

**SOLIPSISM
PHYSICAL THINGS
AND PERSONAL
PERCEPTUAL SPACE**

**Solipsist Ontology, Epistemology and
Communication**

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Series in Philosophy



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If you share my feelings in this book,
you will also share my views; all you need to do
for that is to change your point of view. This will be
a good opportunity for you to face with your own feelings, too.

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Introduction

Professor Ural has made a true contribution to the profession with his new book. Solipsism, for most of us, is just a label for a philosophical position that no one could seriously hold. But Ural has appreciated its real philosophical value, in particular, its unique ontological and epistemological consequences. In his terrific must-read manuscript, he has tried to elicit these hitherto unexplored peculiar features. And there is great value and reward in following his path. As he explicitly notes, no one has thought about solipsism seriously, and so, no one could be able to give a reply much less rebut its central theses. Ural, however, believes that he is able define and explore solipsism in a new light, one more congenial to contemporary metaphysical and epistemological considerations. In this new light, Ural is able to address and respond convincingly to standard old prejudices against solipsism.

Ural makes an interesting case that certain traditional philosophical problems, especially some surrounding the empiricism vs. rationalism debate, as well as, surprisingly, some novel problems about language, communication and meaning, turn out to be closely connected to solipsism either directly or indirectly. These relations and implications have gone unnoticed largely because of no one has taken solipsism seriously.

According to classical solipsism, we know nothing and if it were possible, we cannot communicate it. It is philosophically interesting that empiricism, rationalism and meaning ignored solipsism. Ural's thesis is based on a definition of "physical things" and on the concept of existence, from the perspective of novel form of solipsism. He employs the concept of personal space perception as well as standard treatments of indexical expressions in order to provide this definition. His most significant goal is to explain communication in a solipsistic framework.

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Foreword

In its long history, solipsism was seen as a defective philosophical thesis and the solipsist conceptions were, therefore, either ignored or tried to be re-expressed in slightly different forms, though nobody was able to solve them out or totally discard solipsism in the philosophical system.

The history of solipsism began with the Sophist definition and has reached our time with certain confusing interpretations. New conceptions emerged in the Middle Age depending on their theological as well as philosophical approaches. Nevertheless, it got formulated, popularized and developed by D. Hume and G. Berkeley in their discussions of philosophical problems. Modern philosophers such as B. Russell, L. Von Wittgenstein and E. Husserl referred to solipsism, directly or indirectly, as part of their philosophical perspectives. Today, it is fashionable to refer to it within psychology¹ (especially around the concepts like schizophrenia, selfishness, etc.), which will remain entirely outside my concern here.

Referring to “solipsism” as a special (philosophical) concept is relatively new. The emergence of this concept is said to date back to the 17th century with regards to religion and politics.² The sort of reference to “solipsism” together with the concepts of “ego” and “egoism/egoismus” as in philosophical frames put forth by I. Kant, A.Schopenhauer, Husserl and some others will also remain outside of my scope of interest.

It is well known that the concept of “solipsism” played a very central role in the philosophy of Berkeley and Hume merely because of their philosophical theses. According to the empiricist philosophers, sensations are the basic sources of our knowledge, but they are based on the existence of subjectivity, that is, on consciousness, which is not detectable by empirical observations or sensations. It is all the worse that consciousness is the provision of the existence of physical things, as well as of our sensations. This implies that the existence of a physical world depends on my consciousness, that is, all in all, on my existence.

The problematic relationship between my consciousness and physical things in rationalistic philosophy does not prevail in empiricist philosophy. My consciousness or my mind behave in accordance with certain rules like logic and are able to construct a physical world by themselves without any problem.

¹ For instance: R.Tuomela, R. (1989), pp. 23-47.

² Adriaans, P.W., “Notes on Solipsism, pp.1.

However, as is well known by rationalistic thinkers, a new problem arises here between my mind and others' minds. This also implies that only my mind can exist simply because proving the existence of other minds is impossible. This is the version of solipsism that prevails in rationalistic philosophy.

When solipsism was re-developed by Hume, Berkeley and Descartes, they noticed the strange position of consciousness in their philosophy. Only a few philosophers have continued the story of solipsism, each trying to overcome its difficulties³, but the general tendency until the present has been to ignore solipsism.

Wittgenstein, the prominent figure behind Positivism, recognized the "solipsist colors" in his philosophy.^{4,5} This was also true for other positivistic philosophers in their philosophical views on language. However, I do not want to deal with the philosophy of Wittgenstein or other thinkers and will only make short remarks on certain philosophers to be able to better share my views on solipsism.

The relation between Wittgenstein's philosophical approach and solipsism display two different pictures in two periods in general, characterized by the works titled *Tractatus* and *Notebooks*. *Tractatus* reflects parts of Russell's view of solipsism, especially on questions such as "how comes we know the ego?", "what is the ontological status of ego?" etc. The aim of the above mentioned philosophers was to escape solipsism by defining ego as an aspect of, as related with sensory-data (as was accepted by Russell) or as a relation

³ See for instance: Beloff, J. (1956), pp. 541-549; Clark, M. (1964), pp. 127-128; Dingle, H. (1955), pp. 433-454; Friedman, R. S. (1975), pp. 443-460; Hughes, P. (1935), pp. 328-329; Russell, J. E., (1906), pp.606-613; Schiller, F. C. S., (1909), pp.169-183; Stern, A. (1948), pp. 679-687; Pitkin, W.P. (1906), pp. 344-350.

⁴ His view about solipsism is controversial. For instance: "From Schopenhauer (perhaps) Wittgenstein got his interest in solipsism and in the ethical nature of the relation between the will and the world. Schopenhauer's saying that "The world is my idea," (from *The World as Will and Idea*) is echoed in such remarks as "The world is *my*world" (from *Tractatus* 5.62). What Wittgenstein means here, where he also says that what the solipsist means is quite correct, but that it cannot be said, is obscure and controversial. Some have taken him to mean that solipsism is true, but for some reason cannot be expressed. H.O. Mounce, in his valuable *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction*, says that this interpretation is surely wrong. Mounce's view is that Wittgenstein holds solipsism itself to be a confusion, but one that sometimes arises when one tries to express the fact that 'I have a point of view on the world which is without neighbours.' (Mounce p.91) Wittgenstein was not a solipsist but he remained interested in solipsism and related problems of scepticism throughout his life." (<https://www.iep.utm.edu/wittgenstein>).

⁵ Lange, E. M. (2017) pp.159-175.

between the external world (macrocosm) and the internal world (microcosm) by using logic (as proposed by Wittgenstein).⁶ Wittgenstein, in his second period (the *Notebooks* period) changed his views and shifted to defending some metaphysical assumptions. Yet, the solipsist and problematic status of ego in rationalistic and empiricist philosophy, as well as in positivistic philosophy, remained unchanged.

With Positivist philosophers, we encountered a new kind of solipsism, which was analytically defined, as in semantic solipsism, phenomenal solipsism, analytical solipsism, quasi-axiomatic solipsistic system, etc. The source of the problem in the philosophy of language, which solipsism solved out, has been the denotation of "I" as an indication "ego/ ipse". I am aware of my existence and can give myself existence through my consciousness, which is linguistically represented by "I" in Wittgenstein's philosophy as well as in Positivist philosophy. The denotation of "I" is my consciousness, and its existence is necessary for my existence. Well, the problem is that my consciousness provides not only its own existence but also the existence of the physical things. This, roughly speaking, means that the current issue of the existence of consciousness and the outdated arguments of solipsism will inevitably re-appear in philosophy of language.⁷

"Solipsism", in its old form, held that the existence of anything outside one's own mind as uncertain; the external world and other minds could not be known and could not exist outside my mind. As a metaphysical thesis, solipsism takes it further to say that the world and other minds cannot exist as independent of my mind because my consciousness gives existence to itself and to anything noticed by my sensations. This has been a well-known classical thesis since the Sophist philosophers, but only a few of the philosophers mentioned above noticed the problem. At first glance, the problem is concerned with consciousness since we can be aware of ourselves as well our sensations only through it. This means that all ontological and epistemological considerations must refer to my consciousness and suppose that it gives existence to everything including itself. "To be aware of" is the method of the consciousness of giving existence. It is, in fact, clear that all philosophers, whether empiricists or rationalists, must avoid the deadly solipsistic theses. Solipsism is not a philosophical system and nobody would like to defend it. All philosophical systems have a silent compromise on ignoring it in order to be able to free themselves of the solipsistic theses.

⁶ See for instance: Heflik, W.(2011), O'Brien, L. F. (1996), Engel, M. (1993), Pears, D. F. (1972).

⁷ See for instance: Fodor, J.A. (1981).

My thesis in this book is that solipsism is a result of the fundamental traditional philosophical problems and ideas. It means that it is not possible to escape from it by means of certain structural features of our traditional conceptions. It seems that we can define solipsism from a new perspective to be able to eliminate the pseudo problems and construct a solipsist ontology and epistemology and, then, explain communication from the solipsist point of view.

In order to construct a new form of solipsism, we need to start by elaborating on the concept of “physical things”. The concept of “physical things”, as we use it in philosophy today, is an abstraction, heavy in metaphysical content. First of all, we perceive the physical things around us as a whole and, in fact, in relation to each other. The relationship that is perceived between physical things gives them their features of existence. Physical things can exist in my personal space by means of certain relations. Things stand on the left or right side of another, they stand near or far, above or bottom, front or behind, before or after, etc., in relation to one another. These kinds of relationships not only define the connections between the objects, but also give them their physical characteristics. Actually, the kinds of existences of perceptual objects can be determined by the features of the relationships that we observe. We must note here that we can only talk about different kinds of existences of objects in relation to one another, not about the existence of the objects themselves alone. The relationships that we observe between the objects give them their specific kind of existence, that is, the physical characteristics of the objects in question. It must be underlined here that our physiological features characterize these relations.

Traditionally, we talk about the physical things with reference to our perception, that is, our five senses. This is true, of course, but we never observe an object alone. I must first be aware that it is in my perceptual space at a certain distance from me. “Distance” is a kind of a relation and points to a spatial existence, too. The concept of “physical things” may be an abstraction since being a physical thing requires being inside a physical space, which is characterized by the relations in my perceptual space.

Any type of an object exists in its own space. Physical things exist in a physical space; mathematical objects need a mathematical space just as mythological objects exist in their imaginary space. These kinds of spaces are neither observable nor detectable. We can image the ontological characters of these objects only by means of the relationships established between them. The relations between the objects which are constructed in my mind, determine the future of existence of a space and, thus, of the objects.

In the Kantian sense, we can talk about only one kind of space, that is, the physical space with its geometrical features. But we know that each different thing has its own special existence. We can imagine three, four or n -dimensional spaces for physical things. However, in order to separate a mathematical entity from a mythological entity we have to imagine two different kinds of existences with their special spaces. Since everything can exist in its own space, we have to talk about different spaces. This is why we need to go beyond the Kantian space conception, which has physical/geometrical limitations.

I have to emphasize that our spatial conceptions have their own ontological characters. Ontological spatial characters are our imaginations; yet, they attribute existence to things inside themselves. Each and every space conception reflects different ontological features, so, we can differentiate the existence of a mathematical entity from, for instance, a mythological or intentional thing.

Ontological spatial characters are determined by means of relations between entities or things that we talk about. We can define the existential feature of singular things depending on the relationships constructed among them. The kinds of relations pre-suppose the existence of specific singular things determining their existential features.

The physical space around me is nothing else but my personal spatial perception, and its ontological features are determined by observational relations, like left and right, near or far, above or bottom, front or behind, before or after etc. We can derive other relations, for instance, the continuum, from the abstraction of “before and after” or greatness from the relationship between near or far (or small/ big). We can use these kinds of abstractions in order to give existence to different kinds of entities like mythological, imaginal or even mathematical. Mythological entities, for instance, are immortal and therefore they have timeless existence, but they can have the attribute of greatness without having any temporality.

I perceive ‘things’ in my perceptual space. The perceptual process has two aspects: one aspect is my sensations and my consciousness and the other, I believe, is the ‘things’. We know that we cannot prove the existence of things, which is a problem that prevails in different philosophical systems as well as in the fundamental and irrefutable thesis of solipsism.

It is an abstraction to refer to “singular physical entities” since we cannot perceive them alone, but only in relationship to each other. We cannot perceive these relations themselves, but can give them existence depending on our physiology. And through these relations, we can determine the kinds of existence of physical things, I mean, give them (a physical) existence. We

apparently have mental and linguistic abilities, that is, the abilities of conceptualization and abstraction with which we are able to imagine different kinds of existences, and therefore, the kinds of existences of the entities. It is possible to use one or more concepts in order to assign different kinds of existences to entities. Of course, both the existence of the entities themselves and their physical existences depend on my mind, on my consciousness. As I noted above, my spatial imagination, which consists of different kinds of relations, assigns existence to entities. All kinds of relations are related to my space perceptions. I have to note here that a spatial perception is conceivable as independent of my perception. This is not an answer for orthodox solipsism, with which I am not interested. On the other hand, I can discuss the kinds of existences with reference to spatial conceptions, which are characterized by relations. It is very important from the solipsistic point of view that we construct the same relations, and therefore, imagine the same kinds of existence or common beings. I will elaborate on this problem in detail in the present book.

Imagining physical things as standing outside me but depending on my imagination can be thought of as a negation of physical reality. I will explain, in detail, that the imagination of existence of physical things as dependent on me is, in fact, compatible with our way of thinking, and with our conceptions of existence. On the other hand, the main concern is to assume singular physical things as independent of my consciousness. First of all, we cannot observe any physical thing alone; and even, if we want to define their (single) existence as dependent on our sensations, then, the witness of our sensations will not be enough. We know very well that the witness of our sensations is not certain and they are fallible as well. Plato had shown that we need a “new world”, that is the world of ideas, in order to understand what we observe. Ideas, as is well known, could not be observable, but understandable only in thought. This means also that the witness of our senses will be not enough not only for their physical features, but also for their existence.

Aristotelian ontology is a reference point for many traditional philosophical problems. Discussion about the nature of physical things or their ontological status goes back especially to Aristotelian ontology. As it is well known, according to Aristotelian ontology⁸, “physical things” have substance (*hypokeymenon*), which is not observable. The existence of every singular physical things depends on their (singular) substances; sensations we have of them give us information about their perceptible features only, that is, the existence of my sensations, not any more. These kinds of traditional thoughts clearly show that accepting physical things as independent of my sensations

⁸My unpublished article “Ontology, Aristotelian ontology and Solipsist ontology”.

leads to dark metaphysical assumptions. Since “to exist” is formed by my consciousness, therefore, I can't imagine “the existence” out of “my existence conception”. I can only assume that every physical thing has a substance, which is not observable. Their existence is a metaphysical assumption because of their hypothetical characters.

Just at this point, we need to remember the solipsistic thesis, which says that there is nothing outside my mind. It seems that it is not easy to escape from this solipsistic theses. Ignoring the problem and going on with the traditional way in philosophy is an option, while the second option is to change the old perspectives, as I have tried to achieve in this book.

It seems that solipsistic theses came to exist because of certain traditional concepts like “one singular physical thing”. “A singular physical thing” presupposes the existence of an object, which must not be dependent on me, by definition. But in fact, the existence of a physical thing implies some observable features (sensations), which depend on me and a substance, which has an unobservable existence. Of course, we can talk about certain philosophical views like phenomenology or materialism without looking for any substance or so, but they also require my perceptions, that is, my consciousness.

On the other hand, my sensations should be in my personal space. A personal space consists of perceptible relations: these are also dependent on my conscious, but with them I could be able to ascribe existence, physical existence to my personal space. To be physically existent implies being in a personal space consisting of perceivable relations. These relations like up and down, near or far, left or right, big or small, etc., give objects their (physical) existence. These observable relations are open to some abstractions. With these abstractions, we can define different kind of existences. For instance, we can use the concepts like “near or far” to describe a psychological situation. It seems that different relations provide us with different kinds of existence of the objects. In this book, I will elaborate on different kinds of relations and their connections with objects.

In my personal space, I perceive (physical) objects altogether, with different kinds of relations with which I can assign them physical existence. Being in my personal space means having physical existence due to observable relations. It is clear that I can decide, without touching them, but as dependent on observable relations, that these things are physical. To touch any object gives me a feeling in my personal space, and therefore, its physical character will be dependent on my personal space. If something is in my personal space, than I do not need to prove its independent existence. In fact, the concept of “singular physical thing” is an abstraction and it needs some metaphysical suppositions, as it is noted above. I should declare, again, that

the concept of “existence” or “to be existent” certainly belongs to my mind. But I can imagine my personal space and can assign existence as independent of my consciousness. My personal space could be constructed in my mind, of course, but it could present, indicate or suppose an existence as lying outside of my mind or my conscious. I can imagine and assign them different kinds of existence either as independent of my conscious (like physical objects) or as dependent on my conscious (like mathematical objects).

Physical things and singular physical things must be existent out of my conscious, by definition. I can give them an existence as independent of my mind, but as dependent on my imagination. This imagination certainly depends on my mind, but the existence of physical things, which are predicted by my imagination could be supposed as outside of my mind and independent of my mind. My imagination, of course, depends on my mind, but I could imagine a ‘physical space’ as independent of my mind, which is coupled with my personal space. My personal space, in fact, consists of relations which are perceivable, and therefore, can have physical characteristics in my mind. The difference between this solipsistic view and traditional acceptance is that the second supposes the existence of physical things as independent of my mind. But, in fact, singular physical things could be perceptible in my personal space as physical existence because of my perception of relations. These kinds of relations can be thought of as belonging to a physical reality the constructive elements of which are also dependent on my cognitive presentation or imagination. I should note here that the traditional concept of singular physical things as independent of my consciousness included several difficulties and fell down into the traditional solipsistic hole.

“Nothing exists” is a very radical thesis, and it is not easy to defend. I will partially discuss it in this book. The solipsistic motto “we cannot know anything”, however, can be true, especially if we use the traditional definition of “physical objects” and give independent existence to “singular physical objects”. Solipsism, if we define it truly, will give us a recipe for revisiting certain old ontological problems, which I will discuss in this book in detail.

It seems much more complicated to elaborate on the third part of the motto of solipsism, which indicates communication: “even if we are able to know, we cannot communicate it to others”. This problem is also concerned with the first part of the motto indirectly, since the concept of “singular physical object” supposes the existence of singular physical objects but, in reality, no singular, physical and isolated thing exists. This kind of existence is a metaphysical one; and things do not exist on their own, but as a whole as being perceived by my spatial imagination as physical. This confusion shows

itself not only in philosophical debates, but also in communication theories (philosophy of language or analytical philosophy).

The existence of singular physical objects and their ontological status disappeared after Newton's physics. Kant, as a philosophical interpreter of Newton's system, was never interested with the ontological status of singular physical objects. Newton's interest was in the motion of physical things and discussing them in mathematical language. Qualitative descriptions lost their importance in the search for the existence of singular physical things. In other words, traditional ontological problems have all proven to be in vain after Newton physics.

Just at this point I have to mention the Vienna Circle Positivism or the Positivist philosophers and their attitude against metaphysics. This attitude was their distinctive feature, but in fact it must be thought as restricted only by Aristotelian metaphysics, I believe. They criticized, also, Kantian philosophy, because they interpreted his definition of the a priori as metaphysical. I would like to put aside this point because it deserves a more detailed discussion.⁹

It is very interesting to note that the positivist philosophers turned it down like a bad penny, simply because linguistic analysis is based on searching for the relation between terms and singular physical things. This is required, though, not only for the logical analysis of language and linguistic terms, but also for revisiting certain old problems such as the ontological status of singular physical terms including proper names. I will discuss this issue in the last sections of the book.

Accepting terms as units in denoting physical things re-invited some old problems in a new fashion. We have to note here that, just as the concept of "physical things" entails many metaphysical problems, the concept of "language" is very complicated in structure, involving several kinds of problems. Then, we have to cheer up and welcome solipsism right at this point! Solipsist motto says that knowledge "cannot be communicated to others" and even if it can be communicated, "it cannot be understood". Alas, we do communicate, though! We need to see, again at this point, that the critics of the solipsistic view on issues of communication are right. Yet, I believe that it is possible to explain our communicative action from the viewpoint of the new format for solipsism.

I will discuss this issue, in detail, in the last chapter of the book trying to put forth a new interpretation of solipsism to be able to solve some of the age-old linguistic problems. In order to be able to do that I will briefly entertain two

⁹ Ural, Ş., (2017).

new definitions based on solipsist theses and will explain communication from the new solipsist point of view. The first definition requires discarding identity while the second requires leaving aside the concept of “meaning” as a communicational instrument. I sincerely believe that solipsism, in its new fashion, is capable of providing us with a new vision.

To conclude the foreword, my sincere thanks to go to translation scholar Alev Bulut who undertook the utopic work of translating the entire book into English for this publication and to my dear friend Ernie Lepore who has always been by my side; I am also grateful to Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini for editing and Gala Stojnić for proofreading the book with the utmost care. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my dear colleagues Ahmet Ayhan Çitil, Özgüç Güven, Vedat Kamer, and Reviewer of Vernon Press for their invaluable criticisms on the content. I am most thankful to the Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University for giving me the opportunity of doing part of my research in their Department in 2010. The last but not the least, I owe heartfelt thanks to İstanbul University, Project Coordination Unity of Scientific Research Programs for supporting the book through Scientific Research Funding (Project No 26197).

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İstanbul/Bostancı

July 16, 2018

Chapter 1

Basic Concepts

I. BASIC ASPECTS OF SOLIPSISM

Although solipsism is not a subject that has been frequently dealt with by philosophers, it has maintained its importance from the Antiquity to our day. The famous idea by Gorgias which can be summarized as *“Nothing exists and even if something exists, nothing can be known about it; and even if something can be known about it, the knowledge of it cannot be communicated to others. Even if it can be communicated, it cannot be understood”* or R. Descartes’ distinction between *Res extansa* and *Res cogitans* which creates an abyss between the physical world and consciousness are seen as typical examples of ideas of “solipsism”. Berkley deserves credits as a philosopher who overtly took up solipsism and some of the issues it entailed.

Solipsism can be interpreted in multiple ways as is seen by reviewing how it was defined by several philosophers. Russell divides the solipsist views into two groups as dogmatic and skeptical solipsism (Russell 1966, p.191). Whatever the differences among these views may be, reducing the existence of physical things to their being perceived (to “self” as the ultimate and sole thing/ solus ipse) is the basic doctrine of solipsism.

Solipsism is not a philosophical system in the classical sense because one cannot talk about a systematic solipsist ontology or epistemology. Defense of solipsism is not easy, because it involves aspects that are “contrary to common conception” (!)

This is why solipsism is a kind of a trap set against its opponents in the competition between philosophical systems of ontological and epistemological nature. However, solipsism is an unavoidable conclusion for all philosophical systems dealing with the triple concepts of **physical things, sensations and consciousness.**

According to empiricists, sensations form the basis of our knowledge of physical things. Yet, the act of knowing is an aspect of consciousness. All the data obtained about physical things by sensations (including existence) can only be meaningful if there are conscious individuals. When we accept that the data we obtain from physical things comes from sensations, we might interpret that empirical data as the evidence of the existence of my consciousness as in solipsism. Since sensations depend on consciousness, the existence of physical things has to depend on the existence of consciousness.

A statement as “the physical world exists as I perceive it” can easily be transformed into the statement “the physical world exists in relation to me/self” and into “the physical world exists if I exist”. So, everything is constructed on the axis of “self” (ipse). Therefore, an empiricist approach accepting the existence of physical things and sensations as a starting point instantly finds itself reaching a solipsist finding. Empiricism reaches a solipsist finding by making sensations and objective existence of physical things its foundation.

We do not have a method that proves the objective existence of physical things. Therefore, we do not have a reliable empirical stance proving the existence of a world of things independent of self, which disproves solipsism.

Only commonsense tells us that there needs to be a world of physical things independent of “self”. Yet, the endpoint does not change no matter how much it is avoided since neither sensations nor the “consciousness” that makes them existent can be negated in the issue of physical things. This is why solipsism becomes a headache for the empiricists. The arguments on which solipsism is based are neither phenomenal nor experimental, but logical in nature, which makes it even worse since ignorance of the existence of a physical world is a result of the acknowledgements from inside a system based on sensations and empirical data.

The easiest thing to do to get rid of that finding is to say that solipsism is contrary to common conception.

Solipsism is, in fact, doomed to emerge like a virus not only in empiricism, but in all philosophical systems concerned with sensations and consciousness. In all philosophical systems the consciousness has to give meaning and existence in relation to sensations and physical things. This aspect of consciousness is the reason why the questions of “solipsism” emerge.

In rationalist philosophy, everything is based on the foundation of consciousness, so is the knowledge of physical things. Thus, according to that approach, the possibility of knowledge is constructed in accordance with the existence of “self” or “consciousness”. Yet, the above assumption only serves to hide the problem since neither the independence of the physical things from the ‘self’ nor the existence of other ‘selves’ have yet been proven. Then, the issues of empirical philosophy have to be valid for the rationalist philosophy, too.

The difference between the theories of consciousness, sensations, physical things and their relations as put forth by rationalist and empiricist philosophy amounts to nothing more than entering the same labyrinth from different inlets: in rationalist philosophy, consciousness is the source of knowledge, which means that it accepts the relation between consciousness and solipsism.

From the rationalistic point of view, on the other hand, the existence of consciousness cannot be taken as a proof of the existence of physical things. So, there is no reason to think that the rationalistic approach is free from the questions entailed in solipsism. The monads of Leibniz, for instance, can be thought of as mere consciousness and the physical things can be thought of as being merely contained in that consciousness. This interpretation does not dispute that solipsism takes place in Leibniz's rationalistic philosophy since the pre-established harmony between consciousness and physical things (according to the monadology) is meaningful only when solipsism is ignored.

Yet, we hardly see any philosopher (except for Husserl who dealt with the issue as the 'self of another') characterizes solipsism as part of his/ her philosophical system.

So, the problems discussed under the title of solipsism arise from the relations among "consciousness", "physical thing" and "sensations" since it is not possible to construct any of the above three independently (though they are assumed to have structures different in nature). The problems defined under the title of solipsism are problems that any philosophical system is eventually confronted with. The steps that have been taken to solve the problem out have usually been in the direction of rejecting solipsism.

Consciousness must be considered as the starting point of the solution of the problems categorized as "solipsism" since we can only make sure of the existence of consciousness directly. Consciousness exists by means of self-knowledge and this is also how it becomes "self-existent".

That my consciousness is self-existent by means of self-knowledge is an attribute that applies to physical things, too. So, the "self-knowledge of my consciousness" paves the way to solipsism as a way towards the solution of the problem.

Solipsism is the name given to a logical inference. It is an argument reached by means of logic (as in Zenon's paradoxes) conflicting eventually with commonsense knowledge.

Our commonsense is not a proof of the existence of physical things. Yet, the incongruity between the solipsist and common-sense approaches to physical things cannot be ignored.

The crucial point in resolving this incongruity is consciousness since we can only, doubtlessly, accept the existence of consciousness. Taking the existence of consciousness as our point of departure, following the traces of the philosophers like Descartes or Leibniz, does not provide any natural solution to the problem.

I will discuss aspects of solipsism and re-evaluate the conception of physical thing to offer a solution to the problem from the perspective of consciousness. I believe that such a re-evaluation will allow for the construction of an epistemology and ontology based on consciousness without influencing the known negative consequences of solipsism.

My main aim, in short, is to discuss solipsism from a new perspective. This will make it possible to define consciousness and certain procedures that it accomplishes from a new point of view. These definitions will lead us towards the construction of a new ontology and an epistemology in accordance with solipsism.

II. GIVING EXISTENCE BY MEANS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

We think that we perceive physical things as single entities by sensations. Yet, it seems that the solipsist problems emerge right here. In fact, we might take the concept of “**Personal Perceptual Space**” (PPS) as a starting point in defining the relation of consciousness to physical things as in solipsism. Using that concept, we may define the relation among consciousness, physical thing and sensation from a new perspective. Before discussing that concept, I will discuss the attribution of existence by consciousness and its consequences.

We might suppose that sensations serve to transfer our knowledge of physical things. But sensations can only gain meaning in consciousness. The act of “attributing meaning” can be thought of as the attribution of existence to physical things by my consciousness. The consciousness gives existence and attributes meaning to physical things in its own terms.

The concept of “existence” belongs to consciousness and refers to a thing designed by consciousness. Making something existent is a quality that only belongs to my consciousness and consciousness alone can be self-existent as well as making other objects exist.

It is obvious that self-knowledge is a characteristic of my consciousness. This knowledge (in the sense of Descartes) is the self-knowledge of consciousness (self-existence of consciousness). Yet, the consciousness also makes all things outside itself existent, as is inferred by solipsism. The consciousness can give different ontological existences to different things in accordance with “*the ontological knowledge that it constructs for itself*”. Yet, this operation needs to make different things gain different ontological features (even in my own consciousness).

The act of knowing of the consciousness has to be seen as a process. We need to refer to “awareness” before referring to “direct knowledge”.

The most fundamental and preliminary example of the process can be found in the self-knowledge of consciousness attributing its own existence. In order to be able to say, "I think", I need to be aware of my thinking. In order to be able refer to the act of thinking, the act has to exist and I have to notice it. Self-knowledge and attribution of self-existence by consciousness is realized by means of the act of "noticing". Consciousness notices itself by attributing self-existence. Yet, the process does not entail the determination of the ontological features of consciousness nor its differentiation from other things since even though all objects/ things may become existent in/ by my consciousness, I define them by different ontological features. Otherwise, we would fall into the solipsist abyss in the classical sense and say that all things exist in/ by my consciousness.

Noticing (becoming aware) means the **knowledge** of being of the thing that one notices. Thus, **knowing** becomes the **attribution of existence**, since "knowing" requires the "attribution of existence" to the "stimulus" that one notices. Then awareness is transformed into the attribution of existence; that is, the act of **knowing** brings about the operation of **giving existence**.

Yet this process of attributing existence, even though it is typically solipsist in character, does not require knowledge of the ontological features of the thing that is noticed (i.e. knowledge of the thing). Although my annoyance, my headache or the burning of my hand may all exist in my consciousness and I cannot claim to attribute different ontological existence to them at a point in the process, I have to be able to define different things in a way as to consider their ontological features as consciousness contents (in accordance with solipsism).

The stimulus that we notice may emerge as a result of a physiological, chemical, biological or psychological process. We develop the faculty of attributing different ontological features to these stimuli and thus to things by means of the experiences that we accumulate.

I notice a headache, an annoyance, a needle piercing my hand, or a physical thing by means of stimuli; this act of awareness enables the objects in question to be conceived in my consciousness as distinct single entities, which are consequently each attributed different existences. I first notice the sensation in my abdominal region and then make it "existent", for instance, as the pain of appendicitis.

Making a thing existent is an attribute of my consciousness and this is done within the capacity of the ontological knowledge of my mind. Any stimulus that is noticed will exist in/ by my consciousness. The problem is to be able to tell the "ontological" difference between my hand burning and my happiness or annoyance. The problem, in other words, is to be able to

define ontological knowledge of different stimuli in my consciousness and differentiate them from one another.

This is how I can differentiate happiness, pain and annoyance even though they may have the same ontological attribute (existence) in my consciousness. This differentiation needs an explanation consistent with solipsism.

My consciousness gives existence to the different stimuli that it notices by several methods, beginning with experiencing. What can exist in my consciousness is my consciousness and its content.

Experience is conveyed through language. Conceptualization and remembering can be seen as devices transferring experience and gaining existence in/ by my consciousness. Emotions such as love, hatred and fear can be said to exist in my consciousness as remembering and experience.

Information of different stimuli reaching my consciousness and the difference of content between them will inevitably be in consciousness. Existence is possible for my consciousness in Cartesian terms only through self-awareness and the awareness of the content. Remembering is the awareness of consciousness of its content.

The stimuli that reach consciousness may come from different sources. Although the senses and emotions such as pain, joy and happiness come from different sources, they are always existent in the same place, in my consciousness. Information of both the existence of sensations and things denoted by sensations can be located in a single place, in my consciousness.

Thinking and being aware of my thinking is the existential attribution of my consciousness by a stimulus. Similarly, thinking, loving and having fear or pain are stimuli existing in my consciousness. The existence of these stimuli in my consciousness can only be the proof of the existence of the stimuli, but not of the things that are supposed to correspond to those stimuli! This is why the visual perception is not a proof of the existence of a physical thing, just as my awareness of my thinking is not the proof of the existence of my consciousness. So I accept the existence of a physical thing or my consciousness not directly, but because of the attribution of existence of my consciousness. Otherwise, I would have to accept the existence of my consciousness just like physical things (as in Plato's world of ideas). In the end, consciousness makes sensations, language, or, in fact, any stimulus—and thus different objects—existent just as it makes the act of thinking and thus itself existent. In other words, awareness of a stimulus means first the awareness of its existence and then making it existent. Thus, **sensations, perceptions and other stimuli as well as the things that are anticipated to correspond to them exist in my consciousness within the capacity of my consciousness.**

We accept that there is (an ontological) difference between the existence of a physical thing and my headache or my being happy. This difference, as will be noted below, is related to “the reality” and “the truth” of the objects in question.

Let us put aside for a while the giving of existence to things by my consciousness by means of space representations and the issue of the reality of these things. “Giving of existence” by my consciousness to several outside stimuli/ sensations by means of consideration or awareness of them is an act comprised only of the sensations themselves, not of the objects (i.e. the physical things) that they denote!

I notice a sensation as the first step (by becoming aware of it) and in the second step, I make the stimulus existent by noticing its origin (by means of the past experience). We can assume that acquired experiences play a major role in awareness of different sensations.

Knowing that the pain in my stomach (as a stimulus) results from appendicitis means making the stimulus existent by experience. This means that the attribution of existence to both the stimulus and its cause takes place in/ by my consciousness.

In this case, we can say that a thing is the total of three different kinds of ontological knowledge anticipated by my consciousness:

First is the existence of a stimulus in my consciousness. My consciousness makes the stimulus existent by noticing it.

Second is the knowledge about the ontological characteristics of the cause of the stimulus. This knowledge is an ontological conception, which enables me to conceive one stimulus as having different ontological characteristics from another. This is how I can differentiate the pain in my hand from annoyance and a dream from the reality. This differentiation enables me not only to conceive a dream as different from a reality, but also an operation of logic as different from an operation of mathematics and a figure as different from an imaginary object. This is due to the nature of the step at which the operation of attribution of existence (in/ by my consciousness) to different things takes place.

Third is the knowledge of what the thing is (pencil, human being, etc.). The knowledge depends on language and exists linguistically. The spoken language itself is an existential sphere and also a means of attributing existence. If I do not know what the thing that I hold in my hand is or what its name is, it will just be a (physical) thing that I hold in my hand, which makes it have the first and the second steps of

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