Graham Harman: Your new book *Indexicalism* has already created a lot of excitement, including a wonderful online book launch conference, the likes of which I have never seen before.[i] Could you start by explaining to a newcomer what "indexicalism" means?

Hilan Bensusan: Indexicalism is the idea that the world is ultimately best described in terms of indexical expressions like 'here', 'you', 'now', 'outside', 'same' or 'other'. Substantive descriptions like 'water', 'trees', 'the planet Venus', 'the year 2021' or 'the German population' are appropriate to think things through only to the extent that they harbor implicit indexicality – this is to say, they abbreviate indexical expressions, like 'that drinkable stuff that fills this and that lake and this and that bottle', 'those green things on the surface of this planet', 'the morning star and the evening star', 'this year' or 'those who live between this and that borders'. Indexical expressions provoke vertigo because they are thoroughly situated; to claim that they are what best does justice to the furniture of the universe is to be on the verge of paradoxes related to ideas of a general view or of totality that are commonplace in metaphysics. As a metaphysics, indexicalism is, therefore, a strange, non-standard one – it is paradoxical because it can also be seen as a critique of metaphysics if metaphysics aims at a general, substantive view of how things are. It yields a situated metaphysics where the position one is in cannot be disregarded or thrown out of the picture.

In general, our talk about things assumes that they can be made known or understandable no matter where one is. It is as if they can be made transparent from any perspective which often amounts to holding that they are viewed from nowhere. In contrast, we often hear the idea that truth about things is relative to beliefs, concepts, vocabularies or states of mind of the beholder. Indexicalism departs from both approaches: things cannot be viewed from nowhere – because they are situated – and they are not subjective. Rather, they are positioned and can be viewed only from a point of view. Still, that point of view is precisely what affords elements like 'outside' or 'other'; there is always an 'exterior' to a point of view shaped by indexicals. The exterior is what lies outside the scope of a situated account of what there is. This outdoors is fully indexical and, as such, transcends the positioned description that can be provided to anything. According to indexicalism, no (situated) account can be entirely immune to this outdoors.

Indexicalism bites the bullet of a paradoxical view – indeed it is a paradoxico-metaphysics in the sense developed by Jon Cogburn – because it addresses the other as other.[ii] In other words, the price in paradox is paid because it is a way to make sure that the right to opacity of the other is not going to be trespassed by the effort to make everything fully transparent. To take seriously the others –an effort that was championed by Emmanuel Levinas' departure from Edmund Husserl's (monadological) approach to the other as an alter ego, as a 'me' who is somewhere else– is to understand that the effort to know things is intrinsically bound by the responsibilities they command.[iii] This boundedness emerges from the very nature of the other as other. To describe the world as having others (and an outside, exterior, etc.) is to admit opacity into the picture of how are things in general: the effort of making things transparent is bounded when others as others appear in the picture. Indexicalism thus entails a 'metaphysics of the others' that expands the gesture of Levinas beyond the limits of the human other.

The metaphysics of the others holds that any metaphysical endeavor ought to tackle the opacity that appears when a general view of things is pursued. In that sense, it is similar to your [Graham Harman's] object-oriented ontology.[iv] There too, there is a real object that is intrinsically withdrawn, oblivious to view. Indexicalism and the metaphysics of the others postulate that this blind spot is not inside things but outside them, in what is other to them and escapes them. Still, the similarities are interesting to explore, and some of them are considered in the book. The most striking one for me is that in both cases metaphysics –and, consequently, any enterprise to make things transparent– encounters its limits from within.

Graham Harman: In some sense, your book is an attempt to bring together the cosmological impulses of Alfred North Whitehead with the ethical focus of Emmanuel Levinas. I would like to ask about both of them. Whitehead is one of the most imaginative metaphysicians of all time, yet A.W. Moore's fine 2014 book *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics* –which does such a fine job of including both analytic and continental figures– does not even include a chapter on Whitehead.[v] What do you make of this?

Hilan Bensusan: Yes, the book can be understood as a way to bring Whitehead and Levinas together. Whitehead's philosophy is full of fruitful ideas and refreshing approaches and in this sense is a source for a lot of what is happening in many corners of contemporary thought.[vi] I often make the same remark about Moore's book: not a single mention of Whitehead apart from a reference to Russell and Whitehead's *Principia* in a footnote. Interestingly, the footnote is in a chapter on Gilles Deleuze which is called "something completely different." And, well, I consider that Deleuze, original and inspiring though he is, wouldn't sound so utterly different if we took into account how much he inherited from Whitehead. I consider Whitehead, indeed, as a central source for Deleuze's projects –from transcendental empiricism to the concreteness of becomings– even if Deleuze doesn't acknowledge this often enough. Moore perhaps thinks it is enough to cover Henri Bergson, who is also a great influence on Deleuze. But it seems to me that there is too much left in the mist in Deleuze if his affiliation to ideas rehearsed by Whitehead is not brought to the fore. (Incidentally, Levinas is also only mentioned in Moore's book in a footnote, in the chapter about Derrida– who I also think it is hard to understand if his connection to Levinas is not explored.)

Drawing on Levinas and Whitehead –and indirectly on Derrida and Deleuze– *Indexicalism* is an attempt to find a transcendence that is not attached to hierarchical thinking in an overall immanent image of the world that could be expressed in terms of what Whitehead calls process. The fertility of Whitehead's philosophy is such that it can be suitably adapted to provide a framework for what I call the metaphysics of the others. Some of his notions are crucial for the reading of Levinas that I rehearse, as it enables a fierce rejection of different forms of human exceptionalism. In a sense, Whitehead provides an account of experience – connected to his idea that perception is ubiquitous and more so than relations– that suits the expansion of Levinas' ideas that *Indexicalism* aims to offer. The phenomenology of encountering others can be placed in a context where interruption is understood as a break in

one's concrescence or one's nexus: a break that Whitehead's commitment to immanence is arguably unable to postulate. The metaphysics of the others claims that any agenda is hostage to a transcending outdoors that cannot be fully encompassed by a more overarching nexus.

Among the central Whiteheadian notions that are at play in *Indexicalism*, two are worth mentioning. The first is that of *locus standi*, or standing location. Whitehead claims that any measurement is relative to a standing location: it is only from one's location that it becomes clear how best to measure anything. Measurement is not location-independent, but is not a mere convention either. I believe many of our judgments on how things are –including the validity of arguments– can be approached in terms of measurement and, as a consequence, are relative not to any arbitrary or subjective decision, but to a standing location. The move is not alien to what Karen Barad recommends in her attempts to bring back elements of Niels Bohr's approach to measuring instruments.[vii] Barad also makes clear that measurement is neither a sovereign construction nor something that can be done from nowhere. This idea of a standing location is a crucial ingredient of the indexicalist mix.

The second notion is that of importance, which is itself attached to that of a lure for feeling. Experience is intrinsically connected to importance, to what matters for the perceiving agent: according to Whitehead this is what makes an isolated, non-coordinated fact impossible to be perceived or understood,. Yet, the matrix of importance changes. Theories, films, dialogues pave the way to feelings that weren't there before, precisely because they affect the matrix of what matters and what doesn't. The book proposes a concept of perception as hospitality that perhaps couldn't get off the ground without the idea that *sensibilia* are themselves modulated by what is encountered. These two notions –those of *locus standi* and of importance– illustrate how fertile Whitehead's philosophical toolbox is. *Indexicalism* employs them to advance a project that is, in some sense, quite different from that of Whitehead himself.

Graham Harman: As for Levinas, I enjoy your treatment of his notion of otherness. But I couldn't help noticing that in your new book you don't really engage with Derrida's classic critique of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics," even though you obviously have a high regard for Derrida.[viii] How would you explain this gap in your book?

Hilan Bensusan: Steven Shaviro made an interesting remark in his paper in the book symposium launching *Indexicalism*. He portrays "Violence and metaphysics" as saying that Levinas cannot say, in philosophy, what he attempted to say. This is why Derrida puts so much effort into separating the Greek heirs Husserl and Heidegger from Levinas, who appears as a stranger who speaks the language of philosophy with an accent. Shaviro notices that Derrida eventually found out that there is something about stretching the language to say what it cannot say. Indeed, Levinas himself was aware of these limitations, if we think his point of departure was close to that of Franz Rosenzweig, who thought he could not express what was personally relevant within the limits of philosophy and took this as a reason to stay away from it.[ix] Levinas' venture into philosophy is not a tranquil one: he knows he risks paradoxes and other impossibilities throughout his journey. Still, he thinks it is worth stretching the capacities

of philosophy to make room for the ability to sanctity: for the impact of responsibility in the quest for truth, and for a notion of justice that cannot be grounded in one's freedom.

I take Derrida to have been very much under the influence of Levinas. even though their dialogue is more apparent at some times than others. Ideas such as that of the "trace" as opposed to full presence, of a past that has never been present, of an aporetic justice that is urgent and not subject to deconstruction, are key points that reflect that influence. This influence was mutual and ongoing, and there is a lot of what Derrida published in the late 1960s present in Levinas' 1974 book *Otherwise Than Being*.[x] The distinction between the 'saying' and the 'said,' and the thesis that the former cannot be reduced to the latter –which are the opening gestures of Levinas in the book–arguably constitute a framework through which the efforts of deconstruction can be understood. Simon Critchley, Jalal Badleh, Gérard Bensussan, Fernanda Bernardo and Gabriela Lafetá, who also attended the book symposium, (among others) have shown that it is very difficult to understand Derrida if his thought is not considered as a conversation with Levinas. This conversation had many moments, and "Violence and metaphysics" –a text from the mid-1960s– is one of them. As far as I know, it is not a text with which Levinas engaged very much. It remains an interesting appreciation, of the friction between Levinas and Husserl, but is by no means the last word in their interaction.

In *Indexicalism* I refer directly to Derrida at several points. In one of them I consider Derrida's last seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, where the poem "Snake" by D. H. Lawrence is introduced in a discussion of Levinas' connection between the other and the face.[xi] Derrida never attached that much importance to the face; likewise, I don't engage with the notion in my attempt to expand on Levinas' approach to otherness in the book. Whereas Silvia Benso tries to extend Levinas' approach to the other beyond the human by bridging Levinas and Heidegger's remarks on the thing through the notion of the face (and presentation, appearance, unveiling, etc.), I introduced otherness in the context of perception, where faces are not a dominant element.[xii] Rather, I picture perception as a place where responsibilities can appear from any other place; in perception, our accounts of things are always hostage to something that is added and that can destabilize them. Perception entails a host of interruptions. This addition that the senses provide is an opening to the others, and can be understood in terms of what Derrida calls the logic of the supplement. The supplement is neither mere completion nor continuity; rather, it renders insufficent that which previously seemed to be complete. The non-monotonicity of perception makes it an encounter with the others, and although this commands responsibility, perception is hardly limited to responding to faces.

Graham Harman: There's another question about Levinas that I want to ask. He is most famous as a philosopher of infinite otherness or "alterity". You too are interested in this problem, since "the metaphysics of the others" is one of your key concepts. Yet there is another side of Levinas, in some respects the oppositeone, which has to do with the sheer enjoyment of the surface of the world, which he terms the "hither side" of being. This second

Levinas of enjoyment is not really the Levinas on whom you focus, but I wonder if there is anything worth taking from him.

Hilan Bensusan: Tom Sparrow, in the essays collected in *Levinas Unhinged,* explores some unusual sides of Levinas' writings and shows how much there is to be explored there.[xiii] I find Levinas' early book *On Escape* (*De l'évasion*) a very interesting source to think about desire, seduction and the haunting of what is outside of being on us.[xiv] Further, he addresses there his misgivings with Bergson and, from my perspective, makes clear a connection with Deleuze's (and Guattari's) notion of the line of fugue – especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*.[xv] That urge to escape, together with the impact of the others in my proximity over my thinking and acting, offers an image of horror and repulsion towards being that is crucial in the drive away from one's own existence. Being is not insufficient because it is finite or limited, but precisely because it is what it is; there is boredom towards the sameness of existence that triggers a curiosity and an opening to what is otherwise.

Yet I don't think these two sides of Levinas are utterly disconnected. I find it tempting to relate Levinas' picture of an unsatisfying existence seduced by what is outside and haunted by the Other with the philosophical project of Fabián Ludueña (in his five-volume *La Comunidad de los Espectros*).[xvi] Levinas takes the metaphysical desire, in the terms he uses in *Totality and Infinity*, to be driven by an attraction towards the Other. The metaphysical desire cannot be quenched by an ontology that will simply provide more being, or more reduction of what is other to the same, as he states at the beginning of the book. The metaphysical desire is what drives one away from (her own) being and towards an unknown that is somehow sensed in one's skin. Ludueña's speculative disjunctology pictures two poles, one of less than fully present bodies and another of images and specters that haunt them as desires do. This shows that the insufficiency of the body is not enough either to dismiss it or to dismiss anything else. The two poles –in some sense equivalent to the sensible and the intelligible– are in constant connection with each other, separate but not fully independent. Analogously, I am separated from the Other in Levinas but also hostage to her traces. There is no symmetrical relation and no full-blown commerce, as in Ludueña's two poles where the bodies crave images and are haunted by specters.

The phenomenology of substitution, the experience of being another, is something complex and terrifying where proximity, evasion and otherness are brought together. Levinas understood the somber side of sanctity. Even though *Indexicalism* doesn't dwell on the agonies of this phenomenology, it hints at the issue by bringing paradox to center stage. Much of that phenomenology has to do with interruption and the subsequent paradox of freedom that ends up discovering responsibility and canceling freedo – but this is a paradox that is lived through. As a consequence, sensibility is engaged in the demands of the Other and proximity is constitutive of the very space where enjoyment is possible. *Indexicalism,* with its rejection of the neutral substantive 'human' as a way of predicating the Other*,* takes this relation between fruition and interruption further as they intertwine in paradoxical ways –like freedom and responsibility– and thoroughly situated.

Graham Harman: Let's turn now to your relation with a relevant analytic philosopher, Saul Kripke. In recent decades Kripke has even been somewhat widely read among continental philosophers for his employment of "direct reference" by means of proper names or rigid designators.[xvii] What do you take from Kripke, and what do you reject or at least modify?

Hilamn Bensusan: The idea of direct reference has always appeared to me as compelling, or at least enlightening. To me, the central element of Kripke's way of approaching the relation between thought and its content is the idea that fixing a reference is to be distinguished from satisfying a description or stating a necessary (*a priori*) truth. There is a linguistic contact that is made between 'cat,' say, and its referent no matter whether cats are animals or robots. Through this linguistic contact, an expression is like a photo (in Gareth Evans' apt metaphor), for it matters little what the image looks like– Yeltsin could look like Trump in a photo, but it is still a photo of Yeltsin.[xviii] Interestingly, contact through direct reference circumvents not only description but any kind of representational cognition. This is the great move made by Kripke: he doesn't need to commit to any dodgy epistemological notions such as 'acquaintance'; direct reference is not an epistemological item. As a consequence, reference can be thought of as (relatively) independent of epistemology, as Howard Wettstein often insisted, and semantic content is no longer to be thought as in the head.[xix] Externalism is an interesting idea brought forward by direct reference and has a salient family resemblance with externalism towards cognitive justification. The idea that semantic properties are part of the furniture of the universe through linguistic contact and epistemic properties pave sthe way to new forms of realism.

Indexicalism draws from the work of David Kaplan and John Perry about demonstratives and essential indexicals.[xx] Kaplan understands a demonstrative to refer directly to an object in the world through its character, which is resolved into its content (the object) through context. Perry argues that this semantic story undermines the indexical poison carried by demonstratives: they cannot be resolved into (substantive) individuals. Perry argues that language and thought are far more implicitly indexical than it is ordinarily assumed. My own theory of indexicalism takes this a step further to argue that reality itself is implicitly indexical. We can formulate this theory by saying that by fixing a reference one points at something (let's call it an 'address') and that is the ultimate furniture of the universe. That is, the world is composed of addresses that are directly referred to and that are independent of whether cats are robots or animals. The idea of a direct reference to an address ensures that indexicalism is thoroughly externalist and realist.

Kripke would favor an approach to complex demonstratives like 'this table', entailing that in a different world this table could be broken, could be painted with a different color, and could have been cut in a different shape, but to be *this* table it has to share the same (substantive) origin. Kripke's account is far from indexicalism, in the sense that he seems to favor something like a (substantive) essence that ensured that this table was not made of different material in any possible world. Indexicalism would rather bring together Kripke's notion of possible worlds

(and the possibility of trans-world identity) and an account of direct reference where addresses are the protagonists. In this sense, my theory expands Kripke's views on direct reference with the help of Kaplan's logic of demonstratives and Perry's implicit indexicality. It goes further by assuming that reference-fixing is a path to a complex realism about deixis.

In any case, direct reference posits that *denotata* are more than whatever any description of them can provide. In that sense, it can be directly compared with Levinas' insistence that the Other cannot be fully encapsulated by descriptions. Clearly, there are important differences between Levinas' resistance to encompassing descriptions and the issues around direct reference. However, there is a common gesture that affirms what is exterior and attempts to do justice to what is unreachable by descriptions.

Graham Harman: A great deal of modern philosophy, I would even say most of it, begins with a duality of human thought on one side and a world outside thought on the other, which I like to call "onto-taxonomy."[xxi] A great deal of time is spent debating whether it is easy or difficult for thought to gain access to the world, and if it is difficult, then how exactly we go about doing it. By contrast, you jump straight to a meditation on the world itself, in a way that often reminds me of Whitehead more than any other philosopher since Kant. But how would you deal with the threat of an "enclosure paradox," to use the term Jon Cogburn draws from the work of Graham Priest?[xxii] In other words, what do you say in response to someone who claims that indexicalism cannot get beyond the subjective standpoint and therefore simply remains another form of what Meillassoux calls "correlationism"?[xxiii]

Hilan Bensusan: Correlationism can be portrayed as an anti-realism, or perhaps merely as a skepticism, about the Great Outdoors. In thinking or merely in knowing, we are confined,to our correlations with what is out there and cannot reach what is absolute. Indexicalism responds to this by recommending a realism about the Great Outdoors and about the outside, the exterior, the other. It is a way to take the Great Outdoors as what it is, a disrupting limit that ought to have an impact on what is thought or known, even though it cannot be fully converted into content of what is thought or known. The Great Outdoors, which is a figure of the metaphysics of the others, leaves its traces in thinking and knowing –haunts them– and precisely because the exterior is irreducibly exterior. The exterior is thought through from inside and it is from the inside that it has to be exterior. Otherwise, something else is going to be exterior given any indexically mapped position. This is akin to what Levinas called the ontological argument in favor of the Other.

In Meillassoux's terminology concerning the age of the correlate, indexicalism is not strong correlationism because exteriority as such is thought through in indexical terms. It is not weak correlationism –the thesis that we cannot know anything but correlations even though something else can be thought through– because we can know the exterior as exterior even if it is never fully transparent. The others are not fully known in their indexical structure but they are taken as others and leave traces on what is known (at least because each position has an inside and an outside). Perhaps indexicalism is then some sort of metaphysics of subjectivity,

the term that Meillassoux borrowed from Heidegger: or "subjectalism," as he subsequently decided to call these positions.[xxiv] Indexicalism holds that there are deictic absolutes, but these absolutes are not correlations precisely because they involve the others, the outdoors, the exterior. Its Whiteheadian ingredient places it in the middle of things with no privilege granted to the human subject, while its Levinasian component makes sure that exteriority is taken seriously. There is still maybe a fear that deictic absolutes will end up being no more than phenomena and that there are things-in-themselves that are not accessible (neither knowable nor even thinkable). But this is only possible if a substantive –and not indexical– subject is conceived in such a way that deixis will merely be things-for-this-(substantive)-subject. If this subject is positioned, it will have a horizon and therefore an exterior. Indexicalism and the metaphysics of the others recommend a strong realism about the Great Outdoors and diagnose the opponents of such realism as engaging in some form of substantivism according to which situatedness is explicitly or tacitly abandoned.

Graham Harman: Another influence on your book is the appeal to "multinaturalism" that we find not only in Bruno Latour, but also in those concerned with Amerindian anthropologies: Philippe Descola, Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and others.[xxv] The usual critique of such authors is that they subjectivize the world so that tribal cultures following analogism, fetishism, and totemism are placed on the same level as Western scientific naturalism. Are you also committed to cultural relativism of this sort, or do you find ways to modify these anthropological approaches in the direction of realism?

Hilan Bensusan: Indexicalism is indeed a way to understand Amerindian perspectivism as it is portrayed by the work of Tania Stolze Lima, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and others.[xxvi] It is also a way to combine the disposition towards the non-human that Descola found in the Amazon (and other places), animism, according to which non-humans have interiorities so that to deal with them is not to extract their intelligibility but rather to negotiate with groups of them, with a notion of the others as transcendent along the lines espoused by Levinas. (This is what made me coin the term "Jewish animism" to describe indexicalism, which does justice both to my Jewish and Brazilian, but not Amazonian, origin.) I find Descola's characterization of animism close in many aspects to Whitehead's philosophical outlook, being oriented by a rejection of the bifurcation between what is experienced and what lies underneath experience, unreachable by it. In this sense, there is a family resemblance that would also include Latour's politics of nature. In all these cases, there is no room for absolute opacity in what composes the field of experience that constitutes the furniture of the universe. In this sense, these positions contrast both with indexicalism and with your [Graham Harman's] object-oriented ontology.

Descola holds that some animist groups are perspectivists, while Viveiros de Castro holds instead that perspectivism is quite widespread in the lower Amazon and challenges the very general notion of animism proposed by Descola. Perspectivism holds that terms like 'human', 'animal' or 'food' are deictic and could be translated into different substantives in different contexts of utterance: 'food' can be resolved as the substantive 'humans' for the jaguar, while

'human' can be resolved as the substantive 'wild boar' for wild boars. What is common in different contexts is the articulation of the indexical terms, but nothing substantive is common between the contexts in which humans and jaguars live: 'manioc beer', an indexical that commands some behaviors such as rushing towards it and making efforts to prepare it, could be resolved as manioc beer for humans and as blood for jaguars. The terms, however, express no substantives but are thoroughly indexical: the similarities between blood as a substantive for both jaguars and humans can hardly be expressed as perspectivist thinking revolving around indexicals. According to this account, there is a great deal of indexicalism taking place among perspectivist groups. (It is worth noting that 'perspectivism' itself is used to describe both human groups in the lower Amazon and an approach to humans and non-humans that Viveiros de Castro recommends, inspired by these groups.)

I disagree that perspectivism is a form of cultural relativism. To begin with, it is not about culture, because if there is a culture among these lower Amazon groups it is always the same for both humans and animals: nature (that is, the body) is what is different, as the term 'multinaturalism' indicates. It is nature that varies, and that means truth is not relative, but rather complex, diverse, plural and filled with perspectives. In a nutshell, relativity is true. It is worth comparing Amerindian perspectivism with the two non-standard A-ist forms of realism about time that Kit Fine has proposed: he calls one of them 'perspectivism' and the other 'fragmentalism'.[xxvii] A-ists think, with John McTaggart, that time cannot be properly understood without the aid of the A-series – the series formed by yesterday, today and tomorrow or last year, this year, next year but not by 2020, 2021, 2022.[xxviii] McTaggart held that because it relies on the A-series, time cannot be real. A-ist realists disagree with this latter claim and hold, largely in convergence with indexicalism, that reality could indeed include time if it is not neutral, absolute or coherent. While standard A-ist realisms understand that reality is not neutral and the present time is the one that is real, non-standard ones reject the claims that reality is absolute or is coherent– in Fine's terminology these are perspectivism and fragmentalism, respectively. Perspectivism, in this sense, understands that reality is positioned and must be distinguished from subjectivism in the same way that indexicalism is. Perspectivism and fragmentalism are committed to the reality of tense (see my article "The Cubist Object" and the section of *Indexicalism* called "Tense Realism and Baroque Realism").[xxix]

Similarly, anthropological perspectivism is a form of realism about perspectives. It doesn't subjectivize the world, but fills it with positions that cannot be properly considered except as a situated endeavor. It is, I think, closer to indexicalism than the two opponents I mentioned above: the claim that things are subjective, and the claim that they can be viewed from nowhere. Still, there could be an impression that there is too much relativism here, since it is maintained by perspectivist anthropologists that although naturalists and animists (or perspectivists) carve the distinction between nature and culture at the same joint, they ascribe opposite properties to each side. Nevertheless, the impression that such a position lies far from realism subsists only if indexicalism is not considered seriously. If it is, it becomes clear that reality could be composed of a diversity of perspectives and a diversity of positions that can only be viewed as a unified reality at the risk of paradox. The difficulty here is the same as with indexicalism and the remedy is similar: bite the bullet (of paradoxico-metaphysics) and make

sure that substantivism is properly rejected in its different forms. I would claim that perspectivism, if it is a general view of how things are, should instead embrace indexicalism as a situated metaphysics. This would still be puzzling for some, because it entails that it is simultaenously a metaphysics and a critique of metaphysics. But I argue that it is a robust form of realism: a realism about positions, and therefore about what is exterior to any position.

Having said so, I would still briefly voice some disagreement with perspectivism as embraced by anthropologists such as Viveiros de Castro. Contrary to indexicalism, perspectivist anthropologists tend to hold a view that has no room for transcendent otherness, for an absolute Great Outdoors. They tend to think instead, with Whitehead and Deleuze, that everything merges into a single unified reality brought about by the many perspectives. No outside is disclosed by examining what there is: the idea is that immanence, and the state of being in the middle of everything, exclude any exterior. In that sense, it tends toward a metaphysics of subjectivity (or subjectalism, in Meillassoux's terminology). Perspectivism, like Descola's Amerindian animism, is therefore closer to Whitehead and Deleuze than to indexicalism. This is why it needs to be amended with a Levinasian component. The metaphysics of the others would be a way to make increased sense of a world where different perspectives join together without ever overcoming the situated character of reality.

Graham Harman: In your book (and even in this interview so far) you are ather hard on what you call "substantivism," blaming it not just for bad philosophy, but for patriarchy and a litany of other political crimes. I wonder if that's really fair. In the first place, it might be asked whether it is even possible to link specific ontologies with specific political positions, given that the greatest philosophers have generally been useful to people of all political stripes. There are both "Left" and "Right" Kantians, Hegelians, Nietzscheans, and even Heideggerians for instance. The other objection someone might make is that Aristotle's theory of substance was a radical progressive break with previous Greek philosophy in the sense that his substances can be destroyed, can have different qualities at different times, are both individual and ambiguous, and thefeore deserves more admiration than it usually receives in recent philosophy. So, why do you dislike substantivism so much?

Hilan Bensusan: To improve the world, it is clearly not enough to propose a philosophically general diagnosis of what grounds what needs to be changed or removed. Yet a diagnosis of this sort may help to illuminate what is at stake and to direct the efforts. To be sure, political action is also needed, and together with this, a view on other issues that divide Left and Right. But philosophical diagnoses provide relevant orientation for struggle including the struggle that is conducted through theoretical developments.

Substantivism is indeed taken to be a philosophical culprit by my way of proposing indexicalism. Similarly, metaphysics (or onto-theology, or the metaphysics of presence) is the offender according to Heidegger. For him, metaphysics is committed to an endeavor to make things

transparent, to extract their intelligibility and to make them subject to command, while substantivism for me is a non-situated view of things that conceives of no respectable obstacle for making everything exposed. The two diagnoses are similar, but what matters for me here is that they have effects. There could be Right and Left Heideggerians, but both are committed to the criticism of metaphysics that arises from Heidegger: both sides are enhanced in their analysis by Heidegger's reflections on the effects of metaphysics. Further, both sides would endorse these reflections and the corresponding diagnosis. Similarly, indexicalists of different persuasions would be faithful to a refusal of substantivism and endorse a situated metaphysics. Indexicalism has a broad political impact, as the history of beyng that Heidegger proposed, partly as a consequence of the way he came to read Nietzsche. It has an impact on what I call cosmopolitics (which is a bit different from what Isabelle Stengers has in mind) and I have indeed shown how the same cosmopolitical parties admit of macro-political right and left leanings.[xxx] Cosmopolitical disputes are orthogonal to other, macro-political ones (see my articles "Cosmopolitical Parties in the Post-Human Age", "Geist and Ge-Stell" and the forthcoming "Cosmopolitics as a Taste for Cunning").[xxxi] The metaphysics of the others is engaged in struggle against the view of nowhere, and this can indeed have different macro-political implications. There are connections between philosophical studies, cosmopolitical disputes and macro-political issues, but the passages between these domains are maybe like the Northwest passage through Canada from the Arctic to the Pacific.

But perhaps things here are even more entangled. Indexicalistm –and indeed the situated metaphysics of the others– has a strong case against colonialism that is elaborated mostly in the Coda of the book. Coloniality is grounded on the substantivist idea that the others can be included in a unified project that ultimately leaves no room for the exterior or the outdoors: it is grounded on a non-situated hybris of ground zero, to use the expression of Santiago Castro-Gómez.[xxxii] The Coda of *Indexicalism* is called "The Circumscription of Potosí", and accounts for the fact that the book was partially written around the Sumaq Urqo, the mountain filled with silver that made the wealth of Europe in the 17th Century.[xxxiii] There is a sense in which the history of the world ever since has the mountain at its center; the circumscription of Potosí is a position that contrasts with that of the current colonial center and sees it as an outdoors that leaves traces inside. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui takes these traces to produce a tainted form of life, and no pure form of life is indeed possible if thought is situated and affected by what is exterior to it.[xxxiv] This is what she labels with the Aymara word *ch'ixi*, which she claims should be at the cornerstone of life after colonization: not a struggle towards purity, but rather the adoption of a plurality of forms of life that resists the integration and unification that is favored by colonial powers. *Ch'ixi i*s the idea that other narratives have space in the effort to tell the world using the best of my capacities, to use the phrase of Anna Tsing that orients the metaphysics of the others in the book.[xxxv] *Ch'ixi* contrasts with substantivist views that favor a general and transparent view from nowhere. The struggle against colonization is the struggle for the right to opacity, as Edouard Glissant sometimes put it: the right not to be exposed and not to become part of a totality that dissolves any peculiarity.[xxxvi] A situated metaphysics has a struggle against coloniality in its veins. Similarly, its diagnosis may strongly help to advance some other local, contextualized political causes.

As for substances in Aristotle, it is relevant to distinguish between substantialism (or metaphysics of presence, as *ousia* is translated as substance and as presence) on the one hand and substantivism on the other. The former includes Aristotle and the tradition of metaphysics that, according to Heidegger, lost its connection with the Pre-Platonic *physis* in its capacity to unfold and withdraw: metaphysics is a path towards complete transparency. This trespassing of the right to opacity carried on all the way to Nietzsche, the last metaphysician according to Heidegger, and can carry on beyond him as metaphysics without making any significant new step.[xxxvii] To some extent, Whitehead is part of this effort to make things transparent even though he posits no substance, and arguably leaves no space for any full-blown presence. Indexicalism rejects both substances and the effort to make everything transparent precisely because it is committed to a form of realism about the Great Outdoors. Now, substantivism, the opposite of indexicalism, is both different and in an important sense broader. Whitehead's process philosophy is not substantialist but is still substantivist, since it posits substantives (including prehensions, which play a role similar to relations in other systems). To be against substantivism is to be against any non-situated view of things: that is, against views that postulate substances, but also against those that postulate only relations or states-of-affairs if they are not ultimately indexical. Substantivism is a strategy to abolish any situatedness in philosophy, and with that to exorcise the opacity of the exterior, the transcendence of the Great Outdoors and the reality of the others.

Graham Harman: In your book, you speak of Leibniz as a "relational" philosopher in much the same sense of Whitehead. A monad is determined by its relations to other monads. While this can certainly be found in Leibniz, is it right to omit the fact that these relations only occur *indirectly*, thanks to God's pre-established harmony? In other words, although Leibniz holds that my monad has eternally included the fact of asking you these interview questions, shouldn't we also take seriously Leibniz's claim that monads have no windows, and that all relations are really simulated relations rather than actual ones?[xxxviii]

Hilan Bensusan: There is a disagreement about Leibniz here. I understand that his relations are not simulated, and in fact that there is no more to the monads –and no other reason for God to choose a particular class of monads to compose the actual world– than the way they relate to all the others. God could have chosen an Adam that doesn't sin, but then Adam would have connections with other monads that would make the overall effect in the world worse. God chooses worlds, that is, the choice is of classes of compossible relations. In the last pages of the *Theodicy*, Leibniz presents the allegory of Pallas' palace rooms to illustrate this.[xxxix] God first contemplated the infinite rooms in the palace and evaluated the perfection in each of them, which has to do with the effect of each class of monads. God then chose a world that seemed to be the most perfect in his judgment (which is the wisest but still free): a world where there are bad acts (where Adam sins) but which is overall still the best according to God's judgment. God didn't endow monads with relations, but rather chose them because of their relations with each other. This is why monads are worldly: by contrast with items in Kripke's possible worlds, they cannot travel to another world without losing their identity. God had to choose between

the overall effects of monads that were already placed in worlds, and therefore were already in a harmony with all the others that would make windows entirely dispensable. Each monad does what it does; they don't need to look around to determine their action. Monads have no substratum, nothing underlying their predicates (properties and relations). This is why the law of Leibniz holds, whereas it doesn't for Aristotle whose substances have substrata. The law states that indiscernibles are identical: things with the same properties and relations ought to be the same. I believe Leibniz inaugurated a way of thinking according to which individuals are fully dependent on the world that surrounds them.

This monadological way of thinking has a general form that has instances also in Gabriel Tarde, Whitehead, Latour, and to some extent Husserl.[xl] I have explored the general idea of a monadology in detail in a book in Portuguese called *A Diáspora da Agência*, with Jadson Alves de Freitas.[xli]

A quick summary of this path from Leibniz to Whitehead, and already hinting at indexicalism, can be in a *Process Studies* article called "The Road from Leibniz to Whitehead (and Beyond)".[xlii] The general idea is that in monadologies there are substances, or actants, or actual entities, and they are very important because they are poles that harbor predicates (properties and relations). It is as if they are relata that are crucial in order for relations to hold. Still, these items are not independent of each other, since they are constantly relating to each other or experiencing each other: even though they might dispense with windows, because all their predicates are already in them from the outset. There are important differences between various monadologies, and an important one is described by Deleuze as one between monadologies of closure (like Leibniz's) and monadologies of capture (like Whitehead's).[xliii] Monadologies are interesting departures from some aspects of substantialism and in that sense, they are a step towards indexicalism. But they are still substantivist. Incidentally, your [Graham Harman's] object-oriented philosophy is a further departure from the idea of full presences that can still be found in monadological systems. These systems still belong to the genealogy of metaphysics because full presences are still postulated; in monadological systems, everything is transparent to something. In OOO, by contrast, this is not the case since real objects are withdrawn elements that break with total exposure, and to some extent to the immanence that monadologies embrace.[xliv]

Graham Harman: Let's end on a freer and easier question. Readers tend to think of books as accurate pictures of the present moment, when in fact they usually take a few years to be published, and by that time the author has already moved on to something else. What is the "actual" philosophical present of Hilan Bensusan? Where have you moved to since writing *Indexicalism*?

Hilan Bensusan: Indeed, I've moved on to some extent. Still, indexicalism is something I continue to recommend, even though my formulations have changed a bit since the book has been written. The most direct improvement is due to my joint work with Joan Gimeno Simó and Guilherme da Silva where we define *address*, a term I used above in my answer to question 5.

An address is whatever is fixed when a reference is fixed: it is a deictic content of an expression that makes explicit that reference is indexical at its core. From the notion of address, we develop a conception of propositions –that is, understood as the meaning of sentences, the content of (propositional) attitudes and the bearers of truth– that intends to avoid the shortcomings of current approaches. The basic idea is that propositions are thoroughly indexical items. This is an interesting development where we formulate a semantic indexicalism that can encourage the indexicalism I recommend in the book, but that doesn't entail it. The idea of indexical propositions also hints toward the paradoxes that appear when deixis is absolute. As Paul Livingston remarked during the book symposium, there is a common indexical structure to many paradoxes: it is enough to consider the liar paradox, "this sentence is false". This connection between the indexical and the paradoxical still leaves much to be explored, and it is taking me towards the work of Graham Priest on the nature of *dialeithea*. As a first approximation, I believe that he common structure of many paradoxes can be given by Levinas' paradox of freedom: freedom is what dismantles itself by giving rise to responsibility.

Indexicalism also inspires my current project of studying what I call the principle of addition, which is less than a ground and more of an abyss, much like the "second beginning" that Heidegger recommended.[xlv] In *Indexicalism* I recommend realism concerning the Great Outdoors and an approach to perception as a supplement. I have been developing these ideas toward the thesis that addition is the main component of reality. The idea is that addition is a principle that structures the insufficiency and incompleteness of whatever seems to be present; existence itself is hostage to addends. This philosophy of addition builds on Derrida's notion of supplement, on Georges Bataille's idea of excess, on Marisol de la Cadena's claim that whatever exists is more than one (but is never fully double or multiple), on Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of struction as the arrival of a non-assembled ensemble that is common to constructivism and desconstruction, and finally on the new approaches to transcendence that have learned relevant lessons from the philosophies of immanence of the late 20th Century.[xlvi] The centrality of addition reflects the thought that in perception the outdoors is constantly producing transcendent addends that reshape what there is by changing not only the future, but also the archives of the past. Addition as a logical operation is, I would like to claim, more basic than negation, and in that sense it is addition rather than determinate negation that produces what is concrete. This places the philosophy of addition in direct contrast with Hegelian dialectics, but also unfolds interesting consequences within logic itself. The logic of the supplement is perhaps what I call an antimonotonic logic, one where the principle of monotonicity never holds: which means that no conclusion can be maintained if anything else is added to the class of premises. An antimonotonic logic can be provided from any logic, and it can be shown that the resulting logic is paraconsistent. Interestingly, a procedure that has to do with a break in monotonicity results in a break with trivialization through contradiction. Because the issues of paraconsistency (and paracompleteness) are defined in terms of operations of negation, this suggests that addition is what triggers the movements brought forward by negation.

This research into the principle of addition takes me to a direct examination of what transcendence could mean for us now. I believe that Speculative Realism and its offspring have sparked a renewed interest in different forms of transcendence.[xlvii] I believe transcendence is

best understood in strong connection with addition, and that has to do both with the criticism of substantivism and a departure from the efforts of the metaphysics of presence to make everything transparent. Further, Nancy shows that there is a hidden element of transcendence both in constructivism and in deconstruction. To be a realist about addition –and about Nancy's struction– is to offer what is probably itself a paradoxico-metaphysics. But this realism is to be combined with indexicalism and the metaphysics of the others, since the Great Outdoors is where addends come from. Addends that supplant and supplement what was there before set things off on a never-ending craving for further supplementation: addition, like Bataille's excess, cannot be fully exorcised. Two similar models are to be compared with the model of the principle of addition: Ludueña's disjuntology that postulates two poles –incomplete presences and specters- that interact while being separated and never becoming integrated into totality and Yuk Hui's model of recursivity as a force behind contingency.[xlviii] The principle of addition makes me revisit some ideas about contingency from my book *Being Up For Grabs*.[xlix] The book that I plan as a result of this research will start from where *Indexicalism* ends –with the idea of perception as supplement– and move towards an account of how things are up for grabs because they are hostage to addends that impose their co-existence to whatever they find.

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