

What Can the Global Observer Know?

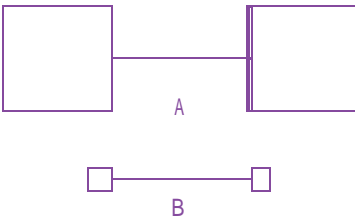
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> Context • The detection of objective reality, truth, and lies are still heated topics in epistemology. When discussing these topics, philosophers often resort to certain thought experiments, engaging an important concept that can be broadly identified as “the global observer.” It relates to Putnam’s God’s Eye, Davidson’s Omniscient Interpreter, and the ultimate observer in quantum physics, among others. **> Problem** • The article explores the notion of the global observer as the guarantor of the determinability and configuration of events in the world. It analyzes the consistency of the notion “global observer” from the standpoint of logic and philosophy, and discusses why application of this notion in some contexts poses challenges and appears to be paradoxical. **> Method** • The paper uses conceptual methods of argumentation, such as logical (deduction) and philosophical (phenomenology) kinds of proof. Its key approach is the engagement of thought experiments. **> Results** • The notion of a global observer is incoherent: “being global” and “being an observer” appear to be incompatible features. It is claimed that from the standpoint of global observation, there are no events occurring in the world. Furthermore, the indefiniteness of the world as a whole is asserted, which is related to the uninformedness of the global observer regarding the “true state of affairs.” “Global observation” turns out to be incompatible with the concept of the observer, blocking, as a result, the opportunity for a determinable configuration of events. It only makes sense to discuss local observations, which are limited to mutual observation or introspections, and not to assume the existence of some absolute truth, reality, or the state of affairs beyond the local observations. **> Constructivist content** • The article emphasizes the role of the observer and observation. It opens up some problematic consequences of the core philosophical assumptions of globally observing existence. Referring to von Foerster’s and Luhmann’s idea that we can only speak reasonably about local observations, the paper argues that reality is neither external to nor independent of the observer. **> Implications** • The paper could be productive for epistemic theories, theories of quantum physics, and theories of non-classical logic. **> Key words** • Global observer, ultimate observer, omniscient observer, ideal observer, omniscient interpreter, local observer, limited observer, event, truth.

“All cats are grey in the dark, but in complete darkness, they are not even grey.”
Martin Gardner (2009)

Introduction

« 1 » In this well known picture¹



line B seems much longer than the line A, but then we realize that we are wrong – the length of the lines is exactly the same. We have all seen optical effects many times in our lives and each time we would discover

1 | The Baldwin Illusion (Baldwin 2000: 247)

that it was just an illusion. But the inertia of perception cannot be helped – if something seems to be obvious, we easily accept it without an analysis. It takes more reasoning for an illusion to be dispelled. And the task I have set for myself is of this kind.

« 2 » In the research that follows, I will try to show some logical and epistemic contradictions associated with the concept of the global observer. To do that, I will first demonstrate in great detail why and in what context a need for this concept arises in the course of knowledge acquisition and why this concept appeals to our mind in its rational thinking. Then, I will criticize the concept and try to display its downsides.

« 3 » Ultimately, my research into the issue can come in handy to show that we can only speak intelligently about local observations (which, in their acquisition of knowledge about the world, may resort to mutual observations or introspections; Foerster 1981b; Luhmann 1990), and that the assumption of the presence of some absolute

truth (or state of affairs) remains beyond their (local observations’) boundaries.

« 4 » The concept of the “global observer” (and I intend to use the term “global,” though other descriptions – “ultimate,” “omniscient,” “ideal,” and “universal” – are also legitimate and are used throughout the works on similar topics) should be somewhat clarified. To start with, it should be pointed out that the concept itself is not far-fetched or made up. On the other hand, it is unquestionably abstract to certain degree. Thus, it would be justified to define it as a concept that integrates those assumptions and ideas that our mind refers to in certain circumstances, for example, when it conceives some intellectual constructions, be they theories or reasoning. We can call this concept “functional” because it describes our activities when we mentally assess some situations. It is another point that we often refer to it unconsciously. Therefore, one of the objectives of the present research is to filter this concept and analyze it.

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1 « 5 » Let us first reveal in what philo-
2 sophical, scientific, etc. contexts this notion
3 is used operationally.

4 « 6 » First of all, the notion of the glob-
5 al observer is used throughout discourses
6 related to such areas of philosophy as epis-
7 temology (Davidson 2001b), in particular,
8 when addressing the problem of substanti-
9 ation or refuting epistemic skepticism, spe-
10 cifically, radical skepticism (Klein 1982).
11 At some point, Donald Davidson initiated
12 an extensive discussion, introducing the
13 concept of the “omniscient interpreter”
14 (Janssens & van Brakel 1990; Silcox 2007;
15 Ward 1989; Brueckner 1999; Manning
16 1995; Goldberg 2003). He appeals to the
17 intelligibility of an omniscient interpreter
18 in order to undercut the traditional skepti-
19 cal contention that human beings may have
20 a coherent system of beliefs that are com-
21 prehensively false about the actual world
22 (Ward 1989). As Donald Davidson says:
23

24 “ [I]t is plain why massive error about the world 25
is simply unintelligible, for to suppose it intelli-26 gible is
to suppose there could be an interpreter 27 (the
omniscient one) who correctly interpreted 28 someone
else as being massively mistaken, and 29 this [is]

impossible.” (Davidson 1977: 201)

30

31 This argument against the skeptic lies at
32 the center of Davidson’s claim that using
33 the coherence of beliefs (sentences held
34 true) as a test of truth allows us to “be re-
35 alists in all departments” (Davidson 2001a:
36 307). Specifically, Davidson contends that
37 with the acceptance of coherence as a test
38 of truth:
39

40 “ [W]e can accept objective truth condition as
41 the key to meaning, a realist view of truth, and we
42 can insist that knowledge is of an objective world
43 independent of our thought or language” (Da-
44 vidson 1977: 301).
45

46 Therefore the goal of the omniscient inter-
47 preter argument is to link the coherence of
48 beliefs with knowledge of “an objective pub-
49 lic world which is not of our own making”
50 (Genova 1999: 38).

51 « 7 » We can also see references
made
52 to this concept in other discussions on epis-
53 temology, covering topics closely related to
54 philosophy of science: specifically, in dis-
55 cussions of realism and the status of some

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fundamental philosophical premises of sci-
ence (Putnam 1990). For example, Hilary
Putnam extensively uses such a concept as
the “God’s Eye” in his works. He states that,
“the idea of the “God’s Eye” has affected
theology, philosophy, psychology and cul-
ture on the whole...” (Putnam 1990: 132).
According to scientific realism, the aim of
science is to discover the truth about both
observable and unobservable aspects of the
mind-independent, objective reality, which
we inhabit. It has been objected by Putnam
and others that such a metaphysically real-ist
position presupposes a God’s Eye point of
view, of which no coherent sense can be
made. Actually, this is a dream image of a
perfect whole picture of the universe, the
image that an ultimate, omniscient scient-
ist-observer could see. This concept stems from
Newton’s classical mechanics and, in some
sense, persists, even in some interpretations
of quantum physics, although the majority of
quantum physics theorists believe that only
local observations can be relied on and that
global ones should be disregarded (Putnam
1990). According to Putnam, the issue of the
“God’s Eye” arises in the area of logic as
well, specifically in the attempt to finalize
(create an ultimate) meta-language by in-
corporating in it all its thinkable levels. But
due to the known paradoxes of meta-lan-
guage (Gödel, Tarski, Russell), this turns out
to be an unattainable task. In the end, Put-
nam himself claims that man cannot have a
“God’s Eye” view of reality. He is limited to
his conceptual schemes. According to Put-
nam, metaphysical realism is therefore false.
“There is no God’s Eye point of view that we
can know or usefully imagine” but only “the
various points of view of actual person re-
flecting various interests that their theories
and descriptions subserve” (Putnam 1990:
145).

« 8 » It is noteworthy that scientists also
resort to the hypothesis of the global con-
sciousness. Laplace’s demon is a classical
example of a global observer. It possesses ul-
timate knowledge and is able to perceive the
precise location and momentum of every
atom in the universe at any given moment
and to envisage its past and future values.
“We may regard the present state of the uni-
verse as the effect of its past and the cause of
its future,” wrote Laplace in his “Essai phi-
losophique sur les probabilités”:

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“ An intellect which at a certain moment would 1
know all forces that set nature in motion, and all 2
positions of all items of which nature is composed, 3
if this intellect were also vast enough to submit 4
these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single 5
formula the movements of the greatest bodies of 6
the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such 7
an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the 8
future just like the past would be present before its 9
eyes.” (Laplace 1951: 4f)

10

11
12 « 9 » This concept was, and in many
13 respects still is, extremely important for sci-
14 ence. First of all, in Laplace’s thought experi-
15 ment, the ultimate observance of what occurs
16 in nature appears as the principle of the ulti-
17 mate controllability of nature, its compliance
18 with perpetual, permanent laws. Secondly, a
19 number of outcomes that are significant for
20 science evolved from this principle, e.g., the
21 development of determinism, which one can
22 either accept or attempt to challenge.

23 « 10 » Speaking next about the modern
24 sciences, they have recently been referring
25 to the hypothesis of the global consciousness
26 more eagerly, even when interpreting quan-
27 tum physics. However, when they do, they
28 imply a type of global consciousness that
29 would be responsible for the generation of
30 events in the universe, namely, a global col-
31 lapse of the wave function. (Zeh 2000, 2003).
32 Zeh (2000) provides a mature review of the
33 problem of conscious observation:
34

35 “ The true physical carrier of consciousness 36
somewhere in the brain may still represent an ex- 37
ternal observer system, with whom they have to 38
interact in order to be perceived. Regardless of 39
whether the *ultimate observer* systems are quasi- 40
classical or possess essential quantum aspects, 41
consciousness can only be related to factor states 42
that appear in branches of the global wave func- 43
tion – provided the Schrodinger equation is ex- 44
act.” (Zeh 2000: 222)

45

46 « 11 » The “global observer” concept is
47 directly connected to the important logical
48 and philosophical category of omniscience
49 – a concept in its own right. The notion of
50 omniscience, actively used in epistemology,
51 refers to the agent of knowledge (observ-
52 ing subject), be it God or ultimate intellect
53 (for example, an omniscient rational agent
54 in Bayesian confirmation theory; Bovens &
55 Hartmann 2003).

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« 12 » For the most part, such discussions relate to the contexts of analytic theology (Swinburne 1993; Grim & Plantinga 1993). One of the key philosophical instantiations of the concept of the global observer is, of course, the concept of the Christian God. At the same time, the majority of philosophical contexts refer only to the logical constituent of the concept, disregarding its religious aspect – thus, speedily transplanting the issue of the global observer (specifically, the issue of the omniscience) from the realm of theology to the realm of logic. One of the logical problems related to the definition of God – namely His ability to hold and unite different points of view (points of view of local agents) (Grin 1985) – will be addressed in the conclusion of this paper.

« 13 » However, discourses concerning omniscience are tightly knit with a number of purely logical, aka epistemological paradoxes (Grim 1985; Chisholm 1976; Castañeda 1967). One of the major issues here is the use of logical omniscience. This paradox arises when modal logic is applied. In modal logic, the provability of a statement implies its indispensability, and the indispensability of some statements implies the indispensability of some other statements that, in fact, originate from the initial statements. Then it turns out that that by possessing the knowledge of some statements, a subject acquiring knowledge can draw logical conclusions. The paradox of omniscience would then narrow down to the acknowledgement of the fact that a subject of knowledge, at any given time, knows everything that stems from his knowledge (Stalnaker 1991).

« 14 » In addition, the concept of logical omniscience (Stalnaker 1991) or theoretical omniscience² is often connected with the notion of the ultimate agent. This peculiarity has to do with the contexts concerned with the development of logical omniscience. For example, in game theory they expand on the subject of appropriate choice – here, the choice is made by a rational agent that ideally should be omniscient. Another example is in probability theories, where an omniscient agent, aware

of all possible probabilities, which, strictly speaking, are no longer probabilities, is introduced (Laplace's demon was the first such omniscient agent). Knowers or believers are *logically omniscient* if they know or believe all of the consequences of their knowledge or beliefs. That is, x is a logically omniscient believer (knower) if and only if the set of all of the propositions believed (known) by x is closed under logical consequence (Stalnaker 1991). A model of a logically omniscient knower is also used in possible worlds semantics analysis (Hintikka) and probability theories. According to this analysis, x knows that P if and only if P is true in all epistemically possible worlds. Epistemic models using this kind of analysis have been widely applied by theoretical computer scientists studying distributed systems (in multi-agent systems), and by economists studying game theory. According to semantic models for epistemic logic, this analysis implies that knowers are logically omniscient (Hintikka & Halonen 1998). At the same time, according to some models in game theory or in probability theories, because all logical truths in any probability function must receive probability one, and because any logical consequences of a proposition P must receive at least as great a probability as P (at least if one holds fixed the context in which probability assessments are made, as in rational decision making), any use of probability theory to represent the beliefs and partial beliefs of an agent will face a version of the problem of logical omniscience.

« 15 » And finally, in the areas of ethics and meta-ethics, we come across the concept of the “ultimate observer,” which is based on the same notion as the concept of the global observer.

« 16 » According to the ultimate observer theory:

- Ethical sentences express propositions.
- Some such propositions are true.
- These propositions are about the attitudes of a hypothetical *ideal observer* (Firth 1964).

“The main idea of the ideal observer theory is that ethical terms should be defined after the pattern of the following example: ‘ x is better than y ’ means ‘If anyone were, in respect of x and y , fully informed and vividly imaginative, impartial, in

a calm frame of mind and otherwise normal, he would prefer x to y .’” (Brandt 1959: 173)

In this case, the ultimate observer should also be endowed with ethical values to be able to judge which ethical statements are true, therefore, the agent is, at the same time, an epistemic agent.

« 17 » So, as could be seen from the review, a number of philosophical and scientific contexts engage the concept of the “omniscient agent.” In one way or another, all these approaches appeal (either in the assertive or critical manner) to some agent – a bearer of supreme, whole and ultimate knowledge. In summary, this agent could be called the ideal, universal, omniscient observer, who I will choose to call the “global observer.” Certainly, it would hardly be possible to come up with a unified, universal concept of the global observer that is equally suitable for all philosophical and scientific contexts.

« 18 » Thus, the objective of the present research paper is to identify just some of the most important features involved in the development of this concept and to zoom in on them. Therefore, first, I will closely follow the line of reasoning behind the concept of the global observer, and then I will provide my critical comments.

« 19 » To complete my task, I will use certain approaches and ideas typical of the contexts found in constructivist epistemology. I expect application of this technique to help me to achieve my objectives because this technique offers a number of effective tools that help to demonstrate the flaws of the concept of the global observer. Thus, I will concentrate on that method of critical analysis of the global observer that can be found in the works of some theorists of constructive epistemology. I will pay special attention to concepts of “observations” and “objectivity” (e.g., the way Heinz von Foerster addresses them). By applying some ideas developed by him and by other constructivists, I will attempt to reveal why it is reasonable to resort only to local observations, leaving out the issue of external (in relation to these observations (objective) reality.

« 20 » First, we should point out that most people would agree that independently of whether or not we know the real state

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of affairs regarding a certain matter, the matter nevertheless exists.³ This is one of the most convincing cognitive intuitions and it is rather difficult to prove its ambiguity.

« 21 » If it occurred to someone as a joke to count the number of grapes harvested last summer in the province of Champagne, we would most likely dissuade him of such a whim. Here we would be guided by the notion that success in an undertaking of this kind is *practically* unattainable. Yet we would also understand full well that although the exact number of grapes might in principle be indeterminable for a single observer, this number is absolutely determinable for a global observer. Even if we do not know this, it is clear that last year, in the province of Champagne, a concrete and finite number of grapes were harvested; they were not counted by the local observer, but they were “counted” by the global observer (Brentano 1966).

« 22 » For example, this would have been the case for Laplace’s demon due to the knowledge he possessed of all physical and mathematical parameters, which could lead only to a specific result. In the same way, we also cannot guess what the present constellation of stars might be at a specific point in the Universe, yet remain convinced that this constellation is completely definite. The concept of the “God’s eye,” which Putnam critically observes, is responsible for our confidence in this specificity, and, in particular, that a subject holds this knowledge and that any of us can refer to it in the course of our cognitive activities. We cannot know which card will come third from the top in a pack of cards, yet we are certain that it will be a specific, concrete card, and so forth. For example, in the case of “logical omniscience,” the disposition of any element in the multitude is defined as being fixed, and we can always mentally refer to an omniscient subject that holds the knowledge of the entire sequence of elements in the multitude.

« 23 » The world might be understood as follows: if a certain portion of its facts (events) cannot be determined or observed by a finite observer, we infer that they are completely specific and concrete, regardless of the lacunae in local observation. For ex-

3 | Presumably, this statement does not include quantum physics.

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ample, they often refer to reasoning in the sense of Laplace’s model to prove determinism in the universe (Bishop 2002). In doing this, we make a certain unclear assumption about the course of global observation. For the world on the whole there is nothing undetermined or unknown: the world is absolutely transparent to itself. It is rather complicated to assume that indeterminacy might be so pervasive beyond the bounds of local observation; otherwise, the very meaning of determinacy (knowledge) would be lost. If there is no one (including the global observer) who does not know how many grapes were gathered during a harvest, then it makes no sense even to talk about such ignorance. The only sensible conclusion one could make about indeterminacy (always local) would refer to a certain global determinacy. One may know what is, one way or another, known, just as one may only determine that which is already determinate. This is connected to the fact that, despite various “points of view,” it might be presumed that there is one truth and that the world is fixed and definite (Vision 2004). If we no longer implied such a situation, then it might be possible not even to try (in some cases when we needed it, let say in court) to mold heterogeneous data into a single version. Yet for it to be realizable, it should be assumed that there exists a system of observation that configures the correct event into a whole (Lombard 1986). However, despite the vigour of such implicit assumptions, they are not self-evident and can be challenged, as I will show below.

« 24 » A similar, intuitive belief, with which all our judgments about the world are infused, is conditioned by the fact that inherent in the concept of truth is the idea of the subject-observer, who steps into the role of a transcendental guarantor (the philosophical God, the ultimate observer, the omniscient subject). A “global observer” is some mental construct that characterizes our perception of the world. Here we are talking about some idea that underlies certain stereotypical concepts about the existence of the world. Despite the inconsistency of this idea (which will be discussed below), it has certain strong points, determining some stereotypical mental concepts not only in relation to the world but also in terms of the logical concept of the truth. This, in turn, is con-

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nected with the notion that the attribution of truthfulness is always bound to a certain event (or fact), which we speak of as the correlate of confirmation, for only confirmation can be true or false (Armstrong 1997). The understanding of an event (or fact) involves a concept of truthfulness or falseness, but the concept of truthfulness or falseness is meaningless without an event. In this case, “an event” is construed as a certain situation – something that is happening or not happening and that corresponds to a certain statement that can be either true or false. It seems that the mind appeals to the intuition of the global observer in connection with the above pattern of thinking. Below I will try to expand on the idea that, contrary to the inherent persuasiveness of this intuition, it contains an internal contradiction. But first, let us see what initiates this intuition. In a sense, it is difficult to declare this intuition as superfluous or artificial, because our mind actively resorts to it every time it believes that some situation will persist, even in the absence of a local observation. This is because we consider the notion of truth to be a purely *epistemic* concept – it makes sense in a situation when we say that knowledge corresponds with certain situation. If “x” thinks that there is “y,” and if there happens indeed to be “y,” we believe that this statement is “true,” and if otherwise, that the statement is “false.” Correspondence, in turn, implies participation of two parties in a process: an object of knowledge and an agent of knowledge. And it is the idea of the

agent of knowledge that takes the place of the global observer when we talk about the truth that we have no other means to prove.

Therefore, the notion of a global observer symbolizes the idea of an agent of knowledge that makes the statement about the truth meaningful. In this sense, this concept could be replaced with another word or term, but cannot be rejected as a concept.

« 25 » There is another formal argument that promotes the introduction of a global observer specifically as some subject or agent. One might object to the introduction of a global observer-agent, appealing to the fact that there is no need to complicate the matter and that one idea of a global observer – the idea that, despite the lack of local observations, the world remains unchanged – is already sufficient. Strictly speaking,

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1 the idea of global observation contains the
2 same contradiction as the idea of a global
3 observer, and the introduction of a global
4 observer is not critical to demonstrating the
5 contradiction. However, in a strictly logical
6 sense, global observation requires an agent
7 to conduct such an observation, as observa-
8 tion without an observer, as well as knowl-
9 edge without someone who possesses this
10 knowledge, is pointless.

11 « 26 » In addition, to point out why 12
some philosophers specifically refer to the 13
global observer (subject, agent) and not 14 just
to the global observation, the following 15
reasons might be presented. For illustration 16
purposes, let us assume that the global ob-17
server is the global witness, specifically the 18
one able to appear in court as a witness. I 19
also take as a premise that in our cognitive 20
constructions we often use the notion of 21 the
global witness even when the situation 22 is not
concerned with legal proceedings. 23 Let me
explain what I mean. Let us assume 24 that in a
course of investigation of a legal 25 case the
judge interviews several witnesses 26 and they
all give different and incomplete 27 testimonies.
It is rather challenging to deal 28 with such
insufficient information, but the 29 judge is
trying his best to create a complete 30 and
objective picture of the occurrence by 31 putting
together tiny bits of information 32 delivered by
the witnesses. In doing so, 33 the judge acts as if
trying to engage some 34 *ultimate witness*, able
to produce a precise 35 account of the incident.
Such a witness, 36 and basically it is a
collective witness be-

304 37 cause it is expected to possess knowledge
38 of every account of the incident any pos-39
sible witness, who saw it from a different 40
angle and point of view, can produce. But 41
why is it that when we mentally process 42
such a situation we do not always restrict 43
our imagination to the images produced by 44
the camera, but instead rely on the ultimate 45
observer? The answer is simple – we under-46
stand that the camera will see only through 47
the eyes of a witness or other experts. But 48
can they be impartial and make a recording 49
of what actually happened? A camera can 50
record something only if a person operates 51
it. Since a recording is useless until *some*-52
one watches it, we see how the idea of the 53
camera gradually transforms into the idea 54
of *someone* that has access to the record-55
ing. As soon as we get a hold of the camera,

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it stops being just a camera and turns into
the *eye of someone watching the recording*.
However, we prefer the eye to be *impartial*,
i.e., perfect. This is how we arrive at the
concept of the “ultimate,” or “global observ-
er,” which is, in fact, the ultimate witness.
Had we not had this notion, we, perhaps,
would have not tried to get the true picture of
the incident (and tell it to judges), as we
would have thought that the truth be-comes a
reality only when no one perceives it, when
there are no witnesses. We would have
believed that the truth is the same as the
camera, recording the incident on its own and
that nobody can ever know what is truly
happening. But in so far as we do not believe
that, we do not limit ourselves with the
concept of the observations (cam-era
recording) but resort to the concept of the
subject-observer (ultimate witness that saw
the incident in its entirety).

Global observation for local events: Qualitative and quantitative limitations

« 27 » Thus, the most important argu-
ment in favor of introducing a global observ-
er is the event-based interpretation of the
world. The simplest “element” of the world is
a condition or event (a certain state of af-fairs
or a relationship).⁴ Even a limited simpli-
fication of the world (a reduction to the
elementary) does not permit us to discover
elements within the foundation of the world
that are neutral (*i.e.*, lying outside a deter-
minate type of set), but only some of their
configuration. To substantiate this thesis we
may show that in our attempt to extract an

4 | This is practically what Wittgenstein called
a configuration of objects (“the world con-sists of
facts, not of things,” Wittgenstein 1961: §1.1). This
position has traditionally been enough for classical
metaphysics, in part because Aristo-telian ontology
also evinces a preference for the primacy of facts
and not things, since substances (things) are not
given in their pure form but al-ways limited by the
remaining nine categories (quality, quantity,
relation, doing, being affected, and so forth). When
we speak of a substance (thing), we are also obliged
to say what happens to it and we cannot separate a
substance from how it comes into being (Ross
1928).

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element from a configuration, another con- 1
figuration must be formed in which the ele- 2
ment would be located, and that, in reality, 3
elements never exist beyond the limits of a 4
configuration (Wilson 1974).⁵ Therefore, the 5
most basic element in the world would be 6
a condition or an event, and, in turn, there 7
should be an observer to accompany the 8
event, or to be part of it. 9

« 28 » This interpretation of observa- 10
tion, in its general characteristics, is close 11
to the ideas of epistemological construc- 12
tivism.⁶ Constructivism is an approach 13
in the theory of knowledge in which it is 14
considered that a person (observer) does 15
not reflect the surrounding world but ac- 16
tively creates and builds it in the processes 17
of perception and thinking (Poerksen 2004; 18
Rockmore 2005; Glaserfeld 1990). Obser- 19
vation in this case is understood not as a 20
passive, but as an active process. The real- 21
ity is not external to the observer and is not 22
independent of him/her; it is created in the 23
process of interaction (*e.g.*, in the process of 24
communication: linguistic, cognitive or so- 25
cial), and an observer is also shaped in the 26

5 | The traditional objection to such an ap- 28
proach may be Leibniz’s well-known argument: “a 29
compound is nothing but a collection or aggre- 30
gate of simple things” (Leibniz 2002). I leave this 31
old metaphysical debate between the adherents of 32
the ontology of things and the ontology of events 33
in brackets, because an examination of these ar- 34
guments of one or the other side would lead us to 35
digress. Moreover, as I understand it, for a dem- 36
onstration of the ideas mentioned here, it is not 37
so important which side we might join (although 38
within the framework of the ontology of events,
these ideas are substantiated far more clearly). 39
Even if the world were composed of things and 40
not events, we would still need the traditional ad- 41
dendum of subject-observer, as the author of the 42
determinacy of a thing. 43

6 | This approach has been developed in var- 44
ious subjects by different authors: by Jean Piaget 45
in genetic epistemology or psychology of child 46
development, by Heinz von Foerster in systems 47
theory and cybernetics, by Gregory Bateson in 48
anthropology, by Ulric Neisser in psychology of 49
perception, by Paul Watzlawick in psychotherapy, 50
by Ernst von Glasersfeld in cognitive psychology, 51
by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in 52
neuroscience and cognitive science, by Niklas 53
Luhmann in sociology and politics and by Bern- 54
hard Poerksen in ethics. Other versions also exist. 55

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process. It is important that neither one of the two precedes the other. It is meaningless to talk about the reality prior to the observation (“Objectivity is a subject’s delusion that observing can be done without him,” Poerksen 2004: 148) and it is pointless to envision an observer before his/her meeting with the reality (Foerster & Poerksen 2002). In a sense, observation is a process that shapes both “the field of the observer” and “the pole of the observed.” Here, neither of the participants plays the leading role, but they refer to each other, forming a creative circle and undergoing a process of co-evolution (Foerster 1984; Segal 1986).

« 29 » If a system of observation is necessary for the constataion⁷ of an individual event, then in the absence of a local observer it could be assumed to be a global observer – a guarantor of the determinacy of the event (Frank 2009). Local indeterminacy (no one saw who committed a murder) transformed into global (this in principle is unknown) may turn into a genuine epistemological catastrophe since we cannot assume a fact-based indeterminacy of the world. Since there cannot be an observable without an observer and in the event that all local observers are unavailable, we are tempted to say that the reality, in their absence, is “non-existent.” To avoid that, in a number of philosophical contexts they (local observers) are substituted with a global (ultimate) observer, in the presence of which objects and events remain “existent,” i.e., certain. One such classical argument was the argument of George Berkeley about the existence of God, who serves as a guarantor of existence of all things (Berkeley 1957). But in some contexts in modern science, specifically, in quantum mechanics, we can encounter reasoning referring to some global guarantor of the determinability of an event, in particular, the ultimate observer, ensuring a wave collapse at the global level (Richmond 2009; Lockwood 1996).

« 30 » Consequently, an absolutely informed instance of observation should be introduced, which would, first of all, guarantee the determinacy of the world and, second,

7 | The Collins English Dictionary (2003 edition) defines “constatation” as “a statement or an assertion [from Latin *constat* it is certain; see *constant*].”

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ond, constitute a criterion of local verification of the known against the unknown.⁸

« 31 » By truth I mean that state of affairs that might be registered by the global observer. In this sense, the limit of the procedure of the ascertainment of truthfulness will be this appeal to a belief (in the existence of a global observer). Strictly speaking, the fact that it can be registered also means that it must be and will be registered, but to maintain the idea of truth, to which we often refer, the very existence of such a possibility would be sufficient, i.e., if a certain state of affairs may be registered by a global observer, then it exists, even in the absence of a local observer.

« 32 » If the system of global observation is directly connected to our understandings of truth and fact, then I must separately show why an event requires the participation of a local observer. From the standpoint of different approaches, this connection might seem apparent, e.g., as von Foerster puts it:

“After this [Einstein’s relativity theory and Heisenberg’s absolute uncertainty], we are now in the possession of the truism that a description (of the universe) implies one who describes it

(observes it).” (Foerster 1981a: 258)

« 33 » But we can also try to bring in some philosophical arguments, supporting a fundamental correlation of the observer and the event.

« 34 » The configuration of an event is tied to observation by means of two criteria: (1) *qualitative limitations*; and (2) *quantitative limitations*.

« 35 » By *qualitative limitations* I mean the requirement of an imposition of a specific conceptualization (a means of perception) in order for the event to take place. For example, a table lamp standing on a table is the result of a defined means of perception that may be juxtaposed against another

8 | The term “observation” is used here with rather broad applicability. I mean not only those constataions that fit the information of experience, but any knowledge involving an element of judgment or confirmation. For example, the application of the term “observation” to mathematical equations or laws of physics would simply denote a “knowledge” of them.

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means. The bunch of particles and group of spots on the lamp’s base may be configured in another way (not into a lamp, say, but into a certain something, “X”). From the point of view of neurophysiology, only colored spots appear to the retina and nothing else. In addition, we see a three-dimensional picture and distinguish the borders of objects and figures. Yet in the course of perception, the eye does not see random outlines accidentally united into something whole, but strictly defined objects construed as if we already knew what we were supposed to see. Psychologist Ulrich Neisser showed that whatever is perceived enters the brain not in its primordial form, “as it exists out there,” but is fitted into some preset pattern (“format”). And the currently existing format is shaped by the sum of all previous acts of perception (Neisser 1976). What the eye actually receives, however, is a gigantic collection of points, an ensemble of visual “pixels,” comprising in its limits the contents of what is seen. During this process, nothing in perspective allows contemplation to create boundaries between what we see as “the lamp,” “the table on which the lamp is standing,” “the picture hanging behind the lamp” and so forth. Nothing prevents us from uniting pixels on the retina of the eye by any means and getting different results. By uniting the lines of objects in a new way we would basically be able to reshape the world, and in this world new objects would be encountered. For example, uniting “the edge of the table” with “the headboard of the bed” would give us object “X,” as yet unencountered in our ontology (Wertheimer 2012).

« 36 » Moreover, the perception of the observer not only structures reality but also structures it to a certain integral completeness (Husserl 1997). For us to perceive a house in a given figure or object, for example, we would have to apply the process of *structuring a figure or object to completion* (Husserl 1973). If we were to rely simply on our emotional experience alone, then we would be able to see very little; more importantly, what we saw would be without any meaning, such as the house’s frame or a couple of wooden additions. In order for us to see a “house” in a concrete image, we are impelled by a certain virtual capacity of *mentally circumambulating* the image to comprehend it as something whole. The connection between

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1 tween event and observer based on the cri-
2 terion of qualitative limitations may also be
3 shown by means of the difference in percep-
4 tions: from two drawn lines let us assume
5 that one observer sees the first line as being
6 longer than the second, while the other ob-
7 server sees it as being shorter. Since the first
8 line cannot be at the same time shorter and
9 longer than the second line, we will attribute
10 its condition to the peculiarities of local ob-
11 servation (Wertheimer 2012).

12 « 37 » The variety in qualitative limi-
13 tations as the event takes shape may be a
14 notional or value configuration. The idea
15 behind this principle is simple: by impos-
16 ing various notional or value systems we
17 may get various orders of events or facts
18 (Bennett 1996). If we were to ask what we
19 might see from the point of view of the “na-
20 ked” facts, such as observing, for example,
21 a murder scene then, with some effort, we
22 may notice that there is nothing about a
23 “murder” in what happens: there are only
24 the physical shifts of the bodies, something
25 we can observe directly. The ethical feeling
26 of indignation or horror that intervenes here
27 is, strictly speaking, of imported origin – its
28 nature is not factual (Wittgenstein 1961).
29 In order for us to see an event of “murder”
30 in the shift of the macrobodies, we need a
31 determinate semiotic network, by means
32 of whose implementation heterogeneous
33 data would be configured into a completely
34 determinate and very dramatic event. That
35 said, a purely physical interpretation of
36 what happens is nothing more than a type
306 37 of configuration, and its possible claim to
38 finiteness would also be unfounded. Dif-
39 ferent configurations of events will turn out
40 to be real for the physics of the macroworld
41 and the microworld (Wigner 1967), just as
42 an event described in the language of mo-
43 lecular structures would be distinguished
44 from an event described in value systems.
45 In this sense an understanding of a “purely
46 (neutral) fact” is a kind of working fiction,
47 since facts are always relative to determinate
48 systems of observation. So if some political
49 forces see good things in the event of the as-
50 sassination of a president and other political
51 forces see evil things, then one of the ways
52 we may escape such a situation of conflicting
53 interpretations would be by indicating the
54 event’s value neutrality from the world’s (or
55 the global observer’s) point of view as some-

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thing that is neither good nor bad, but sim-
ply a physical fact. The physics of the events,
however, are as tied to the types of obser-
vation as evaluative opinions are to various
systems of values. That is why the event can
be configured in a different way, even if we
have in mind a fundamentally different (in
this case, physical) level of description (Da-
vidson 1969).

« 38 » Such are the manifestations of the
qualitative condition of an event’s configura-
tion. The most important thing to under-
stand here is that under various conditions
of perception, data can be configured into
different events. The key criterion of this va-
riety is its connection to the local observer.

« 39 » By the *second (quantitative) con-
dition*, I mean the condition of limiting
everything *that is perceived* as that which
is allotted as an event. For example, the de-
scription of an event of parking a car is not
everything that was happening at a specific
period of time, but only a limited selection
of actions that are the quantitative condi-
tions of configuration. That said, the task of
fully describing the simplest object or action
may turn out to be practically unfulfillable
for the end observer (Rickert 1962). As far as
the global observer is concerned, a full de-
scription is attainable in this case, but then
the event would seem neutralized. The issue
is that calculating the entire sum of pos-
sible events producible in a specific space-
time period strips the exercise of sense and
renders useless any efforts to form an event
(Husserl 1973). Strictly speaking, describing
an action from the point of view of the con-
tinual uninterruptedness of a lasting series
of micro-acts does not capture the event,
but only registers the material from which
the event is formed (Galton 2006). Thus this
single series of micro-acts from which we
could try to construct the event of parking
a car would inevitably collapse, not leaving
us the opportunity to collect it into an event.
If we intend to consider the position of the
passers-by located next to the parking spot
and their outward appearance to be a subject
for our conversation, just like the number of
flowers on the lawn, the shifts of the cat run-
ning around that lawn, as well as the location
of subjects in neighboring houses, and so on
and so forth down an unforeseeably long list,
then the “event” will lose its contours and be
scattered. Moreover, for a completeness of

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description we would also have to take into 1
account the smallest changes, and all this 2 would
then be akin to Zeno’s paradoxes, a 3 description
of an “event” that will never 4 end nor ever begin
(Grünbaum 1967). For 5 example, in trying to
describe the moment 6 of parking we would have
to describe which 7 square millimeter of the tire
first touched 8 the square millimeter of the
asphalt, which 9 touched it second, and so forth.
In other 10 words, for a globalness in
observation, we 11 would have to take into
account all details of 12 the position of the
Universe at the moment 13 of the parking of the
automobile (Richmond 14 2009). This means,
however, that no parking 15 is happening any
more, since a “parking” is 16 nothing more than a
limitation of the entire 17 sum of other acts in
favor of one isolated 18 selection. The same thing
would happen if 19 we tried to describe events
from the point of 20 view of all registers and
levels (from atomic 21 to that of a value system).
The synchroniza- 22 tion and equalization of the
event status pro- 23 cesses taking place on
different levels (the 24 movement of protons in a
chemical reaction 25 in a gas tank in the process
of parking, the 26 sensations of the driver’s body
and his con- 27 comitant thought process) is a
kind of de- 28 configuration of the event, since it
grasps all 29 dimensions of reality, while an event
is only 30 a fragment taken separately. 31

« 40 » The quantitative condition of 32
configuration also implies a chronological 33
limitation on the event. Since events are 34
represented in time, their time framework 35
proposes an interpretation of the observer. 36
For example, if we are talking about a his- 37
torical event, then the problem will involve 38
defining where the event begins and where 39
it ends (Hacker 1982). As an example, 40
where should we place the beginning of the 41
French Revolution? This is one of history’s 42
most significant events and would have, it 43
seems, its own boundaries in time. Yet it is 44
the Storming of the Bastille that historians 45
have agreed to define as the beginning of the 46
French Revolution. In this case, however, 47
researchers are guided by a conventional 48
approach: we need to agree on the data that 49
will symbolize the beginning of the event in 50
question. In addition, we understand that 51
some causes, having arisen at random and 52
led to the event, took place even earlier. We 53
may say that the event “The French Revolu- 54
tion” is something ephemeral, provided that 55

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1 a precise framework of significance and time
2 is not stipulated, a framework within which
3 the Revolution can be localized. That said,
4 this seems possible when we extract some
5 situations (the Storming of the Bastille) and
6 sacrifice others.⁹

7 « 41 » In this way, an event may be
8 formed only under the condition of selec-
9 tive emphasis (Thomson 1977). To form
10 (or to structure) an event means purpose-
11 fully to discern: distinguish, separate one
12 element from the other, e.g., the substantial
13 from the unimportant. Here, Gregory Bat-
14 son's scheme applies – “the difference that
15 makes the difference” (Bateson 1987). This
16 is connected first of all to where and how the
17 limits will be set. If the limits are not set and
18 everything turns out to be part of a series of
19 equivalent actions, then we will not have an
20 event (Gill 1993). In this process, the em-
21 phasis and extraction of specific actions re-
22 main the responsibility of the local observer,
23 whose selectivity is immediately dictated by
24 his locality. He carries out the quantitative
25 selection of actions defining the fragment
26 and level of the descriptive order. Such are
27 the manifestations of the *quantitative condi-*
28 *tion* of an event's configuration.

29 « 42 » In order for *both of these condi-*
30 *tions* to be met, the observer needs *specific*
31 *foundations* – namely those that are distinct

34 9| For example: the Storming of the Bastille 35
was predated by the taking of *L'Hôtel national des* 36
Invalides [The National Residence of the Invalids],
37 known usually as *Les Invalides*. *Les Invalides* was

38 conceived as a poorhouse for distinguished army
39 veterans. Since the rebels had to repulse the army
troops, the people surged upon *Les Invalides*,⁴⁰ where
weapons were stored, and seized ten thou-⁴¹ sand
arms. The taking of *Les Invalides* turned out⁴² to be a
far from simple task, with clashes with⁴³ the army
and a large number of casualties. In⁴⁴ the storehouses
of *Les Invalides*, however, despite⁴⁵ the solid reserve
of weapons, no gunpowder was⁴⁶ found since it had
already been dispatched before⁴⁷ hand to the Bastille.

At that same time, an enor-⁴⁸ mous mass of people
rushed upon the Bastille,⁴⁹ which did not need to be
“taken,” and indeed, this⁵⁰ was a siege. The taking of
the stronghold became⁵¹ a storming and there was no
need for a storming.⁵² Yet it was the Bastille that
became the symbol of⁵³ the French Revolution, and
the day of the Storm-⁵⁴ ing of the Bastille began to be
considered the start
55 of the French Revolution (Hibbert 1982).

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features of local observation. For the event
to be formed, we need to extract some data
and set aside other data; we should see one
and we should not see the other. We should
also have foundations for the imposition of
a specific framework of values or meanings.
The existence of such a framework ensures a
distribution of interests, priorities and pref-
erences. In this process, the entire sum of
these foundations coincides with the limited
and relative position of the observer. “To
have foundations” means to stick to a plan
of observing some levels and not paying any
attention to others. In this way, we may say
that if there are actual foundations, then the
observation taking place is local. Here we
must also mention that the observer, the ob-
served process and the process of observa-
tion all form an indecomposable unity. An
observation cannot be made without an ob-
server, but while structuring an occurrence
– the observer also shapes himself/herself.

And, by shaping himself/herself, creating
constructs in his/her perception, the ob-
server structures the world. This is a creative
cycle, which, as von Foerster puts it, is the
gekrümmte Raum, curved space in which an
observer is determined in the process of de-
fining an event (Foerster & Pörksen 1998).

Moreover, because each configuration is
based on unique foundations, it might be
supposed that all observers are cognitively
closed (ibid).

To observe or to be global – that is the question

« 43 » I may try to show, in that case,
that the notion of a global observer contains
within itself a certain contradiction. Indeed,
upon closer analysis this notion seems inco-
herent: “being global” and “being an observ-
er” appear to be incompatible features. This
constatation's most immediate consequence
would be to deduce that there are no abso-
lute events, in the sense that, for the global
observer, no events seem to take place.¹⁰ In
such a situation the global observer would

10| An exit from the situation so described
may be the following observation: if there can be
no events for the global observer, we may declare
the existence of this same global observer to be an
event. In such a case, the event would not be the

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have to refrain from judgment, although not
from skeptical thought, most likely in the
sense that there would be nothing for him
to say.

« 44 » As a rough approximation, I may
justify what we have said as follows: every
configuration of an event is relative (includ-
ing one and excluding another); at the same
time, the global observer has to continue
being an observer (the condition of config-
uration) yet avoid relativity (the condition
of globality). On the one hand, the global
observer must configure the event on the
other hand, he can only do so relatively, and
not absolutely. Thus the contradiction will
comprise the following: on the one hand,
the global observer must configure the
event, and on the other, he can only do so
relatively and not absolutely (murder is the
point of view of the local observer; so if a
change occurred in the system of observa-
tion, the fixable sum of bodily movements
and states of those bodies might not be a
“murder”).

« 45 » The difficulty indicated here is
linked with the impression that the global
observer has no basis upon which to pre-
fer one event and repudiate another that is
just as realizable. The basis is obtained by
separating the essential from the inessen-
tial, which is dictated by personal prefer-
ences, the particularities of perspective, the
differences in points of view and so forth.
This seems feasible to the local observer
if he focuses on the realm of the clear and
the unclear. In such a case, an event would
simply comprise a move from one realm to
another. Were these differences to be elimi-
nated, however, that is, if the realm of the
clear were totalized, the basis for the forma-
tion of the event would be removed (Badiou
2005).

« 46 » I may try to deduce two conse-
quences from this circumstance. The *first*
and more radical consequence is that the
global observer cannot configure events at
all because he would need a basis, and this
basis would have transformed him into the
local observer. The *second*, less forceful con-
sequence is that even if the global observer
can formulate all possible events, at the stage
of reproduction he will not be able to sepa-

one the global observer configures, but the very
fact of the global observer's presence.

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1 rate one from the other or indicate which 2
one of them it actually is. For this second 3 case,
I add the following: even if we assume 4
nevertheless that the global observer can ob-5
serve all events, this still does not mean that 6
he will be capable of *understanding* what is 7
observable (visible). To the degree to which 8
understanding denotes a logical procedure, 9
namely *definiteness*, that is, demarcations 10 of
one thing from another, and *information* 11
about the unknown to the known, this un-12
derstanding will turn out to be blocked for 13
the global observer due to the totality of ob-14
servation (contemplation).

15 « 47 » In the case of definiteness – that
16 is, the imposition of boundaries separating
17 and distinguishing one thing from another
18 – as this occurs in the traditional logical
19 form “this is not that,” an understanding
20 will be achieved for the local but not the
21 global observer. This is connected to the
22 fact that during global observation, nothing
23 can be limited – in other words, taken out
24 of context or setting – and this wipes away
25 the borders of definability. But because we
26 can understand only that which is defined,
27 understanding cannot be achieved if there
28 is a removal of the conditions of definite-
29 ness. The situation of non-understanding,
as 30 it were, will correspond to the status of
the 31 event itself, which becomes indefinite.

32 « 48 » The same thing occurs during the 33
impossibility of moving from the unknown 34
to the known, because understanding is the 35
act of recognition of that which was previ-36
ously unknown (Husserl 1997). In order for

308 37 understanding to come about, we must dis-
38 tinguish a situation of knowledge from a
sit-39 uation of ignorance; otherwise,
knowledge 40 may occur but understanding
will be absent. 41 In global observation, the
move from the 42 unknown to the known is
excluded, since 43 global observation does
not assume lacu-44 nae of ignorance. Rather,
it is a matter of 45 the one-time and full-scale
presentability of 46 the entire sum of the
data, without leaving 47 any room for
complementary acts of under-48 standing.

49 « 49 » And so, since understanding is
50 the essential feature of a subjective basis
of 51 observation, I need to talk about the
diffi-52 culty of reconciling the qualities of
“being 53 global” and “being an observer.”

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Conclusion: “Did nothing actually happen?”

« 50 » With this in mind, I may ask once
again: why do we need to link global
observation to an observer? Can we not de-
clare global observation to be an especially
subjectless event? The answer is that we can
and, in a certain sense, we need to do so; the
problematics of this decision, however, in-
volve a loss of the world’s event-related and,
strictly speaking, determinate configurabil-ity.
If the world exists, then it must be deter-
minate (it must be *some kind of world*) and
must consist of events. Determinacy, how-
ever, assumes limitability and, consequently,
local configuration. Something determinate
takes place in a situation if something else
does not occur. If everything happened im-
mediately, then, strictly speaking, nothing
would happen.

« 51 » Justification for the introduction
of a global observer, as well as its inevitable
inconsistency, can be shown in a quite sim-
ple way. The “subjective-objective” tandem is
a fundamental element of our mental pro-cess
through which we gain our perception of the
world. More often, philosophy uses this
language: it teaches us that there is a
subjective perception (private, erroneous,
incomplete), and there is an objective per-
ception, to which we should progress. Ac-
cording to this dictionary, if there is a sub-
jective observer, then there should also be an
objective one. Usually, it is at this juncture
and in the context of this difference that a
need for the introduction of some analogue
of the global obser arises. For example, Put-
nam writes about it, analyzing the concept of the
“God’s Eye” view (Putnam 1990, 2007;
Siderius 2011).¹¹ So, the ideals of science are
backed by the idea that we have to overcome
a subjective observer in ourselves and prog-
ress to an objective one (Putnam 1990). The
concept of an ideal scientist, for example, is
similar to the concept of such an unbiased
observer, (1) who is and (2) who also sees
everything as it is in reality. An objective
observer actually is a global observer; they

11 | See also “Donna Haraway and Hilary
Putnam on god’s spectacles” by Edmund Sider-
ius at <https://edmundsiderius.wordpress.com/2011/01/03/donna-haraway-and-hilary-putnam-on-gods-spectacles/>

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are the same thing. But unlike the expres- 1
sion “global observer,” the phrase “*objective* 2
observer” shows that when we substitute the 3
word “observer” for the word “subject” (and 4
the observer is the subject, and vice versa), 5
then we can clearly and distinctly (actually, 6
by looking at the very wording) see an ob- 7
vious contradiction in the expression “an 8
objective subject.” The phrase “an objective 9
subject” is a typical example of an oxymor- 10
ron. However, oddly enough, the foundation 11
of the concept of the world often rests on 12
this particular contradictory notion. 13

« 52 » Thus one may conclude that *ev- 14
ery event is unreal* (since without a local 15
observer there is no subject or event, only 16
a hypothetical cloud of particles, which, in 17
turn, must also be a configuration), but *re- 18
ality is eventless* (without a local observer it 19
remains deprived of determinacy). Ponder- 20
ing the true state of affairs, we unwillingly 21
assume that there is someone observing the 22
real event (how and by whom the “murder” 23
was committed); but if the global observer 24
exists, then, it seems, he cannot observe any- 25
thing. The fact of the murder will exist only 26
for the local observer but not for the global 27
observer, because if the latter had observed 28
the murder he would have become local. 29
Thus, if the global observer also exists, he 30
does not observe the “murder,” but rather 31
exists in a world that Democritus described 32
with the help of his well-known “atoms and 33
void,” having in mind the principal non- 34
structuredness and non-configuredness of 35
the initial existence of the world (Taylor 36
1999).¹² “Atoms and void” means, however, 37
in its way, a minimal level of configuration 38
of the world and, since we must be consis- 39
tent, “atomicity” may be discarded in favor 40
of pure void. 41

« 53 » Classical metaphysics teaches 42
us that reality must not be dependent on 43
the interpretations of the observer (Russell 44
1929).¹³ Yet once freed of interpretations, 45
46

12 | The idea of Democritus: “In reality, ev- 47
erything is but atoms and void.” (Taylor 1999: 46) 48

13 | This is the traditional definition of es- 49
sence as distinguished from appearance. Essence 50
is what does not owe its existence to anything 51
except itself (essence is not conditional); appear- 52
ance, on the other hand, owes its existence to 53
something other than itself (the existence of ap- 54
pearance is conditional). 55

column C



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reality loses any determinacy and thus, if it exists, is a “non-reality.” An event in turn is unreal since it owes its existence to the observer. As von Foerster put it, “The environment, as we perceive it, is our invention” (Foerster 2003: 212). Beyond the limits of all possible impossible configurations, reality appears indeterminable and extra-eventual, which might simply mean that nothing occurs within it. Apart from local configurations, the world exists as a pure non-thing (Frank 2009). From here I may suppose that if we were ever able to stand in the place of the global observer and look at the world through his eyes, it is possible that we might be astounded by the fact that we would see nothing.

« 54 » This leads us to one logical complication related to the idea of the divine omniscience, which, in the first paragraphs of my paper, I promised to discuss as one example of paradoxes of omniscience. According to the classical description, which is well-known and in part links back to antiquity, yet also to a great degree to Christian metaphysics, God is the global observer, who on the strength of his peculiarity (globality), retains as equipotent all possible configurations.¹⁴ Here, nevertheless, a series of difficulties arise. In the first place,

14 | If we retreat to Christian terminology, we can more simply and obviously explain the main point of the paradox examined here: the material world lies in sin; material man is sinful, and on the strength of his original sinfulness, he always sees the world with a touch of distortion. So then the question arises: Is it possible for God, as a being bereft of sin, to see what a person sees? If so, then he is also sinful; but if he is not sinful, then he cannot see it, and therefore, there is no global observer.

as I stated before, if two mutually exclusive qualities are predicated for one object, we are obliged to declare the neutrality of the object in relation to these qualities. Configurations excluding one another cannot be combined into a single state of affairs. In the second place, although the global observer is conceived as unique on the strength of his capability to retain as equipotent all possible configurations, the quality of uniqueness does not allow us to avoid, from the very on-set, the paradoxes of the formation of these same configurations. The paradoxicality comprises the fact that the global observer himself is in no condition to form the event: for this to occur he would need temporarily to become a local observer. Thus, if we wish nevertheless to avoid these obvious contradictions, the uniqueness of the global observer does not involve his self-reliant capacity for multifaceted configuration, but rather his retention of the variety of other local observations, not formulated by him. Yet even here there are problems. Since the global observer is integrated as an instance of attestation of the true state of affairs, we expect of him a single prioritized constata-tion. Yet if to the question, “what actually happened?” he merely puts forth equipotent configurations from local observers, his globality acquires an excessively neutral status. In this case, the global observer observes the entire spectrum of events, yet they are ordered absolutely on the strength of the lack of the grounds. So then, if the global observer were to appear in a hypothetical court and answer a question on the possible murder, he would say that he saw “the mutual activity of electric particles and fields,” “the shift of the position of the macrobod-ies,” “murder,” and so forth, according to an unforeseeably long list. In the case of simple

enumeration, however, the testimony of the global observer may turn out to be somewhat useless. But if he is ready to choose in favor of one version and not another, he would have to stop being the global observer and turn into a local observer.

« 55 » We can also try to introduce a global observer as a neutral recording system capturing everything occurring – for example, in the form of a heavy duty camera, installed in a secluded place. A hypothetical “heavy dutiness” of the camera is required for it to be able to capture what is happening at all levels: not only at the macrophysical, but also at the atomic and subatomic levels. On the one hand, such an assumption can be immediately withdrawn as one not able to grant resolution to the problem, because to decrypt a recording, we would need some observer-interpreter, whose interpretation would bring us back to the local level. But we can also try to say that if you observe the observed in a form of

exceptionally heavy duty cameras, the global level of observation will be maintained permanently. But in this case, an even more paradoxical situation would arise because when some cameras observe the other cameras, which, according to the terms of the problem should not be interrupted by the invasion of a local interpreter, an infinite regress of observations would be created, which would yield no result due to its paradoxical nature. In the case of an arbitrary disruption of the observation, we would either shift to the local level, or convert the entire chain into the unobservable one, i.e., make it “blind.” If we

continue the series 51
to infinity, we would never
arrive at any 52 result, which
would make the whole pro- 53
cedure pointless. Thus, the
idea of a global 54 observer as
the end authority, summing all
55
column C

- 1 the intermediate observations, also presents
- 2 a problem (Luhmann 1995). According to

3 Luhmann, “the statement ‘God is dead’” im-
4 plies that it is impossible to identify the end
5 observer” (Luhmann 2000: 87).
6 « 56 » Yet then the testimony of the
7 global observer would turn out to be de-
8 prived of its desired effect. An appeal to
9 the global observer as a guarantor of truth
10 would then possibly not yield the expected
11 representation about the actual state of af-
12 fairs.

column B

« 57 » Meanwhile, the paradox from which it is so extremely complicated to escape would most likely be that we find it difficult to imagine truth without a global observer, yet we also find it difficult to imagine a global observer. In a certain sense, imagining truth in the way to which we are accustomed will not work if we do not introduce the experience of belief into the existence of a global observer.

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