

Things Without the Mind— A Commentary upon Chapter Two of Strawson's *Individuals*

What is the connection between the idea of an objective world and the idea of a spatial world? If someone has a conception of a world, something whose existence and operations are independent of his experience of it, must he thereby conceive of a system of spatial relations in which both he and the phenomena he experiences have a place? This question can be put another way. We can imagine a series of judgements 'Warm now', 'Buzzing now', made by a subject in response to changes in his sensory state, which have no objective significance at all. But we can imagine a similar series of judgements, prompted by the same changes in the subject's sensory state, which do have such a significance: 'Now it's warm', 'Now there's a buzzing sound'—comments upon a changing world. What is involved in this change of significance? In particular, if 'Now it's warm' is interpreted as a report on the world prompted by experience, must it be tantamount to: 'Now it's warm *here*'?

The connection between space and objectivity lies so deep in our conceptual scheme that many philosophers pass from 'objective' to 'outer' without even noticing the question they beg. The subjective being regarded as what is 'in the mind', the objective becomes what is 'without the mind', and then it is easy to say with Hobbes that if we have a conception of a thing without the mind, we have a conception of space.¹

In the second chapter of *Individuals*, Strawson probes this

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¹ Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, II, 7, ii.

conceptual connection with great subtlety and imagination. He makes us aware of the potential gap between 'objective' and 'outer'—a gap which he then attempts to bridge with a fascinating argument. Strawson illustrates the argument by imagining the situation of a being whose experience is wholly auditory. He argues that the concepts of an objective world, crucially the idea of existence unperceived, would not have any application in the experience of such a being unless that experience provides him with at least some analogue of space. Such an analogue can be provided in a purely auditory experience if each experience of a particular auditory phenomenon is accompanied by the experience of a master-sound—a constant sound whose variations in pitch enable the subject to give substance to the idea that he is moving. It is true that Strawson claims only that the master-sound provides an analogy of space. But it would be wrong to be misled by this, and by the fact that he labels the auditory universe a 'No-Space world', into thinking that Strawson is unsympathetic to the Kantian thesis that space is a necessary condition for objective experience. On the contrary, the chapter contains an argument for a slightly weakened version of that thesis.

Only part of the interest of the chapter lies here—in seeing how much is involved as an indispensable accompaniment to the idea of an objective world. The chapter is bold in another way. For if there is a frame of mind in which it is surprising how *much* is involved before the idea of objectivity can take root, there is an equally familiar frame of mind in which the surprise lies rather in how *little* a subject seems to need to think objectively. Certainly it is no part of Strawson's intention to derogate from the reality of things, but is our conception of our own world not just a little shaken by the thought that there could be a wholly auditory universe—by seeing how simply a tissue of reality can be woven out of regularities in experience?

I shall consider both these aspects of the chapter. I shall begin by considering whether Strawson successfully defends the Kantian thesis. After trying to show that the main line of argument is not successful, I go on to explore another line of argument also to be found in the chapter. In the final two sections, I elaborate two different reasons for doubting

whether a subject whose experience was wholly auditory could be regarded as having a conception of an independent reality.

Before proceeding, there is one important preliminary. What sense does the phrase 'objective world' bear in the questions Strawson took to define his investigation, and which therefore define ours? Strawson is explicitly not concerned with an idea of objectivity which rests upon interpersonal agreement. For the purpose of focusing upon a manageable section of our overall conceptual scheme rather than because it represents a genuine conceptual possibility, Strawson pretends that his subject makes no allowance for the existence of other observers. (Throughout, then, 'existence unperceived' is, effectively, 'existence unperceived by me'.) The idea which *does* concern Strawson is the idea of an experience's being *of* something distinct from it, and therefore the idea of something which is capable of existing independently of any experience of it.

Now Strawson dubs his investigation the elaboration of the conditions for a 'non-solipsistic consciousness'. But there is implicit in his notion of objectivity a restriction which precludes the application of the title 'theory of the objective world' to views which their proponents did not believe were solipsistic. The proponents of these views have a yet more general notion of objectivity in mind, according to which a theory has objective significance if it comprises propositions which, if true at a given time, are not true in virtue of the state of the subject at that time. This differs from Strawson's notion, for there may be no question of the subject's *experiencing* the reality which is constituted by the truths that do not belong in his biography.

For example, the subject's experience may be regular in a way which allows him to express various conditional or counterfactual propositions about what would be experienced were such-and-such else to be experienced. These propositions, if true at all, are not true in virtue of any actual occurrence in the subject's biography, and may be taken² as the

² They have been so taken by phenomenologists. See, e.g., C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1946), pp. 226-30, and *Mind and the World Order* (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 135-9.

basis of a claim that an objective reality is thereby allowed for. However this may be, it is not an objective reality in the sense which concerns Strawson:

... I shall mean by a non-solipsistic consciousness, the consciousness of a being who has a use for the distinction between himself and his states on the one hand, and something not himself, or a state of himself, of which he has experience on the other.³

For whatever it is that makes these purportedly 'objective' propositions true, it is not something of which the subject can be said to have experience.

I

Intertwined in the chapters are several ideas on which a defence of the Kantian thesis might rest, but the main line of argument is one in which the need for space arises from the requirement that the subject of experience (hereafter 'Hero') be able to reidentify the objects of his experience. As Strawson summarizes the results of this chapter in a later one:

... we had to introduce, in auditory terms, an analogue of space in order to make room for the idea of reidentifiable particulars...⁴

A defence of the Kantian thesis on these lines must have two distinguishable stages; it has to be shown that the idea of reidentifiable objects is implicit in the idea of objectivity, and it has to be shown that criteria of reidentification, with the attendant distinction between qualitative and numerical identity, can only be framed in a spatial (or quasi-spatial)⁵ world.

On the first stage of the argument, Strawson has this to say:

... to have a conceptual scheme in which a distinction is made between oneself or one's states and auditory items which are not states of oneself, is to have a conceptual scheme in which the existence of auditory items is logically independent of the existence of one's states or of

³ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), p. 69; my italics.

⁴ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁵ I shall drop this qualification in what follows; except where the context indicates otherwise, I shall use 'spatial' in the weak sense of 'spatial or quasi-spatial'.

oneself. Thus it is to have a conceptual scheme in which it is logically possible that such items should exist whether or not they were being observed, and hence should continue to exist through an interval during which they were not being observed. So it seems that it must be the case that there could be reidentifiable particulars in a purely auditory world if the conditions of a non-solipsistic consciousness could be fulfilled for such a world. Now it might further be said that it makes no sense to say that there logically could be reidentifiable particulars in a purely auditory world, unless criteria for reidentification can be framed or devised in purely auditory terms. And if this is correct, as it seems to be, we have the conclusion that the conditions of a non-solipsistic consciousness can be satisfied in such a world only if we can describe in purely auditory terms criteria for reidentification of sound particulars.⁶

The second stage of the argument is not filled out in any great detail, but perhaps it is obvious how it would run. Hero has to be able to distinguish among later experiences of qualitatively indistinguishable phenomena those that are, and those that are not, later stages of the same phenomenon that he experienced earlier. This can only be done by taking into account the *relations* in which the phenomena stand; more specifically, relations which do not hold in virtue of the intrinsic non-relational character of the things related. And perhaps this may be seen as an abstract formal description of spatial relations.

Ingenuous though this argument is, there is room for considerable doubt about its cogency, especially when it is interpreted in such a way that Strawson's auditory world provides an illustration of it. In that world, qualitatively identical sounds may be distinguished by their 'location at' (by being heard with) different pitch-levels of the master-sound. Given that this is the case, one may well feel that no genuine distinction between qualitative and numerical identity has been provided. Since different pitch-levels of the master-sound are qualitatively distinguishable, auditory presentations of numerically distinct sounds are never qualitatively indistinguishable, so long as a sufficiently inclusive view is taken of what to apply this concept to. But in the present context, a weaker point will suffice. If Strawson's Hero uses a genuine criterion of numerical identity, then space is not necessary

⁶ Strawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-3.

for him to do so. Since his criterion does not make any real use of the dimensionality provided by the continuous variation in the pitch-levels of the master-sound we may suppose with equal legitimacy that criteria of reidentification can be framed in an auditory universe in which an *unordered* series of master-sounds plays the same distinguishing role as the ordered series of pitch-levels of Strawson's single master-sound.⁷

The upshot of the weaker point is this: if the requirement deduced in the first stage of the argument can be satisfied in Strawson's auditory universe, the second stage of the argument cannot be completed. This difficulty seems to stem from the quite unparalleled role played by the master-sound in generating the space of the auditory world. Since change of position is not logically tied to a change in the subject's relations to the occupants in the space, but rather is a change in one particular aspect of his experience, there is no reason why that feature of experience to which it is tied should mimic the dimensionality of space.

In addition to wrecking the argument, the master-sound is the source of extreme disanalogies with our own system of spatial relations. The space of Strawson's auditory universe is an absolute space, and not a framework constituted by the spatial relations of its occupants.⁸ The fact that 'same place' in Strawson's auditory universe is not dependent upon 'same thing' is not merely a curiosity; it lays the whole scheme open to the most straightforward phenomenalist reduction, since 'God save the Queen is now playing at position *L*' is apparently equivalent to 'If master-sound of pitch-level *l* were heard, God save the Queen would be heard.' But, as the

⁷ I assume here and throughout that the existence of an intrinsic ordering between 'places' is essential to a space or a quasi-space. This certainly seems to be the framework within which Strawson was working: 'We want the analogy of Space . . . to provide for something like the idea of absence and presence—but not just of absence and presence in the most utterly general sense these words could bear, but absence or presence in a sense which would allow us to speak of something being to a greater or lesser degree removed from, or separated from, the point at which we are.'

⁸ It is perhaps surprising that Strawson should invent such a space in chapter 2, having emphasized in chapter 1 the mutual identification-dependence in our world, of things and places—a dependence which arises, on one side, from the fact that places are not intrinsically perceptible.

Carnap of the *Aufbau* learned to his cost, in a universe where space is constituted by the spatial relations between things, there can be no phenomenal characterization of being at a particular position, since things can move and change.

Taking the master-sound illustration seriously, we are prevented from completing the intended defence of the Kantian thesis, or are committed to regarding as spatial a scheme of thought so radically unlike our own as seriously to undermine the interest of the conclusion, were we able satisfactorily to defend it. Moved by these connected considerations, we must surely suspect that it is the illustration that is at fault, and not the argument which it is intended to illustrate. And further reflection appears to show the master-sound to be unnecessary even if an illustration of the argument is sought in a wholly auditory experience. For it may be held⁹ that a one-dimensional space which is genuinely parallel to our own may be constructed out of an auditory experience (or, indeed, out of any experience) provided that experience exhibits such order and regularity that its course can be seen as simultaneously due to the way the world is laid out and to the subject's continuous motion through it. Provided the subject's experience is sufficiently regular to enable him to establish short-term generalizations of the form:

An experience of kind k will intervene between any experience of kind k' and any experience of kind k''

it might appear that he can distil from its changing course a more or less detailed map of his world, with an object of kind K between (in a 'travel-based' sense of this word) objects of kind k' and k'' . Possessed of such a map, the subject can make empirical sense of the distinction between a change in his position and a change in the world, and being able effectively to apply this distinction, he can make a revision of, and additions to, his map. That the resulting theory of the world has an interlocking, holistic character, as the subject simultaneously solves for the way the world is laid out and for the route he has taken through it, is no

⁹ It has been held by Jonathan Bennett, in his *Kant's Analytic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 37.

objection since it might reasonably be taken to mirror a feature in our own scheme. The holistic character of the resulting theory certainly renders it immune to any simple phenomenalistic reduction.¹⁰

More important for our immediate purpose, this way of introducing a spatial order into an auditory world seems to provide a much better illustration of the themes of Strawson's argument. Distinct but qualitatively indistinguishable sounds can now be distinguished by their positions in the 'travel-based' ordering, and, no matter how wide a segment of experience is taken, distinct sounds can present genuinely indistinguishable appearances. Furthermore, the second stage of the argument is not undercut since we run no risk of dimensionless parallels. To construct a travel-based space is necessarily to construct an *ordering* of the objects or phenomena whose relations constitute the space.

In view of these considerations, let us suppose that Strawson would accept this as a better illustration of his argument. Eliminating the master-sound enables us to concentrate upon the nub of the argument—the connection between objectivity and reidentification. Here, too, I believe there is reason for scepticism.

My first objection, which does not run very deep, concerns the role which the concept of reidentification plays in the argument. The theories with which Strawson is concerned incorporate the idea that the subject has experience of phenomena which are independent of his experience of them. From this general acknowledgement of the independence of the world, Strawson is surely entitled to extract the corollary that the temporal dimensions of an experienced phenomenon may diverge from the temporal dimensions of any experience of it. Further it seems reasonable to suppose that Hero must be able to understand one particular application of this general idea, namely the possibility that the experienced phenomena should continue throughout a gap in his experience of them. Strawson expresses this idea in the language we use to talk about the persistence of material bodies, so that Hero is to think that he has experience of auditory *items* which continue to *exist* while

¹⁰ An illustration of this point will be developed later; pp. 266-8.

unobserved and which may therefore be *reidentified*. But it is not clear that the concept of identity need be involved here at all, still less that it need be involved in just the way it is involved in our scheme of three-dimensional bodies.

In the first place, it seems that this particular application of the possibility of temporal divergence between phenomenon and experience can be captured with the concept of *continuity*, as it occurs in the thought that it may continue to rain after one falls asleep, or that it may rain continuously between the time one falls asleep and the time one awakes. It would appear that the idea of its raining continuously is prior to, and independent of, the idea of a *single rainstorm*, and that it is possible to enrich what Strawson calls a 'feature-placing' language with an operator having the force of 'continuously' without disturbing its ontological simplicity—without introducing quantification over, and reidentification of, particulars. If this is so, a theory of an objective world can be couched in a feature-placing language, and the concept of identity does not belong in Strawson's argument at all.¹²

Aside from this, there is a worry which arises even if we suppose that our Hero does express the idea of continuous sound by using the concept of identity. Let us suppose that Hero registers the independence of the world by allowing for the possibility of there being later, unheard parts of the same sound of which he has heard an earlier part, and therefore for the possibility of his hearing still later parts of the same sound of which, before an interruption, he has heard an earlier part. This is still not to think of an auditory *item* which *persists through time*, but rather of an auditory *process* which *is extended in time*. If the concept of reidentification is to be used in connection with processes, it must be understood that it is being used in a different sense from that which it has in connection with things. We reidentify a process

¹² In view of Strawson's defence of the coherence of a feature-placing scheme of thought later on in the book (pp. 202-13), it is perhaps surprising that he gives the impression in this chapter that he has demonstrated that any coherent scheme of thought about the objective world must involve the idea of reidentifiable particulars. Strawson does occasionally appear to restrict his question to schemes of thought involving particulars (as in: "What are the most general statable conditions of knowledge of objective particulars?"—p. 62) but to defend the formulation of the argument by taking this restriction seriously is to do so at the cost of significantly reducing its interest.

when we hold that an occurrence encountered at one time is *part of* the same process as an occurrence encountered at another, but it is a distinctive (and some have thought incoherent) feature of our conceptual scheme of material bodies that we suppose an object to be both present as a *whole* on one occasion, and literally identical with an object present as a whole on another.

Now, a concept of reidentification can be used in connection with processes, and Strawson's detailed discussion of the auditory universe makes it clear that this is the concept which he intends.¹² Nevertheless, in the absence of any explanation or qualification, the use of the concept of reidentification which was originally introduced in the description of our conceptual scheme of material bodies carried with it the suggestion of a greater parallel between that scheme and the scheme of the auditory universe than is strictly warranted—a parallel which can only be purchased at the cost of ignoring the considerable difference between things and processes.

Identity is, indeed, a double irrelevance, since it appears not only that continuity can be registered without it, but also that identity can be recognized in the absence of continuity—at least where processes are concerned. We can quite intelligibly hold that later occurrences are parts of the same extended game as earlier occurrences to which they are not linked by any continuous series of game stages. This point has been raised in objection to Strawson's argument, for it seems to open the possibility of thinking reidentifyingly without thinking objectively.¹³ The obvious reply is that the criteria of reidentification mentioned in the argument must be restricted to those which require continuity; but if this reply is made the concept of identity once again drops out of the argument, in favour of that of continuity.

The reason why I said that this objection was not very

¹² '... identified as *part of* the same particular M as that of which the previously heard instance of A was a *part*...' (p. 70); 'There is a clear criterion for distinguishing the case of hearing a *later part* of a particular unitary sound-sequence of which the *earlier part* has been heard previously...' (p. 77) etc. etc. (My italics.)

¹³ See Don Locke, 'Strawson's Auditory Universe', *Philosophical Review* 70 (1961), pp. 518-32.

deep was that it seems simply to invite a restatement of the argument in terms of the concept of continuity. Hero must be able to make sense of the idea that, after his perception has ceased, there should be ϕ -ing stages continuous with the ϕ -ing stages which he perceived, and therefore that some such stage may be encountered later. But not just any later ϕ -ing stage is continuous with a given earlier one. So, Hero must have a way of drawing a distinction between those later ϕ -ing stages that are, and those that are not, continuous with a given earlier stage. Is this distinction not exactly parallel with our distinction between qualitative and numerical identity, and will it not similarly presuppose space?

I do not believe this argument is successful, for it seems to beg the question against a No-Space world in a subtle but decisive way.

In a spatial world there is no absolute notion of (temporal) continuity; we can only speak of spatio-temporal continuity. Now, in order to affirm upon the basis of a later perception of ϕ -ing that the ϕ -ing one experienced at t did continue (did have later stages) one has to be sure, not merely that the later ϕ -ing is continuous with *some* ϕ -ing in existence at time t , but also that it is continuous with the particular ϕ -ing experienced. For, in a spatial world, and possibly only in a spatial world, there can be distinct but simultaneous instances of the same universal. Thus, to be sure that the toy I saw at time t survived until time t' , it is not enough to be sure (i) that the indistinguishable toy I see at t' was in existence at time t , one must in addition be sure (ii) that the route by which it arrived at its position at t' was one which started from its occupation at t of the position in which I saw a toy.

Compare this with a very much simpler way of thinking — one which does not admit of the possibility of distinct but simultaneous instances of the same universal. The objectivity of ϕ -ing is recognized in this scheme (that is to say, it is intelligible that it be ϕ -ing when no ϕ -ing is perceived) but if, at any time, ϕ -ing *is* perceived, then that is all the ϕ -ing that the universe affords. Justice is done to this conception of reality by utterances of the unrestricted form 'It's now ϕ -ing'. Now, if Hero thinks in these terms, he will

certainly make sense of the idea that the ϕ -ing that he is perceiving might continue, but by this he means no more than that it may ϕ for all times between the time at which his experience of ϕ -ing ceases, and some later time. And while in the spatial scheme he would have two questions to ask upon encountering ϕ -ing after a gap, now he has just one: 'Was this ϕ -ing going on continuously between the time I ceased, and the time I began, to experience ϕ -ing?', for by this he means: 'Was it ϕ -ing for all times between the time I ceased, and the time I began, to experience ϕ -ing?' In this crude way of thinking there is no parallel to the second question of the spatial scheme, no analogue to the distinction between qualitative and numerical identity, and therefore no need for a criterion employing quasi-spatial considerations to assist Hero in drawing it.

If this is correct, then the space Strawson extracted out of the concept of objectivity is the space he smuggled into it, by limiting his attention to those theories of the objective that allow for distinct but simultaneous instances of the same universal. It is not surprising if such theories can be shown to be implicitly spatial; it is precisely for this reason that we were prepared to allow that the second stage of the argument might be completed. Perhaps there is some hidden incoherence in the crude and limited way of thinking, but that has to be shown, and if it can be shown the Kantian thesis can be established directly and Strawson's argument becomes an unnecessary circuit.

It is true that there is a distinction which someone thinking in these very crude terms must understand: namely, between the case where it is, and the case where it is not uninterruptedly ϕ -ing during a gap in his ϕ -experience. For in this sense, it remains true that 'not just any later ϕ -ing stage is continuous with a given earlier one'. But space does not appear to be involved in this distinction in any obvious way, and if it is involved in some unobvious way, this also has to be shown. It certainly cannot be shown by gesturing towards a distinction in which space is involved—the distinction between qualitative and numerical identity—but to which the required distinction is not remotely analogous.

To defend the Kantian thesis, the idea of space must be

shown to be implicitly involved in the very idea of existence unperceived, even as it is embedded in such a purported scheme as this. It is possible to find in Strawson's chapter materials for another line of defence of the Kantian thesis — a line of defence which would have just this effect.

II

Strawson suggests that thinking of an auditory experience as experience of an objective world confronts our Hero with the problem of 'making sense of' the idea of sounds existing unperceived. He maintains that 'the most familiar and easily understood sense in which there exists sounds which I do not now hear is this: that there are places at which those sounds are audible but at which I am not now stationed.'²⁴ Space is clearly one way in which this difficulty can be resolved. Various other ways in which we 'make sense of' the idea of unheard sounds are mentioned, namely those which bring into play the idea of one sound *drowning* another, and the idea of deafness, but Strawson maintains that Hero cannot make use of them.

This is obviously a sketch of a line of argument rather than the argument itself, and in the text it is woven together with the argument we have just considered in a way which makes it difficult to disentangle, but I think that it is interesting and distinct, and I shall try to elaborate it. What, then, is the problem, and why should space be thought indispensable to its solution?

Hero must be able to understand the hypothesis, even if, in fact, he never believes it to be the case, that the phenomena of which he has experience should occur unperceived. Now, the idea of unperceived existence, or rather the idea of existence now perceived, now unperceived, is not an idea that can stand on its own, stand without any surrounding theory. How is it possible that phenomena of *the very same kind as* those of which he has experience should occur in the absence of any experience? Such phenomena are evidently *perceptible*; why should they not be perceived? To answer this question, some rudimentary theory, or form of a theory of perception

²⁴ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

is required. This is the indispensable surrounding for the idea of existence unperceived, and so, of existence perceived. (It is not to be thought that the idea of existence unperceived is an additional hurdle to be surmounted after the idea of existence perceived has been understood; the two ideas are sides of a single idea: the idea of an objective world.)

The same point can be put in other words. We might pretend for a moment that we are tracing the development, in a child's thought, of an utterance 'It's ϕ -ing', originally tied to a recurring pattern of his experience—a cry with which experiences of a certain kind are greeted.¹⁵ For an utterance like 'It's ϕ -ing', originating in this way, to become an assertion about an objective world, it must loosen its tie with experience, so that it makes sense to suppose that it is true even when no experience occurs. But, although it must loosen its tie with experience, the tie must not be severed; that which is potentially true in the absence of any experience must be the very same statement as may, on occasion, be affirmed upon the basis of experience. There must be no question of allowing for 'It's ϕ -ing' to be true in the absence of experience by introducing a new sufficient condition for its truth, unconnected with its existing basis. This would merely produce ambiguity, so that what is required would not yet have been accomplished—sense has not been made of the idea of the very same state of affairs that is on occasion experienced obtaining in the absence of experience. Now, we can detach 'It's ϕ -ing' from experience, without pulling the concept apart, only if that in virtue of which 'It's ϕ -ing' is true is connected with experience by some condition which is sometimes, but not always, satisfied. The proposition 'It's ϕ -ing' will then be understood to entail that, if that condition is satisfied, it may be perceived to be true. In the formulation of the condition there lies a theory, or the form of a theory, of perception.

Provided that he is capable of telling whether or not this condition is satisfied, such a connection with experience allows Hero to give empirical content to the supposition that it is now ϕ -ing, irrespective of whether he currently

¹⁵ I do not mean to suggest that this is the way all concepts of the objective world originate; far from it. See pt. III below.

perceives that it is ϕ -ing. If it is true that it is now ϕ -ing, then it must be the case that if the condition is satisfied, he will perceive it to be ϕ .¹⁶

This, then, is what it is to 'make sense of' the idea of existence unperceived. And the requirement that Hero have a conception of the world of sufficient complexity to enable him to understand why what is perceivable should sometimes be, and sometimes not be, perceived will surely rule out some purported theories of the world of excessive simplicity. But have we any reason for thinking that it will rule out all the spatial theories; that 'the most familiar and easily understood sense' in which there exist unperceived phenomena is the only sense?

There are two kinds of explanation of why a perceptible phenomenon may not be perceived, if we exclude those that obviously rely upon spatial notions, such as the observer's being in the wrong position, or having the wrong orientation, or there being something in the way. There are those that cite deficiencies in the perceiver, such as that he is inattentive, unreceptive in the proper modality, unconscious, or asleep. And there are those which cite the absence of factors in the world which are causally necessary for perception, as the absence of light is cited to explain why we cannot see a table. For reasons which I try to explain in the next section, explanations of this second kind do not represent a very promising avenue for exploration, if we are trying to find a non-spatial way of making sense of existence unperceived. Very briefly: we can make sense of the idea of a *material* object or substance existing in the absence of conditions causally necessary for its perception, but we cannot do the same for sensory objects; a rainbow cannot exist in the darkness, even if, were there to be light, a rainbow would be visible. And it appears that, if our Hero is to think of his

¹⁶ Do not say: empirical sense has not been given to the supposition that *it is ϕ -ing unperceived*—i.e. that it is ϕ -ing and the opportunity to establish whether or not it is ϕ -ing is not taken up. All that can be required is that empirical content be given to the hypothesis that *it is ϕ -ing*, and in such a way that it may be the case that it is ϕ -ing unperceived. The supposition that *it is ϕ -ing unperceived* is one whose intelligibility is consequential upon such a way of giving sense to the simple supposition that it is ϕ -ing, but it is obviously not in its turn a supposition that needs to be given empirical content in the sense of conditions under which one can conclusively establish that it obtains.

experience as of a world, and this world is not to be a spatial world, it will be a world composed of phenomena analogous to our sounds, smells, and rainbows, rather than to our material substances.

But there does not appear to be any parallel reason why Hero should not make sense of the idea of unperceived sounds (or, more generally, phenomena) by thinking in terms of some block of unreceptivity in himself. 'Perhaps', he thinks, 'there are sounds which I do not now hear, because I am unreceptive; if I was to become receptive, I would be able to hear them.'

Let us suppose that this abstract form of a theory is filled out in the following way. Let us suppose that Hero's prior experience had been of the unceasing auditory sequence 'tick tock tick tock . . .', but that upon one occasion the sequence in experience had been 'tick tock tock tick . . .' Why should Hero not use ordinary canons of scientific inference (let us not enquire too closely into what they are) to hypothesize that there was a tick which he did not hear, and understand this hypothesis in turn by supposing that he must have been unreceptive?

The objection Strawson would make to the coherence of this scheme of thought must be gathered from the following extract drawn from the passage in which he discusses various ways in which we make sense of the idea of unperceived sounds:

Alternatively, they turn upon such an idea as that of failing sensory powers. But why do we think of our powers failing rather than the world fading? This choice cannot be used to explain a conception it presupposes.¹⁷

I am not at all sure what objection Strawson has in mind here, but perhaps it is this. 'If one asks oneself why, in any particular case, one supposes that one's sensory apparatus is defective, it is clear that such a judgement cannot rest only upon internal features of one's experience (e.g. hearing nothing, or hearing things fainter and fainter), since it cannot be logically ruled out that there should be nothing to hear, or that what there is to hear is getting fainter and fainter. A judgement that one's sensory apparatus is defective must

¹⁷ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

rest upon a view that this or that thing is there to be heard. Since the view that one's apparatus is defective ('this choice') must rest upon ('presuppose') a view as to what objectivity exists, it cannot be used to give the indispensable surrounding ('explain a conception') which the idea of what objectively exists was discovered to require.'

If this *is* the objection, then it appears wrong in principle. It is right to insist that all of the elements of the theory of an objective world should be present, but wrong to insist that they be independently intelligible. It is true that the idea of a perceptual breakdown presupposes the idea of an objective reality, and that, upon the envisaged scheme at least, the idea of an objective reality presupposes the idea of a perceptual breakdown (or lack of receptivity). The ideas form a circle, and any theory constructed with their aid will have a holistic character as a result. Propositions about how the world is will be derivable from propositions about the course of Hero's experience only when they are taken together with propositions about when he was, and when he was not, receptive, while propositions of this latter kind will in their turn depend both upon propositions about what Hero is (or is not) experiencing, and also upon propositions about what there is to be experienced. Hero must see the course of his experience as simultaneously determined by the way the world is and his changing receptivity to it; each is connected to experience, but only as modified by the other. All this is correct. What is not correct is that there is anything objectionable in principle in such an arrangement.

The best possible reason against objecting to such a structure in Hero's theory is that it can also be discerned in a spatial theory. In the modified version of a spatial scheme in the auditory universe, Hero can tell that he has changed position by the changing course of his experience, but only when this is taken together with a map of a fairly stable world. But that map, in its turn, can only have been established, and must constantly be revised, by Hero's adopting views as to where and when he is moving. (In the somewhat Cartesian setting of the auditory universe, in the absence of other subjects to whom Hero and his movements can be objects of perception, all it can mean for him to be at a position is for

him to perceive what is audible at that position.) The parallel between these two kinds of theories is not complete, since, in the place of an absolute notion of receptivity—present or absent at a time—the spatial theory effectively employs a relativized notion: receptive to (= located at) this or that position. But this greater complexity does not prevent its central concepts from having that interlocking character which would appear to expose it to Strawson's criticism, if that criticism was well founded.

In fact, a stronger point might be suggested, namely that it is not merely permissible, but positively necessary, for that condition which is to account for the presence or absence of perception to be connected *a priori* with, and therefore, known to be satisfied only upon the basis of, propositions about the way the world is. For it was precisely this feature of the revised spatial theory of the auditory world which secured for it an immunity to that simple phenomenalist reduction which threatened the master-sound theory. (In the master-sound theory, the subject's changing position is definitionally tied to a change in one phenomenally identifiable aspect of his experience.)¹⁸

Although each person in a large circle of people can be sitting upon the knees of the person behind him, this is not a feat which only two or three people can manage. Perhaps the objection is not that there is a circle in a theory relying upon deafness or unreceptivity to give sense to the idea of existence unperceived, but that the circle is too small. For, while it is true in the spatial theory that deciding whether or not one has moved (and therefore deciding whether a change in one's experience signals objective change at some given place) requires taking as given certain propositions about the way the world is, these are not the very propositions about the world whose truth one is required to establish, but rather propositions about how it is with adjacent places. (This reveals another part of the structure of the theory: the subject can only move continuously through space.) Of course doubt might be raised about the condition of these adjacent places, which could be resolved in the same way provided weight is shifted on to knowledge

¹⁸ I shall discuss the significance of this irreducibility below; see pp. 288-9.

of still other places; an indefinite series of such challenges could bring us back to the place from which we started. However, the theory, though interlocking, has enough structure to get off the ground; one who holds it can meet a challenge parallel to the challenge in Strawson's rhetorical question:

But why do we think our position changing rather than the world changing?

Compare this with the scheme using receptivity. Hero is supposed to be able to make sense of the idea of its now ϕ -ing unperceived by relying upon the concept of receptivity, and in particular, by supposing that, if he were now to become receptive, he would perceive ϕ -ing. However, this only gives content to the idea that a sound now exists unperceived if there is some criterion of Hero's now becoming receptive, other than his perceiving ϕ -ing. But what could it be?

Equally, Hero was supposed to be able to understand the hypothesis that there was an unperceived tick by using the supposition that he was unreceptive. But the past regularity in his experience cannot be regarded by Hero as conclusively establishing the hypothesis that there was an unperceived tick. If it does, this would not be because Hero had made the uniformity of nature a logical truth—no one could do that. It would simply be that he had established a new, and independent, sufficient condition for the statement that there is a tick, and therefore failed to give sense to one and the same state of affairs existing both perceived and unperceived. But, if the inductive considerations fail conclusively to establish the hypothesis of an unperceived tick, then Hero must be able to distinguish, at least in thought, between the case in which the regularity was perpetuated, and the case in which it was not. Here we should like Hero to be able to appeal to the counterfactual conditional 'If I had been receptive, I would have/would not have heard a tick'. But such a conditional is quite vacuous if the only possible conception that he can have of his being receptive at that time is simply that of being able to hear what is there to be heard.

Here, surely, are the materials for a possible line of defence of the Kantian thesis—a line of defence which rests upon the

idea that only a spatial theory can satisfy the demand that the factor accounting for the presence or absence of perception of perceptible phenomena should be at once *a priori* connected with the propositions about the world, and yet subject to significant empirical control. I shall not now pursue this line any further; to do so would involve the consideration of a variety of alternative schemes¹⁹ in a detail which is not perhaps commensurate with their interest. The principle of the argument should be clear, and if it is clear, we have perhaps derived such illumination of the role of space in *our* thinking as it is in the power of this, or any, defence of the Kantian thesis to afford. After all, as Strawson himself emphasizes, this is the object of the exercise.

Instead, in the remaining two sections, I want to turn to what must be a brief, and I fear rather dogmatic, consideration of the question of whether a coherent theory of an objective world can be constructed upon the basis of an experience that is wholly auditory, even when that experience exhibits whatever degree of order and connectedness is necessary for the subject to apply 'travel-based' spatial notions to it. There does not appear to be any concept parallel to that of matter or material substance which can be framed in the auditory universe. The first question I want to ask is: Can there be a world without substance?

III

It seems possible to draw a distinction between two kinds of properties which objects may have, though a complete elaboration and defence of this distinction would be a very difficult task. Into the first kind fall those properties which are dispositions to affect sensitive beings with certain experiences—these we might call *sensory properties*, or, in deference to a long-standing tradition in philosophy, *secondary properties*. For an object to have such a property is for it to be such that, if certain sensitive beings were

¹⁹ A spatial scheme is not the only scheme to employ a relativized receptivity condition, with the possibilities of additional empirical control which that provides; we can make sense, perhaps, of the idea of being *φ-receptive*, where receptivity is relativized to a universal. And there are other possibilities.

suitably situated, they would be affected with certain experiences, though this property may, in its turn, be identified with what we should normally regard as the ground of the disposition. However, in the first instance, a sensory property is a dispositional property.

It is not necessary for our immediate purpose to have any other characterization of primary properties than as non-sensory properties of objects. So defined, the class is extremely heterogeneous. What *is* important, though, is that the properties constitutive of the idea of material substance as *space-occupying stuff* should be acknowledged to be primary. These include properties of bodies immediately consequential upon the idea of space-occupation—position, shape, size, motion; properties applicable to a body in virtue of the primary properties of its spatial parts; and properties definable when these properties are combined with the idea of force (e.g. mass, weight, hardness). The way these properties relate to experience is quite different from the way sensory properties relate to it. To grasp these primary properties, one must master a set of interconnected principles which make up an elementary theory—of primitive mechanics into which these properties fit, and which alone gives them sense. One must grasp the idea of a unitary spatial framework in which both oneself and the bodies of which one has experience have a place, and through which they move continuously. One must learn of the conservation of matter in different shapes, of the identity of matter perceived from different points of view and through different modalities, and of the persistence of matter through gaps in observation. One must learn how bodies compete for the occupancy of positions in space, and of the resistance one body may afford to the motion of another. And so on.

To say that these primary properties of matter are theoretical is not to explain or to mystify, but to highlight an analogy between the way our grasp of them rests upon implicit knowledge of a set of interconnected principles in which they are employed, and the way our understanding of such a property as electric charge rests upon explicit knowledge of a set of propositions more familiarly regarded as a theory. Certainly, to deny that these primary properties are *sensory*

is not at all to deny that they are *sensible* or *observable*, for we are obviously able, after the appropriate training, to perceive the shape, motion, and hardness of things. The point is rather that it is not possible to distil the concept of hardness solely out of the experiences produced by deformation of the skin which is brought into contact with a hard object, for it is not possible to distil out of such an experience the theory into which the concept fits. It is no more possible to have a purely sensory concept of hardness than it is to have a purely kinaesthetic conception of what it is for one's legs to be crossed, or to have a purely muscular conception of the motion of one's body, or to master the concept of electricity solely by learning to recognize electric shocks. And, though this is less obvious, it does not appear to be possible to regard the conception of the shape of a material thing—with all the propositions about its characteristic behaviour and interaction with other bodies which that implies—as the same as whatever shape concepts might be grounded in the colour mosaic thought to be given in immediate visual experience. This would certainly seem to be suggested if we can demonstrate, as I believe we can, that the blind are capable of a perfectly adequate mastery of shape concepts, and of spatial concepts generally, for no single *sensory* property can be defined in relation to different senses.²⁰ Berkeley²¹ and Mill²² both saw this point but, constrained by a theory of concept formation that would not allow for the formation of ideas of any other than sensory properties, they concluded that these spatial concepts were sensory concepts, but related to the sense of touch as heat is. This is possible only by supposing that the concept of solidity is a sensory concept, as we have seen that it is not, and further, by supposing that the concept of the motion of the subject, and of the parts of his body, are concepts of kinaesthetic experience, which they are not.²³ I wish to stress my divergence from Berkeley and

²⁰ The issue of the spatial concepts of the blind surfaces again in pt. IV below.

²¹ Berkeley, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*.

²² J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London: Longmans, 1872), pp. 270-313.

²³ Further, any attempt to explain spatial concepts in this way runs into the objection that it only provides 'serial' and not 'simultaneous' spatial concepts. For this distinction, and the significance of the objection, see pt. IV below. For

Mill on this point in order to guard against a serious misunderstanding. The distinction we shall presently find between Hero's conception of his world and our conception of the material world, does not at all reside in whatever difference is to be found between auditory, and tactuo-kinaesthetic experience. On the contrary, it resides in the difference between a conception of the world which is directly and exclusively, and a conception of the world which is neither directly nor exclusively, woven out of materials given in experience.

I do not take myself to be saying anything new in drawing the primary/secondary quality distinction in this way, since it is almost exactly the way Thomas Reid explains the distinction in his *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*. Consider, for example, the following remarks on hardness:

When the parts of the body adhere so firmly that it cannot easily be made to change its figure, we call it *hard*; when its parts are easily displaced we call it *soft*. This is the notion which all mankind have of hardness and softness: they are neither sensations nor like any sensation . . .²⁴

. . . hardness is a quality of which we have as clear and distinct a conception as of anything else whatsoever. The cohesion of the parts of a body with more or less force is perfectly understood, though its cause is not: we know what it is, as well as how it affects the touch. It is therefore a quality of a quite different order from those secondary qualities we have already taken notice of, whereof we know no more naturally, than that they are adapted to raise certain sensations in us.²⁵

In the words of a recent commentator:

Reid tries to show that our concepts of certain primary qualities are bound up in an elementary theory of bodies, a natively given primitive mechanics. Since the primitive mechanics gives us various ways of telling when and where the primary qualities are present, then we can develop and apply these concepts independently of our having all the corresponding sensations.²⁶

Mill's wrestling with the issue of simultaneity, and his conclusion ('The idea of Space is at bottom one of time') see *ibid.*, p. 278-83.

²⁴ *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (ed. T. J. Duggan) (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 61.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁶ Norman Daniels, *Thomas Reid's Enquiry* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1974), p. xiv; see also chap. 4.

With such an excellent and detailed discussion to appeal to, I feel easier in giving nothing but a very brief sketch of the distinction.²⁷

All it can amount to for something to be red is that it be such that, if looked at in the normal conditions, it will appear red. This formulation embodies what we might call the dispositional route from subjective experience to objective property, a route with which we are already familiar.²⁸ Philosophers have tried to provide a different account of what it is for a colour ascription to be true which does not so much involve a different route, as an attempt to make the most direct possible leap from subjective experience to objective property. They have tried to make sense of the idea of a property of redness which is both an abiding property of the object, both perceived and unperceived, and yet 'exactly as we experience redness to be'. By concentrating upon one's experience of colour, one is supposed thereby to know what it is for an object to have this property: 'This', one is to say, referring neither to the experience nor to any primary property of the thing, 'this, just as it is, can exist in the absence of any observer'.²⁹

But the leap gets us nowhere, for it inevitably involves an attempt to make sense of an exemplification of a property of *experience* in the absence of any experience. Wittgenstein once imagined a world in which there were places which affected everyone painfully, so that pains were located at places in the way we locate smells. Suppose this fantasy came true. Would it then make sense to give a non-dispositional

²⁷ This way of drawing the distinction also echoes recent work; on the inter-connection between the primary properties and the idea of space see A. M. Quinton 'Matter and Space', *Mind* 73 (1964); on the idea of secondary qualities as dispositions to affect us with experiences see J. Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), chap. 4. I differ from Bennett in not making the dispositional character of the secondary qualities a matter of the meaning of sentences ascribing secondary qualities, but relying instead upon the obscure notion of that in which their truth consists. It seems decisive against any dispositional account of the meaning of such a term as 'red' that the only way to characterize the experience red objects produce in us is as such.

²⁸ See above, sect. II.

²⁹ See, e.g., J. L. Mackie, *Problems from Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), chap. I. Mackie regards such a concept as intelligible, and used by the common man, though in fact Mackie himself does not believe there is any scientific use for it. In these views he follows Locke.

account of what it is for there to be a pain at such and such a spot; to suppose a 'pain as we feel it' existing in the absence of any observer? What can the latter form of words mean save that something awful is going on there, and how can that be, when there is no one who is hurt? To modify a dictum of Wittgenstein, conceiving of a pain which no one feels upon the model of a pain which one does feel is none too easy a thing to do.

We may ask a philosopher who claims to find intelligible the idea of an objective property extracted from our experiences of colour in this direct way, whether or not such a colour property can characterize an object in the dark. He can hardly say 'Yes', since it would be quite obscure how a 'colour-as-we-see-it' can exist when we cannot see it, and how our experiences of colour would enable us to form a conception of such a state of affairs. Further, it would have to be explained in what the difference between such an objective colour property, and the dispositional property, consists. Observing the results or switching on the light merely tests for the dispositional property; what could show whether or not objects did in fact retain these other colour properties in the dark? To maintain, on the other hand, that such colour properties cannot be true of objects in an unlit cellar seems to undermine the status of the property to being an objective property of a body, since it seems to depend for its existence upon the conditions necessary for the human perception of it. Further, the concept is *said* to be different from a dispositional property but it is difficult to see in what a grasp of the supposed residue would consist. Presumably, it is conceivable that objects which are not really 'red-as-we-see-them' should appear red to us; indeed, this appears to be the situation Locke supposed actually to obtain. But what one conceives, when one conceives that objects which appear red to us are, in addition, really red, or are, in addition, not really red, and how one might manifest, either verbally or behaviourally, these supposed conceptions, is quite opaque.³⁰

³⁰ These remarks are equally directed against those 'hard nosed' philosophers who wish to maintain that 'science has shown that objects are not really red'. Such a position would equally require the *intelligibility* of a non-dispositional concept directly fashioned from experience, which I am trying to deny.

The idea that objects lose their colour properties in the dark suggests a diagnosis of the position—it suggests that it arises because philosophers are being led astray by their imaginations. We must suspect that the philosophers who claim to find intelligible an objective but non-dispositional colour property try to conceive of an object's possessing such a property in the absence of any observer by imagining a red object which no one sees—a feat of the imagination which is impeded if part of the imagined story is that the object exists in a pitch-black cellar. Now, if the conceivability of an object's having such properties in the absence of any observer comes to this, then Berkeley's arguments against taking those imaginings as at their face value is decisive. What, after all, is being imagined but experiencing a red object unseen by anyone *else*?³¹

In our world, auditory properties are sensory properties, and auditory phenomena are sensory phenomena, and since they are imagined to rest upon the same basis in experience, they cannot be different for Hero, who inhabits a purely auditory universe. For both Hero and ourselves, the truth of a proposition to the effect that there is a sound at such-and-such a position must consist in this: if someone was to go to that position, he would have certain auditory experiences, or rather, to bring out the force of the conditional, if some-

³¹ This argument is found both in Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 23, and in the first of the *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*. In general I take Berkeley to have been quite correct to argue against Locke's contention that we can form an idea of a world existing independently of observers out of the ideas of primary properties which Locke provided, since they remained sensory concepts. Cf. M. R. Ayers, 'Introduction' to *Berkeley's Philosophical Works* (London: Dent, 1975) '... the only case of conceiving a thing's intrinsic properties that Locke can suggest... is conceiving of its "primary properties", the ideas of which, as he himself holds, are acquired through sense. Thus the real issue between them [Locke and Berkeley] is whether we get, or could possibly get a sensory concept through which we could conceive of reality in a *sense-independent* way' (p. xliii). Reid saw that Berkeley was right about this, but thought that, rather than reject the material world, we should reject the poverty of the mechanisms of concept formation which the empiricists recognized: 'The very existence of our conceptions of extension, figure, and motion, since they are neither ideas of sensation nor reflection overturns the whole ideal system by which the material world hath been tried and condemned . . .' (op. cit., p. 79). Actually, Berkeley's idealism doesn't follow immediately, even within the empiricist framework, since there is the 'dispositional route' from experience to objective property which the phenomenologists later explored.

one was to go to that position, he would thereby be caused to have certain auditory experiences.³² But there is a difference, for we have, and Hero does not have, the resources to make sense of the idea of the persisting categorical basis or ground of that disposition, in the object, or at the place, to which it is ascribed. Unlike Hero, we have the concept of substance, of space-occupying matter, for we have the concepts of the primary properties of matter.

In order to make this difference clear, we must make another difference clear. Michael Dummett has drawn attention to the fact that, for every proposition which is true, we like to think that there is something that makes it true, and further, that we do not like to think that conditional propositions can be *barely true*, that is to say, we do not regard that in virtue of which a conditional proposition is true as specifiable only by a repetition of that proposition. Now, there are two different kinds of non-conditional statements in whose truth the truth of a conditional may be taken to consist, and therefore two different kinds of ground for a disposition. The first kind of ground is simply the generalization whose truth we normally regard as evidence for the conditional. Hero's propositions about the world, true in the first instance in virtue of the truth of a conditional, need not be regarded as barely true, for they can be regarded as having a ground of this kind; the truth of the proposition 'There is now a ϕ -sound at p ' can be regarded as true in virtue of the truth of the generalization 'Whenever in the recent past I have gone to p , I have had ϕ -experiences', or perhaps more complicated generalizations from which the conditional may be derived.

There is another kind of ground for a disposition, namely a relatively abiding property of the object to which the disposition is ascribed, capable of being characterized independently of the disposition, and therefore capable of providing, when taken together with the antecedent of the conditional (and perhaps certain other conditions understood as normal)

³² Since going to the position must produce the experiences if the place is to have the dispositional property, it is possible for Hero to make some sort of distinction between veridical and hallucinatory perception, the latter consisting of experiences which are not causally dependent upon his position.

a causal explanation of the occurrence which the consequent of the conditional reports. It is a ground of this kind which we suppose a disposition like fragility has in the arrangement and binding of molecules; more relevantly, we suppose that any disposition of a place to affect us with certain experiences has a ground of this kind in the occupation of that place by a matter of a certain sort. Now, Hero can have no idea of such a ground for the dispositions which places have to affect him in a certain way. He has no resources, or at any rate has not obviously been provided with resources, for forming the idea of any property of the world that is not a disposition of the world to affect him in a certain way.

It is important to appreciate the difference between these two kinds of ground for a conditional if we are to gain a proper understanding of phenomenalism. Sir Isaiah Berlin has objected to phenomenalism that it reduces categorical existence to the truth of subjunctive conditionals which are not, in their turn, grounded in anything else.³³ Dummett has replied, on behalf of the phenomenalist, that, provided he gives up bivalence for statements concerning material objects in remote parts of the world, there is no reason why he should suppose that any subjunctive conditionals are barely true, since he can maintain that propositions about the explored material world are true in virtue of observed regularities in our experience. But it is clear that Dummett is not offering what Berlin was missing, namely a ground of the second kind for these subjunctive conditionals—a relatively abiding property of an object or place which, together with a subject's presence, could be used to explain his experiences. Whether or not it is something that would or should worry the phenomenalist, Berlin certainly put his finger upon a deep conceptual prejudice of ours that is offended by dispositional properties without categorical grounds of the second kind. The sense of disquiet which we feel at the idea of two glasses which are exactly alike in all that is abiding, yet different in that if one is struck it will emit middle C, and if the other is struck it will not, is not at all diminished by citing the generalization upon which the proposition

³³ I. Berlin, 'Empirical Propositions and Entailment Statements', *Mind* 59 (1950).

may be asserted, namely, that whenever in the past one has been struck, it has emitted middle C, and whenever in the past the other has been struck, it has not. And this prejudice is equally offended by the idea of two places alike in what occupies them between visits, yet of which one is such that if one goes to it, one will have certain experiences, and the other is not.

This is just the situation that Hero must accept in his world; places have powers that cannot be identified with anything continuously occupying them, so that going to a place is just a basic, causally relevant factor in the explanation of the course of his experience. However, I do not want at this point to examine whether there is more to our resistance to such an idea than mere prejudice, but rather turn to this question: if this is the situation, can we continue to suppose that Hero has a coherent theory which incorporates the idea that he has experience of an objective world?

The notion of objectivity arises as a result of conceiving a situation in which a subject has experience as involving a duality: on the one hand, there is *that of which there is an experience* (part of the world) and, on the other, there is *the experience of it* (an event in the subject's biography). We have been exploring the consequences of this duality, especially the consequence that, though the temporal dimensions of these two elements overlap, they need not coincide. And, if the situation does comprise these two elements, they are not unconnected—they are not two distinct states of affairs existing simultaneously by accident or as the result of a pre-established harmony. Thus unconnected, the one could not be regarded as an experience of the other, as a way of gaining knowledge of it, and thereby, of the world of which it is a part.

Now, can these features be recapitulated in Hero's scheme—in a scheme where that in virtue of which the 'objective proposition' is true can only be generalizations about the past course of Hero's experiences? The answer is surely 'No'. We do not have two states of affairs existing simultaneously, and related causally. All that exists at the position is Hero and his experiences. The only cause of Hero's having those experiences on going to that position *is* his going to that position. That which makes the 'objective proposition' true

cannot be cited as a cause. If it is regarded as a barely true dispositional property of a position, then it is ineliminably characterized in terms which logically connect it to the event that is to be explained. It is no improvement to consider the 'objective proposition' not as barely true, but as true in virtue of the past regularity in Hero's experience, for the regularity can hardly be regarded as something which causes those events which perpetuate it, nor can it sensibly be regarded as something Hero *experiences*.

In fact, without ideas corresponding to our ideas of the primary properties of matter, Hero cannot make sense of the same thing existing both experienced and unexperienced, for he cannot recognize any unexperienced *existence* at all. It may hold good of a place when no one occupies it that *if* one was to go there, one would be affected with such-and-such experiences, but *that* patently does not report any contemporaneous existence, nor, when we inquire into its ground, do we discover any contemporaneous existence there either; all we have are generalizations. Hero is forced to think as the phenomenalist would have us always think, and the remark Berlin made about the phenomenalist's scheme applies equally well to Hero's:

. . . what troubles the plain man is the thought that if the hypotheticals are unfulfilled, if no observers were in fact observing, then, if the phenomenalist analysis is in fact correct, there was . . . nothing at all.³⁴

We can think of sounds as perceptible phenomena, phenomena that are independent of us, and that can exist unperceived, because we have the resources for thinking of the abiding stuff in whose changes the truth of the proposition that there is a sound can be regarded as consisting. A fly is moving its wings; this is an event which we perceive, partly in an auditory way, and which is naively regarded as the ground of the proposition that, if one goes into a certain room one will hear a buzzing. (More knowledgeable thinkers would locate the ground in the movement of the air molecules which

³⁴ Berlin, *op. cit.* This passage makes it clear that Berlin was lamenting the absence of a contemporaneously existing categorical ground for the hypothetical propositions.

these events produce.) And the event of a fly's moving its wings is not even in the first instance a sensory phenomenon; it is an event consisting in space-occupying objects, possessed of qualities characterized independently of observers, moving in relation to one another. The sensory phenomena we typically recognize are, in fact, properties of things or stuffs—persisting space-occupying substances—in whose primary qualities, or primary quality changes, the disposition to produce experiences may be regarded as grounded. It is these substances which we perceive as coloured, or as making a sound.

There is a passage in the chapter in which Strawson seems to be expressing similar thoughts:

It helps us to think of one particular M being drowned or submerged by the stridencies which intervene . . . ; and thus to think that they were there to be heard, would have been heard but for these stridencies. But now we have only to think of the reasons, the evidence, we have for thinking something like this in real life—the visible but inaudible scrapings of the street violinist as the street band marches by, and then we lose interest in the suggested criterion for the case of the purely auditory world.³⁵

We find here the idea that what enables us to think of sounds as being drowned out, and in this way, existing though unperceived, is the knowledge that their categorical basis—the scrapings—continues; this is, on the whole, the point I have been making. I would want to guard against the misunderstanding that might be involved in thinking of the scrapings as particularly *visible*, as though the difficulty could be surmounted by providing Hero with a richer network of correlations between his experiences. But the main idea is surely there, together with the critical equation upon which it rests: 'was there to be heard/would have been heard'. I disagree with Strawson only in that I go further, and see the difficulty he points to as arising for Hero in *any* attempt he makes at the idea of an unheard sound. Exactly the same background is necessary for making sense of the idea of a sound's existing unheard at a place; the place must be occupied by an object characterized in other than sensory terms, and in whose states and doings

³⁵ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

(scrapings) the existence of an unheard sound may be taken to consist.³⁶

This is the first respect in which I believe that Strawson does not provide the subject of auditory experience with a coherent conception of external reality—the conception is one constructed exclusively out of sensory concepts. However, even if it is now clear that such a conception of an independent reality is not possible, it may be less clear why the conception by a subject of auditory experience of his world must take this form. After all, I have stressed that our ideas of matter are independent of any particular kind of experience, for example, tactual experience. So why can there be no analogue to the idea of matter in an auditory universe?

The issues raised by this question are enormous, and I should not be able to deal with them in this paper, even if I knew how. If the hypothetical theory is to follow ours at all closely, sounds would have to *occupy* space, and not merely be located in it, so that the notions of force and impenetrability would somehow have to have a place, and we may well wonder whether we can make sense of this without providing Hero with an impenetrable body and allowing him to be an agent in, and manipulator of, his world. But perhaps this is the wrong line to pursue. Perhaps we should explore the possibility of a theory more closely analogous to the field theory of some physicists, or even a physical theory working on principles quite different from any we have knowledge of. Unsurprisingly, I cannot myself conceive of such a theory nor do I know how one might set about demonstrating its

³⁶ It might be worth pointing out that considerations similar to those of the present section bear upon the question of how Hero conceives of himself. Presumably Hero must be able to make sense of his *existing unperceiving*—located in space although asleep. In the first instance, Hero can understand such location in terms of dispositions: 'If I had been awake, I would have had experiences as of position *p*.' But if Hero's being at a position is to be cited in the explanation of Hero's experiences, when he does perceive the world, this disposition must have a ground which can be independently characterized, and this can presumably be found only in the occupation of that position by something which is identical with Hero, and, since it exists unperceived, something which is characterized by primary properties.

Strawson made a half-hearted attempt to provide Hero with an audible body (pp. 84-5) but, since it does not have primary properties, it does not meet the need here indicated.

possibility, nor whether a search for such a demonstration is even coherent. What I hope to have pointed out is the need for some physical theory over and above the ideas which Strawson attributed to his subject; not that such a supplementation cannot be provided. Though my conclusion is limited, I believe that it is worth drawing. For it is extremely tempting, upon first reading Wittgenstein's fantasy about locatable pains, to think: 'How simple! This is all that separates the inner from the outer—this is all that is required to make an object, and hence a world, out of experience.' Liberating and appealing though this thought may be, it does not appear to be correct.

IV

I shall raise the second doubt I have about Strawson's auditory 'universe' rather obliquely, taking as my starting-point a debate about the spatial concepts of the blind. For some centuries now, philosophers and psychologists have disagreed over whether and to what extent the spatial concepts of the blind are similar to those of the sighted. There have been those who have maintained that the blind do not, strictly speaking, have genuine spatial concepts at all; as Lotze puts it:

... the space of a blind man may not be so much what we mean by space, as an artificial system of conceptions of movement time and effort ...³⁷

This position is also taken by Platner:

In reality, it is time that serves, for the man born blind, as space. Remoteness and proximity only mean to him the time, more or less long, and the number, more or less, of intermediaries which he needs in passing from one tactual impression to another.³⁸

Occupying a middle position are those who agree that the distance concept of the blind is essentially a concept of the time and bodily movements necessary to traverse the distance,

³⁷ H. Lotze, *Metaphysic*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), pp. 272-3.

³⁸ E. Platner, *Philosophische Aphorismen* (1793), Vol. I, sect. 765, p. 439. Quoted in J. S. Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-4. The most extreme and dogmatic version of this position is found in van Senden's book *Space and Sight* (London: Methuen, 1960).

but who deny that in this fact there is any ground of difference from the sighted, since their spatial concepts have exactly the same feature. This is Mill's position.³⁹ And although I do not know of any text in which Poincaré specifically addressed himself to the question of the blind, he is committed by his general views on the concepts of space to occupying this position:

To localize an object simply means to represent to oneself the movements that would be necessary to reach it. It is not a question of representing the movements themselves in space, but solely of representing to oneself the muscular sensations which accompany these movements and which do not presuppose the existence of space.⁴⁰

The other group opposed to the idea that the spatial concepts of the blind are *to to caelo* different from those of the sighted accept that the only genuine spatial concepts are those that are instanced in an array of simultaneously existing objects, and thus that are paradigmatically applicable to a simultaneously presented array, but deny that such concepts are inaccessible to the blind. According to this last group, while it is true that the blind must receive information about the spatial arrangement of the world successively, it is possible for them to organize the information they receive into a form in which genuine spatial concepts are used, or to which they may be applied. This point has been made with particular reference to the haptic perception of an object like a chair, too large to be encompassed by the hand, but presumably the point would also apply to the blind man's conception of the room or city in which he lives. Revesz puts the point about haptic perception like this:

... But even when the details have been touched, the total form is not yet given. The parts which are touched must be finally unified in a total form, in a complete impression. This synthesis presupposes a specific constructive process which we see in the visual sphere only occasionally . . . Thinking and fantasy exert their effects together with intuition. The parts of a figure grasped haptically become fixated abstractly.⁴¹

³⁹ Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-86.

⁴⁰ *The Value of Science* (New York: Dover, 1958), p. 47.

⁴¹ Revesz, *The Human Hand* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 26.

It is difficult not to think of this synthesis in terms of the formation of an image, and this is the way in which Pierre Villey, a Montesquieu scholar who was himself blind, put the point:

The image which a blind man receives by touch rid[s] itself very easily of the characteristics which constitute the modalities peculiar to tactual sensation . . . The residue which it keeps, if it does not contain colouring which is absolutely foreign to tactile nerves, and if it be less rich than the contents of the visual image, may frequently not include any element which is not in the visual image, and may coincide very nearly with that.

He acknowledges that his tactual perception of the chair is successive while visual perception is simultaneous, but he goes on:

But if, an hour after feeling it, I search in my consciousness for the memory of the vanished chair . . . I do not reconstruct it by means of *fragmentary and successive images*. It appears immediately and as a whole in its essential parts . . . There is no procession, even rapid, of representations . . . I couldn't tell in what order the parts were perceived by me . . . What is the residue of this work? The limit towards which they tend, and which they appear to reach, is simply form.⁴²

I do not mean to engage in this fascinating dispute now, but to get a little closer to my objective by extracting from it the distinction between two different kinds of spatial concepts which it highlights. On the one hand, we have what I shall call *serial* spatial concepts—concepts explained in terms of the succession or sequence of the subject's perceptions, and any muscular or kinaesthetic sensations accompanying these changes, whether they arise from the movement of the whole, or merely part, of the subject's body. I shall call these concepts 'spatial', but in view of the scepticism that is to follow, neither this term, nor the corresponding term 'travel-based' ought to be taken too seriously. For, as Poincaré said, the 'movements' can be characterized in terms which do not presuppose the existence of space.

Distinguished from these are what I shall call *simultaneous* spatial concepts, a notion which is much more difficult to make precise. Perhaps we may characterize them as relational

⁴² Pierre Villey, *The World of the Blind* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1922), p. 183.

concepts the situation for whose most direct application is one in which the elements related by them are simultaneously presented or perceived.⁴³ Relative to this characterization, the dispute about blind men is a dispute about whether someone who has no capacity to make the most direct application of a concept *to the world* might nevertheless possess it, and how this possession might be manifested.

However exactly the distinction between these two kinds of spatial concepts is to be drawn, that there is such a distinction seems fairly clear. It seems fairly clear, that is to say, that there are two quite different ways in which, for example, the fact that three objects *a*, *b*, and *c* lie, in that order, upon a straight line might be established. Someone might be able to tell that the line connecting the objects was straight by means of the kind of bodily movement necessary to pass from one to another, and that *b* lay between *a* and *c* by means of the temporal relation between the experience of *a*, *b*, and *c*. On the other hand, someone who was able to see, might be able simply to *see* that such an arrangement existed. Equally, it seems fairly clear that we can identify, in these different ways of detecting spatial facts, the application of different kinds of spatial concepts, which have different presuppositions and which sustain different kinds of reasoning. Someone who had information given in, or stored with the use of, concepts of one kind, or in a form to which concepts of one kind would be directly applicable, would find certain problems easier, and certain problems harder, to solve than one who relied on concepts of the other kind.⁴⁴

Armed with this distinction, let us return to the auditory universe, and ask what kind of spatial concepts its inhabitant has been provided with. So far, in fact, Hero has a theory of

⁴³ In view of the discussion of the concepts of primary properties at the beginning of the preceding part, this characterization must in no way be taken to suggest that such concepts can be *extracted from* just an experience in which distinct elements are simultaneously presented.

⁴⁴ In fact, the distinction between serial and simultaneous spatial concepts is implicit in much of the psychological literature upon spatial perception and behaviour, especially since Tolman argued for the use of the notion of a *cognitive map* in psychological explanation. For an explicit use of the distinction see F. N. Shemyakin, 'Orientation in Space', in B. G. Ananyev *et al.* (eds.), *Psychological Science in the U.S.S.R.*, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Office of Technical Services, 1962), pp. 186-225.

perhaps excessive simplicity, since it concerns a space of just one dimension, in which distance is only measurable upon an ordinary scale. It uses just one primitive spatial concept—'x is between y and z'—and as it was introduced, the concept is serial or travel-based. What it *means* to say that x is between y and z is simply that an experience of x will intervene between any experience of y which is followed by an experience of z and conversely.

If we were to provide Hero with analogues to our more complicated spatial concepts, such as 'arranged in a square', 'forming a circle', etc.—something that would be necessary if we were able to contemplate a generalization to a two-dimensional auditory universe—then we should have to provide Hero with some way of estimating the passage of time, so that a notion of distance permitting measurement upon a ratio scale would be understood in terms of the time of normal travel. (The presence of the word 'normal' is to signal that the estimate of distance, like the estimate of position, would be subject to revision in the light of considerations from elsewhere in the theory, which would therefore retain its holistic character.) The notion of a straight line could then be defined in terms of the shortest distance between two points, but the scheme would presumably be practically unworkable unless Hero could make provisional judgements of the straightness of the path he was following upon the basis of 'bodily sensations'. (In a parallel way, our holistic scheme of reidentifiable bodies and places would be practically unworkable unless we had the ability to make provisional judgements of the identity of bodies by recognizing them.) We have not been supposing that Hero has these conceptual riches, but for present purposes it would not matter if we had, since his concepts of space would remain serial.

Now, whether or not a subject in an auditory universe could have a use for simultaneous spatial concepts is a difficult question, partly overlapping with the question about the spatial concepts of the blind which I mentioned earlier. But Strawson did not suppose that the subject in the auditory universe could, and it is this that gives me the ground of my disagreement. Strawson was quite well aware of the

distinction between the different kinds of spatial concepts, and he in fact elaborates an objection to his discussion which is based upon the premiss that the subject in his auditory world would not have simultaneous spatial concepts. However exactly it is that Strawson does deal with this objection he raises to himself, it is not by denying the premiss.

The objector Strawson imagines begins by pointing out that, in visual perception, we are simultaneously presented with objects in a seen spatial array:

. . . these simultaneously presented elements . . . are simultaneously presented as being related in another respect: viz. in a respect which leads us to characterize one as being *above* or *below* or to the *left* or to the *right* of another . . .⁴⁵

He then goes on to object:

But relations between elements in respect of the auditory analogue of the spatial dimension cannot be presented simultaneously, all at once. They turn essentially upon change.⁴⁶

When Jonathan Bennett discusses this objection, he says that Strawson treats it much too tolerantly. This is wrong; there is a deep objection to the serial nature of the spatial concepts of the auditory universe, and Strawson does not treat it at all. The objection which Strawson does answer, or rather, shows that he does not need to answer, is one to the effect that serial spatial concepts are not *sufficiently analogous* to our simultaneous concepts. But, *even as Strawson presents it*, the objection has a much deeper thrust, for it calls into question the claim that a theory couched in serial spatial terms can genuinely embody the idea of an independently existing objective world:

But surely the idea of the simultaneous existence of the perceived and the unperceived is linked with this idea of the simultaneous presentation of elements, each of a definite character, but simultaneously exhibiting a system of relations over and above those which arise from the definite character of each. Surely the former idea is necessarily an extension of the latter, is just the idea of such a system of relations extending beyond the limits of observation.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

And to this objection, which expresses the doubt I have been approaching by such a circuitous route, Strawson offers no answer.⁴⁸

Certainly, any theory using simultaneous spatial concepts does genuinely embody the idea of an independently existing reality, the idea of the perceived and the unperceived existing simultaneously, and in exactly the same sense. If *a*, *b*, and *c* are envisaged to lie upon a straight line, when what is envisaged is an instance of the simultaneous concept—a concept whose most direct application lies in a presentation of the three elements *a*, *b*, and *c* together—then *a*, *b*, and *c* must thereby be conceived to exist in exactly the same way. If *a*, *b*, and *c* are believed to exist in such an arrangement when *b* is perceived and *a* and *c* are not, then *a* and *c* are conceived to exist, though not perceived, in exactly the sense in which *b*, now perceived, exists.⁴⁹

It is just this idea of the simultaneous existence of the perceived and the unperceived that we illegitimately import into the auditory universe by misinterpreting Hero's serial propositions as simultaneous, for example, by crediting him with something like a *map* of the world in which the information about succession and sequence is synthesized into a unitary framework. Tempting though this further step of interpretation may be, there is no warrant for it. The serial spatial propositions are once again conditional in form: if such-and-such an experience is had, followed by such-and-such another, then an experience of still a third kind will intervene between them. If this is the stuff of which the theory is made, how can it register the existence of anything going on unperceived? Unlike simultaneous spatial propositions, serial spatial propositions are not at a level different from, and therefore potentially explanatory of, propositions about order in experience. Strawson's Hero does not have the resources to rise above the level of the explicandum.

This sceptical point must be put with some delicacy. It will not do to say: 'the fact that I will have an experience of

⁴⁸ More accurately: he offers no answer which he does not answer himself.

⁴⁹ Someone who thinks of time *spatially* pictures the time series as a totality any member of which could be observed from a position outside the series. Precisely for this reason to think of time in this way is to think of the past and future events existing in the same way as do present events.

b between any times I have an experience of *a* and of *c* (and vice versa) does not guarantee that *a* and *c* exist now, when, for example, I am perceiving *b*.' By speaking in terms of the experience of *b* etc. the trick has already been given away, and the scepticism can only be expressed in the unwanted, and possibly incoherent form: 'Why may it not be that *a* springs into existence when I come to have experience of it?' Nor will it do to say that, while simultaneous spatial concepts could relate things existing simultaneously, serial spatial concepts could relate things existing at different times. Once again this turns the objection into a worry about objects 'springing into existence'. The objection is rather this: because serial spatial concepts do not provide us with a way of thinking about simultaneously existing objects, they are not obviously concepts of relations between (independently existing) objects at all.⁵⁰

Against the background of this scepticism, the immunity of the 'travel-based' theory to a simple phenomenalist reduction takes on a new complexion. Any proposition 'spatially' relating specified, perceivable 'objects' is reducible in a straightforward way to a proposition about the sequence of experiences; such irreducibility as there is comes only when Hero introduces expressions referring to 'places' whose identity conditions are tied to the whole network of propositions previously mentioned, but to no one taken individually. But it is hard to believe that an ontology appropriate to a theory of an objective world is introduced by Hero's supposed version of 'It's ϕ -ing at position *p*', if it is not already involved in the propositions of the form 'It's ϕ -ing between where it is ψ -ing and where it is χ -ing.'

The situation is really no different from this. There is a group of currencies each actively traded against the others in a situation of floating exchange rates. The basic propositions for describing this system will be of the form '£1 = \$1.75 at the end of . . . day's trading'. But we can imagine the description enriched by the introduction of the idea of

⁵⁰ If the line of reasoning expressed in these paragraphs is correct, those who deny simultaneous spatial concepts to the blind are committed to denying that they have a conception of an independently existing reality at all, which is surely very difficult to accept.

the value of the £, something which is reckoned to be increasing, decreasing or constant by means of some averaging of its relation to all other currencies. Just as in the 'spatial' case, there is sufficient *de facto* stability in the relations between most currencies from day-to-day to provide the background against which it makes sense to discriminate those changes in the £-\$ exchange rate which are due to the pound's falling, and those that are due to the dollar's rising. Now, a proposition to the effect that the value of the pound has declined is not reducible to any one proposition of the form 'At the end of day d , £1 = n units of X currency, and at the end of day $d + 1$, £1 = $n - k$ units of X currency.' Such a proposition is not necessary, since X may be a currency moving down with the £, and it is not sufficient, since X may be moving up rather than the £ moving down.

If this does provide a parallel for the relation between the basic propositions of Hero's travel-based theory, and those which mention or quantify over 'positions', it is hard to take the theory's immunity to a simple phenomenalist reduction seriously. While a genuine theory of an independent reality will be thus irreducible, not every theory thus irreducible is a genuine theory of an independent reality.

It is a little surprising that Strawson does not treat the objection to his auditory universe which we have been considering with more understanding, for the point upon which it rests is one which Strawson himself emphasized in defence of the Kantian thesis:

... we must have a dimension other than the temporal in which to house at the present unheard sensory particulars if we are to give a satisfactory sense to their existing now unperceived ...⁵¹

... we want an analogy of distance—of nearer to and farther away from—for only, at least, under this condition would we have anything like the idea of a dimension other than the temporal in which unperceived particulars could be thought of as simultaneously existing in some kind of systematic relation to each other and to perceived particulars.⁵²

The objector is simply taking this point, and insisting that, if space is to provide this system of relations, it must be a space

⁵¹ Strawson, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

constituted by simultaneous spatial relations; that if Hero is to think of unperceived particulars existing simultaneously with, and in relation to, perceived particulars, he must have simultaneous spatial concepts, and not those that 'turn essentially upon change'.

I may have given the impression that I disagree with all the most important points which Strawson makes in his second chapter. But this does not seem to me to be so. As important as any point I have so far discussed is something implicit in the entire procedure of discussion, something implicit in what, if he would not shrink from such a word, might be called Strawson's methodology. This is the idea that the connections between the fundamental concepts of our conceptual scheme are central objects of philosophical investigation, and that exploratory pressure may have to be put upon these connections by imagining situations radically unlike our own. (Hero must not take on a life of his own, so that speculations about him are misinterpreted as speculations 'about what would really happen in certain remote contingencies'; Hero and his 'world' are devices for 'testing and strengthening our own reflective understanding of our own conceptual structure'.) As a model of how to pursue this essentially imaginative exploration, Strawson's chapter is unsurpassed.