

## ON SEEING WHAT IS NOT THERE

by *Virgil C. Aldrich*

Santayana said, "Nothing given exists." One thinks of jokes right away. A Volkswagen is given you as a commencement gift. Nothing given exists. Therefore, qua given, your car is nonexistent, and you can say thanks for nothing to the giver. But, as some philosophers still remind us, ordinary terms may be used in an extraordinary way or in prescribed applications in the treatment of philosophical problems. "Given" here is subject to such use, and we must understand it that way if we are doing philosophy. In this particular essay, I am wholly in favor of doing just that, since I think the result, arrived at my way, will put the concept of "intentional object" in a new light, especially as applied to objects of visual perception. My essay is to be a speculative improvisation on the ambiguous notion of the "myth of the given"—the notion that no such thing exists—conceding something to it, but in a way that pulls the rug out from under those who currently maintain it.

How, then, is Santayana's statement to be construed, playing his language-game? What *is* this "given" that, by nature, is nonexistent? In visual experience, it is a (determinate) universal, an essence, simple or complex, and universals, as such, subsist only. They do not exist. There *are* givens, but to be does not entail to exist. When the material conditions are right, a universal ("essence") supervenes in the field of visual consciousness, is immediately "intuited," and taken (or mistaken) as a sign of a state of affairs among existing particulars. Thus what is given in the field of your visual perception of, say, the woman you love, is a wraith—a lovely apparition of the existing *particular* female you take it to characterize. It is nevertheless a bona fide object of visual "intuition," though nonexistent. And you may have fallen in love with just that—as will dawn on you when you find out that your dream woman is not the one with the m-predicates: the one that exists and you live and sleep with. After all, "love" is, in our more recent lingo, an intentional verb. You can love what does not exist. Santayana said, in effect, that "see" is an intentional verb. But he was more than underwriting the weak notion that *sometimes* what one sees is not really there (existent). His point was that

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what we simply or directly see *never* exists—or what is given to visual intuition is never “out there,” since an essence, a universal, is never anywhere or any-when, as such. Whitehead’s notion of “eternal object” is quite like this one, since, by his own admission, he conceived it under Santayana’s influence.

The above is one analysis of the idea of the “sense datum.” It differs radically from the psychological analysis of the given into *sensations*. Let us see how a theorist who espouses this view might use the dictum that nothing given exists. Of course, if it is dualistic, the theory has *no* use for it. Sensations, on that view, are mental particulars, existing “alongside” the particular neural states correlated with them. But, with the advent of a reductionist identity-theory, a sensation, in the psychological sense, was analyzed out of existence into a material state of affairs. Then, if you hang on to the *old* notion that only sensations are sense-data (“given” to sense), or the only immediate givens, it follows that nothing given exists. As Thomas Hobbes said, they are “phantasms” that only appear to exist. Such reasoning, however, gets its apparent force by playing tricks with language-strata—what Dray has called a jumping from one semantic level to another. Here there is no recourse to the neo-Platonic notion of “logical” entities that, as determinate universals, only subsist, nowhere in space-time—a kind of logical atomism, as applied in the analysis of the data of visual perception. Bertrand Russell also once held such a view. At least he gave it a good try, as he did the other positions he subsequently took and forsook.

There is a significant point on which the logical and the psychological views of sense-data abovementioned agree. Sense-data are “private” to the individual “having” or “intuiting” them. Strictly speaking, what is given to one cannot, in principle, be given to another, partly because the objective and the subjective conditions of the sense-datum’s appearance, as intuited or had, can never be identical in the two cases. So, access to the given, whether it be taken to be a universal or a mental particular, is privileged. The individual alone has the privilege. This suggests that the expression “the given” or “what is given” is incomplete. The completed expression reads: “given to S,” where S is a particular someone or subject of the immediate experience. So the tendency here is to agree also that such experiences are incorrigible. They cannot go wrong because they “take” nothing beyond the private given to be the case.

Let us see, next, what might be made of our maxim, “nothing given exists,” by one who philosophizes in the style of continental phenomenology, Husserl’s theory being an arch example. The central idea of this view is that all consciousness is intentional. This, being interpreted, means that consciousness never “naturally” terminates in the simply given. This implies that no natural perceptual awareness is immediate. It always has an “objective” beyond what is directly intuited, if anything. And this dictum, in turn, is susceptible of two different interpretations. One is the more traditional line

such as was taken by Santayana. There *is* something given, though subsistent only like an essence which one becomes aware of by "bracketing" consciousness off from its natural objectives. The other interpretation is the newer view that is closer to Husserl, and to the phenomenologists after him. In this view, "nothing given exists" is *not* allowed to yield "but there *are* givens that don't exist." It reads, rather, "Anything, qua given to or in consciousness, is only inexistentally present," or "Nothing, qua existent, is ever simply given in or to consciousness," or for the visual case, "No existing thing is ever simply seen, thanks just to good eyesight, if by such vision is meant sight that is not structured (directed, aimed) by intentions; there simply is no such seeing." In John Dewey's words, the given is always *taken* to be something "present-as-absent."

This is the now-famous notion of "intentional inexistence," with its implication that nobody ever *simply* sees anything. Different recent versions of it are due to Chisholm, Anscombe, and others. Frequently, under Kant's influence, the idea is, given a conceptual twist, to the effect that, if not intentions, then anyway concepts must come into play to present even the simplest visual experience with objects of sight—the theory then being that, to get at anything "objectively there," one has to *think or believe* that something is the case. Thus is all seeing made "epistemic," an embryonic conceptual enterprise. The thrust of this whole style of theorizing about all states of consciousness purporting to have objects is the attempt to show that "existence" is—in Santayana's excellent phrase—a surd quantity, surd because neither perception nor conception, singly or jointly, simply *gives* the existence of anything *in particular*—or then and there in the particular case. What seems to be given there and then is, if existence is in question, an affair for nonterminating judgments to deal with, as C. I. Lewis said—endless inferences required by the implicit implications of theory-laden terms even in the *simplest* perceptual reports, such as of something that made you see it by conspicuously and determinately appearing in your visual field whether you were looking for it or not, and whether or not you know what it is. Just to notice it is to believe something about it and thus to get caught in a conceptual spiderweb.

I call philosophical funsterism the style of thinking that results in, and is content to rest the case about perception on, such a conclusion (the funster in philosophy is nothing if not startling). The workers in philosophy are those who are restive about this, and do what they can to justify the less theatrical view of the matter, not by appeals to common sense or *just* to ordinary use of ordinary terms, but by arguments, some conceptually well-formed, others impressively persuasive without such construction. Frank Sibley, Dretske, Warnock, Arthur Collins, Ryle, Austin, Merleau-Ponty, and even Wittgenstein in his ambiguous way, have done some work in this direction, but without overwhelming success. A more successful job at this requires first a more

radical categorial reconstruction from the ground up, a more critical look at ultimate presuppositions, or what Aristotle called "starting points." From this treatment a new concept of intentional objects will emerge, one that applies nicely even to the objects just of good eyesight, thanks to a much needed modification of what the intentionalists (and conceptualists) have in mind. So you can see that I am, in part, going to play their language-game, which should show that I am not wholesale against this ancient and still viable style of philosophical thinking. Before making my own splash by dropping the coin into this wishing well, let me first examine Gilbert Ryle's performance as a would-be worker, not a funster, in philosophy, in the theory of visual perception. Since Sibley<sup>1</sup> has gone with a fine tooth comb through Ryle's remarks on seeing or observing in *The Concept of Mind*, I shall attend mainly to things Ryle said some four years later in *Dilemmas*, in the essay on perception. This brief look at Ryle will set the stage for my own bit of descriptive metaphysics bearing on the notion of simply seeing something, with special concern for the description of *what is thus seen*—the question that Ryle himself tends to neglect in favor of the seeing.

Of seeing itself, Ryle wisely says in his earlier work (p. 232) that it is using one's eyes, *not* using one's sensations as clues or evidence; and that learning to see is like learning to ride a bicycle, not an affair of clapping concepts on the seen things. This at least suggests that sight is a physiological affair, but in his later work Ryle explicitly denies this. There he says that seeing, say, a tree is neither a physiological nor a psychological "phenomenon." "It is not a phenomenon at all" (pp. 101–102). So it is neither objectively observable nor a private mental affair to be subjectively introspected.

One who talks this way is evidently bending over backwards both from sense-datum theories of perception on the one hand and Watsonian behaviorism on the other, and one can like him for doing this, or at least understand why he did it. There are reasons. But Ryle's remark is too blunderbuss a blast. It shoots holes into something that one does not want perforated. Of course, one may be glad to have the old act-theories of seeing damaged, whether of the brain-event sort that puts seeing behind the eyes, or of the mental-occurrence sort which makes of seeing an inner "diaphanous" act that eludes introspection even by the mind staging it (G. E. Moore). This all on the side of seeing. But how about *what is seen*—the thing simply as an object of good eyesight, looking somehow to the seer? Is this not a phenomenon in some straightforward sense, something simply appearing in the field of vision and seen, whether as a result of a hunt or investigation, or as innocently *antecedent* to any expectation, interpretation, explanation, or evaluation?

Anyway, this is the "phenomenon" that is my primary concern from here on, the target of my bit of descriptive metaphysics. Age-old questions and answers have clustered around the notion, and I shall here add yet another answer—the right one, of course. Ryle himself does not dwell on it, because

of his “perception-recipe”-and-achievement concept of seeing, which makes it a close neighbor to, if not identical with, “seeing-that.” (This conceptualist twist shows itself more clearly in the later treatment.) And, of course, the *object* of such seeing is indeed “not a phenomenon at all,” being too propositional to be the sort of direct object that “see” takes in its simple use.

The notion of “intentional” verbs (“wanting,” for example) has of late been spelled out in a variety of ways, sometimes with the help of the schema (S v O and O is P) implies (S v P). Where the verb is intentional, the implication is said to fail as a basis for inference. For example, if Oedipus wanted to kill that man, and the man was his father, it does not follow that he wanted to kill his father. Anyway, insofar as this is true—there is room for a different construction, as Quine pointed out—“want” is branded an intentional verb. “See,” in some of its uses, is not quite like this. One might naturally say that Oedipus “saw” his father at that tragic encounter, not knowing that the man he saw was his father. Here, S sees O and O is P yields S sees P. Similarly, the hawk-eyed woodsman who, in the laboratory, sees that shiny elongated thing sees (unknowingly) an X-ray tube, since that is what it is. Again, this is debatable (remember Hanson), but insofar as there is such a use of “see,” it is more like “step on” and “eat,” so is not intentional. Thus, as Dretske says, seeing a bug is like stepping on it. You may even do this unawares, or without any particular belief about the object. If S sees O in this sense, O must exist.

But, from here on, I want to make hay mainly out of a different sort of case. If S sees a star, and the star is a swarm of atoms, does S see a swarm of atoms? And to be able to squeeze all the juice out of this orange, I shall first have to come to terms with yet another sort of (though related) case: if S sees a bright speck up there in the night sky, and the speck is a star, does S see a star? This two-stage approach will clear the deck for making a new sort of sense of the notion of “intentional object,” as the “phenomenon” that amounts to “what is simply seen” by anyone with good eyesight. This then is the quarry; let us proceed to zero in on it. The *old* notions of intentional verbs and their objects qua intentional were introduced to account primarily for cases of “seeing” what is not “there”—cases in which a material object description of what is seen turns out to be false. My new treatment of these notions will allow for mistakes—in two logically different ways—even about what is simply seen, qua intentional object. Moreover, it will show why neither “physical” (“physiological,” etc.) nor “psychological” (“mental,” etc.) nicely apply, as categorial predicates, to the phenomenon of simply seeing something—neither to such “seeing” in this bipolar concept, nor to what is thus seen. Ryle, Sibley,<sup>2</sup> and others who recognize this fact need to be helped over the embarrassment about it. The new maneuver will also show another application of the dictum, “nothing given exists,” yielding a fresh insight into the notion of the intentionality of sight and its objects.

To set the stage for the main show, let me give you a picture which you do not have to take seriously at first. And, at first, look at it as innocently as you can, for the sake of an impression that preconceptions tend to preclude. Conceptions and preconceptions can become operative again later on—in their usual constructive and destructive ways.

The picture is of a source of light. When it is on, or turned on, the things in its neighborhood are in its field of illumination. They are illuminated by the source. They, and the field of illumination, are around the source. Neither is *in* the source of light.

Among these things is a sleeping man. When the light-source is turned on, he is awakened, which is what it is for *him* to be turned on. For him to be turned on, or awake with eyes opened, is for the things before him in his neighborhood to be in his field of visual consciousness, which he would not have were he not a living thing with a nervous system including eyes. The things are seen by him. This visual field that extends before his eyes, and the things seen in it, are not in him, the seer. They are in that portion of the field of illumination that has come alive as a field of vision. And as the things in the field are illuminated on their sides that face the source of light, so are they seen on the side that faces the point of view. The far side is “in the dark,” both in the sense of “out of sight” and “out of light,” if the thing is opaque. (“Opaque” has a Latin root that means dark or shady. Neither light nor sight can penetrate an opaque thing, which therefore leaves something in the dark on the far side in the one sense or the other.)

But the luminous source, shining upon or—if it is transparent—through a thing in its field of illumination, *does* something to that thing, as it did to the man when it awakened him, turned him on; whereas the seer, simply seeing the thing, or through it, is not doing anything to it. The thing does indeed, qua seen, become an “object of sight”—what is seen—in the visual field where it is made to appear to the seer. But there is no causal efficacy of *sight* in this, acting on the thing. Quite to the contrary, the thing, by thus being “objectified” (expressed) for a subject of visual experience, is presented as a phenomenon, an appearance, the very existence—if any—of which is in some sense problematic. This is to say that the thing, by becoming an object of sight, has suffered a sort of annihilation, a de-entification. As what is simply seen, it is neither a something nor a nothing. It is loosened from its status in the executive order of things that exist. Though it is indeed luminously there to be seen by anyone with good eyesight, it is, as an object for a subject, not existentially present. And the “consciousness” that is involved in this is *not* a state of mind. Or, learning simply to see is an affair of eyes maturing with use, eventually focusing on nonconceptually structured phenomena in that part of the field of illumination that has come alive as the field of visual consciousness. At its minimum that is what vision is. The organization of its objects, as such, is not the work of mind.

Here I draw the curtain over this picture, and continue the investigation in a vein that makes more sense to philosophers with conceptually hardened arteries like yours and mine.

You remember the remark made earlier about two logically distinct ways in which one can go wrong about “phenomena,” which is from here on our new word for intentional objects. A phenomenon or intentional object is, in the visual case, a *thing in the role of object of sight*—something appearing in a certain way to a seer, thanks to light and responsive eyes and other related conditions that objectify or “express” it in his field of visual consciousness. Notice here the nonequivalence of “thing” and “object”; a thing is an object *only* under certain conditions, vis-à-vis a subject. Remember Descartes’ old use of “objective,” according to which a thing objectified—or as present to a subject—is a thing subjectified, thus relativized. This is simply to recognize “object” and “subject” as the grammatical and logical correlatives that they are, reserving “thing” for the more neutral or logically primitive use.

One way in which the seer makes mistakes about phenomena—objects of sight—has to do with what, in general, are called conditions of visibility. And this is what one is to have in mind in turning now to deal with the seeing-the-speck-and-star case.

It is natural enough to speak of seeing a star as a bright speck in the night sky, but this use of “seeing-as” is different both from what Wittgenstein made of the notion and from what the conceptualists do with it. Wittgenstein had in mind schematic figures that can be simply seen *not* to be what they are seen as, like the duck-rabbit picture, seen as a rabbit or a duck, without mistake. The conceptualists’ point is kin to Kant’s, to the effect that *any* phenomenon of perception (“experience”) is there to be perceived thanks to the mind’s constructive (conceptual) work on the otherwise unformed sensory manifold. In short, for him objects of sight (“phenomena”) are, from the ground up, already in the realm of mind—though, as he tried to show, not in the sense of, say, Berkeley’s “subjective idealism.” Kant’s point is, simply, that percepts without concepts are blind, or have no objects at all. Without concepts, one *sees* nothing at all. But, clearly, what is expressed by “seeing stars as specks” is not a conceptual achievement, referring as it does to *phenomena* that set the stage for conceptualization.

Of course, one could take the expression the other way around: seeing a bright speck in a dark field as a star. This might suggest *knowing* what one sees, or having found something out about it by investigation; say, that it is really a large hot body at an enormous distance, or a hole in an opaque spherical shell with light outside, or a quintessential intelligence. This would be to “see that” what you simply see is that sort of thing. But even this misses the sense of “star” in which people, looking up into the night sky, have from the beginning simply seen the *stars* and wondered what they were, how far away, etc., since the conditions of visibility of a star are too poor to show

them the answers to this. "Star," thus ostensibly defined, is what people, at any time in any clime, simply see at night, and then speculate about—goaded on to do this especially in the stellar case precisely because craning the neck this way and that, or getting closer or stepping back, or moving around what is seen, is either not feasible or does not yield a better look at the thing.

For such phenomena (objects of sight) that are too far outside the zone of stereoscopic vision to permit the seer to take a good look at them, or too large and bright and hot to permit a good look at them from close up, it makes sense to say that they are seen as this or that, where the question of what visible properties the thing "really" has, is left partly open by the description even of the *appearance*. And, of course, it is under such poor conditions of visibility that the seer may make a mistake. And the notion of "intentional object" in *this* context means that *vision* there is not, or cannot be, consummated. A good look is not feasible here, but relevant to the kind of question being asked.

It is crucially important to understand how a mistake in such a context is corrected, because this determines the sense of mistake here being examined. This is illustrated by another case, in which an eventual good look at the thing is both relevant and *feasible*. Suppose there are, in a green field, a white circular disk (plate) and a white ball side by side a hundred yards from the point of view. Each is a foot in diameter, and the disk is at right angles to the line of sight. They *look* exactly alike to the seer, because at that distance he simply cannot see—or cannot simply see—the shape of the two surfaces that face him. This shape is a visual determinable, not a determinate, in those circumstances. This is to say that the conditions of objectification of the disk and the ball in the seer's visual field are such as to leave out of sight their frontal shapes, while the circular profiles are given. As simply seen, these things appear neither flat nor convex on the sides facing the seer. He simply can't see the frontal surfaces.

In *such* circumstances, the seer may indeed say he can see *either one* as a disk or as a ball—philosophers talk this way about the moon looking flat or round—all this in Wittgenstein's sense, since what is given is schematic enough to make room for a sort of seeing-as. But it is precisely such a use of "seeing as" that is crowded out if the seer moves closer and looks at the things at a distance of six feet from the point of view. Then, simply seeing the flat disk, he cannot make sense of seeing the disk "as flat" or "as convex" any more than he can of seeing it as white or red. Wittgenstein was right about this, where the conditions of visibility are too good to leave room for such impressionistic seeing or to provide illocutionary space for really using the locution "seeing as" that is just right only for schematic figures.

So, the first way in which a mistake may be made about visible phenomena—things as objectified in a visual field—is related to situations (contexts)



in which the decision rests with visual perception, or in which the notion of "objective" conditions of visibility—including eyesight—has a key role. A mistake here would mean a taking ("believing") something that is not  $\phi$  to be  $\phi$  where  $\phi$  is a visible characteristic and the thing seen does not show but suggests  $\phi$  under the given conditions of visibility of the  $\phi$  in question, to anyone with good eyesight. What induces such a mistake is, of course, the seer's simply seeing something that is not clearly objectified in the circumstances and reacting as if it were  $\phi$ —or as if this is what could and would be simply seen under a good look at it.

Crucial also is the reminder that "belief," in this context, is not yet a *mental* affair (Ryle). Guesswork, on this level, is more an affair of having learned to see and an exercise of the capacity. The developed or adult seer is one who can tell, simply from trying to see, whether or not he *can* see the item in question. His complaining that he cannot see the frontal shape from a hundred yards off is not the expression of a *belief* that the conditions are wrong for such seeing. By the same token, he neither believes nor disbelieves—knows or does not know—that the objective conditions are right for dependable seeing when he moves up to six feet away for the decisive look and the final report. Dretske and Sibley were wrong about this.<sup>3</sup> Seeing is *not* believing of that sort, even when it is revealing in this elementary way.

These cases of visual determinables—items appearing indeterminately under certain visibility conditions—are different from cases like, say, the stick clearly seen but partly submerged in clear, still water, or things clearly seen in a mirror. The former "vague" cases are logically connected in part with the question of acute eyesight, the latter mainly with optical conditions of light and media in the field clearly "before one's eyes"—seeing things that are not there in the direction the eyes are turned. I cannot deal with this important distinction in this essay—except again to remind you that the question of the "order" of things simply seen in the field of light-and-sight is *not* a question of how the field is *conceptualized*. And I must now say something more about this before proceeding to the account of the other (logically different) way in which one makes mistakes about phenomena, or about what we simply see—which account is going to put the notion of "intentional objects of sight" into a context that makes it philosophically more interesting. So far, the concept of intentional objects has been pretty much confined to meaning what we simply see when we are not seeing as acutely as we are able to. *The intentionality of objects seen thus is the tug built into them towards consummated seeing*—sometimes feasible, sometimes not. For such cases, the decision, if any, rests in principle with perception.

But, now, what about the claim that the field of simple vision is structured, but not "conceptually"? When the seer *reports* what he sees, howsoever simply, is he not applying concepts? Surely, saying something even as simple as, "This is flat and white," involves the concepts of white and flat. Thus,

you cannot use language at all without conceptualizing what you are talking about.

This certainly must be granted. But then a distinction becomes crucially important between two logically different orders of concepts or ways of using terms of the language. The first are such that the question of whether or not they apply to the given thing is answered by taking a good look at it—an intersubjective procedure that anyone with good eyesight can engage in, where the conditions of visibility make it feasible. People do not have private and privileged access to phenomena, even as intentional objects of unsummated vision. (Step over here to where I stand, and *you* will see and fail to see what *I* see and fail to see, if your eyesight matches mine.) Now, I call “plain talk” the use of language that is “centripetal” around phenomena or perceived things. This is to say that the meaning and the justifiability of what gets said are determined by reference to what is publicly there to be seen, or to things simply as objects of sight, since its terms were learned in their visible presence. What this denies is the “centrifugal” theory of language that makes it look as if *anything* said is like the basket hanging from a balloon, where the balloon is a theory or a conceptual system qua theoretical, determining from above the “direction” (sense, intention) and adequacy of *anything* that is said, even the so-called descriptions. This monolithic view of language makes in effect *all* of its terms theoretical and “explanatory” in any use, tending thus to replace perception with theory-laden conception, from the ground up. What is wrong with this will be shown as we get into the analysis of the second way of making mistakes about things as phenomenal (intentional) objects of sight. What has been suggested here about “plain talk” is a “first” order of concepts—presupposed by the second—with which one can describe *and* explain things in a theoretically innocent way. “Why is this woman weeping? During the earthquake, a wall fell and buried her child under the debris. How do you know? I saw it happen.” Sherlock Holmes thought and spoke in this idiom expertly, without acquiring any reputation at all for theory-construction in the conceptual system-building sense. Nor was he, in his performance as a *detective*, unwittingly using some special conceptual system which prevailed at the time. This is why achievements of first-order thinking “have no history.” They are, in Strawson’s words, at the “massive central core” presupposed by the theories that do have a history, at the periphery of that *matrix* situation in which plain talk serves so nicely and so unostentatiously.

To say that such plain talk consists of unclear bits of embryonic theorizing is not only too counter-intuitive for words. It is a *logical* howler, for one who understands the logic of plain talk. Of course, to deny this is fun, being the opening wedge either for scepticism or science-fiction philosophy. This is why there are philosophical funsters and we like some of them around—some of the time. For example, what the funsters says about sight implies, in effect,

that seeing a cat streak through the backyard (chased by a dog) is logically like seeing an alpha particle streak through the Wilson cloud chamber. This puts both reports of what is seen into the same logical boat. The meaning and justification of both are dependent on a theory, and it is this maneuver that makes "object of sight" continuous—if not simply identical—with "object of thought," the latter notion being made to wear the trousers.

So I turn, at last, to the second way of making mistakes about what we see, and to the sense of "seeing what is not there" (intentional object) in that context. The first way does involve concepts, as has been noticed, but that sort of conceptualization is not fundamentally responsible for the order (structure) of things to which they apply, or for mistakes about them. This distinguishes them from the second case now before us, where to make a mistake about phenomena *is*, fundamentally, to misconceive them, in the sense of a failure in theorizing about them. Here, the notion of "conceptual organization" of phenomena applies nicely, meaning a putative order conceived to explain, *ex hypothesi*, the perceived regular correlations given in the perceptual field. The aim here is, in short, to give the why and the how of regularities expressed in first-order empirical generalizations.

But what I want to focus on is the different complexion that the notion of "intentional objects of sight" has in this context of second-order conceptualization. You will remember that we began by wondering about the idea that nothing given exists, and have introduced "phenomena" as what are given in the field of visual consciousness—things as objectified (relativized that non-conceptual way) for sight in the field of illumination. These we have called "real," meaning what they are as objects of consummated vision—or under a good look at them, and in this first case, their intentionality consisted in what it is in them that prompts a better look when the visibility conditions are not so good. But in the second-order case, now before us, there is a difference. It is illustrated by the difference between the star that is a luminous speck and the star that is a cluster of atoms. Seeing the star, does one see the cluster of elements that it actually is? The negative answer, which offhand seems right, implies that in simply looking at the star, you simply see what is not there, or you do not see what "actually" is there, and this drives home the thesis of the intentionality of what is seen, in a different dimension of sense. The difference is that, in this case, the "more to seeing than meets the eye" is *not* what *would* determinately appear (be seen) under a good look as in the flat disk case. The more to seeing than meets the eye, in the second-order case, is logically different, if "seeing" is here conflated with "theorizing," or "thinking that," making "what is seen" equivalent to "object of thought" (a theoretical entity). Of course, *that* is more than simply meets the clammy, unthinking little thing called the eye—so goes the story—the exercise of which organ of sight is, in this context, a symbol of simplemindedness taken in by mere apparitions, sometimes called "experiences." The sug-

gestion by the funsters is that, in *all* visual cases, what does simply meet the eye is like the dagger that Macbeth “saw,” which has suggested that simply seeing has no actual *objects* at all, ever, and seeing without objects is not *seeing* at all. Seeing must be more mindful than that, to grasp anything that is actually there to be seen. Shades of Plato and Descartes!.

The poison in this suggestion is extracted by allowing for phenomena as things which are *intersubjectively* objectified for vision and plain talk, in the first-order sense sketched above, where visual consummations and decisions based on them are feasible without theories. But for language-users, “sight” is a bipolar concept. At one end, it gravitates around the concept of good eyesight and plain talk (first-order). At the other, it amounts to theoretical vision. This is putative knowledge whose objects are theoretical entities, the formulation (theory) of which accounts generally for the order of things simply seen. Consummation of such *theory-laden* vision involves conclusive theoretical considerations that warrant a knowledge-claim, such that here the decision rests only obliquely and partially on first-order perception.

But there is still this new (second-order) sense of “intentional object of sight” that, in this context, has not yet been elucidated. Looking at the star that actually is a cluster of atoms, but not knowing this, what do I see? One might answer either (1) nothing or (2) something that doesn’t exist, or (3) something that does exist but is objectified for the seer in a way that does not show him what it actually is, in its existence (or existentially speaking).

Examine these three answers. (1) The answer that simply nothing is seen follows from taking “see” to mean “know” (theory-laden seeing). Then, given that the seer knows nothing of the actual atomic composite that the star is, he sees (knows) nothing. To say the least, he does not see the star, where “star” means “cluster of atoms.” Few people, if any, have consistently and wholly hung on to this “sees nothing” answer.

(2) The answer that, looking at a star, I see something that does not exist, reminds one of the dagger that Macbeth saw or seemed to see. What is wrong with this is the suggestion that all seeing is hallucination, including the good look from close up at the flat white disk, since that too is a cluster of atoms. This obliterates an important difference. Only Macbeth could “see” the dagger. You, and anyone else with good eyesight, can see the star that I see, and *that* deflates the balloon of the hallucination theory of vision. Anyway, people do not normally think and talk that way about all objects of sight—for whatever that is worth.

(3) The answer, in terms of an existing something that appears in a way that *does not reveal what is here in question about it* is the easing—not the easy—answer. And the question here is precisely the sort that only theoretical considerations can answer, not better looks (first-order) at the thing. To “see” the remote star or the nearby disk, here meaning things that are clusters of atoms, is to *see that* they are things of that sort, and such (second-order) seeing

is indeed theory-laden. It is knowing (seeing) something that simply seeing things is, in principle, mute about. (And, conversely, if it is a first-order question about the thing—is that a ball or a disk a hundred yards off?—theory-laden seeing is out of order, irrelevant. One moves closer for the good, decisive look.)

I have associated a question's being theoretical with its being a question about what exists or the "actual" nature of things "in their existence." And these things, I have said, appear under nonconceptual conditions of "objectification" for vision, as the "phenomena" that anyone with good eyesight can see and be articulate about in the first-order concepts of plain talk. And I have characterized phenomena as things that are "really" there for public encounter in the field of visual consciousness, which is not a state of mind but a field of illumination "come alive."

Now I want to say that simply seen phenomena—the "real" objects of that sort of seeing—do not, as such, exist (which indeed is to put "exist" to a restrictive use) *and* I say that *all* such objects are "actual" existing things "inexistentially present" in the field of visual experience. This is the second-order sense of "intentional objects of sight." In the first-order case, the intentionality of the objects of sight meant the lure in them towards better looks at them. Visual consummations of this sort show what and where things as phenomena "really" are, in the logically primitive or first order use of "where" and "what." I am restricting "real" or "really" to apply to what is found out to be the case this way. Such realities are not subjective ghosts that will be liquidated by theories, since such being as they have is not theory-dependent. They are at the "massive central core that has no history," meaning no history of the sort that theories have. And Anscombe's "grammatical feature" notion<sup>1</sup> of the intentionality of these objects is not sufficient to explain such independence.

In the second-order case, the intentionality of the objects of sight is the lure in them towards theoretical understanding of what and where they "actually" are in their existence—or the lure in them that provokes the language-user (and only language-users) into theorizing about them. In this light, what is simply given in the visual field is looked upon wholesale as not *actually* there, in favor of what can be found out about it by theorizing. Plato recognized *only* this sense of "intentional object of sight," thus suggesting that in simply seeing something (first-order), one sees either nothing, or something that does not truly exist. Such a maneuver leaves out the objective *reality* of what is simply seen, with which omission the monolithic centrifugal theory of thought and language, currently the style with philosophers like Goodman and Quine and Putnam, has a field day. In this view, nothing is "really there," in a theory-independent way, as a check on theories. The Bacchanalian revel that results is essentially Hegelian, as some critics of the movement are beginning to find and to point out—and some proponents to admit.

In conclusion, I must do something to take some of the mystery out of my central notion of the "field" of sight-and-light, in which actual existing things are objectified, under conditions of visibility, for simple visual encounter by the seer, or in which they are really but not existentially present, as is the seer himself, *qua* seer. If I do this adequately, I will, with the same stroke, also explain the remark made earlier that simply seeing something in this field is neither a physical (physiological) nor a mental (psychological) affair (phenomenon), as Ryle, Sibley, even Anscombe have suggested. This suggests a *tertium quid*, a third somewhat, which is what finally is to be spelled out.

When you look at a Käthe Kollwitz sketch of a grieving woman and see it as a grieving woman, what do you see? Do you see the *sketch*? Do you see a *grieving woman*? The careful (qualified) answers will be negative. If you look at the schematic picturing device and strictly see *it*, the report of what you see will certainly be different from the report of what you see it *as*. But neither will you simply see a grieving woman, since your eyes are certainly not directed at a grieving woman, but rather at the picture.

What you see when you see the picture as a grieving woman is not really there (a special kind of intentional object). Still, it is not quite right to say that you see nothing, or even that you see something that is unreal. There really are grieving women, and one of these might even have sat for the picture. Why not say that a grieving woman is "present" or "presented" in the space of the picture (as its "content") but not really there? Or that the picture "comes alive" with what it re-presents, i.e., with the "unreal presence" of what it pictures?

Notice also that the report of what you see the sketch as—the unreal presence of something in it—will not be in terms of what you *think* or even *imagine*. It will be a report of what you *see*, in some bona fide sense of the term, granting, of course, that there will be special conditions of "objectification" of this special sort. Moreover, notice that the space of what is seen "in" the picture is not the space of the sketch itself or the space in which you find the real originals (models).

The scene changes. Instead of our seeing the sketch of a grieving woman as a grieving woman, you are there in the green field looking at the flat white disk at a distance of six feet. What do you see? This time it is the "real" thing. But this still leaves out of the *picture*—the word is chosen advisedly—the thing the disk actually is in its existence, say, a conglomeration of atoms. You do not simply see that, as you did not see a real woman in the first case, looking at the sketch that "objectified" her for you in the *special* pictorial way that defines a work of art.

I am giving birth to the idea of an objectification of sorts occurring, this time a bedrock, natural sort of picturing, in simply seeing the real thing, where *this* "real" is the *tertium quid*, corresponding to what was expressed, shown, seen "in" the sketch. So, what is simply seen in the *natural* picture is in a

new sense neither a something nor a nothing, though “objectively” there to be seen. And the space of the field of visual consciousness in which it appears is not simply the space of the existing, actual, original “in itself,” the collocation of atoms, as the space of the thing apparent in the Kollwitz sketch is not the thing’s space in reality.

The analogy can be pressed further. In the primordial case of objectification of existing things for simple vision, with its natural conditions, there is (1) a sketching, (2) the resulting sketch, and (3) what is sketched (the original). (1) The sketching is the play of light schematically depicting at least the form of the original on the retina, via the lens of the eye. (2) The inverted image is the sketch, picturing (3) the existing collocation of atoms. Thus is the natural stage set for simply seeing something. But what is thus simply seen is neither the ocular sketch (retinal image) nor the atomic conglomerate in its physical space. It is rather the visual phenomenon that takes shape in the “real” space of the natural picture, its “content,” which here is the field of visual consciousness. And, I submit, this phenomenon—the real object that you are visually awakened (turned on) to in this situation—is the actual atomic thing inexistentially present in the visual field, challenging (luring) you to get at what and where it “actually” is, by theoretical considerations of the sort that were not at all necessary to your being aware of its real presence in the field of visual consciousness.

Here the analogy with pictorial (artful) representation as we ordinarily understand it ends. In the latter case, the seer can come out of the seeing-as experience of the “content” of the sketch to look at and see the *sketch* itself, and to see that, in certain respects such as shape, etc., it is roughly like what it represents—also to look at and see the (original) real thing “the like of which” is expressed (shown) in the picture. Nothing like this is feasible in the bedrock natural case of the picturing that goes on in simply seeing something, in the context of the question of what actually exists and its nature. Nobody can simply see either his retinal image or the cluster of atoms it corresponds to (a grammatical remark). Of course, *both* are atomic conglomerates in the final *physical* analysis, so neither is in the real (perceptual) space of the phenomenal representation that is simply seen. Thus, this bedrock seeing, though it involves picturing, is something that just happens willy-nilly to the seer by nature’s instigation; she has constituted him that way, naturally to picture (express) in the visual field the ambient actualities. Whereas, looking at and seeing the Kollwitz sketch as a grieving woman is sophisticated enough to count as something the seer does, his action—sometimes even voluntary. So it presupposes linguistic and mental capabilities and techniques, which make certain predicates associated with these appropriate to its description and explanation. Not so with simply becoming visually aware of something just on the strength of good eyesight. Nature does that to one, making him see what is “really” there to be seen by anyone who *can*

see, independently of beliefs or expectations. So it is not a mental affair. But "physical affair" won't do here either, since the field of the phenomenal objects of such seeing has a sort of intersubjective autonomy that is nicely accommodated *in plain talk about them*, without logical commitment to physicalism, in so far as this involves theoretical constructs of physics. The physicalistic consideration and its special talk ensues after our awareness of the phenomenon *as an intentional object*, i.e., the sophisticated awareness of it as a physical somewhat inexistentally present. Only then does the theoretical consciousness of it grow—the sense that, in simply seeing the phenomenon in real space, we are seeing what isn't there, now meaning not in physical space.

In this last step, I shall suggest something that points at—if it does not give—the answer to the question that has bedevilled current physicalists (Davidson, for example): why is there people-in-action (or person) talk at all, or what grounds it, if anything? Why not just physicalistic talk about what exists, namely, bodies-in-motion? Well, consider the odd ring of the remark, "the grieving woman is a conglomeration of atoms." You felt no such jolt under exposure to the notion that the white disk is a cluster of that sort. Why the difference, especially in view of the fact that you do not want *simply* to deny either proposition? Part of the answer draws attention to the "firstness" of what I have called the simple "realities" perceptually encountered in the real space (field of experience) in which we live, move, and have our being, with theories coming and going at the fringe. I called these "phenomena" and "intentional objects" not to derogate their reality or thinghood, but because they induce people (language-users), looking at them, to want the sort of explanations of them that only theorizing will yield, or in that light, to see them as objects manqué, not quite "actually" there where simply seen. Remember, nothing given *exists*.

This characteristic is what one would expect of things in a field of consciousness, but it is crucial to remember that this visual field—as such not relativized by *mental* perspectives—is the public domain, the one world, of seers and of the things they simply see, and live with and talk about, simply. One is present in this domain thanks simply to being a living thing (= with a nervous system) with eyes alerted by the things around it in the field of illumination. This "real" world is the neutral, natural starting point for ventures beyond this matrix situation in search of theoretical explanations.

Theoretical explanations naturally go in different directions—or are of logically different orders. If the thing in question is the white disk, its motion and stuff, the theoretical account raising and answering questions of what I have called "physical actuality" is proper. That is, "physical" analysis—call it substance analysis if you like—yields the theory with its theoretical constructs dealing with items in physical space, not simply in view. Of such things, inexistentally present in the visual field, I said earlier that looking at and



seeing them “does” nothing to them, while their illumination does awaken the seer (turns him on) to their presence.

But, if it is instead a woman you look at and see, this is certainly to do something to her, provided, say, your glances meet. It makes her blush, for example—which is to change the color of something just by looking at it. The theoretical account of such phenomena will border on the absurd if it is given in terms of photons, neurons, and the like. Physical or substance analysis here is inappropriate, out of order. This is to say that the thing, qua live woman, is not “actually” a concourse of atoms or, more generally, not a “physical object” constituted and moving in the way that such a categorization requires. What she “actually” is will be stated, not in terms of substance or stuff analysis, but in terms of ideas, ideals, emotions, cultural ethos, and so on. Call this “person” talk, including its ascriptive and normative force, the sort of talk that introduces the concept of a person to explain what one simply sees in some cases. (I do not like to call it “psychological” language, *tout court*; language of “mind” is better.) Thus, what is “inexistentially present” in the blushing woman you simply see are norms of conduct, etc., the instantiation of which in behavior is action, not just motion. This is to say that even the concept of “body” in, say, “her body,” is not quite what it is in, say, “the chemistry of his body.” Looking at the blushing woman, one can’t naturally say, “she is a conglomeration of atoms,” or even that *her* body is, *if* the point is to say something that has any explanatory bearing at all on the woman’s face turning red. Her face, in the relevant sense, is the thing which shows you what she feels and thinks (embarrassment, shame, etc.), and the theoretical explanation of that is in terms of body-as-subject, not as physical object. In short, m-predicates functioning in person-talk (red face) are not quite the m-predicates of physicalistic talk. Strawson did not make enough of this difference. (However, at the starting point in *plain* talk, this difference between m- and p-predicates is not operative.)

But I concede to the physicalists that this is not substance analysis. Mind is not a substance, nor is a man alive *as such* a stuff, a substance. That the physical account or theory is somehow basic for the explanation of *everything* is the bogus notion of the philosopher who has overlooked the simple *reality* of things at the starting point, with their “firstness” that accommodates—even requires—the personalistic explanation of things like people. What is wanting is, thus, a true “First Philosophy” of the condition of things at the starting point where, as simply seen, they are not either physical or mental. They are intentional objects of sight, “intending” or “inexistentially presenting” what actually exists. And, in terms of *this*, there is no monolithic theory or explanation, all of the same logical type. Any “body” does indeed, as such, come under the category of “physical object,” but if it is “somebody,” the very body in question is appropriated and formed by principles that constitute it a body-as-subject, a person.

## NOTES

1. Frank Sibley, "Seeking, Scrutinizing and Seeing," *Mind*, LXIV (1955), 455-478.

2. Frank Sibley, "Analyzing Seeing," *Perception* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 82, 92-94 *et passim*.

3. Fred I. Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (Chicago, 1969). Dretske is wrong in his contention that any seeing that yields *any* information about what is seen is belief-dependent—a belief that could, in principle, be false in any actual case.

Frank Sibley, "Analyzing Seeing." In his later treatment of seeing, Sibley says that simply "noticing" something involves beliefs about it, a notion that deserves separate examination.

4. G. E. M. Anscombe, "The Intentionality of Sensation," in *Analytical Philosophy*, Second Series, ed. R. J. Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1965).