

The Trademark of Idealist Philosophy

Nándor Sztankó

Independent Researcher, Pécs, Hungary

Email: sztanador@freemail.hu

How to cite this paper: Sztankó, N. (2024). The Trademark of Idealist Philosophy. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 14, 146-151. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2024.141012>

Received: January 2, 2024

Accepted: February 18, 2024

Published: February 21, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Natural sciences are credited with being the chief force in the process of rendering relative many elements of our world view. To make acceptable the relative character of the order of two poles for the public, however, is the task of (idealist) philosophy. I reduce the division of objective/subjective to sensible duality. To explain the belief in sensible duality, I use unusual means: personifying the sensible content. It is the distinction between present (as extension) and absolute present (as the absence of extension), which I call the trademark of idealist philosophy. This distinction is based on the striking assertion that though finite time can be divided infinitely, but at the same time, this division is not permitted to be performed, protecting the conceptual substance. The noninfinite division of finite time results in the definition: present = an extension-atom. This short extension is an important component of the notion “original environment”. The message “total nonuniversality” does not exist without that “place”.

Keywords

Hegel, Total Universality, Total Nonuniversality, Present, Absolute Present

1. Introduction

It is meaningful what a conflict a given philosophy puts into the centre, that is what a map is draught, within which its standpoint makes sense. It is meaningful too what are the views the given philosophy fights.

The map draught by materialists we know well. It is the order of two poles that stands at the centre, where they prefer the objective pole. The view that needs to be overcome is the one which set out from the subjective pole and considers the reality a bare idea of humans. The appreciation of independent existence of external world is absolute and sacred truth for them.

It is a map which strongly suggests the triumph of materialism over idealism. People are embracing that map and taken aback, if somebody puts forward some

sort of idealist philosophy, since in their opinion that philosophy will stand no chance. Berkeley (1998), Hume (2016) and Hegel (2007) (and other idealists too) have been unsuccessful in persuading the public. How far the situation is different now?

Well, I am trying to draw a different map, to boost the chance of acceptance for the above classics. On this map there are two extremities: total universality and total nonuniversality. Both expressions suggest the same evaluation of all elements of a given philosophy. That evaluation is of two sorts: either universal, or nonuniversal. Here the chief value is homogeneity, pureness. Do not put forward miscellaneous world view, where absolute and relative elements mix!

The one extremity considers the other not as enemy, but thinks highly of it, advocating the same value. The adversary sits in the intermediate zone, and may be called philosophical materialism.

How should we call the two extremities? In case of “total universality” the choice is easy: naïve materialism. The most proper designation of “total nonuniversality” may be intellectual radicalism. I, however, prefer the name “idealism”, expressing my respect toward Berkeley, Hume and the others, who are recorded by historians of philosophy as idealists.

2. The Question of the Present

On account of its spontaneous consistency the advocates for total nonuniversality esteem highly the naïve materialism, but point out its vulnerable point, which is expressed by the question: what should we mean by the moment of now? Owing to—what appears to be—a small flaw, naïve materialism is not good for idealists, despite their sympathy. There is a break of principle on the timeline, which is evident from the following row: extension-absence of extension-extension (answering to past-present-future). Without break the row presents itself as follows: extension-extension-extension.

What takes care of covering the “small” flaw is the sentence: a line consists of points. But not with Hegel. He resists the suggestion of a point appearing in our pictorial thought. That suggestion is: a point forms a part of a line, a moment forms a part of a timeline. (§31)

Returning to the timeline, what size the central extension should assume? One second or one million years? We incline to the former: that extension should be a small one. With this answer we, however, take in the convention to the concept of time: present = small extension. Burdened with convention, the concept of time is not able to claim the status “independent of human”. Time is the vulnerable point in materialist philosophy.

Over the course of discussion, if somebody overlooks the vital point, materialists always put the question: which pole should we prefer? The objective one or the subjective? Similarly to this, idealists have a simple question as well: what should we mean by the moment of now? Extension or the absence of extension? The obsessions of the two philosophies are different. They are at cross-purposes.

Berkeley and Hume had launched an attack on the standpoint “present = absence of extension”, when they claimed that finite extension is not divisible infinitely (Berkeley, 1998: point 123; Hume, 2016: p. 18). Adopting that to time, we can claim that finite time is not infinitely divisible. The above idealists permit a division of merely finite number: at the end of the division an extension-atom must remain, which makes sure the fulfilment of the “present = extension” requirement.

Correcting Berkeley and Hume, it must be added that at the same time finite time can be divided infinitely, since there is no obstacle impeding to reach the zero position. I call this zero position absolute present. (In Hegel one can encounter the expression “absolute present”—§258) The distinguishing between present and absolute present marks the idealist philosophy. It is a trademark. This distinguishing has a potentiality of didactic nature to explain the belief in sensible duality.

3. Explaining the Belief in Sensible Duality

Since we do not intend to erect the building of truth as the natural sciences do, we have more scope of action regarding the question: what means should we employ to promote the efficiency of our explanation? Personifying the sensible content is such a means, of which no one has taken advantage to this date. It is time to make an attempt.

Before this, however, let us consider the key sentence of idealist philosophy from Hegel:

“In pictorial thought, space and time are taken to be quite separate: we have space and also time: philosophy fights against this ‘also’.” (§257)

The goal of the fight against “also” is to obtain the absolute unity (zero space + zero time). The absolute unity goes beyond understanding (it crosses the conceptual boundaries set by natural language). Therefore it is right to say Hegel crosses the Rubicon. Showing a “thing” beyond understanding, he demotes the human understanding.

The natural place of the sensible content is in the present. To be able to exist, it needs “large” space and “short” time. (“Large” space is the world of human-scale objects.) The peaceful idyll of being in the present is disturbed by the announcement of the fight against “also”. The danger looms over the sensible content: both attributes can be lost. This is the reason why it fears and why it flights. It files an application for refugee status in the absolute present.

For the sensible content absolute present is not an ideal place, but it provides safety. Here its space-attribute is safe, nothing endangers it, as there is no fight.

Summing up: fear and sense of safety. Because of the fear we can assume a weak sensible in the present, while the sense of safety renders possible a strong sensible in the absolute present. The weak sensible indicates Berkeley’s standpoint: the only place for the sensible content is in the eyes. The strong sensible means sensible duality. (Sensible duality: the same sensible content exists in the eyes on the one hand, and on the surface of objects on the other.)

Our belief in the sensible duality stems from the absolute present.

4. The Three Pillar Didactic Construction

The absolute or relative character of human understanding constitutes a “to be or not to be” question for materialists. They have to stick to the “absolute” classification of understanding, because absolute truths (of positive nature) can only be declared by absolute understanding.

The faith of understanding in itself, in its own omnipotence is very strong. This is the reason why it is insufficient the relative character being merely stated; this statement will be easily shaken off.

The truly efficient means to undermining the “absolute” classification is the showing a “thing” beyond understanding. The more efficient than this is showing two “things” beyond understanding! The goal of our three pillar didactic construction is to shake the position of understanding stronger than this ever has happened.

Our starting point is the central pillar called original environment (“large” space, “short” time). The sensible content and the institute of conceptuality share the same fate: both are bound to that place, and owing to that fact, they suffer devaluation.

The fact of boundness to a place and the sense of its own universality of understanding are incompatible. The sense of its own universality is driving understanding to do action: the sensible content will be projected into “small” space and “long” time. These projections generate two claims:

- The world consists of atoms (by atom I mean absolute finitude)
- Sensible objects are destined to last forever.

Neither of them had proved to be correct! The idealists draw a bold consequence: the very emotion and attitude, which forced to make these claims, is not true.

The two “things” beyond understanding (the absolute unity and the positive/negative structure) come into being on the ruins of the two projections.

The absolute unity profits from the failure of spatial projection, the “positive/negative” from the failure of temporal projection.

In order to be more concrete and expressive, let us sketch the basic structure of our understanding! This structure (called space/time symmetry) consists of three elements: sensible object, space and time. Space and time (as attributes) are in a subordinate position. There is equal logical distance between them and the chief being. (The expression “symmetry” demonstrates the equal logical distance.)

What happens, when we project the sensible content into “long” time? Soon will be realized that the claim “things are destined to last forever” is not true. This will be abreacted by the following sentence: everything changes, nothing is everlasting. At this moment, however, a new role of time comes into being: the generating/consuming role. The new role puts the time into a superior position to the chief being. Negative time as a fictitious entity originates from weighing

the two roles: if one combines the role that gives time a subordinate position and that which gives time a superior position, then the resulting artificial formation could be called juxtaposed time. This creation (that is to say: negative time) and the positive/negative structure can be and should be interpreted as breaking away from the original environment.

In the positive/negative structure we can interpret the absolute present; the positive part of the structure is the sensible duality realised in the absolute present. The present can only be interpreted in the space/time symmetry structure, owing to the presence of extension-time.

In this paper I contended the trademark of idealist philosophy is the distinction between present and absolute present. This distinction is of more pronounced, if present and absolute present sit in different structures.

5. Conclusion

In my opinion, philosophy is heading from naïve materialism to the opposite pole, which is called idealism. While this journey is voluntary and easy for idealists (discovering the soft pot of our natural world view), materialists are driven and urged by natural sciences.

The tendency is clear. One never has to put down the sentence: of that particular thing we thought earlier being relative, but some developments led us conclude it may be absolute. That means movement from naïve materialism toward total nonuniversality seems unstoppable.

A few examples to demonstrate elements of our natural world view becoming relative over the course of late 150 years or so:

- By emerging the nonsensible matter, the sensible matter,
- Space and time,
- Casual connection,
- The vertical direction, which plays a prominent role for human.

There are two elements, the relative character of which being accepted is particularly difficult: the order of two poles and the understanding itself.

The order of two poles is based on sensible duality. Using the distinction between present and absolute present, I have attempted to provide an explanation for the belief in sensible duality.

What about understanding itself? Here we are helped by Hegel. Relying on him, I have showed two “things” beyond understanding: the absolute unity (zero space + zero time) and the positive/negative structure. Hegel declares space positive, and time negative (§253). I deem these classifications the nucleus of the positive/negative structure.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Berkeley, G. (1998). *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Oxford

University Press.

Hegel, G. F. W. (2007). *The Philosophy of Nature*. Oxford University Press.

Hume, D. (2016). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Lexington.