ON SAYING PARADOXICAL THINGS RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT: These are responses to the contributions of participants at the book symposium on *Indexicalism: Realism and the Metaphysics of Paradox.*

KEYWORDS: Bensusan; Indexicalism

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the book symposium around *Indexicalism: Realism and the Metaphysics of Paradox*; including those that ended up not sending their texts for publication: Andrea Vidal, Janina Monisnka, Germán Prosperi, Elzahrã Osman, Michel Weber and John Bova. Some, but not all, of what has been discussed on this occasion is reflected in my replies here. I understand the debate around indexicalism and its consequences to be an ongoing one and therefore the responses below aim at fueling it. In any case, they are no more than preliminary responses that can be read as steps towards furthering the multi-dimensional conversation that I was pleased to find in the above readings of the book.

RESPONSE TO SHAVIRO:

To engage in a general account of how things are is to risk paradox. Totality, with its different figures including the impersonal one that enables a symmetrical view from nowhere of anything, looms about and it could make everything available to an exercise of unconstrained, non-situated freedom to reveal. Franz Rosenzweig, for what can be considered to be good Levinasian reasons, would refrain from it and recommend the attraction to philosophy to be kept at bay for otherwise totalities would make anything personal impersonal and render

anyone's life equally part of a global picture. Rosenzweig writes "an All would not die, and in the All, nothing would die. Only that which is singular can die, and everything that is mortal is solitary".[1] The philosophical endeavor is one where nothing is left outside its transparent light, it leaves no remainder, "no remainder at least according to its own claims and its own particular modalities".[2] The challenge for whoever would rather exorcize this all-encompassing prospect would be to "present an Archimedean point outside of that knowable All".[3] In order to avoid philosophy, he has to engage with its scope, master some of its tricks and acknowledge its pull. Yet, he seems to have been convinced that he could somehow escape the paraconditional spell of the *Protrepticus* brought in by Paul Livingston: if you should do philosophy, you should do philosophy, and if you should not do philosophy, then you should do philosophy.[4] Perhaps he assumed that he could "throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it".[5] His venture into philosophy would be then like a season in hell from which he emerged believing in personal redemption, in local coordinates and in the very possibility of exorcizing the All.

Emmanuel Levinas would still insist on going into the danger zone and resolutely remaining there – maybe by suitably changing its landscape. He would insist that one must speak of what one cannot speak going against the final injunction of Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*[6] and resisting the diagnosis that he was trespassing the borders of the language of philosophy itself – a diagnosis put forward by Jacques Derrida.[7] As Shaviro writes, both Wittgenstein and Derrida are wrong, you cannot remain silent about you cannot speak or whereof you cannot speak Greek – the language of philosophy. Levinas would rather force the language to the unspoken, bring in the foreign accent and stretch it at the cost of paradox. As a foreign to the land, he feels compelled to go against the grain in philosophy while not moving away from it – perhaps what matters most is the very performance of the paradox (contre*dire*) rather than the product of the paradox (contre*diction*). In other words, dwelling in contradictions has something

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1 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 10.
2 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 12.
3 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 13.
4 Aristotle, *Protrepticus*.
5 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.54.
6 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 7.
7 Derrida, "Violence and metaphysics".

to do with saying rather than with what ends up being said. It is situated.

The root of paradox in Levinas is home ground – it is stated at the beginning of *Totality and Infinity* that the aim is to bring Rosenzweig's criticism of philosophy inside philosophy. This is the stated aim of the project and its main formulation is the paradox of freedom: through my freedom, I discover my responsibilities and then I'm no longer free. Philosophy is the domain of freedom – nothing apart from my own impossibilities would stop me from getting anywhere. There is no passivity and receptivity itself could be taken as a strategic passivity where I listen to something in order to gain better access to what was previously concealed. Yet, it is in the exercise of this freedom that I encounter responsibility, something that cannot either come independently from my freedom because it is exercised within it or come as a consequence of free deliberation. Responsibilities are there from the beginning, like what lies before any grounds, but cannot come to the fore but in the milieu provided by freedom. As a consequence, when I'm engaging in the philosophical endeavor of providing a general account of how things are – say, indexicalism – I am in the very milieu where my responsibilities will become apparent. When they become, my engagement with philosophy and its craving for totality will fade away and criticism of metaphysics will replace what previously was just an exercise in metaphysics. But criticism emerges from freedom and therefore I cannot renounce doing what I cannot do without the act of engaging in the paradox. The extent of the infinite responsibilities lying in my own personal, situated position reveals something about how things are through the exercise of freedom, that is of seeking the general account. One could throw the ladder away but at the cost of not being able to reach the top again. In other words, what matters is not what is achieved (which is the paradox) but the saying of the contadiction (contre*dire*), reaching there in order to appreciate the situatedness that one is tied to even when trying to climb up the ladder to see it all. The paradox doesn't dissolve after it is stated because it is said repeatedly in different ways – compare with Shaviro's fictioning – and one doesn't find a domain where contradiction lies; contradiction is what I end up saying when I try to engage philosophically with the others that compel me. My freedom leads me to my situatedness not because I'm free to be situated, but because it was there from the very metaphysical desire for the others and therefore in the situated exercise of freedom. The indexicalist picture attempts to extend this to every

episode of knowledge: the freedom required is what reveals a structure of infinite responsibilities that made it possible but renders it impossible.

This is a picture that is faithful to Levinas' gesture even though it is perhaps not what he had recommended. It intends to be, in the lovely (Derridian) phrase of Shaviro, a Levinasianism without reserve. Indexicalism – with the help of Whitehead, perspectivism and externalist accounts of indexicals and other ideas – extends the gesture beyond the limits of the anthropic. As Shaviro writes, I claim that there could be no principled way to distinguish what can contest me and what can merely refuse my attempt at fruition – to use a dichotomy that appears mostly in *Totality and Infinity*. To say indexicalism extends Levinas, or that it performs a (broken, interrupted) speculative flight taking Levinas as a takeoff lane is one way of putting it in which I sometimes indulge. But perhaps the very idea of a Levinasianism without reserve is that the gesture cannot be restricted to the antropic. If the restriction applies, two things follow. First, the anthropic realm becomes a kind of restricted realm for paradox and contradiction is limited to the philosophy that encounters humans – it is only towards the human other that I have incumbencies and therefore the paradox emerges only when my general view concerns them. As a consequence, freedom (and knowing) would involve no vertiginous responsibilities when it is exercised outside this realm. As a result, not only the paradox of freedom is limited in scope but also the situatedness that presides over any exercise of knowledge is itself confined to the engagement with humans. This leads to the second consequence: if the other I'm facing is human, I'm already predicating something neutral about the Other. The neutral is a figure of the symmetry that Levinas rightly aims to exorcise for it replaces my encounter with the other with a two-lane image that can be quickly viewed from nowhere. The first point circumscribes the domains where the paradox incides and produces a merely anthropic dialethea. The second point is made by Livingston after Derrida in his contribution. Judith Butler's observes that in order to deal with the Levinasian Other, one has to have the concept of 'face'.[8] Butler's remark relies on concepts and recognition and it can be countered by insisting that there is no knowledge of the Other through the face – but simply the hearing of a call, of an appeal. But part of her gesture can also be captured by the idea

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8 Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

that the human neutrality is a step towards symmetry; we can say that my incumbencies are human and therefore not quite towards any other – assuming, as Levinas himself seems to do, that 'human' is a substantive and not a deictic[9]. In any case, if a reserve is placed in Levinasianism, paradox becomes circumvented and the non-human existents – towards which fruition supposedly is the right attitude – are immune from it. This immunity relies on a distinction that discriminates others according to their capacities to refuse or contest me and, in order to do that, has to know something about the others before hearing their call.

Indexicalism applies notions such as proximity – and substitution, recurrence, obsession – to any other and posits that they gear towards the outside that is always around in perception. Shaviro has this great image of ophthalmological proximity to claim that proximity is not only an-archaic but also disturbing, overwhelming and often anathema to communication. He then finds it inappropriate that perception taken as hospitality and built from the indexical paradoxical and situated metaphysics is compared to a conversation. His reasons are clear: a conversation seems to be too much of a mutually cooperative, somehow symmetrical – may be neutral, communicative and consensual endeavor. In proximity what one feels often is the weirdness, the eeriness and the hostility with which incumbencies could be met. Conversations are perhaps too hospitable or too converging to be part of what Levinas had in mind when he thought of obsession for the other or the wound that makes me vulnerable. Even among humans, a conversation can be impossible – as Lafetá points out, the other could be too impaired, fragile or hurt to be part of a conversation. In any case, incumbency doesn't disappear when a conversation fails. Proximity, Shaviro points out, involves sometimes suffocating compulsion and complicity could be thoroughly unwanted. I agree with all that. At this point, I could recoil from my appeal to conversations in the book. Surely I would rephrase some of the intensity I placed in them. I would not fully recoil only because I believe that there is more to conversations than conversations. In other words, when two people stop talking to each other, or a wounded animal becomes too ferocious to be dealt in

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9 In contrast with the Amerindian perspectivism conception of 'human' as indexical, which is explored in the book. (see Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological deixis and Amerinidian perspectivism").

closeness, there is still a responsibility, obsession and capacity to respond. A newly acquired foe can become unable to talk to me, or be unable to carry on exchanging words, but still, I continue to respond. I do it because the intricate interplay of demands, urges and substitution wouldn't just fade away – as proximity is not easily exorcised. That interplay could be called an (extended) conversation. And this is a way to describe some features of perception. In this case, even while renouncing to speak of what cannot be spoken, a response could possibly be given. That fictioning is possible when philosophy fails – or becomes too paradoxical – is perhaps also a move in a broad, open and ongoing conversation. That philosophy is not itself alien to fictioning shows that there is conversation beyond conversations and that the paraconditional of the *Protrepticus* is always surprisingly resilient.

RESPONSE TO GEVORKYAN AND SEGOVIA:

Without offering not even a glimpse into how to best interpret or translate Anaximander's sentence, I find it interesting to go back to that conjunction of injustice and the course of things. On the face of it, it could sound like something about the vertiginous notion of what deserves what it has (and what doesn't). One would feel like there is a reason to engage with general questions concerning how things are because that could be a way to determine what is deserved – and what is not. In the more common, philosophical and general reading of Anaximander, the urge for justice is seen as spread everywhere and to find answers about it one needs to go into the arrangements between what comes into being and what perishes. Now, it is not said there that there is an order to that at all; further, if there is, it can be intrinsically opaque. Moreover, it can be an order that is eroded and reshaped at each new event and nothing is safe from deviation, from interruption or from non-monotonic addition. Still, the issue of injustice (and merit) persists because it involves a quest that cannot be dealt with once and for all. If a foray of any kind into the way of things is prompted by Anaximander's tie between the process of things and justice, it could entail that the others encountered are never transparent from any point of view attained and, yet, they are inextricably from the issues raised by the quest for justice. If we agree that Anaximander's sentence provides a guide map to what philosophy became from Ionia to Jena, we can see already the roots of the indexicalist paradox. There is a project for this foray that aims at surveying what there is and making it

transparent; it is, in fact, a variety of projects to this effect and they became somehow dominant even though hardly consensual. If this survey intends to make everything transparent, it could discover that justice lies in the opacity of the other. Further, it may discover that opacity and situatedness ought to be a constitutive ingredient of what there is if justice is to be part of it altogether. Indexicalism – and the metaphysics of the others – is faithful to Anaximander's sentence in the sense that it is a way of connecting the course of things and the demands that genuinely interrupt them from their kernel, the centrality of the others in a deictic setting. Analogously, it is a reading of Heraclitus' Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.

Indexicalism holds, nonetheless, that this faithfulness to Anaximander as a guide map is not to be found everywhere. In particular, it is not to be found in an approach that can be called, to use Levinas' phrase, ontologism – the claim that only being is real. That approach – which is at odds with Plato's *Sophist* five great types including four indexical ones besides being – makes hardly any room for justice (or injustice, merit, deserving or whatever could be taken to appear as the main character in the plot of Anaximander's sentence). Ontologism is perhaps the shortest path to accomplish the goal of a neutral, impersonal account of how things are – and in that sense, it is committed to substantivism, the image of the world where positions and deixis play no role. According to the metaphysics of the others – that takes otherness seriously as a deixis – justice can only be made through situated action, especially because its demands cannot be replaced by substantive descriptions once and for all. One way or another, and in different instances, in the long road from Ionia to Jena and beyond, the last part of Anaximander's sentence was downplayed or straightforwardly dismissed in the name of a robust ontology of substantives – and often of substances. This gesture had a great impact on how we displaced incumbencies from freedom, concerns from facts and justice from knowledge. It is also why philosophy can often seem like the realm of the impersonal, of the non-situated, of the indifferent. Expurgating the last part of Anaximander's sentence paved the way for this special dispensation of responsibilities conceded to the quest for knowledge.

Gevorkyan and Segovia place *Indexicalism*, the book, between the subtractive and the chiastic logical architecture. For them, I think it moves away from an aporetic style towards something that could be found, I believe, in the sentence of Anaximander. This integration within a split enables an opening towards

transversality. Attending to two poles is not a commitment to symmetry but rather an acceptance of imbalance. In bringing a concern with the other as an other to a landscape familiar to process philosophy, the book intended indeed to bring forth a kind of agenda that would be oblivious to any separation between metaphysical concerns and how we deal with what is around that would dangerously live proximity, responsibility and care out of the picture. If there is a separation – and it is perhaps a paradoxical one – it is one that is often reinstituted for it is not a no-trespassing fence. To think through the chiasm in which philosophy has to be placed to take the others seriously is a way to stretch a vocabulary and begin to move away from the language of universality. If I understand the move Gevorkyan and Segovia are both describing and recommending, the chiasm is what ensures contradiction is to be preferred to indifference.

RESPONSE TO COGBURN:

If *dialetheas* are understood as places where the paradox lies – or even as parts of reality where contradiction entails no *quodlibet*, no triviality – then the issue appears as to whether they are substantive or indexical. One can arguably aim to fix contradiction – once they cannot be eliminated – to a restricted zone with marked borders where there is a domain on which contradictions are true. To be sure, as Levinas himself shows, we cannot afford not to venture into these paradoxical areas and if we do so we can at most try to walk carefully. But perhaps dialetheas are not substantive, but rather an indexical effect, as Livingston argues in his paper: it is the essential indexical that leads to most (if not all) paradoxes. If V is a suitable domain for a logic of demonstratives, closure entails transcendence and if we grant existence, we can either deny closure or assume what Cogburn calls the Bova/Livingston line according to which there is a tension between consistent plurality and inconsistent totality. Indexicalism goes for the latter; in fact, it is through exploring closure that one finds transcendence as I said before, and once transcendence is found, the metaphysical endeavor that affirms closure is criticized – the closure ladder can be then thrown away, again, but only at the cost of not reaching the place where closure can be criticized through transcendence. It seems, at first sight at least, that if there is a Bova/Livingston dialethea it is deictic and depends on a context added to the character of the demonstrative – it is a situated paradox. In other words, it is

through looking for symmetrical relations around that one finds asymmetrical positions that inform a situated metaphysics of the other. One can project this asymmetry in V but in doing so, one engages in the paradoxical (impossible and perhaps urgent) task of formulating a transcendent closure.

We can think further about indexical dialetheas. From the perspective of deictic absolutes, there ought to be outside to what there is – that outside is part of what there is. This outside is therefore inside what there is and outside it: for each tentative class of what there is, there is an outside that is both outside and inside. The contradiction follows from an indexical position of what is outside a given class; for each closure, there is a corresponding transcendence and therefore a correspondence dialethea. It is only from the point of view of a class that there is an outside – like it is only through pointing that this sentence while stating that it is false that the paradox arises. True contradictions are an effect of having indexicals like 'this' or 'outside' just like paradoxes are effects of having an indexical general account of how things are. As a consequence, paradoxes are themselves situated.

Cogburn also points at an interesting epistemological occurrence of the closure-transcendence tension. It addresses the issues that appear in chapter 3 of Indexicalism where an account of perception as a challenging exercise in hospitality is provided. Suppose V is the class of everything that could be conceptualizable this far by an agent (or a class of agents) to whom perception presents an outside. Davidson can be taken to recommend the idea that anything outside V – and indeed outside the reasons already known and assuming they coincide with what has been conceptualizable – is either already conceptual or makes no impact on knowledge. In that sense, he's siding with closure whereas McDowell, attempting to restore a proper domain for a tribunal of experience, urges for a transcendence, for what is beyond the currently conceptualizable. Perceptual experience is the outside to which Davidson denies any epistemological import. From an indexicalist point of view, it is not only that the outside can provide verdicts but also that it constantly provides new borders because perception is the very locus of transcendence. McDowell struggles to make sense of verdicts of experience in a way that they are neither too Davidsonian as verdicts are too conceptual nor too committed to the Given as non-conceptual deliverances of the senses. His current way out is to postulate

verdicts as composed by *Anschauungen* which are less than full-blown concepts.[10] These verdicts appear, in any case, as help from the world to exercise our spontaneity. From the point of view of the metaphysics of the others, the others with which perception makes contact do not provide verdict but rather incumbencies. That is, they appear as a limit to our spontaneous endeavor geared towards revealing what is perceived and otherwise constrained only by our incapacities. This purely exterior ingredient in perception has to be positioned somewhere with respect to the relevant *sensibilia* – it is, if this expression makes any sense, indexically mediated. (It may not make sense due to its triviality from the indexicalist point of view according to which there is nothing that fails to be indexically mediated.) Notice that this impingement from the exterior – this outside – is neither a McDowellian *Anschauung* nor a form of non-conceptual content because it is not a content at all. With Whitehead, for the metaphysics of the others perception is a widespread constituent of the world because it follows from encountering something else, positioned as other. The outside in perception is both part of the landscape that makes perception possible within a deictic operation (therefore, akin to closure) and what transcends perception – and therefore transcends what has been conceptualized. This is reminiscent of Levinas' version of the ontological argument: the exterior imposes itself as such from within. It is at the same time a position in the deictic space with which I orient myself and something outside of it. This is why the other as great kind in Plato's *Sophist* is the underlying dynamics of any negation.

I have recently proposed that we can see the encounter with the Other as Levinas conceives it explicitly as something that precedes any attempt to extract the intelligibility of what surrounds us.[11] There is an often-unnoticed starting point which is something else before me, facing my sensibilia even before my sensibilia is engaged in its activity to perceive and know anything. I compare this pre-history with Heidegger's second beginning which is prior to the first – the first being that of *sein = physis* and the second that of *seyn = Ereignis.* Here, it is not *Ereignis* that precedes *physis* without grounding it, but it is the very encounter with the other that precedes without grounding any attempt to extract information

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10 McDowell, "Avoiding the myth of the Given".
11 Bensusan, "An-Arché, Xeinos, urihi a".

from the other which has been met. Perception is encountering (with an outside) before it triggers a knowledge process. As such, it is haunted by an incumbency – and a transcendence – that limits the exercise of my spontaneity irrespective of my cognitive capabilities or deficiencies.

RESPONSE TO LIVINGSTON:

Indexicalism inherits from Levinas both the taste for adventure that guides moving from an arguably safer criticism of philosophy to the attempt to be in its midst and the rejection of the idea that an attachment to neutrality is recommended to prevent sliding into paradox. That makes it venture into philosophy preferring paradox to neutrality. This rejection of neutrality – and hence of a view from nowhere – guides the way totality, or the absence of it, is thought through. It is as if we could say: as a whole, reality is such that there is no whole. This is where the language of paradox and that of fictioning meet, as Shaviro insinuates. Livingston argues that there is no paradoxico-metaphysics and one should rather adopt a critical position towards the project of a complete description of things that would engage indexicalism as an item in its toolbox. This project – which is arguably part of the indexicalist project as I see it, one could be tempted to take an impossible measurement and say it is one half of it – is in a sense an effective follow-up to Rosenzweig's abstention from philosophy. Such abstention is taken in Levinas' bag when he ventures into philosophy – as I began to explore in my response to Shaviro. There is a neutrality element here, nonetheless, that is interesting to notice. In a sense, to refrain from paradox is a way neither to take sides concerning the two conflicting poles nor to bet in *polemos* itself. The first option is also a way to avoid paradoxes and, in this case, would amount to either embracing philosophy in its tendencies towards the neutral, the impersonal and the non-situated image of things or rejecting it altogether. To be sure, criticism could take these two flavors – or mix them perhaps paradoxically: to refrain from taking sides by saying that this is a dangerous area or to take sides with the thorough rejection of the philosophical endeavor as a commitment to a general view of things. Interestingly, there is an (indexicalist) paradox looming on the horizon for those who adopt the critical view: reject both sides but dismiss the side of philosophy in an emphatic way. I conjecture that this is a way to find a reverse paradox in a position that refrains from stretching indexicalism into a (general) account while rejecting general accounts in general for indexicalist

reasons. This reverse paradox would nonetheless be itself committed to neutrality: indexicalism is a tool for criticism but it cannot go beyond that without tainting the ultimately desirable and perhaps unattainable attachment of the philosophical endeavor which involves neutrality. The pull towards a total, neutral view is still preserved even if frustrated. Arguably, to say that metaphysics is impossible for indexicalist reasons is to take it as still substantive. Indexicalism embraces paradoxico-metaphysics to ensure substantives are exorcised, so to speak, from both sides.

Still, Livingston not only understands the gist of the indexicalist endeavor with its paradoxical consequences but also expands it in interesting ways. In particular, he explores the idea that deixis is the root of paradox. I don't quite know how far can we go in this indexical analysis of paradox, but Livingston suggests that notions such as outside and inside are crucial for the very statement of most paradoxes. To the extent that the liar paradox – "this sentence is false" – can be seen as the source of many paradoxes, it seems like there is a link between self-referentiality and deixis which is crucial to the paradoxes to emerge. To be sure, paradoxes tend to be about how to navigate once things can be approached from more than one direction. At any rate, the idea of borders and how to draw them can be viewed as potentially evoking indexicality. Tristan Garcia has crafted the notion of de-determination that picks up a thing from a realm of objects and predicates and provides a universe in which the thing's borders are the crucial ingredient – the line between that thing and all the rest. The procedure, as I write in the book, is similar to that of reference-fixing. The borders emerge from de-determination and while these borders are established, one can prove to be wrong about any substantive description of the thing without losing the contour that specifies it. It would be interesting to explore how much we can make explicit the deixis behind set-theoretical paradoxes with the help of the idea of de-determination in its indexical resonance.

Further, Livingston, if I understand him correctly, recommends modal realism as a companion to indexicalism. Although I don't dislike David Lewis' attitude of considering actuality indexical – what makes this world actual is that we are in it – I fear his concretism about possible world ends up being not indexical enough. I maintain that reference-fixing is a procedure that targets what can be accessed from my actual position, through an explicit indexical, through a proper name or even through a description (as Saul Kripke and Keith

Donnellan have shown). The price for Lewis' concretism is to take every world as substantively different from each other – maybe we can say that indexicalism comes too late since the actual world is actual because it is determined by our position. As a consequence, worlds are deemed independent from each other and their denizens are never identical. They are substantive. To be sure, this could work out as a way out of the seemingly difficult problem of trans-world identity. But I think Kripke is right in rejecting this (Leibnizian) path of having each possible world with its own and unique denizens – it is a crucial ingredient for any monadology, but this is one of the ways to see how indexicalism departs from monadology. On Kripke's take, I am me in every possible world which are accessed through the actual world where I am and are not to be thought of as foreign countries or distances you can observe from a telescope. It is from an actual referent in the actual world that other worlds are drawn and, accordingly, the trans-world identity problem is not issued from the assumption that the possible worlds are substantive (and substantively different). The center is always in the actual world and the path from I in w to I in w' can be different from that from I in w' to I in w but this is where indexicalism leads you, to no all-encompassing totality with a view from nowhere. All the other possible worlds are others and, again, I am not the other world's other. It seems to me that this is the way to avoid both a balanced reciprocity and an ultimately descriptivist – substantivist – account of the denizens in different worlds.[12]

In a footnote,[13] Livingston argues that modal realism is not necessarily committed to neither Lewis' counterpart theory nor a substantive view of possible worlds. One could take possible worlds as being thoroughly indexical and still be a realist about them. It seems to me that when deprived of these adjacent doctrines recommended by Lewis, modal realism loses a great deal of its bite. That this mountain in front of me could have afforded different descriptions is a consequence of the rejection of substantivism which entails that the mountain is what a correct description of it is true of. If taken indexically, the mountain is

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12 In this area, indexicalism also entails the abandonment of content as Fregean *Gedanke* that can be contemplated from anywhere and, incidentally, thanks to a renewed attention to Perry's texts with my co-author Guilherme da Silva I came to realize that *de re* thought is also insufficient to accommodate thorough indexicality.

13 See Livingston's paper above, note 36.

rather what deixis are about – and again, once the reference is fixed, it can be very different while being indexically the same. To reason in terms of possible worlds can help, but ultimately there is no reason to assume possible words subsist independently from the indexical situation in which they are evoked. From an indexicalist point of view, what is ultimately real is deictic and therefore possibilia are to be understood in indexical terms. Possibilities cannot be contemplated from nowhere – they are attached to a situation that makes themselves salient. This is why I insist on the view that possible worlds ought to be hostage to the situation in the actual world where they appear – they are themselves situated. That one could still defend the indexical reality of possible worlds, the claim would then seem to be of lesser importance. The force of Lewis' modal realism, it seems to me, lies precisely in his supporting doctrines that picture other worlds as being independent, concrete and self-sufficient.

RESPONSE TO LAFETÁ:

Do the others have an interiority? Lafetá's question opens the way to a paradox she identifies at the kernel of the indexicalist project and can be a way to summarize its paradoxico-metaphysics. The answer is indeed ambiguous; to a first related question, *do I get to know the other's interioriority,* the answer is no while to a second related question, *is there more than one interiority?*, the answer is yes. Maybe we can say that the others have interiorities but they are not fully present to me. The different interiorities are in a diachrony that makes them accessible to me in general only through the (perhaps fictioning) effort of philosophy. Yet, philosophy cannot make a substantive predication about the other's interiority – and neither can encountering the others render interiorities transparent. The others come from a persistent exteriority leaving traces on me. Meeting the other leaves me not only interrupted but also in perplexity: I can make myself fully available and yet not know how to respond for the exteriority of the other pierces through what there is in my interiority and suffocate me. It is not quite that I can give what is in me but rather that I should provide something I cannot own for the other.

This is what happens in the perceptual event – what is perceived is not non-conceptualizable, but rather it forces me out of any existing conceptual scheme, it pieces through my conceptual capacities and presses me away from my interior space. This pressure is there even if I am also pushed, for reasons of justice with other perceived others, to make it fit at least partially into a concept. While I can

have an account of perception while engaged in philosophy – that it takes place in a situation akin to that of hospitality, for example – each event of perception places me between the conceptual scheme that results from the imperfect attempts to do justice to what has been perceived – an attempt always urgent and impossible – and an interiority that does not make itself open to me. I believe this can be done only if the account of perception satisfies Tsing's injunction of leaving space in the ground – where perception takes place – for something that eludes the narrative provided by the account. This is why the dynamics of hospitality – always haunted by hostility – can illuminate my encounter with the others in perception.

This is where the image of perception favored by indexicalism contrasts with one in which something like a full-view is requisite. Lafetá points out that the others are never fully there to be perceived – perception itself is not synchronic, it evokes a past that has never been fully present. What I perceive is not my contemporary but rather what eludes any craving for a fully-fledged integration. In perception, it is clear that an interioritiy is itself a wound that cannot be reached; there is nothing left in what is perceived to be found, and still, there is what haunts us. Perhaps the image of the other pushing me into a shame that fails to enhance perception is what approaches hospitality with the exercise of being haunted – that is suggested in Lafetá's word *visitation*. Perception is being haunted and, in that sense, can just be paralyzing – as paralyzing as the shame that interrupts all my actions. It is in a home that a visitation takes place, but perception is an embattled field about which Audre Lorde once wrote "there is no place that cannot be home nor is".[14] Qahlï Eltinaé explores this displacement as an incapacity that generates a capacity that perhaps eludes perception.[15] Perhaps paradoxically, perception from an indexicalist perspective, has to involve what eludes it – if viewing requires anything, that would be a sensitivity to blind-spots as blind-spots.

RESPONSE TO PINEDO:

Do I have an interiority? In a sense, self-perception clearly deals with what eludes it.

14 Lorde, "School note".
15 Eltinaé, *The Moral Judgement of Butterflies*.

From the point of view of Iris Murdoch as quoted by Pinedo, self-love could perhaps be the difficult realization that an individual other than oneself in oneself is real – and therefore that there is more in me than my actions and my agenda. Pinedo explores the meaning of letting others step into my shoes – what Levinas calls substitution. If they do, we find them inside us. Levinas connects substitution with recurrence: my interiority is an intermittent position to which I come back but is never in the same place.[16] Perhaps self-consciousness is itself a consequence of this movement of recurrence. Interiorities are fleeting – apart from being wounded and incomplete because they are a viewpoint from where the others always appear. An interiority is not attached to anything substantive and 'I' or 'we' are not shorthand for what could be described in terms of substantives. Yet, interiorities are not attached to indexical positions like the others in the sense that seeing the others is maybe precisely being oblivious to their interiorities. From an indexicalist point of view, an interiority is from where indexical operators emerge – and mostly from where exteriority is considered as such. It contrasts, as Christopher RayAlexander points out, with Heidegger's *Bodenständigkeit*; it is not a point of view given by soil or blood, not any fixed point of view. It is rather from where the outdoors comes to view – and this can be shifting not only between differently encompassing spheres of me and us but rather between layers of the indoors. This is because I can doubt my own beliefs, as Wittgenstein remarks while considering Moore's paradox.[17] It is not that the self is (substantively) split but rather that it enables different indexical engagements – one can observe oneself coming from outside. This is perhaps what happens in episodes of recurrence: someone steps in my shoes and then I see myself from afar. That doesn't mean that the two parts are then substantive; rather what makes an interiority a unity in some sense is that it is a place open to indexical haunting.

Levinas stresses that there is an asymmetrical relation of being hostage between myself and the Other – all my thinking is hostage to the Other like the pupil is hostage to the tutor in Wittgenstein rule-following example[18] and the Other depends on me when an interruption takes place. What matters from the point of view of who steps on my shoes is exteriority. Pinedo's emphasis on self-knowledge (and self-perception) is insightful precisely because the indexicalist

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16 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*.
17 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, II, x.
18 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 185.

stance could be a way to take seriously the idea that the genuinely outside could be indoors. In general, what interrupts one's agenda – and one's attachment to neurosis and social conventions, in Murdoch's terms – cannot come from within. But if the indoors are itself provided with an indefinite series of back doors, there is no reason why the injunctions of hospitality would not apply to whatever comes from them. To be sure, not because the unexpected visitor is going to complete me and provide me what I ultimately need[19] but precisely because (and to the extent) that what comes from the indoors can interrupt me while not being fully exposed. After all, perhaps self-perception is genuinely a perception, but not because it is *intro*spection, but because it cannot be rid of the elements that come from an outside that is, like many others, in proximity. It is interesting to bear in mind that proximity, also in this case, is neither pre-established nor a consequence of any kind of order that can be viewed from nowhere – rather, as Levinas often stresses, it is an-archaic.[20]

RESPONSE TO HARMAN:

Indexicalism brings to a broadly Speculative Realist arena a combination of granular process philosophy – that is, where there is an assumption of discrete items like Alfred Whitehead's actual entities – a Levinasian concern with the transcending other and Amerindian perspectivism that privileges deixis over fixed identities. Process philosophy of the granular kind – that tends to build on monadologies – understand process in terms of units of agency that interact with each other, make compositions or alliances or conflict with each other. These units are autonomous and understood in terms of their effects. When coupled with a concern for the absolute others, they are no longer fully moved by their agency and their agenda and become endowed with a freedom that encapsulates infinite responsibilities. Those responsibilities, however, can only be comprehended from a first-person point of view – as I cannot impute an infinite responsibility to anyone else's freedom. This combination of Whitehead – and his resolutely immanent account of entities in a network of perceptions – with Levinas – and the transcendence of the other which is placed beyond the possibility of full perception – leads to an explosive paradox. We can tame it by

19 Like joy, depression and meanness in Jalaluddin Rumi's poem *The Guest House*.
20 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*.

appealing to deixis – and the Low Amazon tendency understands predicates in terms of relative positions. (The combination is made more acceptable when we bring in the idea of a paradoxico-metaphysics.)

Indexicalism is an attempt to find a transcendence that is not attached to hierarchical thinking in an overall immanent image of the world that could be expressed in terms of what Whitehead calls process. The idea is not only to insert the transcendence of the others in process philosophy but also to rework some of Levinas' crucial ideas in the landscape of the philosophy of organism. An important element of this enterprise is to resolutely reject notions such as substance while taking seriously the idea of a substantial connection between an interiority and the others. The rejection of substantives also extends to relations: an indexical is located, it is situated and as such cannot be appreciated from nowhere. The fertility of Whitehead's philosophy is such that it can be suitably adapted to provide a framework to enable an exorcism of different forms of human exceptionalism. In a sense, Whitehead provides an account of experience – connected to his idea that perception is ubiquitous and more so than relations – that suits the expansion of Levinas' ideas *Indexicalism* aims to offer. Harman mentions Moore's book and its silence about Whitehead which matches its silence about Levinas – who is only mentioned in a footnote in the chapter about Derrida. In any case, those two characters of the 20th Century both influential and both to some extent not taken as central are reconsidered in the book from the current perspective of Speculative Realism. In this sense, the book has much in common with Harman's philosophy and could also be read as an attempt to replace the withdrawn object that is crucial for Harman's OOO by the opaque exteriority of the others that could, if Pinedo is right, be also found indoors.[21]

Indexicalism also follows the track of Amerindian Perspectivism with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Tania Stolze Lima and Eduardo Kohn. Harman sees its engagement with multinaturalism as a form of relativism. To assume, with Amerindian perspectivism, that predicates are deictic and reality is incorrigibly conditioned by positions is not a lapse into relativism. To be sure, reality can no longer be contemplated from nowhere – and not only because we happen to be always somewhere. What emerges, rather, is a realism about indexicals that leads

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21 For more on my convergence and divergence with Harman see Bensusan & Harman, "A Conversation with Graham Harman and Hilan Bensusan on 'Indexicalism'".

to a realism about the others (as others) – or so I argue. This realism holds that the relativity of positions is real – and not, for instance, that truth itself is relative. This makes an important difference that has to do with the very general structure that indexicalism recommends, namely, that indexicals are the (paradoxical) furniture of the universe. This general structure involving some kind of relativity – a situated metaphysics – is maintained to be true. Realism about the transcendent other and about deixis posit precisely this structure. It is worth comparing Amerindian perspectivism with the two non-standard A-ist forms of realism about time that Kit Fine has proposed.[22] (A-ists believe that the A-series formed by yesterday, today and tomorrow or last year, this year, next year and not by 2020, 2021, 2022 is indispensable to think time through). While McTaggart held that, because it relies on the A-series, time cannot be real, A-ist realists disagree with this last claim and hold, much in convergence with indexicalism, that reality could include indeed time if it is not neutral, absolute or coherent. While standard A-ist realisms understand that reality is not neutral and the present time is the one that is real, non-standard ones reject either that reality is absolute or that it is coherent. Amerindian perspectivism, in this sense, understands that reality is positioned and must be distinguished from relativism if that means that there are no truths of the matter.[23]

Now, Harman argues that his quadruple structure of the object is not committed to a totality corresponding to a view from nowhere. OOO claims that there is non-transparency in reality and that there is a dimension to every object that eludes (and transcends) the efforts to perceive it. That opaqueness, nonetheless, is hidden inside each object. A universe of Harmanian objects is where objects can be all viewed from nowhere – although there is a dimension of each of them that is hidden. If the idea of a view from nowhere makes any sense at all – and assuming that real objects withdraw even from the third-person eye – there is something inside the viewed objects that is concealed. It is not the structure itself that fails to elude a view from nowhere for, as Harman points out, the indexicalist structure is there also to be contemplated by a drone-like device. The OOO structure, however, makes each object available to be seen, albeit

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22 See Fine, "Tense and reality" and also McTaggart, "The unreality of time".

23 See section Tense realism and baroque realism in chapter 1 of *Indexicalism* and also Bensusan, "The cubist object".

incompletely. In contrast, the indexicalist structure takes anything that is an other to any interiority as unavailable to a drone-like eye. It is as if non-transparency had been relativized. As a consequence, a view from nowhere would gaze at the interiorities but not to any of its others. There is not only a Great Outdoors that is unseen – the other of all that there is – but also an other to each interiority. Because of this, indexicalism is no metaphysics of subjectivity: correlation is not absolute because there is always an other that escapes apprehension. OOO, in contrast, as a granular perspective, holds that the real object is a residue of the correlation. The indexicalist other is not a residue of the correlation because if there is an indexicalist correlation, it involves the others – that is external because it draws from Levinas' ontological argument. Neither of them is a form of metaphysics of subjectivity because something escapes correlation – even if the correlations are ubiquitous. Still, OOO is a realism about objects while indexicalism is a realism about deixis.

Harman doubts indexicalism and the metaphysics of the others can have a definite political import. In particular, he argues that substantivism cannot be responsible for coloniality and partriarchy. It is not clear that reading a book (for instance, *Indexicalism*), as Aha Else points out, would have any converging effects. It is not clear that preaching indexicalism would be enough to change coloniality or patriarchy. Still, there is a diagnosis that can be made. The idea that substantives are a good guide to what is there makes one oblivious to positions, circumstances and circumscriptions – and ultimately to the Cerro Rico in Potosí as being anything other than a standing reserve of silver. Perhaps indexicalism is doomed to fail to lure the feeling that one is positioned and inscribed in a circumstance even when engaged in abstract thinking. However, the diagnosis that substantivism promoted the feeling of indifference to the locality can still stand. In this sense, the diagnosis is not unlike the one Heidegger (and Levinas) make of Western metaphysics and its offsprings – it promoted the idea that it is possible and desirable to keep the world at bay. If this Heideggerian diagnosis is brought up, it then makes sense to think that indexicalism can provide a roadmap to an alternative path to what Heidegger called the *Kehre* or the *Sprung*. In other words, it can provide a way out of the predicament that Western thought – either because it is *homoiosis*- or *ousia*- oriented or because it is substantivist – has persistently provided.

Of course, this is no political program – and it is unclear how to extract a definite political program from the corresponding remarks from Heidegger.[24] Heidegger indicates that the change to come – post-metaphysical thinking, to coin a name – cannot be actively promoted but, at the same time, our actions and efforts cannot be indifferent to it. Further, it is not clear that such a change lies in the macropolitical right or in the macropolitical left. It has, nonetheless, a political import – that is perhaps cosmopolitical and, as I argued elsewhere[25] the alternatives are orthogonal to the macropolitical poles. That doesn't mean that the critique of substantivism is macropolitically neutral as well for I believe much can hinge on this diagnosis in macropolitical disputes to come. An indexicalist stance can help shed light into the issues of representation and to speak for the others not as a way to replace them but rather as a way to be replaced by them. Perhaps there are links to be explored between substantivism and (some sorts of) identity politics. The encounter with the others is something that neither disturbs a solid identity nor provides one. |Interiorities are not fixed, neither substantive. The others have an infinite capacity to disturb and interrupt my agenda.

This takes me to Harman's remark on the infinite character of the others. Levinas' notion of infinity is Cartesian: what goes beyond finitude, especially the finitude of my own understanding. The contrast between finite and infinite certainly looks different if we move to a Cantorian framework. For one thing, the Other's infinity can hardly be conceived as particular. An important element of the Cartesian infinity can be captured by the idea that the others are exterior in the sense that they transcend interiority. The Great Outdoors, in this sense, eludes individuals (and individual interiorities, as I argued above) even though our engagement with each particular other is granular. In a Cantorian framework, to be sure, we can still think of infinite responsibilities towards the (infinite) others – and we can attach this to the exteriority that ensures transcendence. The others themselves would be what brings this infinity to us. However, Harman seems to be right that the connection between infinity and transcendence becomes less powerful when we depart from the Cartesian notions to which Levinas resorted.

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24 See Heidegger, *The History of Beyng*, for example.
25 Bensusan, "The cosmopolitical parties in the post-human age".

RESPONSE TO JOHNS:

The extended conversation between Hegel and Levinas is fruitful not only to elucidate both positions but also to explore their consequences. It is interesting to see what happens to the conversation when it happens in a land, Speculative Realism, that is arguably foreign to both – although one could also claim that the future of philosophy is never foreign to its past.

The idea that exteriority is produced is a genuinely intriguing one as it helps to begin making explicit the microstructure of the friction between a Levinas-inspired position like indexicalism and a Hegel-inspired object-oriented dialectics. To be sure, there are many contrasts between the two positions concerning symmetry, reflexivity, transcendence and self-synthesis. Still, in an important sense, for indexicalism the outside is also produced (by me) for if it is taken to be reducible to a substantive description then it would be neutralized. This is what I call interruption – and it is a form of negation. The others appeal to me but they cannot impinge anything on me because if that was the case there would be no exercise (in the sense of an spontaneity) of passivity. If the outside were imposed on me, that would constitute merely a technical limitation to my sovereignty. This is an important difference. The infinite responsibilities I have over the others make me not free at all but that happens only with the aid of my freedom through which I can entertain some of these responsibilities. In the paradox of freedom, it is not the case that freedom simply disappears when responsibility comes to the picture – that the other is seen as other and not turned into the same is a production of my response to the original demand. That the exterior is made available through perception by an exercise triggered by an interruption in my spontaneity makes it, in a sense, sympoietic and this is what encourages the image of a conversation taking place in experience. This, however, says nothing about how I am perceived – it is not co-work in the sense of me and the others laboring together. This is where the diachrony of the others comes to the picture: the others as others are not in my present. They are not my contemporaries. They interrupt, interfere and haunt my present from a different time and appear disconnected from my current image of how things are. This diachrony enables asymmetry. It also makes sure that it is not a matter of two poles laboring together. To expect the other to threaten me in any particular way, for instance, in reciprocity, is an exercise in spontaneity that already makes the

other a substantive.

This diachrony also shows how negation, from a point of view informed by indexicalism, is not the ultimate building block of what is concrete. Before negation, comes the addition that is provided from outside. It is an other that ushers in a negation. As a consequence, contradictions – and even paradoxes – could be a consequence of adding elements to a structure that is sensitive to what comes from its exterior.[26] This points to the direction that far from being the engine of the concrete, negation is a product of the need to accommodate added elements that continuously knock our doors. The engine of the concrete, rather, would be exteriority which is coupled with the vertigos of hospitality.

RESPONSE TO CARON:

There are several ways to understand implicit indexicality. We can think of deixis as hiding in different forms behind substantives. Much of this implicit character is connected to reference-fixing. This is a process by means of which anaphoric expressions, definite descriptions, complex demonstratives and proper names can be used to perform some sort of linguistic contact that is oblivious to many cognitive operations – including those in operation when something like acquaintance is taken to require no conceptual ability. I take Levinas' appeal to the face as a sort of representation-free reference-fixing operation: the Other appears as other, not as any content. I compare, in the book, reference-fixing with Garcia's de-determination because the latter seems to be also a way to be indifferent to properties and relations. But de-determination is not indexical because it is not situated. What is important here is that it is implicit in objective descriptions, in Garcia's sense.[27] As an implicit linguistic contact, reference-fixing can be compared with pointing.

Pointing is often taken to be at odds with abstraction. There seems to be a tension between indexicals and abstraction. In fact, indexicals are situated and dependent on acts akin to pointing, indicating, tracking or locating. On the other hand, abstraction is often considered to be tied to universality. Universal indexicalism deals in paradox – and this is a bullet worth biting, as I argued.

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26 See Bensusan and Carneiro, " Paraconsistentization through antimonotonicity" and Bensusan, Carneiro, Coimbra & Paiva, "Minimal logics".

27 Garcia, *Form and Object*.

However, I'm not that sure a commitment to abstraction entails a commitment to universality, neither am I sure that indexicalism runs to paradox by accepting any kind of abstraction. Similarly, I wouldn't claim that abstraction is to be avoided from the point of view of a metaphysics of the others. There are, to be sure, many kinds of abstractions and not all of them simply obliterate exteriority. We are familiar not only with concrete universals, but also with abstract particulars. Tropes, as they are sometimes called, are resolutely particular and could be a challenge to existing concepts. Nor are abstractions necessarily at the service of, say, extracting the intelligibility of things. I do believe that suitable doses of abstraction are required to depart from the metaphysical project – or to any of its variations.

The issue of abstraction takes us back to the Protrepticus issue: in order for indexicalism to be formulated, it needs an amount of abstraction of, say, some features of the logic of demonstratives and its variations. This can be seen as an aporetic use of abstraction, but it can be deployed to provide an account of abstraction itself. I believe abstractions can be considered to be like measurements in the sense that it is only from a standing location that they can be fully understood – and not simply integrate a substantive picture of how things are. Abstraction – and also the use of it in philosophy that is arguably inescapable – is called from a situated perspective and thought cannot reach beyond its location. Yet, it is a way to reach beyond it – and this is from where paradoxes often appear.

Caron points at how indexicalism offers ground to the post-nihilist Marxism that I'm trying to develop. The idea is to combine a thorough trust in the release of new productive forces as a way to challenge existing human and non-human social relations with a rejection of any attempt to replace things – objects, processes, events – by their suitable artificial counterparts. That is, accepting the transformative power of production – or poiesis, perhaps – while resisting the turn of the world into *Ge-Stell*. I agree indexicalism can ground this development that is perhaps best thought as being situated once the forces of production have different impacts on how things are in different circumscriptions – especially if the reterritorializing drives of capital itself are set aside. Caron then proceeds to criticize post-nihilist Marxism as an impossible combination of what I defined elsewhere as the anastrophic and the catastrophic cosmopolitical tendencies of

the present.[28] The former tendencies see the present as ushering in an interesting future while the latter see it merely as the moment where what has been commendable in the past collapses. If I understand it rightly, Caron's misgivings with post-nihilist Marxism hinge on the idea that we can either accept or reject abstractions altogether. Now, as I see it, post-nihilist Marxism is not only a direct consequence of indexicalism but rather of an attention to addition – that leads also to what I have been developing as an antimonotonic, non-Tarskian logic of the supplement. The power of addition is what makes the changing forces of production capable to unsettle social relations. Further, it contrasts with the artificialization of the world not only because there is no substantive intelligibility to be extracted but also because the very introduction of machines changes the salient features of the landscape. Thought can be then disconnected to *homoiosis* and rather considered also in terms of the supplement: to think is to add something and to respond to what has been added. This, however, goes beyond the scope of *Indexicalism*.

RESPONSE TO AHA ELSE

Is the language of sensation Aha is trying to construct an exploration in the implicit indexicality of how things are? Contemporary art, perhaps by assuming that art is never contemporary, often deals in displacements. The operations of displacement it evokes, nevertheless, work arguably better when they are invisible in the sense of not being labeled art – the label, in this case at least, undo some of its effects. The vertigo that these operations of displacement produce is perhaps more salient to art than the judgment-relativity that would involve the very theatricality of placing a (random) object in a gallery. This theatricality is itself indexical: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain displaced the urinal from the usual context and replaced in the art context. It seems to me that the operation here is that of displacing both the urinal and the gallery. Aha's effort to bring together Duchamp and Dikembe Mutombo is itself a displacement. It doesn't bear so much on theatricality which is a displacement operation that is dependent on the existence of art and an art scene. An art that doesn't evoke its name, displaces without relying on the art label. That displacements can be performed shows how

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28 Bensusan, "The cosmopolitical parties in the post-human age".

crucial places are, and places are primarily what we point at when we point at something.

RESPONSE TO MACIEL

Complex realism is an attempt to view reality as generating complexity. Rather than assuming that what is real escapes (our) access to it, it postulates a reality that is not oblivious to the complexities of trying to access it. It ends up being an antidote to the Ockham's razor: abundance should be welcome because it reveals rather than eludes how things are. As a consequence, errors are always conducive to hidden dimensions of things and the quest for correction itself has to be either abandoned or suitably reformulated. Maciel's complex realism invokes a metaphysical diplomacy to arbitrate between different conceptions of things – a diplomacy that is not simply determining which position is right. His metaphysical diplomacy is a meta-philosophical stance that has to be ensured for philosophy not to dogmatically oversimplify how things are. It seems to me, however, that it is a meta-philosophy that risks being indifferent to its contents – that is, to the philosophical positions it aims to arbitrate. In other words, I fear that metaphysical diplomacy and complex realism come too late for the philosophical positions are already fully-fledged and developed to an extent that what is left to be done is to recommend ways in which they can interact with each other. An important ingredient of *Indexicalism* is Anna Tsing's injunction to both narrate the world with the best of one's capacities and leave space on the ground for other accounts. What is interesting in a (meta-philosophical) injunction like this is that it affects what it is on about – it is about how philosophical positions are to be best construed. It is not simply diplomacy, it is a recommendation concerning how accounts of the world should be pursued.

Maciel claims that indexicalism is insufficiently complex because it is blind to supposedly non-indexical ingredients of how things are. This may be so, although I would resist the conclusion by pointing out that several other ingredients of how things are carry an implicit indexicality, as I have tried to do both above and in the book. However, the metaphysics of the others is an alternative to metaphysics that satisfies Tsing's injunction and, in doing so, it cannot be coupled with a different meta-philosophical view altogether. There is no further need for diplomacy because the space for (asymmetric) negotiation with the others lies inside its entrails. This is what a realism about the others as others provides – and

this is why indexicals like 'others' (or 'outdoors') ought to have a special role to ensure reality is conceived as sufficiently complex to accommodate plurality.

RESPONSE TO RAYALEXANDER:

RayAlexander commends indexicalism to theologicians. I think this is an intriguing move. And he does it in an interesting way by placing the book in convergence and contrast with the efforts of Raimon PanikkarI to think through the interstices where peoples of different faiths or conceptions of God friction. As RayAlexander rightly diagnoses, I have no theological aspiration. f I had to venture into a discussion about God, that would mimic the movements of the book in attempting to combine the Whiteheadian idea of deity in process whose nature is always being changed by the other actual entities on the one hand and an insistence in a personal God that is not alien to proximity. I haven't been pressed in this direction, so far. So I welcome this attempt to give me a road map concerning the relevant issues. Panikkar's *Advaita* seems to adhere to the idea that the fine-grained structure of positions dissolves the idea of a substantive interiority. It is not inside substantives but rather on the outside that any tie with any other can emerge. It is through the address where the other appears that a separation enables exteriority to thrive – as Levinas had emphasized, my complete communion with God would make my capacity to be commanded disappear for a complete integration means an absence of the other and therefore of any exterior pressure over me. Without atheism, there is no religion, Levinas claims, and similarly, without a separation from the other that ensures there is no interdependence, there is no room for the other to be a transcendent other. This dissolution of interdependence is also a result of a thorough rejection of totality that comes with a rejection of symmetry.

Through a deictic paradoxical furniture of the universe a non-substantive God could come to the picture – what matters is that a reference is fixed for the corresponding noun. This will be a God without predicates – that means no specific capacities or incapacities. In any case, this is where an indexicalist theology, I guess, could start. Still, that's far from anything definite about what else could it be and the friction with Panikkar can certainly help. In this friction, as RayAlexander presents it, the issue of conversations is brought up again. As emerges from Shaviro's remarks, indexicalist contact with the exterior is not based on symmetry or reciprocity-oriented resolutions, it is unbalanced, lopsided.

Reciprocity is perhaps not a requisite for an extended conversation that would involve not only silence but eventually suffocating aggression and explicit offense. Imbalance is always looming as it cannot be ultimately constrained or limited without an appeal to substantives – and to a symmetric view that would prefigure a view from nowhere. In any case, theology could be a good way to think through an asymmetry that resists at least certain forms of reciprocity for it is in an irreducible imbalance that the transcendence of the others lies.

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