Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences
2024 17(9): 1748–1773

EDN: UIXBUM
УДК 141.201

The "Hard Problem" of Consciousness and Cosmology: the Saturated Phenomenality of the Universe versus its Constituted Objectivity

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Received 06.11.2023, received in revised form 08.11.2023, accepted 15.12.2023

Abstract. The paper discusses the relevance of cosmological ideas to the explication of the so called "Hard problem of consciousness." The latter problem is reminiscent to the ambivalent position of man in being called the paradox of subjectivity. The rational capabilities allow the person to start from its position and contemplate the whole of existence from the smallest conceivable scale to the largest as the whole of creation itself. Life gives the person a discrete particularity; but from that position the person can direct its intentionality toward the whole of existence. The object of consciousness embraces the universe at its extremes of greatness and smallness as a continuous surface which amounts to "uroboros," the mythic serpent biting its tail. Thus the universe is not a flat extension of time and space, but an uroboros-like structure determined by the world line of the subject. Essential to man's hypostatic particularity is the material body. The relationship of "I=I" in the subject, and then in its existence in the world is a saturated experience that transcends the subject-object relation and provides the ground for consciousness in its relation to the world. The universe is present in the human condition as a saturated phenomenon inseparable from the existence of the human. It is this phenomenon, to the extent that it cannot be articulated in terms of quantity, quality, modality and relation, that constitutes the "I" in its ambivalent condition of being the center of disclosure and manifestation of the universe and, at the same time, an insignificant organic component of it. The "hard" problem of consciousness as the split in the experience of existence into 1st and 3rd person reflects this paradoxical position of man and requires its elucidation through an open-ended hermeneutics that is similar to that for the universe as a saturated phenomenon. Hence the hard problem can be seen through its endless hermeneutics not as a problem, but as that which incessantly explicates the sense of human existence as given.

Keywords: consciousness, cosmology, embodiment, experience, flesh, humanity, phenomenality, theology, universe.

Research area: Philosophy of Science and Theology.

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Citation: Nesteruk A. V. The “hard problem” of consciousness and cosmology: the saturated phenomenality of the universe versus its constituted objectivity. In: *J. Sib. Fed. Univ. Humanit. soc. sci.*, 2024, 17(9), 1748–1773. EDN: UIXBUM

«Трудная проблема сознания» и космология: насыщенная феноменальность вселенной versus, ее конституированная объективность

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Аннотация. Статья исследует важность космологических идей для экспликации так называемой трудной проблемы сознания. Поскольку рациональные мыслительные способности позволяют человеку размышлять о всей вселенной от ее наименьших мыслимых масштабов до ее структуры в целом, будучи случайно-позиционированным в произвольной точке пространства, человек и его сознание мира образуют своего рода неразделимую структуру, напоминающую «уроборос» – мифического змея, кусающего свой хвост. Неотъемлемым элементом личностности человека, из которой и проистекает «трудная проблема сознания», является его плоть (или тело), связывающая человека с миром во времени и пространстве. Отношение «я=я» как самосознание субъекта и выражение первичности его ощущения существования составляет «насыщенный» опыт, выходящий за рамки отношения субъект-объект, но именно этот опыт лежит в основе позже артикулированного отношения сознания к миру. Вселенная присутствует в человеческом состоянии как насыщенный феномен, практически идентичный самому существованию человека. Этот феномен, поскольку его нельзя представить в категориях количества, качества, модальности и отношения, конституирует «я» в его амбивалентном состоянии, делая его центром раскрытия и манифестации вселенной, и в то же время давая человеку осознать, что он является ничтожно малым органическим элементом в этой вселенной. «Трудная проблема сознания», как расщепление в опыте бытия на 1-е и 3-е лицо, отражает эту парадоксальную двойственность человека в мире, экспликация которой требует бесконечной герменевтики, аналогичной той, что предназначена для вселенной как насыщенного явления. Таким образом, «трудную проблему сознания» можно рассматривать не как проблему, а как элемент конституции человека во вселенной.

Ключевые слова: вселенная, космология, опыт, плоть, сознание, телесность, теология, феноменальность, человек.

Научная специальность: 09.00.08. Философия науки и техники.

Цитирование: Нестерук А. В. «Трудная проблема сознания» и космология: насыщенная феноменальность вселенной versus, ее конституированная объективность. *Журн. Сиб. федер. ун-та. Гуманитарные науки*, 2024, 17(9), 1748–1773. EDN: UIXBUM

> Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science. The existence of consciousness seems to imply that the physical description of the universe, in spite of its richness and explanatory power, is only part of the truth, and that the natural order is far less austere than it would be if physics and chemistry accounted for everything. If we take this problem seriously, and follow out its implications, it threatens to unravel the entire naturalistic world picture…
>
> We ourselves are large-scale, complex instances of something both objectively physical from outside and subjectively mental from inside. Perhaps the basis for this identity pervades the world.
>
> Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos, 35, 42.*

Introduction:
The "Hard Problem of Consciousness"

The "Hard Problem of Consciousness" (Varella 1996) is defined as a problem of explaining how the first-person embodied lived experience (understood as unique phenomenal field in which, and from which, every variety of knowledge (objectifying knowledge and participative knowledge) is assessed), with all its qualitative features, may arise from the physical processes taking place in the brains and organisms of humans (Chalmers 1995). The question is not only about consciousness as such, but about hypostatic consciousness related to persons (asserted theologically, as radically different types of beings capable of articulating their own existence and createdness, imitating the source of this quality as originating in that ultimate personal Being which is associated with the Creator of all (Divine Life). Conversely, the problem is how to phenomenologically describe the appearance (in lived experience with its singular hypostatic specificity, with its physical conditions and mental states) of that presentation of this lived experience as one particular thing against the background of all being. In other words, how it becomes possible to describe experience in first person (as existence "simultaneous" with the variety of affections originating in the surrounding world) as that one particular modus of an individual among plural existences of the others.

From the perspective of perennial philosophy, either naturalistic or theistic, it seems that no "solution" to this "hard problem" can be given. In other words, no causation/transformation/transfiguration/mutation between the material world and the intelligible realm incarnate in every particular physical person can be found (this is the perennial mind-body predicament intimately related to the Hard Problem of Consciousness). In fact, it seems that the "Hard Problem" is itself generated through the search for a transition between the material and intelligible, assuming that the latter does take place, thus making it a "false" mystery constitutive of the human condition. Seen from this angle, the very task of addressing the "Hard Problem" becomes not an attempt to provide its ultimate "solution," but to generate an approach to the restatement and transformation of the problem into a new constitutive principle of the human condition. This implies a change of the basic attitude to the problem of embodied personal consciousness removing it from the metaphysical realm (that is, as reflected from the "outside") and placing it into an existential context, that is, as reflecting the essential feature of the lived experience which must be placed at the foundation and beginning of all further reasoning. Such an approach accentuates two, usually separate, directions of research about embodied consciousness (naturalistic and theistic) without giving priority to one at the expense of the other, and treating both as equally contributing to the open-ended hermeneutics of the human condition. Yet, such an attitude implies the recognition of lived experience as the ultimate presupposition of any form of investigation. The lived experience is understood widely as forming the life-world in the context of Husserl's attempts to ground all experience, including that of the sciences (Husserl 1970). To put it differently, the lived experience corresponds to

that primordial realm of *existence* which Michel Henry associated with life as proceeding from the unconditional and self-affective (Divine) Life (Henry 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Since this lived hypostatic experience is the precondition for anything to count as explanation, the "Hard Problem" transforms into the interrogation of how one would consider this lived experience as something to be explained. This kind of "explanation," if it could be effectuated, would require a radical change in the attitude of the inquirer by shifting from his/her object-oriented thinking to one in which the hypostatic subject becomes a problem for himself/herself. But perennial philosophy, including Christian patristics, as well as modernity and all modern continental philosophy, has always been aware that no constructive response to such a problematic interrogation of humanity by itself can be produced. Man is unknowable to himself, so that the implied transformation of the attitude to the Hard Problem can be compared with *metanoia* (a change of mind in ancient patristic tradition) in which this subject attempts to establish in words (that is, to phenomenalize) its own contemplation of being contingently given to itself, that is, contingently created. Certainly, one feels here a *theistic* flavor attempting to ground the facticity of subjectivity within some transcendent foundation. This foundation, unfortunately, itself becomes a certain stopping point that is itself not considerably different from the allegedly reductionist-like postulated physical substance in the foundation of mental activities and behavior. In fact, the shift to theism postulates the existence of some mental source of which human beings are miniature versions. And it is this mental source which is, allegedly, responsible for that intelligibility of the world that is manifested through the human capacity to comprehend the world under the conditions of its own ambivalence. In other words, rather than resolving the problem, the reference to theism makes it even more incomprehensible because radical contingency is ultimately related to the contingency of the world upon God.

If one abstracts from theology and looks at the possibility of readdressing the Hard Problem from a philosophical point of view, one has to admit that one can change oneself on the basis of human capacities without any reference to the transcendent. As was expressed by Michel Bitbol, such a transformation "requires from researchers nothing less than a mutation of their state of consciousness… when they can *see* lived experience *as* the universally presupposed background of questioning, rather than a theme to be questioned" (Bitbol 2021). This returns to our previously formulated thought that the "Hard Problem" must transform into a constitutive principle. The postulate of self-modification is radical in the sense that it implies a de facto modification of the human condition from within (not from without) to such an extent that the conventional, already existing, human condition might receive a sort of "explanation" from its modified state. Philosophically, this move could be seen as a strange self-split in the human sense of existence that could "look at itself" as if there were an access to that which is primarily forgotten at the act of birth and that is forgotten after death. Yet, once again, one feels an intrinsic influence of theistic thinking because the sought-after modification of thought, by accepting the primacy of the lived experience in its existentially irreducible and transcending intentionality, appeals to that which is not this thought and not this life. And any attempt to construct a joint picture of the world where consciousness and its intentional objects are ontologically equivalent fails because this equivalence is itself a fact that has already been constituted within the already lived contingent experience. This latter point is scarcely ever recognized by scientists, especially those who follow particular forms of speculative materialism based on the absolutization of mathematics in the natural sciences. Here we come to another version of the Hard Problem of Consciousness that can be formulated in the following paradoxical expressions: how can consciousness (in the first person) think of its own incarnation in the physical world (that is, in the person) where the question of its existence or non-existence entails thinking of that which could exist without this thinking. In order to exist in the first person (regardless whether this person is aware of its own fragile conditions), there must be certain physical conditions on Earth which make it possible

to exist in embodied conditions whose articulation takes place in the person. But then, under this supposition, the first person must admit the existence of that state of the world when the existence in the third person was impossible. This implies that one observes a certain *distension* in the subject in the person when the sense of its existence in the third person experiences a tense-split pointing to a fundamentally non-local sense of coming into existence as being endowed with the possibility to formulate this coming into existence and *distension* in human consciousness between its oblique and direct intentionality.

An example of such a physicalistic attempt to express this distension between the perception of the world in first and third persons can be found in attempts of the famous physicist John A. Wheeler to introduce existential categories into the fabric of physics by employing ideas from Quantum theory. He developed an idea, as a generalization of Quantum mechanics's claim that observers affect the sense of reality of that which is observed, that the whole edifice of physics depends on the logic implemented by the network of intelligent observers so that the universe in its essence is not a watch-like mechanism, but the "World of Existences" (see e.g. Wheeler 1988) contingent upon the constituting inter-subjectivity of existents. In other words, the world as it is articulated by physicists is not something in itself; it is a mental creation through historically evolving human consciousness. In a way, Wheeler attempts to say that the physical world and, hence, human observers themselves, are constituted from within the premise that they already exist. It is one thing to exist unconsciously (to experience existence in oblique intentionality), but it is a completely different thing when the fact of existence is manifested through an active exploration of nature where the very physical picture of the world represents a certain mirror of human consciousness.

Scientists did not like these ideas because of their impalpable claims and their lack of contribution to any scientific methodology. As was pointed out in my analysis of Wheeler's attempts to produce the overall constitution of the physical world by the community of observers-participants, the problem of the original lived experience, that is, of the already existent life, from within which the representation of the physical world unfolds, remained untouched (Nesteruk 2013). The reference to the community of observers remains in its essence the same metaphysical postulate of the original intelligence and intelligibility of the universe which is not advanced by such a claim. The Hard Problem of Consciousness remains untouched because all intelligent observers as hypostatic beings enhypostasizing the physical universe imply the inherent dualism between their experience of existence in the first person (as life) and in the third person as those who, while constituting the world through their observations, de facto constitute themselves as part of the physical world. The split or *distension* in the human condition is present in all such attempts to construct a model of the systematic unity of nature, but its "genesis," or the foundation of their contingent facticity, remains the primordial and ultimate mystery.

The reason why existential moves are generally problematic for physics is because the latter leaves no room for the problem of consciousness, subjectivity, and personhood to be posed in rubrics of discourse and concepts. For physicists, the hard questions related to the facticity and the structure of the inquiring mind are usually delegated to the field of vague philosophical intuitions. In many ways, this happens because of the unconditional belief in the efficacy of mathematics whose truths, while being discovered, do not refer to any personal consciousness. Yet the problem remains even for mathematics itself: man is the subject who develops and applies mathematics to the world ultimately from within the conditions of the first person (historical personality) whereas this same mathematics does not account for man as a hypostatic existence.

Correspondingly, any serious approach to the "Hard Problem of Consciousness," in particular in conjunction with the sciences, demands that we precisely locate this problem in the appropriate philosophical field which deals with the problem of consciousness as the problem of existence as such. This means that unlike in physics, where the presence of

conscious observers is presupposed, philosophy makes consciousness a problem for itself, that is, the very facticity of philosophy itself is a philosophical problem. And the difficulty of such a formulation of the problem is exactly the intrinsic split of consciousness into two modes of operation within the conditions of life when existence is experienced by the human subject within first and third persons; that is, when the facticity of experience of existence in the first person depends on the facticity of existence in the third person, and vice versa. What remains solid as a rock is the dualistic structure of consciousness which while being contingent in its facticity remains closely linked to the necessities of nature. It thus encapsulates in itself the structure of the world where this consciousness is possible. Can then one conjecture that the dialogue between science and theology represents an outward dynamics of such an interplay between first and third person perspectives in one and the same man, the dynamics which contributes to the open-ended hermeneutics of the human condition?

The natural attitude and the phenomenality of objects

If one adopts an objectifying epistemic attitude in an attempt to address the "Hard Problem," then one follows the standard object-oriented ontology of scientific research and technological activity. One deals here with monistic physicalist metaphysics which accompanies a goal-oriented, objectifying attitude in investigation. This encapsulates the essence of our "natural attitude," formulated briefly as positing that which is deemed to exist as none other than object-like targets that can be extracted and stabilized out of the flow of lived experience[1]. What happens then is that those who follow this attitude are often brought to think that the very lived experience (out of which objects are constituted) must be an epiphenomenon of some objects in the sense that the physical and biological properties somehow lead to the internal facticity of this experience, including humanity's multi-hypostatic consubstantiality.

Indeed, the naturalistic research program purports to explain every phenomenon on the basis of the laws and objects of the natural sciences. The open-ended character of making statements about phenomena (an infinite advance of science) makes naturalism allegedly immune to any objections based on the impossibility of achieving certainty with respect to some phenomena, including consciousness. However, one immediately observes that consciousness is not a particular phenomenon; it is the very phenomenality that is presupposed by any phenomenon whatsoever. Nor is consciousness an objective feature of the world. Then, a reference to the open-endedness of the naturalistic research program (its infinite advance) is *in principle* irrelevant to the problem of consciousness (although it could be claimed that the explication of consciousness is tantamount to the ongoing advance of the sciences at whose objects this consciousness is intended). Indeed, the naturalistic program only bears on an objective domain of inquiry (it deals with the phenomenality of objects). It leaves aside, by its very essence, the experiential, pre-objective, condition of any inquiry within such a phenomenality. No scientific effort can discover what has been intended in the very *decision* to enact

[1] According to Edmund Husserl (Husserl 1980, § 1), our "natural attitude" is a pre-philosophical view in which the existence of a world of objects, those objects in which we are interested for practical reasons, is taken for granted. The natural attitude is related to the activity of consciousness within which one acts in a world which is real, a world that existed before this one was born and which one thinks will continue to exist after he or she dies. This world is inhabited not only by a particular human ego, but also by other human beings with whom this particular human can communicate meaningfully. This world has features which have been systematically described through the genetic-causal categories of science. The world of daily life is lived within this natural attitude and, as long as things go along reasonably well, there arises no need to call this attitude into question. Even if one does occasionally ask whether some things are "really real," whether the world is "really" as it appears to be, these questions are still posed in such a way that they are questions about the natural world in which one lives. The natural attitude has a basic teleological tendency which finds its fulfillment in the constituted world which contains others. This is implanted in the mind's intentionality as a teleological tendency to move toward world-building. The natural attitude does not presume that manifesting something is making that which is being manifested. It is merely saying that the world appears through our production of its appearances. In the natural attitude consciousness is directed outside itself as a center of disclosure and manifestation and becomes entangled in the world as it gives it shape.

objectification. *Intentional* acts cannot be subjected to straightforward physical causation and hence no non-existential foundation of science is possible[2]. In this sense, scientific naturalism has shown itself to be an epistemological dead-end as an explication of the very motivations of science, that is, intentional acts launching this or that particular investigation. Scientists are actors and participants in their research and not detached observers. The choice and consequent constitution of a particular object of research is dependent on *intentionality* rather than on physical causality. This is trivially the case in the science of consciousness, since here the "object" of research is identical to its subject. But this is also the case in the most fundamental theories of modern physics, dealing with the limiting questions, namely cosmology and Quantum mechanics. Indeed, the constructs of these theories are, of themselves, historically and sociologically contextual and cannot therefore be detached from transcendental conditions (conditions of the lived experience, including socially conditional applications) of their objectivistic assessment (see e.g. Bitbol 2009).

One realizes, in the context of the "Hard Problem of Consciousness," that there are indeed situations in physics and cosmology where the phenomenality of objects in respect to their constructs cannot be sustained. Hence a doubt arises about the legitimacy of the mental inference that private consciousness (as it is within the experienced phenomenon of life) can be deduced as an epiphenomenon of physical entities posited as objects (that is, one cannot deduce the phenomenality of the world in the first person from the one in the third person). In a trivial case this is related to the fact that all objects from everyday life can receive their interpretation from the point of view of the physical particles and interactions between them that sustain the object as a whole. Yet, this kind of representation will have no existential meaning. Physics in this case describes some underlying structures and relations which are abstracted from lived experience. Consciousness is present in this description as a post-factum discursive (mathematical) form of the expression of reality; however, the overall shape of objects of everyday experience (in particular of those which are constructed artificially) contains the consciousness of the whole as a basic intellectual and purpose-imbued idea drawn on the grounds of primary lived experience. In simple words, all scientific representations of reality presuppose that life as immediate experience of existence is already there. But this life is not explained by the sciences on grounds that establish sufficient conditions for life to be possible; that is to say, the conditions of this life's contingent facticity are not covered by the necessary conditions inferred through the sciences themselves.

In more sophisticated cases, some scientific claims about the ontological status of objects of investigation are challenged by ongoing scientific advances. This can be illustrated by historical examples, when some scientific "objects" become obsolete (ether, for example). This can also be illustrated by examples from those parts of cosmology which deal with not directly observable aspects of the universe (Dark Matter (DM) and Dark Energy (DE), for example), as well as with some claims on the part of cosmology for the reality of entities from the early universe, including the Big Bang itself, which as theoretical constructs have no direct empirical references. In other words, the theoretical constitution of objects does not entail their object-like phenomenality unless one commits itself to a strong mathematical realism[3]. Yet, even in this case such a problematic phenomenality of theoretical entities (a selected domain of objectified phenomena (that includes neurobiological phenomena) (Varella 1996)) does not relieve us from the obligation to recognize that all theoretical approximations have their source in the immediate lived experience (a broader domain of the immediately

[2] Husserl argued that all scientific activity is ultimately rooted in the life-world as that unmediated context of any lived experience.

[3] This kind of realism implies that whatever is mathematically possible is physically possible. Even stronger, mathematics provides one with tools to think about those realities which allegedly exist without the presence of any inquiring intellect. Mathematical thinking paves the way to a belief that one can think that which is not related to this thinking (see more details in Meillassoux 2008, 112–28).

lived, unfabricated phenomena[4]), that is, in the already given life. The next move then is primarily dependent on how to interpret this life in order not to abandon the issue of manifestation of reality in the first person. For, speaking of the first person, one implies a particular living being with its specific body and hence with a particular trajectory in space and time.

If, as an alternative to the naturalistic trend, one interprets life as a life of consciousness, one thus retreats into a phenomenological attitude[5], according to which the only domain of "apodictic certainty" (of which any claim of inexistence would be performatively contradictory) is the domain of "pure conscious life" ("all positions taken towards the already-given objective world" must be "deprived of acceptance" (Husserl 1960, § 8), so that the worlds of science and everyday life are downgraded to the rank of mere phenomena that "claim being," whereas "pure conscious life" is raised to the rank of "the whole of absolute being" (Husserl 1980, § 51). Such a position is unsatisfactory because it relegates consciousness to the sphere of the unconditional (that is, implicitly to the theistic realm) and does not question the underlying issue of its facticity. The implied reversal of ontological hierarchy can be qualified as a variety of idealism (probably objective, that is, theistic) which cannot account for embodiment, to say nothing of the hypostatic features of consciousness, that is, persons. If one reifies the phenomenological activity that consists of "recollecting" on one's own conscious life and identifying the lived roots of one's "natural" beliefs, into something like a soul (self, mineness, etc), this creates a range of philosophical difficulties. In all possible scenarios, such a reified idealism (whether with its objective or subjective overtones) offers the problem of the first person experience (or hypostasis) no possible explanation.

It is possible then, in order to overcome the extremes of reductive physicalism and phenomenological idealism, to invoke some dualistic possibilities. Dualism, from René Descartes to David Chalmers, arises from a kind of switching over between the phenomenological and natural attitudes, associated with a naive ontologization of each of the two intertwined phenomenological domains. A phenomenological first step asserting the presence of "I think" in Descartes, or the felt "intimacy" of experience in Chalmers (Chalmers 1995), or the non-intentional immediacy of life in Henry (Henry 2003a, 2002b), tends to transform into a new "object" or property in its own right. Indeed, one is obliged to seek after the ultimate foundation of the facticity of Descartes's *cogito*, Chalmers's intimate experience, or Henry's life. The first person "I think therefore I am" is thus converted into the third person *res cogitans,* entailing that the lived experience as a precondition of any phenomenality must be converted into an additional component of a physicalist ontology.

A possible escape out of such dualism between the lived experience in the first person and post-factum representation of this experience by referring to the *hypostatic other* can be undertaken via a route of a "God's eye viewpoint" (that is, a theistic point of view) located somewhere above both consciousness and the place of its physical embodiment. In this case, the very facticity of hypostatic consciousness is associated (in Christian tradition) with man's Divine Image as being created by God. In this case these two attitudes toward lived experience – as that one which detects it instantaneously and intuitively through the fact of being created in communion with God, as well as another one which considers existence

[4] Once again one implies the life-world of Husserl or what Thomas Nagel described as common sense and plainly undeniable: "After all, everything we believe, even the most far-reaching cosmological theories, has to be based ultimately on common sense, and on what is plainly undeniable" (for example the very fact of life) (Nagel 2012, 29).

[5] The phenomenological attitude is the opposite of the natural attitude which, as mentioned above, has a basic teleological tendency which finds its fulfillment in the constituted world that contains others. It is contingent, constitutive (world-building), and taken up with, and entangled in, the world it is shaping. In the phenomenological attitude, the transcendental reduction (epoché) as suspension of this natural naivety of world-building becomes an opposite move, contrary to the "inhuman" tendency of finding its foundation in the world, the move which returns the ego to its self-centering as a modus of the basic self-affectivity of life. The phenomenological attitude implies a move, in a way, opposite to that of world-building, where through a careful insight into the constitutive acts of this building, the center of this constitution is itself disclosed as the source of "worldification" or "enworlding."

in reflection as corporeal, extended in space and time (but synthesized intellectually)—are both seen as two complementary approaches to one and the same created reality. The implied anthropology places humanity at the center of creation, unifying its visible (empirical) side with the invisible (intelligible) through their unity effectuated by God in the world and in man. Such an interplay between the personal experience of existence and its further representation in consciousness as an "objective" phenomenon can be illustrated through an analogy of a permanent circulation between the two attitudes, reaching one by way of the other and vice versa. This dynamical process can be illustrated as an "uroboros of consciousness" (Vörös 2014), as a continuous intellectual process in which one move serves as a preparation for the other. In Husserlian terms, consciousness is correlationally dependent upon the brain within a naturalistic framework, but the brain (as an object of perception and active physical handling) is *constitutively* dependent upon consciousness's acts within a phenomenological framework. Conscious experiences correlate with brain-events, but the brain as *object* is *constituted* out of a carefully selected set of conscious experiences.

The latter thought can be illustrated graphically through a "naturalized uroboros of consciousness." The task of this illustration is not trivial because it implies joining two radically non-uniform realms, that is, consciousness and the physical world. Nevertheless, this duality is the easiest problem because in principle, that is, in the natural attitude, these two realms can be "encoded" graphically as two different entities. The difficulty which pertains to the Hard Problem of Consciousness is that one needs somehow to reflect in such a graphic representation the difference between the constituting consciousness in the first person (as radically private and thus singular) and the working of consciousness that represents the outer world as a set of intentional objects, including the embodied consciousnesses of others.

Here one faces a challenge of making a symbol for the intrinsic split between the identity of the "I," expressed through the classical Fichtean formula "I=I" (and experienced only in the first person perspective), and that of "not-I," which can be treated as the outer world through which the "I's" split in itself occurs as a result of embodiment. In other words, if one fixes attention on the facticity of one's own "I," one immediately becomes aware of the boundary of one's own sphere of consciousness. The identity "I=I" cannot be unconditional because it implies the sense of the boundary as the limits of its own specificity and concreteness. But this concreteness is de facto the "I's" contingency. However, in order to detect and fix this contingency one needs to view oneself in the third person as posing this concreteness (contingency) as an "object" of this "I's" intentional gaze. One summarizes: in order to make the transition to the third person, that is to consider the "I" in the context of the "not-I," one needs to become aware of the contingency of the "I" in the first person. Both the "I's" contingency and its positioning in the context of the "not-I" in third person go inseparably together. One can provocatively claim that the Hard Problem of Consciousness is a very specific expression of the "I's" radical ontological contingency.

Thus, any attempt to graphically represent consciousness in relation to the world must implement the internal split in the "I" which makes "I's" self-identity meaningful: its self-identity implies the presence of the Other, so that, geometrically, for example, the "I's" singularity cannot be expressed as an insular point. Indeed, at this point a particular geometrical idea comes to mind if one treats consciousness, together with the French philosopher Francis Wolff as a "transparent cage":

> "Everything is inside because in order to think anything whatsoever, it is necessary to "to be able to be conscious of it," it is necessary to say it, and so we are locked up in language or in consciousness without being able to get out. In this sense, there is nothing outside them. But in another sense, they are *entirely turned* towards the outside; they are the world's window: for to be conscious is always to be conscious of something, to speak is necessarily to speak about something… Consequently, consciousness and language enclose the

> world within themselves only insofar as, conversely, they are entirely contained by it. We are in consciousness or language as in a *transparent cage*. Everything is outside but it is impossible to get out" (Wolff 2020, 42–43).

One possible concept would be to employ a so-called *stereographic projection* (where all points on the two-dimensional plane can be presented as intersections of this plane by line segments originating at the top of the sphere touching this plane at the bottom) in two dimensions. Consciousness, as a *transparent cage*, is depicted by a circle with the *transparent circumference* in a two-dimensional plane. The interior of this circle is related to its hypostatic self-identity (in a technical language, there is a generating principle of all points in this circle) whereas its boundary (circumference) contains the images of the world as result of consciousness's intentionality directed outside, that is toward the world. It is not accidental that any imagery of consciousness implies two dimensions in order to make a distinction between this consciousness as hypostatic self-consciousness "I=I" (zero dimension, that is a point) and as intentional consciousness appearing as a result of a limitation of self-consciousness because the latter must occur under the conditions of embodiment in the world. In other words, the finitude of consciousness as related to the conditions of embodiment is depicted with the help of the finite circle (in spite of the fact that the interior of this circle can unlimitedly and inexhaustively be explored by this consciousness as inner life (geometrically, the interior of the circle as two-dimensional manifold is infinitely large in comparison with that of the generating center in terms of a geometrical measure). The fact that this circle of consciousness must be related to the world as "not-I" is depicted through the touching point at the bottom of the circle, where the physical world is depicted as a tangent line to the bottom.

The top of the circle symbolizes the hypostatic core of consciousness, that is, that self-identity of the "I" which initiates all intentional acts directed (through this transcendental circle) to the world. This is depicted in the spirit of stereographic projection by straight lines originating at the top of the circle and directed towards the world depicted by the tangent straight line at the bottom of the sphere. The isomorphism between the circle and the world-line determines that any object in the world is articulated through transcendental consciousness; that is, the very structuring of the world-line in terms of scales is the result of the presence of human subjectivity depicted through the circle. World-objects appear as projections of the "I=I" through the circle of consciousness. There is only one point of "intersection" of the circle of consciousness with the world-line at the bottom of the circle and it symbolizes embodiment, that is, the fact that the circle of consciousness cannot exist without touching the world. The graph geometrically expresses that different physical objects articulated in terms of spatial scales and expressing a certain type of systematic unity of the universe are humanly constructed. This is related to human beings themselves who are constituted as physical formations from within the transcendental sphere of consciousness.

Unlike consciousness, the outer physical world is posed as *qualitatively infinite* and encapsulated in terms of spatial scales, but its *appearance* to consciousness is contingently *limited* (that is, specific and concrete and thus epistemologically limited). This contingent limitation is expressed through its projection onto the finite circle whose contingency is defined by the conditions of embodiment; i.e., the part of being that is unconcealed to man can be qualitatively infinite but epistemologically limited. This thought must be clarified further. When we talk about the world, we mean that its particular articulated presentation in forms of sensibility, categories of the understanding, and rational ideas is transcendentally specific and concrete as related not only to the cognitive faculties we have mentioned, but also to historical, social and technological circumstances. The latter amounts to the fact that the representation of the outer physical world in terms, for example, of its spatial scales, parameters of evolution in time, in terms of masses and sizes, is that of an organized structure which cannot be isolated from the structures of consciousness

in a generalized sense[6]. It is in this sense that no picture of the world can be non-contingent and unrelated to the human presentation unless one postulates it as a mathematical structure of a Platonic kind. This picture is formulated in human language and through human ideas. Thus the link between the circle of consciousness and the world seen through this circle on the tangent line is *constitutionally necessary, but contingent.*

One must bear in mind that the geometric representation of the circle of consciousness does not have anything to do with physical space and time. The circle simply represents the logical extension in the identity of "I=I" which manifests its contingency and radical difference with all other instances of "I" and with the world. The specificity of representation (projection) of the world through the circular boundary is determined by the specificity of embodiment. The lines proceeding from the hypostatic "center" at the top, intersecting the circle of consciousness and projected onto the line of the world represent the world's traces articulated by consciousness as its inherent desire to relate itself to that environment where it is embodied. Ultimately, one can say that the very specificity (facticity) of that which consciousness can perceive through the transparency of the circle is determined by the specificity of its embodiment which determines the extension of the "I=I" towards the world. Only that "information" can be processed by consciousness which is consistent with the conditions of the body.

At the same time, the epistemological *conditions of embodiment* are not detected and articulated in forms of consciousness because the boundaries of consciousness are not perceptible: one cannot gaze at them as "objects." The boundaries are present in all images of the world, but consciousness does not reflect upon them. It concentrates mostly on that content which penetrartes consciousness through these boundaries. Here, the following analogy which is related practically to all physical observations comes to mind: physics outlines the properties of the outer world, it extends some picture of the world without necessarily describing how specific results and facts have been obtained. A clear example comes from astronomical observations: they involve telescopes, that is to say, combinations of the glass-made lenses and photographic elements, but the stated facts (as results of observations) never explicitly refer to the actual constructions of observational technologies and methods of processing observations. In other words, the boundaries of consciousness (implemented in technologies) are implicitly present in all observations of the outer physical world and its resulting picture, but they are never explicitly articulated as objective conditions of the very possibility to explore the world in the results of such exploration. All photographs are produced with the help of optical and computer technologies, but the latter are not remembered in the human evaluation of the quality, quantity and value of final results of research in spite of the fact that the transparent limiting conditions of consciousness remain tacitly in place.

The diagram at Figure 1 illustrates an interesting property of consciousness: if the latter wants to deal with the infinitely distant (either at large or deeply microscopic) "objects,"[7] the "intersecting" straight lines corresponding to consciousness's attempts to represent such "objects," become tangent to the circle at its top, that is, effectively geometrically parallel to the world-line. It seems reasonable to identify such straight lines tangent to the circle at its top with that realm of being which is perennially called the *intelligible* in contradistinction to the physical. Then it is the case that the extended finitude (not in a physical state) of the circle

[6] Yet, according to those who adhere to the so called "speculative materialism" position, the recognition of the inherent contingency in the world-picture does not entail that there is no truth behind this picture because this picture is mathematical and hence predicates that which allegedly can exist without being seen or thought at all (see, for example Meillassoux (2008, ch. 5)).

[7] The reader must not be confused at this point because of the existing physical limits on the sense of space associated with the Planck length (10–33 cm) in depth and, let's say, 92 billion light years in breadth. Since modern mathematized physics allows constructs in principle with any possible sizes related either to the ideas of the infinitesimally small or infinitely large, all these constructs, being mental creations, depart from the physical and occupy a place of computable (fractals) or abstract infinities.

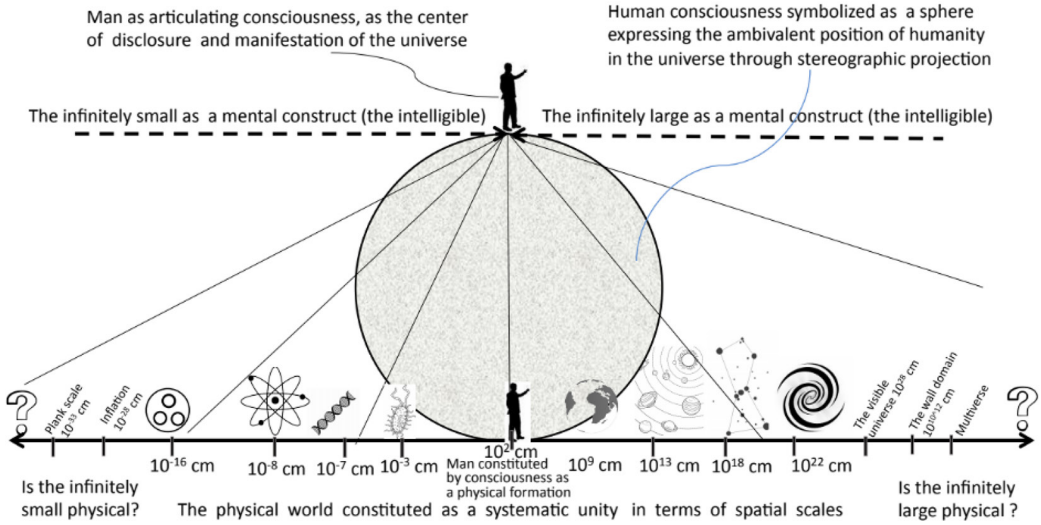

Fig. 1. The relationship between human consciousness and the world presented by stereographic projection

of consciousness as related to its embodiment expresses geometrically a finite distance between the world-line and the intelligible. Thus the two infinite parallel lines merge at infinity and, as it were, "glue together" the two realms of being into one single whole thus effectively reproducing the self-enclosed circle of transcendental consciousness. The most important thing in this representation of the whole realm of existence is that, at the intelligible level, the dramatic distinction between the infinitely small and the infinitely large disappears thus uniting them in human consciousness and thus expressing the "uroboros-like" structure of all articulated being where the human subject is present twice: as an organic physical object and as articulating consciousness (as the center of disclosure and manifestation of the universe). In order to assign to the diagram at Figure 1 a more precise "uroboros-like" character, reflecting the dualistic presence of man in the world, we make such a transformation of this diagram when the split in the embodied subjectivity will disappear and the infinitely distant (large and small) coincide (within their representations in human subjectivity) thus demonstrating a smooth transition from the physical realm to the intelligible. The result of this transformation is presented at Fig. 2.

The physical sense of this diagram consists of a two-fold assertion. On one hand, it unifies all known levels of physical reality starting from microscales (elementary particles, fundamental interactions, Planck scales and the possible beyond) and finishing by mega-sizes of clusters of galaxies, the visible universe, multiverse and the possible beyond[8]. This diagram positions man as a physical organism at the center thus symbolically uniting all levels of the consubstantial universe in himself, being microcosm and mediator in the perennial sense. From a physical point of view, all levels of reality are constitutive for the corporeal humanity; from a philosophical point of view, the constitution of the physical position of humanity in the universe requires an intellectual insight into those realms which in many ways have only an intelligible status. To put it differently, in order to characterize humanity's position in the universe one needs an insight not only into those entities which are observed or constituted by man through theories, but also on the real presence of human consciousness in

[8] The sense of uroboros as a snake biting its own tail, if our diagram would restrict itself only to the physical realm, is related to the fact that fundamental physics experiences a striking merge at micro- and mega- scales. See, for example (Carr 2017, 42).

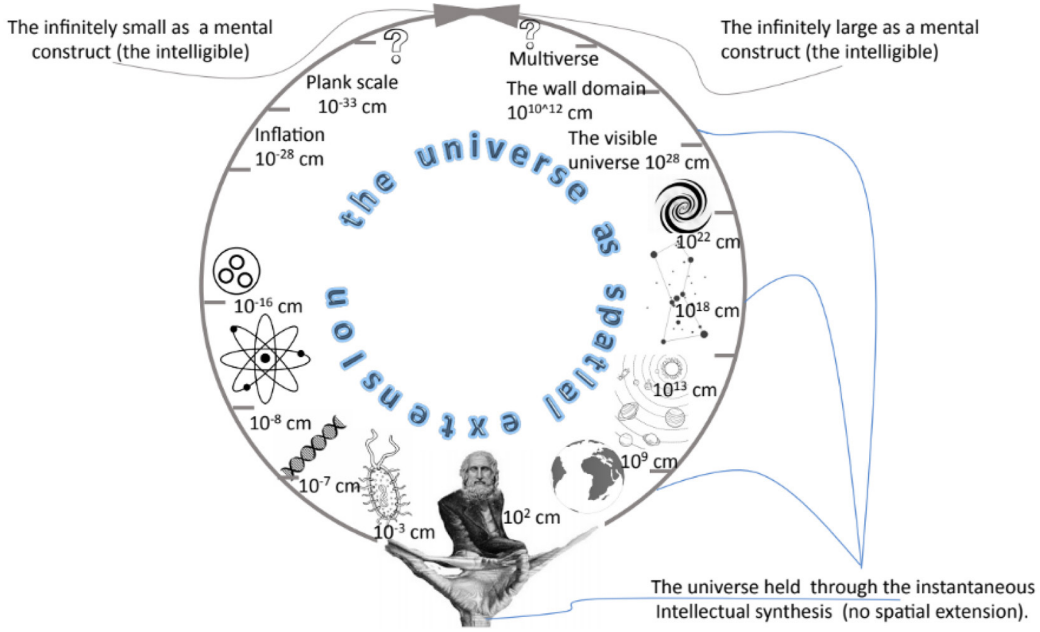

Fig. 2. The "uroboros-like" representation of the radical inseparability of consciousness and the universe explicating the paradox of subjectivity: man is a physical formation in the universe as well as its articulating consciousness

them when their external appearances tell one how humanity functions in its attempt to disclose the sense of its own facticity.

Certainly, such an interpretation of the unity of physics and the centrality of man is possible in the *natural attitude* where universe and man appear both in the phenomenality of objects, that is, both are constituted by some consciousness which oversees the universe. In other words, the physically middle position of humanity in this diagram is epistemologically misleading, because it is itself, as a fact, constituted from within the already existing life whose facticity is illustrated only in terms of *necessity*, that is, the physical and biological conditions of man's existence. The diagram as such cannot offer any descriptive explanation of the *sufficient* conditions for the existence of the consciousness which constructs the diagram. As has been stated, such a diagram represents a particular constitution of the idea of systematic unity of the universe manifesting the human capacity of producing an "instant" synthesis of it. This implies that consciousness is logically pre-existent with respect to this diagram and that it can be introduced here as that articulating gaze at the universe which the diagram reflects (not literally, of course) as if the universe were "held" in the hand of man as a hypostasis of this universe, in analogy with a theologically asserted "He had in His right hand seven stars" (Rev 1:16).

In such an uroboros-like presentation of the universe there is no inside or outside of the universe with consciousness inside of it ("consciousness and language enclose the world within themselves only insofar as, conversely, they are entirely contained by it" (Wolff 2020, 43). One can say metaphorically that the outer universe is projected on the inside of man's consciousness, whereas its inside is immersed within its outside because consciousness is intended to be a consciousness *of* something. The spatio-temporal expanse, and the objects within the "uroboros-like" diagram, are constituted by the subject's consciousness, whereas the subject as a living body is immersed in space-time. What is encoded here is the well-known paradox of the human subjectivity of being a part of the universe while at the same

time being a consciousness that articulates it[9]. Yet, the possible formulations of this paradox cannot together enlighten its radical aspect that remains hidden behind its formulation; that is to say the fact that the articulating consciousness is not an anonymous and collective field in some transcendent intelligible realm, but essentially embodied and hypostatic, for whom the experience of existence in the universe is radically private and in the person.

The latter point emphatically expresses the fact that there is no "symmetry" between consciousness and its objects. In other words, the phenomenality of consciousness for itself and the phenomenality of the world for this consciousness are radically different. The abovementioned symmetry is false because it itself is an intellectual construct, in which the *constituted* bodily objects and the *constituting* embodied consciousness are formally put on the same level. But whenever one becomes aware that all intellectual constructions are embedded in and originate from the lived experience, the symmetry becomes lost.

It is typical to assume that both terms of the dialogue (relationship) between science and theology enter it symmetrically. In this case theology is treated as a kind of intellectual activity that can be compared with that of science on some abstract philosophical level. However, if one treats theology existentially as expressing outwardly the lived experience (that is, experience of created existence in communion) which forms the foundation of all other phenomenalizations of the world and life, one realizes that the symmetry with the sciences is lost because scientific experience is dependent on this lived experience. One then anticipates that the only coherent strategy of balancing two kinds of phenomenalities is to dwell continuously within the lived process of constitution of the world by a concrete hypostatic consciousness, instead of *simulating* constitutive dependence of the manifest objects on an abstractly conceived (anonymous and collective) consciousness. The symmetry between the terms of this dialogue cannot be sustained because the very subject enters the dialogue asymmetrically: as the lived experience in theology and as a constituted agent of knowledge in science.

The paradoxical interplay between human consciousness and outer reality (which is constituted by this consciousness), becomes phenomenologically amplified and multiplied because humanity is multihypostatic. To put it differently, every "uroboros-like" symbol of the unity of the universe has a hidden sign of its author, a particular human person. The world is seen in the image of a concrete person. The world contains the image of this person twice. Man is present as articulating the consciousness of the universe (the universe is enhypostasized by him), but he is also present physically as a particular human being with its face (identity) and position in time and space reflected as if the world appeared to be the mirror of the human soul[10].

Such a dualistic position of man points, in reflection, to a certain specificity of the human condition, namely to a *time-delay* between the immediate perception of the unity with the universe by the fact of existence in communion (in the first person), and the discursive representation of this existence in terms of outer space and time (in the third person). The essence of the paradox of subjectivity can then be described as the tense-split in the sense of existence when the awareness of existence (as a mental operation) must be conjugated with the perception of the same existence through the body. This requires a time-delay in conscious-

[9] Here are two concise formulations of the paradox: "We can describe the relations between subject and world as purely intentional relations as opposed to (objective) spatial, temporal, and causal relations. We can appeal to the distinction between belonging to the world of objects and being a condition of the possibility of the world of objects (as meaning). Perhaps the broadest terms for these relations would be the transcendental relations and the part-whole relation" (Carr 1999, 116), or "It is necessary to combine the recognition of our contingency, our finitude, and our containment in the world with an ambition of transcendence, however limited may be our success in achieving it" (Nagel 1986, 9).

[10] One can conjecture that this biological concreteness of every hypostatic human being makes it fundamentally different in comparison with a hypothetical form of artificial intelligence which could somehow acquire hypostatic features in some disembodied state. It is because of this disembodiment that such an artificial intelligence would not be multi-personal. The way of communication with the Other would not require physical space and time and thus would be "all in all" at once leading ultimately to the disappearance of the Hard Problem of Consciousness.

ness itself, that is, its internal temporal extension. Here corporeality enters the discussion not only on the abstract level as a physical dimension, but as a specific and concrete body subjected to biological temporal flux and position in space. The personhood of the articulating consciousness thus demands that subjects appearing in Fig. 2 be extended in space, so that this extension becomes an essential feature of that consciousness which is present behind the "uroboros-like" circle.

The split in tense-structures of experience de facto defines the difference in phenomenalities. In order for personal consciousness to make a transition from first person perspective to third person, one needs a change of phenomenality (and hence of hermeneutics) from that which is devoid of temporal flux and extended spatiality to that which represents bodies among other objects in the universe in extended space and time. One can reinterpret this as the switching over between the inner perception of existence in the Cartesian style of *ego cogito* to the perception of the physical body as enabled by the thinking subject.

By generalizing the intuition formulated above, the principle of personhood as experience of existence in the first person implies that personal consciousness has a propensity to be consciousness of space and time (compare with space and time as forms of sensibility in Kant). In this sense, such a consciousness is possible only if it is incarnate in physical space and time. The latter bodily characteristics of consciousness enter the definition of multihypostatic humanity as a principle of distinction and, at the same time, communication among hypostases. Then one can say that space and time turn out to be those *modi* of consciousness which reflect consciousness's incarnation in flesh making possible in principle the distinction and relationship among persons.

If experience of the outer world either in first or third persons is related to the fact that the world affects the subject through its body, that is, physically, the experience of existence as such, that is, the sense of oneself in the first person, is prompted by the fact of being *alive*. The lived experience is that which can be associated (as was advocated by Michel Henry) with *life's self-affectivity* (Henry 2003a, 2003b). As such, this reference to a new term "self-affectivity" does not advance our discussion, referring once again to something primarily concealed and uncaused in worldly terms. Theologically, one could refer to humanity's creation in communion with God and thus relegate the problem of personal consciousness to the archetype of a personal God. Yet, this theological reference does not elucidate the major problem of how to reconcile the first person experience of the world with the third person. This problem remains a posited fact in the belief that man is made in the Divine Image. Seen in this perspective, the paradox of subjectivity becomes a constitutive part of the Divine Image with no further explanation of the ultimate origin of this paradox, as well as of the Divine Image. However, the treatment of the paradox as constitutive for the human condition in general, does not stop this condition's open-ended hermeneutics, that is, the infinite advance in attempts to explicate this condition.

The "Hard Problem of Consciousness" and the ambivalence of flesh

One can approach the Hard Problem of Consciousness from a different direction by considering the conditions of its embodiment (incarnation) and their dualistic phenomenality. Indeed, the awareness *of* one's flesh, involves a dualistic approach to *this* flesh: on the one hand, flesh can be that which *is experienced*, on the other hand, the same flesh can be outwardly posed as that through which the world is experienced, that is, as *experiencing flesh*. The flesh is taken here as the locus and origin of the process of objectification, more precisely, one considers that consciousness is embodied. Consciousness is the center of disclosure and manifestation, but in the conditions of embodiment, that is, of flesh. Thus understood, flesh is split in itself onto that which is deeply transcendental as seeing, hearing and feeling, and, at the same time, as that which is "transcendent," that is heard and felt. In a way, this split serves as a different expression of the previously invoked discrimination of phenomenalities as conscious acts. At the same time, such a split in the meaning of flesh may corre-

spond to the alleged dualism between the lived experience in the first person (flesh as experienced) and that one in the third person (flesh as that which experiences the flesh of the other). Yet, if one attempts to build a metaphysical account of the relation between conscious experience in the living body (as a particular hypostatic variation of flesh) and that of the same body in the world, one needs to start from the lived experience and then, through abstractions and objectivations, link it with to the worldly position in space. The pattern of this link is "uroboros-like" (as we have already argued through the diagrams which explicitly refer to the material flesh), yet unfolding from within lived experience.

Such an accentuation of embodiment has serious implications for how knowledge in general is conceived. In the framework of a standard ontology, one aspires to acquire knowledge about what is given out there, and this knowledge can be encoded by using thought and language. But in the framework of an ontology based on embodiment, knowledge affects two sides of the human condition that arise from the self-splitting of what is out there. Knowledge of something arises concomitantly with a transformation of ourselves as knowers: on the one hand man receives knowledge of the world through perceptions and their contextual interpretation; on the other hand, being involved in the same material fabric through embodiment, the one who is embodied becomes a knower by the virtue of being affected by the world. The transformation of oneself *as* a knower manifests itself as a mutation of one's experience that cannot be encoded intellectually, since the very processes and conclusions of the intellect depend on it. The pattern of knowledge, where one has to reflect upon the transformation of oneself from a passive observer into a knower as an active participant in the constitution of reality, is universal. In the classical natural sciences, where the objectification of a limited set of appearances is complete to such an extent that everything happens as if the objects of knowledge were separate from the act of knowing, such a pattern may seem excessive. In these cases, it is said phenomenologically, the intuitive content of that which is known is nil, because the objects are constituted and hence predicted by means of mathematics. However, the participatory pattern of knowledge becomes decisive in other situations where the phenomenality of objects becomes unattainable in principle, because the intuitive content of that at which knowledge is intended exceeds the possibility of its discursive representation.

Thus considered, the mind-body problem (that is, a transition from experience from first to third person) cannot be "solved" through a purely intellectual operation (through a change in our outward understanding *about* man in the third person) because this problem cannot be considered at the level of "objects." One cannot isolate this problem from lived experience because it is an inherent part of this experience, a part which constitutes indirectly the very phenomenality of this experience. In such a case the "Hard Problem" of the origin of phenomenal consciousness has even less of a chance of being solved. The problem is that no separability between subject and object is possible because phenomenality in first and third person originates from one and the same living being. To approach this problem one then needs a radical change in the appropriation of experience, where the above-mentioned splits in consciousness (reflecting its embodiment) will not be considered as confusing or distorting dualisms of existence, but as constitutive elements of existence. Since experience is not a term in an intellectual scheme among others, but is the lived origin and by-product of any process, including that of knowing, this experience forms the lived background of the intellectual inference (transcendence) intuiting that there is something "beyond" experience. But since the problem of experience itself cannot be confined to a part of this experience, then, to address it properly, there is no other option than to subject the problem to such a "transfiguration," where its dramatic overtones will disappear and experience will be considered as the beginning and the end of any possible justification of knowledge.

In other words, the lived experience is destined to become the existential *alpha* and *omega* of any further articulation and intellectual

constitution of this experience. Repeating our thought, the problem of the split in the lived experience between first and third persons, as well as between mind (soul) and body (flesh), indicates that this experience, as very existence, as life, appears to man as that phenomenon which intuitively exceeds any capacity of being represented discursively. It falls under that class of phenomena which are called *saturated*[11]. Yet, any lived experience breaks down into two focal poles of attention, namely the sensing of the world in the first person (through the primordial perception of belonging to the world (the primordial sense of consubstantiality and epistemological commensurability, for example)) and perception of the world in the third person, mediated by the understanding and reason that guide intellectual processes whose convergence within the variety of objectified living bodies and brains yields parts of the lived experience in reflection. Here one makes a distinction between the *presence* of the lived experience (phenomenality of presence in the person) and its mental or perceptual *structure* (when this very presence is identified in perception as presence in the third person). Objects then are formed as focal points of attention, picked out and stabilized around stable poles of identity (objects) within experience as sheer presence. What can be derived from the intellectual reflection and articulating processes involving human bodies and their brains is by no means this experience as sheer presence (phenomenality of events), but an account of the *structure* of what is experienced as objects (phenomenality of objects) in space and time.

Intuitively, it is clear that in order to outline the stratified hierarchy of experience as a split of phenomenalities in one and the same subject, one needs to look at the whole picture in its intrinsic dynamics. In other words, one must dynamically describe the link between object-centered phenomenality (in the third person) and the subject-centered phenomenality (in the first person) as events, as a mutual and ever branching whole unfolded within the conditions of embodiment in time. If one concentrates on a body as a physical entity, it is positioned and moved in space in the course of time. Correspondingly, an objectivized picture of reality is itself related to such space-time representation of the body. This reality is linked to what is perceived through the body. In the case of the phenomenality of events related to personal existence, the situation is radically different because the sense of this existence as extended is purely subjective. It is within this time-consciousness that the intentional structure of consciousness appears as a movement extended in physical time. Here the internal temporal structure projects itself onto physical space that is "materialized" through the body. The body reveals itself as sheer presence through its intrinsic dynamics in space and time. The split between first and third persons can be described alternatively as the subject-object's self-splitting. The same can be expressed as transcendence towards objects generated within the immanence of the lived experience and revealing a dynamics of inner temporality[12]. Some of these objects, like our own bodies, have an exceptional status. Their object-centered space-time dynamics is correlated with the subject-centered dynamics of reminding, willing and desiring. The living bodies are accordingly endowed with certain forms of circularity: "speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 265), etc. The observed correlations do not prove that the

[11] Saturated phenomena are phenomena that cannot be represented in the phenomenality of objects, that is in rubrics of: quantity, quality, relation and modality. The issue of saturated phenomena concerns the possibility that certain phenomena do not manifest themselves in the mode of objects and yet still do manifest themselves. These phenomena undergo saturation by the excess of intuition over the concept or signification in them; saturated phenomena cannot be constituted because they are saturated. Here such a definition of experience is implied that it cannot be determined by a transcendental subject. On the contrary, it is to the extent that ego cannot comprehend as a phenomenon that constitutes this ego. And it is flesh that reaches nonobjective phenomena, those where an excess of intuition saturates the limits of the concept already known and always foreseen. For example, this flesh attains itself as that split in the "I=I" as self-eroticizing consciousness. Before my own flesh I cannot say I, I cannot constitute it, foresee it and hold it at a distance in front of me. It is the phenomenon saturated with intuition, which makes me. The flesh surpasses my objectifying rationality (Marion 2000).

[12] How this can be achieved is not a subject matter of our discussion. The phenomenology of temporality can provide an insight into this mystery.

object-centered dynamics of our body *cause* the subject-centered dynamics of our lived experience (such a conclusion could arise in the framework of a physicalist ontology that conflates immanent projections of transcendence with real entities and causal factors)[13]. In a phenomenological account, the correlation is understood as a "mirror-like" correspondence between the structure of experience as a whole, and the structure of some of its objectified elements. Yet, the objectified items are *constituted,* by linking through laws, the experience of the present with those experiences which have been memorized. Thus, the correlation itself remains entirely internal to experience. Since no "Hard Problem" of causation between heterogenous entities (such as material brains and immaterial consciousness) is generated by this phenomenological account, it remains purely descriptive, but not explanatory.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty attempted to tackle this problem by introducing an element of temporality in perception when the split of phenomenalities (in first and third persons) happens because of a certain *distension*. Merleau-Ponty pointed out that, from a phenomenological perspective, brain processes are nothing more than perceptual or conceptual "logical meanings" within the lived experience of their observers. By this act of projecting "meanings," by the intentional *distension* it undergoes, the lived experience moves away from itself towards what is meant, and thus it self-splits (Merleau-Ponty, 234). Merleau-Ponty nevertheless insists that there remains a permanent relation between experience and its signified items in the sense that a pattern that is given to me *now* as my lived experience, will be given to myself *a little later* as a logical meaning of my future experience.

The situation with the temporal split of phenomenalities signifying the distinction between representations of the world in first and third persons becomes acutely seen in the paradox of subjectivity understood, for example, in the following way. On the one hand, there is the *man of the world*, who is only concerned with the world and can only be so against the background of his previously conceived essence as being-in-the-world. On the other hand, there is the *man who is not of the world* because he finds himself originally determined in himself by some a-cosmic factors[14]. *The opposition between these two men relates to the phenomenological structures to which they refer.* By using the language established above, human beings deal in this situation with two types of the *given* with different phenomenalities. This situation can be described in terms of the tense-related structures employed for describing the human condition. The immediate experience of existence, when humans position themselves at the center of the reflected existence but not separated from it in their inner time-consciousness, places humanity in a nominative case as that who states this existence in the form "I am" (*ego sum*). In this case co-existence of the universe in which this "I" exists is just implied as a premise and a component of this existence as contingent. In other words, to say "I am" is the same as to say "the universe is," because to say "I=I" is de facto to say, that the self-identity of "I" implies "not-I." However, to say that I exist in the universe as its insignificant part is to say something which is temporally delayed with respect to the nominative statement, delayed because of the reflective nature of this statement, where the reflection as a psychological process is shifted in time with respect to the immediate sense of existence. The opposite statements of the paradox form a seeming tension first of all because they use two different tense-like modi of consciousness. In fact, the paradox becomes

[13] In the framework of phenomenology, the abovementioned correlation remains an uninterpreted basic feature of the continuum of appearances.

[14] Kant calls this a-cosmic factor noumen: "The necessity of nature, which cannot co-exist with the freedom of the subject, appertains only to the attributes of the thing that is subject to time-conditions, consequently only to those of the acting subject as a phenomenon. . . But the very same subject being on the other side conscious of himself as a thing in himself. . . regards himself as only determinable by laws which he gives himself through reason… the whole series of his existence as a sensible being is in the consciousness of his supersensible existence nothing but the result. . . of his causality as a noumenon" (Kant 1959, 191). The famous Russian religious philosopher Nikolas Berdyaev argued for a non-cosmic origin of human personhood: "There are in the personality natural foundation principles which are linked with the cosmic cycle. But the personal in man… always denotes a break with natural necessity… There is nature in man, but he is not nature. Man is a microcosm and therefore he is not part of the cosmos" (Berdyaev 1939, 94–95).

a certain expression of the fact that human beings are capable of formulating complementary statements about their existence through making extension in time by effectively stretching life in time (*distension*) and thus introducing some asymmetry between the statements of the paradox through hierarchy (before and after, primary and secondary) of the tense states of consciousness. This asymmetry has an ontological character because the state of "man of the world" is only possible from within the state of life. Thus, the facticity of life comes first.

But the paradox as such, being preoccupied with the ego's position *in* the world, by extracting this ego out of the primarily given life, gives de facto witness to the radical forgetting of humanity about the primacy of life as that immediate givenness of existence whose facticity escapes any intentional gaze. And if, with respect to the question of why humanity represents a part of the universe, one can respond that it is because of life, the question about the facticity of life (from within which everything is disclosed) cannot be referred to anything prior to this life[15]. Certainly, one can attempt to make a naturalistic inference from the universe to life, but the very assertion of the universe implies the already given life. Thus, the genuinely paradoxical feature of the dichotomy related to humanity's position in being lies in the fundamental unknowability of that life which forms a premise for any articulation of the world. Life as sheer givenness and facticity of existence cannot be conditioned by any particular modus of its manifestation, for example, by that of thinking. Life as the origin is not thinking because it is this origin that is concealed from any posterior reflection, that is, from thinking of it. In this sense one cannot remember that which was "before" life, because for this particular life there was no before: its contingent novelty and uniqueness can be placed in the worldly scheme of things as if they produce this life, but as such, this life, as the life of a particular self, or of an hypostatic being, does not have any trace of its pre-worldly history because life as such, as was expressed by Michel Henry, is forgetting in a radical sense (Henry 2003a, 148).

From what we have discussed it follows that there is an intrinsic inseparability between subject and object whose triviality originates in the fact that life precedes the very distinction between object and subject. Yet, the extent of the interplay between them can be different. For example, when scientists successfully predict the outcome of their research activity, and when the rules of prediction have been formalized into autonomous laws of phenomena, it is usually said that an "explanation" of phenomena has been provided. In classical physics the phenomena to be predicted can be treated as if they were occurring spontaneously in nature. Accordingly, the connecting law between phenomena behaves as if it were autonomous. Yet, there are other cases where, although "phenomena" are correctly predicted to a certain extent, these phenomena are intermingled with the researchers' activity which determines the conditions of their appearance. This is not only related to the famous claims of Quantum mechanics. In a more banal sense, it accompanies many theoretical disciplines which function under conditions where their constructs (as products of the intellect) cannot be subjected to the rules of correspondence with empirical realities. Cosmology is an obvious example with respect to its theories about the wholeness of the universe as well as about its origination. The high level of "participation" in constituting the corresponding "realities" is associated with the fact that they are introduced into theory on the grounds of intentionality but not on the grounds of physical causality. Intentionality is that which forms the basis of conscious cognition and hence involves associated ideas and philosophical intuitions not directly borrowed from sensible experience.

Apart from examples from physics and cosmology, the very science of consciousness,

[15] Michel Henry emphatically expresses this by saying: " Life is given in its own way, in a completely unique way, even though this singular mode of givenness is universal. Life is given in such a way, that what it gives is given to itself and that what it gives to itself is never separated from it, not in the least. In this way, what life gives is itself. Life is self-givenness in a radical and rigorous sense, in the sense that it is both life that gives and life that is given. Because it is life that gives, we can only have a share of this gift in life. Because life is what is given in this gift, we can only have access to life in life" (Henry 2008, 120).

that is, of self-knowledge, implies an even higher level of participation. In this case "predictions" cannot be made autonomous with respect to the activity of the one who predicts: predictions are based on intentional acts and do not lead to any formal invariant residue that can be called a "law" (as based on causality). As a consequence, one cannot "explain" the neuro-experiential correlation in the standard sense of considering it as an expression of some causal law-like succession (neither of a physical nor of a psycho-physical law). Indeed, one cannot predict the neural correlate of a type of experience *a priori*, before its conditions have ever been observed. One cannot predict a correlation between the internal sense of the universe as an all-encompassing experience and that which will become its abstraction before the actual intentional activity starts. Thus, building abstract models of the universe is a creative process based in the human propensity of looking for some systematic unity of nature; yet there is no evidence for any objective reference to these models apart from the human intentional consciousness itself. One can "explain" the neuro-experiential correlation in the sense of new possibilities of intuition and scientific investigation *un-folding* in us that this correlation opens, thus unfolding new possibilities of self-knowledge through an intentional construction of the whole[16].

Such an "alternative" meaning of "explanation" as an intentional construction can no longer mean encapsulating phenomena within a rule of succession that is posited once and for all, and then considering the phenomena and their law from a distance. Instead, explaining here means participating in the production, prediction and disciplining of phenomena. Saying phenomenologically, explaining, means constituting, that is, in a way, co-creating that phenomenality of things which has not been there before. The knower becomes here an informed actor in the connection between the two types of phenomenality in the representation of reality, as opposed to a spectator of one fixed (in the natural attitude) regularity. Yet, even in this phenomenologically extended approach to how consciousness participates in constituting its reality, the Hard Problem of Consciousness can find no solution. However, there is a methodological remedy to it consisting in making the "Hard Problem" not a false mystery fabricated by our naturalistic prejudice, but the constitutive characteristic of the human constitution. Even if the "Hard Problem" is a *constitutive illusion*, this illusion must have a foundation in its own facticity as an element of the overall existence of humanity as the self-affective life of self-conscious flesh. In a way, all possible philosophical efforts to disclose this problem as the problem of existence of such flesh lead one to the final frontier where one has to invoke an idea that worldly flesh is suspended in something which is not entirely comprehensible from within it. The assumption of such a suspension is tantamount to the already mentioned theological idea of creation as linking the immanent aspect of the world to that which transcends it. Either this is the creation of *Imago Dei* as a hypostatic unity of body and flesh, or the creation of *flesh* (distinguished from the body) defined as the initial coordination of the material and intelligible in human beings. Yet, the hypostatic dimension of this flesh remains the ultimate mystery allowing one the only possible theological *analogy*, namely that one of the hypostatic Christ incarnate in the worldly flesh of Jesus from Nazareth. This analogy is historical and theological and, as such, non-descriptive. Yet, the historical reference (realized in liturgical actions) to the hypostatic union of the Divine and human reifies the intuition of creation of the human composite in the perspective of the Incarnation; in other words the reference to the creation becomes more concrete through its incarnational facticity.

If one abstains from assigning any ontological sense to such a theological insight, the invoked theological "solution" of the Hard Problem seems to be no more than another contribution to its unending (and non-descriptive) hermeneutics. This observation can be radicalized and reduced to the statement that the very

[16] In different terms, the neural-experiential correlation represents such a practical synthesis of the person who is at once an existent (in the rubrics of the worldly) and an end (the goal for the worldly realm to be articulated by humanity). It is that which realizes the scale of disproportion with the universe (expressed in the paradox of subjectivity) and thus the original fragility of the human reality (see Ricoeur 2016, 197).

presence of this problem in the background of life indicates that it is constitutive to this particular life but not explicable in discursive terms. In other words, the Hard Problem is such an inevitability which saturates intuition to the extent such that no detailed fragment of this intuition is available. The lived experience as experience in the first person is that which cannot be "looked" at in the phenomenality of objects. This experience is rather an event, or *the* event, related to every concrete human being, that event which inaugurates not only all other types of phenomenality, but human life as such. Life can then be treated as an unceasing temporal distension in the embodied man when the existence in time implies the split of phenomenalities into first and third persons.

The "Hard Problem of Consciousness" as seen through the split between the universe's saturated phenomenality and its object-like constitution

In spite of the fact that the "Hard Problem of Consciousness" seems to be irresolvable in a mundane sense of the word[17], it can nonetheless be explained through the application of human faculties to the study of the outer world when the sense of reality in the first person encounters a tension with the sense of the same reality in the third person. This is acutely illustrated in the paradox of subjectivity as a reflection upon the dualistic position of humanity in the universe: its sense of existence in the first person when the universe as a whole is enhypostasized as commensurable with the scope of consciousness, "clashes" with the articulated sense of the physical insignificance of that one who enhypostasizes it.

Human transcendental subjectivity experiences a disjunction between the phenomenon of the universe expected to appear in the manner of ordinary objects and the ego's subjective experience of the universe through the sheer belonging to it in the event of life. Consequently, the ego cannot constitute the universe as an "object" whose concept would agree with the conditions of experience of the universe through the ecstatic reference of standing in front of it. One has here the intuitive saturation through belonging to the universe which imposes itself by excess and which makes this universe present, but *invisible* (not technically) and incomprehensible. The universe engulfs the ego's intuition to such an extent that any attempt of constituting the universe is suspended. In the same manner is the universe *visible* in its particular parts and moments but, as a whole, it cannot be *looked at.* Human subjectivity finds itself in the conditions of being split between its finite physical embodiment and the intellectually all-encompassing synthesis of the universe. On the one hand, the universe enters subjectivity as a variety of objects where the human body is one among them, on the other hand, it appears as an event commensurable with an event of a concrete *personal* existence whose facticity is not entirely in the causal link with the antecedent physical circumstances. What then is that in the intentional pole of consciousness which makes the initially personal sense of the universe (in the person) converted into that which can be approached by all men in the third person? One can rephrase the latter by posing a question of how the superabundant phenomenality of the universe as it is available in the first person transforms into that practically intuition-free content of the universe which is comprised of objects. Can then a response to this question provide another explanation to the Hard Problem of Consciousness?

In fact, the Hard Problem can be interpreted as an attempt to balance two different *phenomenalities* in this very consciousness. On the one hand, it deals with events of communion (events of living) with the universe (where the universe cannot be constituted because of its saturating intuition). This always happens in the first person. One can say, paradoxically, that the phenomenon of the universe is revealed in the first person and hence it is this person that "initiates its phenomenality" as a saturated phenomenon in spite of the fact that this phenomenon produces itself out of itself. It is in the first person that the saturated phenomenon

[17] The classical attempt of thought to grasp its own roots and close itself inside of a hermetically sealed sphere of immanence in which only apodictic truths can present themselves, necessarily fails. One can neither stand outside of the world to make it an object of our perception, nor can we stand outside of ourselves.

is perceived as immediately given and inseparable, but not constituted through a logical function. In other words, the lived experience remains the primordial condition and "milieu" for the very qualification of some phenomena as saturated. In this sense one may conjecture that what is called "lived experience" appears always in the context of the saturated phenomenon of the universe. Thus, this lived experience as such, in its initially non-split presence with the universe, forms the saturating phenomenality of life itself.

On the other hand, the universe, containing the human body that forms the necessary condition of the very possibility of reflection upon the universe, appears as a space-time manifold of extended objects. The issue is how to balance the experiential sense of the universe as a whole, as an *event-like* saturated phenomenon co-inherent with the event of life and encompassed by the first person, with that representation of the universe in the third person, which seems to be a system of constituted *objects* (as is the case in the sciences), including human bodies.

Science and philosophy deal with the universe as a system of extended objects without being able to grasp the sense of their contingent facticity. Then through understanding that this vision of the universe is ultimately produced within the lived experience, the same consciousness poses a question about the facticity of life as such. The same can be expressed differently. What is common to both phenomenalities of life is that one cannot account for the foundation of their contingent facticity. In both cases consciousness manifests its own incapacity of dealing with the non-originary oblivion of its own origins, and hence the origins of the universe. Here theology enters the discussion by referring to the very contingency of life as originating in Divine Life understood phenomenologically as non-originary origin of its own self-affectivity and of all in the world.

The importance of a theological insight in the constitution of the universe could be dismissed if cosmology would be able to provide some clues to humanity's origin and position in the physical universe. Unfortunately, this does not happen. Not being able to understand "where from" (or "how") human intelligence was brought into existence (that is, to understand the *sufficient* conditions of their creation), the fact of existence remains for man himself fundamentally indeterminate (the same is related to consciousness). The planet, the galaxy, the cluster of galaxies, and the entire universe carry with themselves the sense of this created indeterminateness, making humanity not to be able to adapt to, and to be at home in the universe. An attempt of balancing between a theological sense of existence as engulfed by the universe because of being created into it, on the one hand, and a perception of the insignificant cosmographic position in the practically infinite universe, on the other, constitutes another dimension of the dialogue between theology and science. In analogy with Jean-Francois Lyotard (1991, 4), the meeting with the world as belonging to it can be described as a return to the condition of infancy, for as infants, humans are helplessly exposed to a strange and overwhelming environment while lacking the ability to articulate what affects them. The universe-as-saturated-phenomenon poses itself to the human "I" in primacy of its consubstantiality with this "I" (within its Earthly flesh) as a constitutive element of the principle of human life.

When the universe is represented in cosmology as unfolding through the cinematographic sequence of events and places, different objects and their classes, the body of humanity as its planet becomes eidetically deprived of its initial egocentric predisposition to the universe by being displaced to the periphery of space, time, physical scales, etc. The planet Earth is displaced to a mediocre position and hence not attuned to be the home-place for man. This condition of non-attunement to the universe signifies a gap between the incarnate sensibility chaining humanity to Earth and impossibility of a mental articulation and linguistic expressibility in situations when human beings encounter the universe as a saturated phenomenon. To wrestle with the universe as a saturated phenomenon is to be in despair of chasing its escaping presence that constantly reminds the "I" about the unclarified nature of its own created finitude. The "I," being unable

to constitute the phenomenon of the universe as a whole, experiences itself as being constituted by this phenomenon in the first person: this is that modus of the self-affectivity of human life which "manifests" the fact that all human beings as living creatures are affected by the universe.

By belonging to the universe, the "I" does not have (it simply cannot have) any dominant point of view over the universe as a whole. The universe engulfs subjectivity by removing its parts and spatial extension thus saturating "I's" intuition with the sense of being hypostatically coextensive with the universe. In a temporal sense, the universe is always already there, so that all events of subjective life unfold from within the donating event of the universe as a constant coming into being. There the unforeseeable nature of every consequent moment entails the unending historicity and unpredictability of existence. In a spatial sense, the concrete factuality of the event of appearance of this "I's" life, or human life in general (phenomenologically hidden from humanity's comprehension), gives the position of human life in the universe no place in an absolute metaphysical sense. Its "place" "is" its sheer facticity, so that any cosmological reduction of the human place in the universe to a particular position in the mathematically constituted space reduces the universe's phenomenality to that of an object. But in the primary experience of existence as life of Life, the universe is not "an" object, but a saturated phenomenon coextensive with the fact of living, whose phenomenality in the first person can be described in terms of the invisible according to quantity, unbearable according quality, unconditioned according to relation and irreducible to the "I" according to modality (Marion 2000, 211).

In the natural (scientific) attitude (that is, in the person), the universe as a whole is posited as existing out there, that is, as being transcendent to the field of consciousness. Yet, the status of its objective reality is not clarified unless the universe appears as a result of an intellectual constitution. Then the very representation of the universe as transcendent to the constituting consciousness is achieved through following an inherent *teleology* of explanation (and hence constitution) that characterizes the activity of consciousness. Hence, no objective meaning can be assigned to the universe introduced as a regulative idea formed through a teleological power of reflecting judgment (in a Kantian sense)[18]. The universe as a whole emerges here as a regulative notion with no pretense for an accomplished theoretical (ontological) status[19]. Being a regulative notion, the universe as a

[18] On the teleology of explanation in cosmology see (Nesteruk, 2015, ch. 6). The notion of reflecting judgment is important in order to understand why and how cosmological claims about the universe as a whole can be justified in terms of the human cognitive faculties. Since the Kantian analysis of the notion of the world as a whole in Critique of Pure Reason proves this notion to be problematic, the question arises as to where this notion comes from. In other words, what is that faculty which allows one to consider the notion of the universe as a whole as valid, although as collectively subjective? For this purpose one needs to appeal to the faculty of judgment, which is a matter of Kant's Critique of Judgment. Kant distinguishes between two types of judgment which he calls determining and reflecting. In determining judgment, one applies a particular concept to intuition: one starts with a given universal (which can be a rule, principle, law, or concept), and the task is to find a particular that falls under the universal. In a reflecting judgment one creates a new empirical concept to capture common features of different intuitions. The reflecting use of judgment begins with the awareness of a particular object, or objects, and the task is to find or create a universal under which to subsume the particular object or objects. For example, observational cosmology deals with stars, galaxies, their clusters, microwave background radiation, etc. Theoretical cosmology attempts to "find" or to create a universal under which to subsume all these observable objects. This universal is the universe as a whole. But this universal is not that which can be subjected to the determining judgment. If one deals with the scientific cosmology attempting to construct the notion of the universe as a whole, one needs a particular idea of the systematicity of nature which enters the structure of the constitution on the level of reflecting judgment. However, a judgment about the universe as a whole involves judging the "object" to be formally purposeful, that is, without the representation of an objective end or purpose in its construction. That is, in such a reflecting judgment, one judges the "object" (the universe as a whole) to be purposeful without purpose, that is to be only formally purposeful in order to conduct cosmological research, understanding in advance that its purpose, that is, the notion of the universe as a whole will never be achieved. In claiming that in a judgment of the universe as a whole the "object" is represented as purposive without purpose, one means that the object is regarded as objectively without purpose, but it is regarded as subjectively purposeful.

[19] The existing mathematical models of the universe do not substantially challenge our claim because they are also constructed on the basis of human abilities to have access to eidetic worlds which in no way can become theoretical concepts.

whole becomes a characteristic of consciousness as such, so that its hypothetical *reduction* (phenomenological reduction) would amount to the suspension of consciousness itself, that is, to its effective cessation. Since consciousness exists in the universe so that the universe is intrinsically present in this consciousness as communion, the universe cannot be cut off from this communion in any other way than in abstraction. One cannot suspend the reality of the *universe as communion* by using this consciousness because by insisting on such a suspension, this consciousness effectively denies itself as embodied existence and hence eliminates itself[20]. The impossibility of the phenomenological reduction of the universe as a whole points to a simple fact that the representation of the universe as transcendent to consciousness (that is, in the third person) can acquire no ontological quality, remaining "transcendent" only as an element of the immanent teleology of consciousness. And here phenomenology leads us back to treating the universe within the rubrics of saturated phenomena: to place the universe under saturated phenomena is tantamount to asserting that the universe defines an inherent teleology of its explication which cascades down to the human attempt to achieve self-comprehensibility. The universe as living communion in the first person remains that saturated phenomenon with respect to which the teleology of explanation acts through the universe's open-ended hermeneutics in the third person.

Phenomenology rightly suggests dismissing the intellectual idols of the universe (through the suspension of their realistic interpretation) as pretending to exhaust the reality of the universe as communion: any discursive image of the universe remains never accomplished and thus is incomplete. The universe is present in the background of existence through relationship and communion in such a way that allows one to express this presence ecstatically through music, painting, poetry, and the like. However, this experience cannot be conceptualized or expressed in the definitions of physics and mathematics. In fact, one can say that the very suspension of conceptual idols of the universe is possible only because their resulting conceptual absence is balanced by the reality of its concrete presence, manifested in the very possibility of thinking about the universe. The implicit *presence* of the created universe in all acts of the incarnate human subjectivity cannot be phenomenologically reduced because, if so, the incarnate consciousness itself would be bracketed away and hence eliminated. Obviously, this would lead to a sheer existential contradiction.

Thus, we see with a new force that the tension between the worldly experience in first and third persons (lying at the foundation of the dialogue between theology and science) deals with two complementary phenomenalities of the universe which, by the fact of their origin in one and the same human being, have to be in a constant critical attitude to each other. They must determine the sphere of their legitimate application with no claims for the priority of one with respect to another, and even less with a presumptive refusal to overcome their difference. The universe as saturated phenomenon enters the proper givens of theology because of being commensurable with human life by the fact of their creation by God. Scientific cosmology, by dealing with the universe as the constituted world of physical objects, joins a hermeneutics of the human condition by inserting into the latter the hermeneutics of the universe (outlining the necessary conditions for humanity's existence as well as for the very possibility of this hermeneutics). One can say that the ongoing inquiry into the sense of the unity of matter and consciousness forms an endless intertwining hermeneutics of experience of living in the universe as communion (and a saturated phenomenon), as well as an outward constitution of the universe as extended space and time in cosmology. Such an operation of phenomenologically dualistic human subjectivity contributes to the hermeneutics of the human condition in general and points to the irreducible and primordial facticity of the

[20] Merleau-Ponty wrote: "We might say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself—or that the world is at the heart of our flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 136). In our context, the universe appears as a mirror of man's existence (compare with Fig. 2), and likewise, man mirrors the world (being its center of disclosure and manifestation).

flesh as a materialized consciousness and spiritualized matter.

Conclusion

The major difficulty of dealing with the Hard Problem of Consciousness, or the problem of mind and body, is the fundamental unknowability of man by himself. Theology makes an ontological claim of *Imago Dei*, that is, that man is created in the Image of God. Thus, the Hard Problem of Consciousness has ontological overtones relating humanity to God through the idea of the Image. Then the riddle of humanity, its ultimate mystery, is referred to the teaching on creation of the world and man out of nothing. In a way, the Hard Problem of Consciousness becomes a different form of expression of that which is radically unknowable: creation of man by God out of nothing. This observation entails that if *creatio ex nihilo* is invoked in the context of the Hard Problem of Consciousness as a reference point, this problem acquires some theological dimension and can only be interpreted non-descriptively.

Then the question remains: what kind of ontology is needed to preserve the integrity of human beings as part of the natural world, as well as the integrity of the natural world in the presence of human existence? One might suggest the following answer: one needs a creational ontology that understands the world as *flesh*, created with intrinsic structures and with the power to unfold, to produce and to bring forth, a being constantly becoming, in which the human is a particularly rich intertwined pattern – a being woven in the prison of the flesh by a productive power made and sustained by God the Creator. Such a world has its integrity precisely as creation *and* that which creates; and human beings are precisely integral parts of this creation, of which they are also co-creators. All these metaphysical statements imply that there is a creative principle of self-affective Life that is in the foundation of all. And it is in the manifestations of this Life that humanity detects its own hard problems related to understanding what humanity is and related to the sense of its existence. By asking why life in men acts in that way as it does, by generating that consciousness which interrogates itself about its own functioning duality in the world, man manifests in himself this life and implicitly answers the Hard Question: his consciousness is split in itself and is capable of inquiring into the facticity of this split because it is this propensity that forms the essence of his life.

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