« 22 » When we speak about the difference between branches of metaphysics, perhaps the difference between approaches used in transcendentalism and naturalism would be very important with respect to epistemological possibilities of metaphysics, since this distinction determines epistemic optimism from the pessimism of a specific metaphysics program.

« 23 » Now, if we apply these “tools,” it will be clear that Hegel's metaphysics, though representing a PL model, is closer to naturalism than transcendentalism (see also Friedrich Hayek 1952 regarding the proximity of Hegel's philosophy and positivism). That has to do with the fact that Hegel's Absolute features a unique ability in self-reflection: it is able to cognize not only that which is present in the world, being the result of its cognition, but also the mechanism of own cognition.

« 24 » In contrast, Plato and Wittgenstein's philosophies – though also representing the PL model – are more an example of transcendentalism because Plato's categories (beauty, fairness, courage, etc.) and Wittgen-

stein's language/logic are examples of constructs that, though explicitly participating in the process of organization of reality, are not present in it as objects of cognition.

Conclusion

« 25 » Based on my argumentation so far, I claim that depending on which program of metaphysics constructivism is based on, constructivism will maintain its epistemic positions, characterized by certain degree of epistemic pessimism. Whether it will be the dualistic ontology of Rene Descartes's type (DL-metaphysics), or the homogeneous Plato-Wittgenstein's (PL-metaphysics) type, constructivism will maintain its transcendental vector to the extent to which transcendentalism itself successfully collocates with both ontologies (or metaphysics, in Werner's terminology).

« 26 » Even if we are talking about PL-metaphysics, embodying Hegel's principle of identity of a subject and substance, in application to constructivism, the existence of such an integer will still depend on the presence of certain cognitive non-understanding of one's own mechanism of operation.

« 27 » Concerning this matter, constructivism, which regards the world as a certain system, would most probably consider various restrictions of the self-referential type. Here we are talking about difficulties of self-reference in the spirit of Kurt Gödel's theorem of incompleteness (Gödel 1931), although Alfred Tarski (1968), Bertrand Russell (1905) and Wittgenstein (1921) also vigorously developed this intuition, while Niklas Luhmann (1990) did it in contexts similar to constructivism. Consistent and complete self-reference of the system within the boundaries of its continuous self is fundamentally impossible. A system is always either contradictory or incomplete if it attempts to cognize itself (its construct applying its own “tools”).

« 28 » It appears that incompleteness of our knowledge about the world is a systemic failure of knowledge, required for a successful functioning of the system and we reproduce it autopoietically.

« 29 » Consequently, the statement about the non-transparency of a system's own settings is fundamental for constructivism, and it can be applied to both the DL- and PL-metaphysics. Thus, I absolutely

agree with Konrad Werner that constructivism may very well be supplemented by PL-metaphysics; however, what I am proposing is that such a metaphysics by itself does not add epistemological optimism to constructivism.

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Diana Gasparyan has held fellowships in the Department of Philosophy at M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University. Currently she works at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. She has a PhD and holds an Associate Professor of Philosophy position. In 2009–2010, she was a visiting Professor at Clark University (Massachusetts) within the Fulbright Program. Her webpages are at: <http://www.hse.ru/en/org/persons/66551> and <https://suhse.academia.edu/DianaGasparyan>

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Author's Response Subjects, Worlds and (PL-) Metaphysics – What Is It All about?

Konrad Werner

> Upshot • My principal goal in this response is to reintroduce my understanding of metaphysics, which turned out – as I have learned from almost all of the commentaries – to be problematic, to say the least. Having done this, I will be able to address some of the most topical remarks provided by commentators, thereby further clarifying and also modifying my position.

«1» I am deeply thankful for all the commentaries. There are two major points of criticism toward my target article. One finds fault with my attempts to employ

metaphysics (a) within the philosophical accounts of perception, and (b) in the realism–constructivism debate. The other consists of intriguing suggestions and reflections that broaden my perspective on the possible correlations between the PL-metaphysics perspective and other, sometimes even surprising, areas of thought.

General remarks on metaphysics

«2» In order to respond some of the criticism regarding the employment of metaphysics, I will recapitulate and clarify my attitude toward and understanding of metaphysics.

«3» I shall start from the worry expressed by **Peter Gaitisch** pertaining to my use of the word “world.” Following Marcus Gabriel (2015a, 2015b), he writes that “we cannot trust in any metaphysical notion of the world at all” (§4). In response, let me refer first to the footnote that I made in the initial steps of my reflection. I do not link “world” and “subject” to any particular philosophical position: “I simply need these notions, taken in their usual senses, to introduce the philosophical issue” (§1). Therefore, as I pointed out in §9, “world” is “defined osensively: it refers to the realm of ordinary things around me.” Here we touch on quite a profound issue, namely the question of a relationship between our everyday experience (or “folk psychology”) on the one hand, and sophisticated considerations undertaken by philosophers and scientists on the other. Let me outline an example from the philosophy of perception: Howard Robinson singles out the principle laid down in the early 20th century sense-data theories (ensuing from Locke’s and Hume’s empiricism, although not endorsed there explicitly), i.e., the Phenomenal Principle: “If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality” (Robinson 1994: 32). Although the principle can be thought of in many ways (and I disagree with almost all things that sense-data theoreticians have built up on this basis), one thing is central there: if I am *faced with* something in my everyday perception, then it is the job of a theory of perception to deal with *it* instead of replacing it with items having no phenomenal aspects at all (such

as propositional contents). In other words, even these highly abstract (philosophical) or scientifically sophisticated stories of perception must take care of their links *with the plain fact* known to all folk, that in everyday perception they (indeed *we*) have *the world in view*.

«4» The notion of the world as I use it in the initial paragraphs of my target article is immersed precisely in this “folk” recognition of something’s *being in view*. What is it exactly? That is another question.

«5» Having the world in view, the question arises: What can we do with it? Following the distinguished tradition of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1934) and Rudolf Carnap (1950), among many others, we can – in fact we should – capture this view with some conceptual frameworks. Now, as I pointed out in §§8f, provided these frameworks are set forth, there are – as Carnap (1950) proposed – internal questions (thus answers as well) of science and external questions of philosophy. The latter should be abandoned, says Carnap. This is the place where I can reintroduce my approach toward metaphysics. Being inspired by Roman Ingarden (1964), Jerzy Perzanowski (1990, 2004), Sebastian Tomasz Kołodziejczyk (2006, 2009), Kit Fine (2012b), and Nicholas Rescher (2008), among others, I claim that there is a discipline whose objective is not so much to break the limits of conceptual frameworks, thus to get out of the world captured and constrained by them (in conjunction with all other cognitive factors); not so much to get a glimpse of reality *an sich*, but rather to problematize the most general *architecture* of this conceptually constrained world. By “architecture,” I mean the basic setup of items imposed by such pairs as the Aristotelian ones: matter–form, actual–potential, simple–complex; by such categories as substance, object, process, fact, event, relation, etc. This discipline is called ontology, and metaphysics is a special part of it. Rescher puts it aptly:

“Since categories are correlative with questions they delineate and canalize our efforts to secure information. They provide the conceptual frame of reference in terms of which we pose our questions about the nature of things – the cognitive scaffolding we employ in erecting our view of the world, or some sector thereof. ‘To think is to