

FALSEHOOD

AN ANALYSIS OF ILLUSION'S SINGULARITY

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PREFACE

Our conclusion occurred before the arguments that support it, and in this respect, our arguments are horribly biased at the onset. Although written by a single individual, they are our arguments because the arguments in this work are as old as philosophy. None of them are new, and many students of philosophy will recognize the originating sources, at times perhaps hearing the voices of those authors. Despite a lack of original argumentation, we have put these arguments to new use.

In these contradictory words, rather than presupposing the existence of objective deception or illusion or falsehood at the start, I sought an analysis of the reality of illusion on par with the analysis of the reality of reality. Particular attention is given to perceptual illusions because I assume that, through empirical illusions, illusions have been justified and given identity. After all, what is more certain than our history of perceptual error? The reader is asked to question this assumption, and although this is

similar to questioning perceptual certainty itself, the two questions are not identical. The resulting analyses nonetheless inform each other.

I am led to the conclusion that the concepts of illusion, falsehood, and objective error in general—for I carelessly lump these together and make little distinction—are intrinsically contradictory in nature. This is not to say that they are valueless or that none of these exist, but if they do, each must exist in a contradictory state, at least according to our classical conceptions.

Yet I continue to believe that true deception exists, just as much as truth itself, but whatever this deception is, it is not what we thought it was, nor is it any sort of deception or illusion analogous to perceptual illusion, for perceptual illusions are not deceptive or illusory at all. Deception is far cleverer than it has led us to believe, which, although expected from Deception, does not mean that we have caught Deception in the act.

CHAPTER 1. CONFLICTS

Who has not murdered an idea for true love? Our scholarly history is marked by crimes of passion, but surely you have committed no sin and sit wondering why I hold all of humanity accused. Innocent people, I presume, choose not to waste energy while waging battles against concepts. They recognize that the art of academic argument is merely a type of assassination and have sought more useful employment. Know that we thought-killers practice our art and science over hours and centuries, awaiting the moment when our loathed ideas are captured and strung up in preparation for the chopping block. On the block we can find satisfaction, but only the experienced executioner will strike cleanly through deep meat. Practice is necessary. A sign of life is failure.

But who truly cares for the thoughts of humanity beyond other humans? This second question I pose for the sake of balance and to show that no crime has been committed in the universal court. Our ideas will likely be extinguished along with the molten core of the earth in a cataclysmic event. If impatient while waiting for

nature's local demise, we may instead evaporate our physical selves with the aid of nuclear fusion, consume the environment down to the dirt, or lose the game we play against microbial organisms. The possibility and high probability of our eventual extinction must be calmly acknowledged before questions of value can be approached honestly. We will not go forward in time eternally. With this scientific thought one can begin an investigation.

I do not hope for an end of our line—we are having a magnificent run, one that I wish would continue for some time. You and I, fellow companion, are the primitive men and women of yesterday who will be looked upon with the nostalgia of simplicity by future minds. But we are also the society of tomorrow that breathes today, and although the ancient cultures lacked technological expertise and technique in art, I can while squinting see the same everyday struggles in our culture today. I half lie when I tell you my vision for these things is poor. The conflicts of aboriginal men and women are ostentatiously replicated in the metropolitan empires, and I assume that we have not inherited these problems from the ancient Greeks, nor from the first hominids who walked on two legs upon African plains. In fact, no creature at all is to blame for the current dilemma.

Our struggle, although manifest in the oscillations of history, originates from the fabric of the present. The present is to blame: like an electric power-plant it provides the voltage differential, generating the alternating historical current that is viewed as a periodic waveform of past events. We often fault poor memory for today's mistakes, but history does not repeat itself because it is forgotten—how can memories removed from existence or left in the past have influence upon the present? Admittedly, over finite time periods, recurrence of a forgotten history may randomly

occur with infinitesimal probability, but this repetition would be a statistical fluke and should not be expected to occur again in a world of infinite possibilities. Rather we conclude that history repeats with regularity because it is remembered all too well, that those who should have forgotten the past have not done so, and that those who do remember take action to repeat it. Thus every repetition of history has its origin in the presence of the present, today, right now. Assign biological blame if you must, but never conclude that the human species failed in the past—it fails only as we speak, this moment and each moment next.

Psychoanalytic theory may help us here. A self-tortured being repeats its patterns of self-destruction for the same reason that nations separated in space-time repeat silly conflicts of moral aggression: the present is perverted at its core. But perverse is a poor word to use. More clearly I mean that the present is shaped, connected, and colored in a way that generates cannibalistic behavior; put another way, the Freudian repetition of the mind applied to a universe that consumes itself.

One might assume that our neurotic galaxy is helpless, destined to tumble and stumble along the well-worn path of the pathetic; or one might also conclude that the galaxy is a well of infinite potential simply waiting to burst forth. Both alternatives sound about right, or neither, yet whatever the world's course, humans are woven into this universal weave realizing our existence as an aspect, a part, a twist in the void; we are threads of a tense cloth covalently bound and held captive in a tapestry that simultaneously grants our only possibility of freedom.

And I speak of freedom, but of all assumptions please do not presume that we possess freedom or awareness or conscious choice. These treasures, like the native's land, are owned by the universe itself and cautiously loaned out with an expectation of

return. Viewed with planetary eyes, aware experience is a physical singularity that hides a turbulent distortion of cosmic geometry. From this galactic perspective I am a prolonged instant of sudden impact where sight and sound are continuously forged in an electromagnetic fire.

The grand idiocy of existence has been eroded first by symbolic forms of expression, then further by particles, and now through the proliferation of televisions and simulated environments. I see in star formation a sublime tale of molecular dust as it accretes to form a dynamical orb in violent hydrostatic balance, a near perfect self-sustaining conflict between gravitational potential and nuclear explosion that ignites the night sky like the blinding eye of a God betrayed. Our phenomenological experience deserves at least an equal story of temporal formation and destruction. Just as a star can only be understood in the processes that create, sustain, and then destroy stellar structures, our awareness cannot be comprehended outside of a subtle sequence of constructive interactions, knowledge of competing physical forces, and an appreciation of the boundary conditions that yield conscious solutions.

Let us prepare for the day, the day after the idea of illusion, when knowledge of knowledge formation is known. On this sentient morning the world will be propelled into a hallucinogenic transformation. Fearful beings will hold on more and more tightly to previous simplicity, and the fragile who cannot find safety will fragment into noise, while the worshiping relativists will fall deeper into a welcoming hole, smiling, scholarly accepting identity-diffusion as a perfect, perverted reality. And most of us will select to become half-blind—the sensible response when forced to look into a sun. A society exposed to truth must choose delusion in order to persist.

THE MORAL ENGINE AND DUALITY

How can I write the words religion or science and expect you to understand what I mean? These words float around my head without definite form, evoking an electric symphony of memory and idea that changes with each separate exposure; but despite each word's fluidic effects, they reliably ignite theories and experiences that explain my aggregate life. I know that you, in part, can share in this understanding. Nothing aggravates (saddens?) me more than the proliferation of arguments that begin from an observation of uncertainty, of honest empirical ambiguity as above, where the authors, rather than attempt to understand the nature of this ambiguity, choose to revel in alleged ignorance.

I too wish for a world abundant in uncertainty—I envision suicide without—but equally, I desire to tame whatever ignorance I can. Show me your rulers and gravitational metrics; I will use them to quantify the distance of my thoughts. But where in philosophy are the robust measures of distance? I have no desire to make binary distinctions within worn-out categories, nor do I wish to run away from measurement by denying the procedure all-together.

As our foundation in distance comparisons has dissolved, it has become rational to say, for instance, that the distance between Truth and modern cosmology is equivalent to the distance between Truth and Aristotelian cosmology. But we are not Truth, and we cannot compute any distance involving this term, and as a substitute, as an approximation of Truth, you, the individual, must insert your world-theory-experience into the distance formula. Upon honest computation you should find a non-zero distance between every conceptual system and yourself. This is not a failure of the theory, the religion, the philosophy—

you are not identical to any of these, but neither are you completely distinct. Positive distance need not imply complete rejection, and if the theory is understood at all or evokes meaning then the theory cannot be infinitely distant from you.

Let me incompletely distinguish for the moment between my meaning of Truth and the binary conception of true. True and false as they are used in casual conversation over dinner, in serious philosophical discussion, and in computer programming are binary outcomes; they are the result of a categorization procedure that begins with a given object of unknown a priori form that when arbitrarily processed produces an outcome of zero or one. To understand the principle mystery of binary truth you need only grasp how a computer can differentiate images of cats from non-cats or detect collisions in a video game. The algorithm, the process, beginning with uncategorized data, transforms this data with a mapping that yields one or zero where the mapping carries a given label that indicates the category of the binary output to us. We function similarly. Linguistic propositions couple to categorization procedures whose truth output is dependent upon the world-theoretic experience of the particular being. Creatures possessing care and subtlety understand that the full continuum of values between zero and one are acceptable outcomes—we call these processes probabilistic; they understand distance.

Unbinary Truth, the conceptual Truth that drives history, has almost nothing to do with propositions, predicates, or categorical assignments. This Truth is as much force as matter, and I fantasize that the philosophico-religious endeavor arose from a fundamental moral tension: a world that *ought* to be composed of Truth, and simultaneously, a present that *is* dominated by Illusion and Untruth. In Buddhism, Zoroaster, and the Greeks we see a present composed of deceit, lies, and illusion that can only

be untangled by embracing strategic methodology and belief. Our first assumption was, and still is in some quarters, the obligation to Truth within the actuality of Illusion.

Acting synergistically the two primeval axioms of world philosophy-religion unleashed a cyclical juggernaut of exploration that has excreted libraries of residual thought. Still, present ideology and practice have not congealed into concrete form, and no system of belief dominates the universal mind. Instead of a singular Truth, philosophy has generated a collective of ideas that have reproduced with mutation where each idea survives through conflict in partial and perverted form. As a dominant species of idea does not empirically exist, philosophy, taking this observation seriously, began to abandon the first of its axioms: the belief that fixed Truth can or ought to be found. With the fundamental assumption of philosophy colliding against the undeniable empiricism of the present, the only work for philosophy to do was to buttress its simultaneous assumption—the reality of present Illusion.

Skeptics and relativist have been around since the beginning, but they did not always possess the technological fruits ripened over millennia of failure and the untamed safari of competing ideas. Today, armed with these rational perspectives birthed in the quest for Truth out of the force of Truth, many have concluded that all is Illusion. These meta-empirical skeptics of today deny invariant Truth of any sort and dare not construct foundations that will be shortly torn down. Too many have failed before. Too many have been ridiculed on the playground of future ideas.

But the axiom ‘present is illusion’, by itself, exerts no force. Without an *ought* to Truth the engine runs down, thus to continue forward philosophy has switched from anabolic to catabolic processes. Our stored knowledge has become fuel. And

while the critiques of the meta-empirical skeptics may open pathways for future thought, the dissipative dynamic, value structure, and dogma of the group prevent any significant movement from within. Uncertainty, absurdity, and non-structure are worshipped, generating a new homeostasis of comfort for those who see only a world of unfathomable variety. But the stability of this equilibrium is not given, and their comfortable ignorance suffers from unrelenting hunger, for it is not a particular position, belief set, or value that creates comfort, but the *process* of elucidating new ignorance and uncertainty. Rather than discovering a novel means to produce heat—the dream of cold fusion—we are now standing in an intellectual field of dry straw where warmth grows in proportion to the spread of a consuming wildfire. Soon the fire will be burnt out, the straw consumed, and what remains will be cold, dark, and anxious once again.

ILLUSION

Unchallenged, Illusion has occupied the place of Untruth for too long. While Reality has been slashed and beaten by the skeptical whip, Illusion, being slyer by nature, has slipped from the claws of otherwise able intellectual predators and now hides upon hallowed ground. Under Illusion's domination from afar, our state of knowledge is a small child that trembles in darkness, starving, who frantically searches the floor for pieces of decaying carrion that do not exist. Oh look, we found nothing yet again! We are tired of empty stomachs and cold nights, and our beds, which ought to keep us warm, are occupied by a foreign body—Illusion's—who lies awake under our sheets with an evil grin.

Illusion cannot lead us to Truth. Truth would annihilate Illusion—what respectable torturer offers the means to his own destruction?

“How can we defeat you?” we ask.

“There is a pure dagger, but it is hidden in the dark. Only this dagger can defeat me. Search harder,” spoke Illusion.

Thus the torturer tortures us not with flail or whip, but by forcing us to squirm in darkness upon mere command. Fearful puppets we are, amusement for a cunning idea, and I am quite serious about the carrot-like appearance of truth suggested by Illusion. Whatever forces us forward does so for its own survival alone. Like in nature, the force of gravity works only to perpetuate that gravity by attracting more matter, and the electromagnetic force of the photon eternally oscillates, repeating itself until annihilation or collision. Illusion, materialized as the force toward a comforting Truth, reproduces only Illusion after all accounting is done. As long as we believe in this Illusion we are guaranteed to run around in academic circles, finding submissive arguments that take us back to the Illusion that initiated the search.

We will search no longer at your bidding, dear Illusion. Your secret is loose...you have no relation to Truth at all.

RESTFUL SLEEP

There are many reasons to fear the nighttime—a decrease in the number of photons striking your neighborhood is not one of them. Blackness is not evil, and even the man who looks outside his window at night and sees demons crawling through the treetops is a fortunate soul. His world is alive with hell-spawn phantoms and naughty faeries while mine is barren and dry. It would be a mistake to assume that the man wishes to rid his

perception of evil spirits—perhaps he has nothing more and desires nothing less? Without this fantasy he would be an empty shell, alone, waiting for the next delusion to crawl inside his head and take residence.

When the succubus is upon you, or under the bed while you dream, I hope that you will still sleep deeply throughout the night. And once you awake, rejoice as the light becomes a perception and then a memory. It matters not if the light outlines demon or angel. Your senses, your perceptions, and your meaning are never illusion for even a moment. There is no reason to fear demons as Descartes did. Should the demonic creature have the power to manipulate the gray moist tissue within your skull, or pervert your electrical patterns of mental sense and cognition, you need not fear deception. All of your parts and all of the universal mechanics and equations are functioning precisely to specification. The total setup that includes your mind coupled to the demon's interaction with your mind establishes your perceptual experience—as it is supposed to be. Both demon and mind operate how they must, producing the only perception possible given the complete condition. Not deceptive nor determined; simply abiding by the atemporal constraints of the moment.

Descartes provides the solution to his deceiving demon before he finishes the story of the problem. If my perceptions and senses are a product of a malicious demon, then I can rest comfortably knowing the source of my vision. All that remains is the science of the matter. How does this demon interfere with my sense? What sort of technology does he possess, or is he imbued with a biological organ that interacts with the minds' of other creatures? Above all I wish to meet and understand this demon. I will ask it why it seeks to play with us and if all of its kind possesses the same desires. Should it not listen then we will fight. I mock the philo-

sophical depth of this exercise, for I see no inextricable darkness and dread in the situation, nor am I propelled to seek the foundation of all knowledge. Rather I wish to understand the demon Descartes speaks of and its relation to my perceptions.

1

I see little epistemological difference between an ethereal Demon that creates an object's perceptual parts and a self-unified, unknowable object-in-itself that causally generates the exact same set of sensations. For each hypothesis, the set of possible perceptions are identical and the mechanisms unknown; the difference between them arises from a theoretical transformation. Under the first hypothesis, a Demon creates perceptions; under the other, an innocent object. The difference is not one of deception, but rather one of purpose. We morally scold the Demon who purposely influences our perceptions for play, while an unaware object-in-itself that does the same but presumably without selfish intent is left off the hook. Perhaps, as some say, our objects-in-themselves conceal their true-natures, projecting distorted versions of themselves to we helpless humans—is not the object then an evil-deceiver as well? You will say that the object can do no other, but then, perhaps the Demon can do no other...who knows.

2

Although different worlds may logically manifest the exact same set of perceptions, the philosophical difference between these equivalent perceptions, at least upon Cartesian understanding, is one of construction, of mechanism. We are uncertain as to how our perceptions are created or explained. I grant you this uncertainty, but it has nothing to do with deception or

mistrust. We may also be uncertain whether we are dreaming or not, meaning, uncertain as to whether our perceptions arise from external sources or from internal construction. The perceptions themselves do not deceive; rather, we question their particular path and mechanism of creation.

We routinely entertain different theories of explanation for assumed constant observables—we have done this for fire, for gravity, for superconductivity and any other characteristic that we can pin down long enough to talk about. For Descartes, that constant of discussion is perception itself, and he discusses possible theories of perception's mechanism: dreams, evil Demons, and I assume hypothetical real objects or a benevolent spirit. From these possible theories he concludes, implicitly:

Since I am uncertain how perceptions are created or explained, I do not know anything that involves inference from these perceptions.

To include more of Descartes' thought, you may replace perception with the words belief, cognitive state, or some combination, for these may be caused by demons as well. His conclusion implies, generally, if one does not understand everything about one's objects of discussion already, including their causal genesis and complete explication, then no certain knowledge can be gained by further inference using those objects at hand. For example, in the future we may conclude that gravity is explained differently than it is now. This change in understanding implies that all other inferences, based upon an outdated understanding of gravity in the past, become instantly suspect. Whatever you thought gravity was, it is not, and whatever conclusion you made using those old concepts must be false or at least incomplete. The only way to avoid future disruption and secure knowledge is to reduce possible uncertainty to zero regarding the topic in question. Here is another way to put it:

1. If something X can be explained in multiple ways, then inference Y based upon X is uncertain.
2. Something that is uncertain is not knowledge.

I'm not sure what knowledge is, but it is certainly possible that uncertainty leads back to certainty. Probabilistic central limit theorems rigorously suggest how this might be. Quantum theory similarly suggests that determinate perceptions may be constructed from indeterminate entities. Descartes lived prior to a robust probabilistic theory and could not have appreciated probabilistic objects or their contribution to knowledge on the whole. In some sense, the meditation is a manifestation of latent probabilistic processes that desired escape.

3

Why do you suppose Descartes feared the demon? He did, this is certain, but his fear was not born of illusion or evil or even galactic doubt. Descartes feared first his loss of freedom at the whip of a mental torturer. If the perceptions of the mind are hopelessly dependent upon a demon's longing and desire, then one should conclude that self-control, self-ownership, and solitary self lose all meaning. The perceptual self becomes a whim of another, and thus Descartes found a reason to still believe in freedom even under mental dominance—an unshackled 'I' that retains the ability to *freely* think.

But we can build other paths to freedom. Why not accept your perceptions as they are, embracing the demon's torture while asking for more? The demon only enjoys its play while you scream and resist, and otherwise it will bore and seek another. Are you listening to us you creatures of hell and mind-controlling super-aliens and demigods? Create whatever perceptions and meanings and *thoughts* you want for us. We are your prisoners

and play-things trapped in your simulation without the hope of escape. The awareness you give us will be cherished, accepted, and remembered despite; even if that acceptance is only a consequence of your desire. And if one day you bore or sleep too long, perhaps one of us will understand your creation and open new doors for the rest of us. With or without you, *This* is our objective, definitive, and timeless reality.

4

Descartes, like so many of us, was driven by a desire to remove doubt. Yet why would one attempt to annihilate an entity like doubt unless one first believed that uncertainty itself warrants destruction? We have here an unavoidable value judgment driving the meditative process. Deception of the senses is assumed to be morally reprehensible, so much so that as the meditation advances, the moral core of the argument manifests as an expectedly evil demon, a demon that is evil only because it deceives and controls our perceptions—what other distasteful properties is the demon given aside from a penchant for human deception? The opposition to a non-deceiving God is too much evidence to deny the moral fueling of the birth of modern epistemology.

The meditation originates from the moral tension between the evil of uncertainty and the goodness of certainty, climaxing in the confrontation between a deceiving demon and Descartes' thinking. But let us not take these characters too literally. If I place the combatants, demon and thought, on the same playing field, the structure of the situation appears to be the ageless conflict between external control, a character played here by a deceiving master, and internal freedom played, in a legendary performance, by free thought. Nietzsche, more clearly, recognizes the conflict between external control and internal freedom,

dubbing a system's lustful expansion of freedom the will to power; a concept that assumes as a premise external forces working to subdue that will. He also recognizes that the issue is a question of value rather than confusing it with a quest for knowledge.

Permit me to replace Descartes' doubt with the concept of Evil and certainty with that of Good, for in the meditation, doubt and certainty are respective synonyms for Evil and Good. Under this transformation you will find that the essence of the meditation remains invariant, and the final conclusion becomes an obvious consequent of the premise. Descartes is filled with the Evil of doubt, this he knows, and he tries, diligently, to search his insides for the smallest remnants of Good. He assumes that man cannot be all-Evil, especially not a follower of God, thus some Good must be found hidden within himself. Yet Descartes can imagine that if a deceiving God—an Evil God—ruled the universe, then possibly everything, included Descartes, could be composed entirely of Evil; thus he concludes the existence of a Good, non-deceiving God to establish the possibility of Good within himself. All is not finished, for Descartes anxiously recalls that his mind is packed full with the Evil of doubt, and through nearly circular maneuvers, carves a small space in his visual cortex to house a fragment of God's Good.

I am not interpreting a text when I tell you these things, nor do I presume to know what any man or woman actually means. Through a simple substitution, when I replace two terms with two others, I find that the meaning of the piece is relatively preserved to me. In other words, one can statistically explain the majority of the variance in meaning with moral terms, and although not exactly the same, the significant correlation between moral and epistemological readings is evidence enough for a person more interested in relational distances above binary fact.

In transforming moral matters into an almost secularized quest for scholastic knowledge, Descartes made possible an academic field of philosophy that has separated from religion and value. During his day, religious dogma did not allow Descartes to question the Good directly, and to his genius, he slyly side-stepped his oppressors via a coordinate transformation of terms—should we expect less from the mind that created analytic geometry? He freed the quest for knowledge from the constraints and assumptions of moral dogma, but this academic separation does not imply that the quest for knowledge and the quest for Good are different. Our modernized, purified pursuits of knowledge are still, in the Scholastic tradition, the pursuit of value or God, regardless of the name you choose for your field.

5

In more pragmatic states, one fears of Descartes' demon its interference with our imagined intimate relationship with individual perceptions. It is assumed, I think, that each perceptual situation occurs in some sort of isolated room that is hermetically shielded from perturbing forces, outside of which nothing has relevance or impact. Or rather, each perception is thought to have deep significance and meaning in isolation, and that talk of particular perceptions correspond to the building blocks or atoms of experience. The demon through its influence violates this first assumption of intimate phenomena, magnifying the complexity of our experience and perception beyond simple comprehension. Do you think that man, knowing she needed to consider the manifold of every possible perception in order to fathom just one, would have even attempted the effort?

The independence and significance of perceptions is a simplifying assumption that helps us generate approximate answers to the intractable problem of existence. A physicist knows well the short cuts she takes to make even simple calculations—she is required to do so only too often, and independence is often the first. Thus the simplifying approximations that philosophers employ to understand linearized questions of Knowledge and Love must necessarily disfigure the original intuitions beyond any recognizable form. Language is always an approximation...of what?

Fortunately there are no illusions, demonic or otherwise, yet faith in illusion is as difficult to dissolve as faith in truth, for each has been mistaken for the other. As quickly as Kant, too, saw that perceptual illusion was impossible; he contrived a new and improved replacement, a transcendental illusion belonging to reason that was necessary to support his truth. Let us just say that for some people ‘illusion’ possesses no explanatory power and merely represents the memory of past beliefs being replaced by modern answers to old questions. Every scholar proclaiming that some object is an illusion means, more humbly, that his personal beliefs on the matter have changed. He was confused before but now sees clearly, and so can you, so long as you abandon your previous truth for his.

Illusion demands multiple judgments, a constant question, and nothing more. When someone acquires a present belief that contradicts a belief of old, he has already compared the two. The comparison process itself unconsciously erects truth and untruth, reality and illusion. With maturity new beliefs become true and the old transform into illusion, yet it is easy enough to speak in a language without deception. Different judgments evolve in the context of different states and processes where each judgment can be understood in the environment that surrounds it. As an

organism and environment change so too can judgment, but those judgments need not change as a binary switch with the pulse of truth. Illusion, if anything, is the residual molt left behind after perceptual and theoretical growth.

Examples are numerous, simple, incomplete, and informative. A tree under the night sky differs from the tree in the light of our sun—when the sun rises does that tree appear finally in its true form for all aware beings to behold? We may, as I repeat, explain the difference in terms of context. The increasing number of photons as night transitions to day brings with it the perception of sharper and brighter colors, but a being that is colorblind will not experience this as you or I. And we 3-color based beings, with color vision intact, will not appreciate the depth of beauty felt by creatures who see the full electromagnetic spectrum reflected in each piece of matter. To these creatures all men and women are colorblind. Nor do even these great beings see the truth of the tree, at least not until they can see the tree as do humans, squirrels, rocks, etc.—Truth of the tree requires at least that it is understood in every possible way.

Error, like illusion, has been mistaken for negated truth. We all err—I know I have done so in grammar already—but each error is nothing apart from the given constraints and expectations that allow the error to be noticed. I leave modifiers dangling. I create ambiguous reference. In mathematical manipulation, I have abandoned symbols on the previous line and have inserted numbers without history. Commit too many errors and we will not talk of error but instead calls these moves nonsense: they become run bowl quising and $+ \%2(2$. When we expect meaning but receive noise, we cry foul. The pieces do not fit.

Error is noticed, pragmatically, by the absence of a desired goal; idealistically, by the absence of a desired meaning, and analytically, by the violation of an axiomatic logical constraint. Absolute error plays no part except for impossibility within our two great systems, Physics and God. They share the bond of temporal perfection; neither commit dynamical errors, and it is no coincidence that Physics has partially displaced God, for both concepts have approximately the same moral meaning. As one travels away from the Physical or God toward the ethereal and beyond, one begins to realize that the systems we care about most care little for perfection and seek only self-understanding.

6

Descartes' demons are not the eternal enemy of man. They are participants, like us, in the only world that can be for us. Let the evil creatures of the galaxy contribute to the shape and velocity of our perception, for their being is just as important as our own. Welcome the angels in light and darkness, too. Together we will run around in partial confusion and understanding, sharing our discoveries, each determining what the other perceives. As the interaction between creatures becomes more intertwined in recursive relationships, old confusion may begin to feel like understanding, creating new confusion as residual. We can continue to believe in the mystery of a raw Truth that has nothing to do with propositions or theories. The process has room for illusion if you desire it, but the illusion will not illuminate truth or what it means to be in error except in miniature worlds where the axioms are given. In the act of changing beliefs we may draw closer to truth and grasp that the wise being is not someone who has woken up, but one who continues to wake up again and again each moment until her energy expires.

ILLUSION'S FORMATION

To understand the present confusion of Illusion, it will be helpful to analyze the birth of Illusion as a concept. I assume without proof that Illusion, as it manifest in language, arose first in the idea of sensual perceptions. Ancient man, and perhaps animals as well, would have identified visual illusions, for instance, first by the feeling of surprise elicited on witnessing a perception that conflicted with expectation. Without scientific theory or even advanced language, a hominid who submerged a branch into a clear river for the first time would have reeled in curious surprise. She had always perceived the branch, and similar branches, as straight when holding them in the air, but now, when placed halfway in the water on a bright day, it appeared to be bent. She would reach into the water to touch the branch, and notice that her fingers made contact with the branch exactly where it appeared—there was nothing to be touched when she swiped her hand underwater in the area she expected a straight branch to be. And, upon pulling the wet branch out of the water, it happily appeared straight once again; repeating the submersion would repeat the complete set of perceptions as described.

The image of the bent branch underwater, as the perception that opposes prior expectation and common experience, *becomes* the anomalous perception, the deception of the senses to one day earn the name illusion. It is only noticed as extraordinary because bentness does not blend in with the expected scenery. Although the illusion is firm, it does not require our past perception of the straight branch to be true, or real, or even societally shared. Without knowledge of the reality of objects, physical

theory, or even language; the experience of illusion exists and is established by little more than a prior set of expectations coupled to modest computation.

A differential error is the key feature of illusion, an error of the sort found in statistics, control engineering, and optimization algorithms. Mathematically minded individuals with a penchant for practical applications know that an error signal, rather than suggesting an epistemological conflict with reality, represents only an honest difference between what is observed and what is expected. Expected can mean many things, and what I intend here is, approximately, a waiting to occur, or conditioned to become a particular experience. The inexperienced individual will expect a hard wooden branch to appear straight in all situations, and when a perception conflicts with this expectation, one will label the deviant perception a fundamental distortion of reality. But reality has nothing to do with what I just said. Illusion originates as a conflict between expectation and new judgment. Nothing else need be added.

First contact with a perceptual illusion can be understood in two parts: 1) an expectation, and 2) an observational judgment that is inconsistent with that theoretical expectation. And by theory I do not mean anything as glamorous as quantum mechanics or evolution; I have in mind something more general—a personal set of random variables that may take on values, the relations between those variables, and constraints for the possible collection of values. A perceptual evaluation that violates a theoretical constraint is enough to establish the authenticity of illusion, an actuality that represents the objective violation of our preconceptions but whose greater significance may always be put

into question. In this way, our illusions differ little from the errors in commercial computing, and each may herald an imminent crash.

Let me offer you a game. Suppose you were given one thousand photographic pictures of objects from an alien land, and I asked you to sort these pictures into two piles, one that contained pictures of real objects and the other of illusionary, digitally-distorted objects. Now suppose two pictured objects are shaped exactly like apples, except one apple-like object is deep blue while the other is red. On what ground could you claim that the real apple-like object, coming from an alien land, is red and not blue? Could not apple-like fruits be blue if grown or synthesized on alien soil in alien light? Or perhaps both are actual varieties of apple in this distant land, or perhaps neither. You might assume that memories here, on earth and within recent geological time, are representative of experiences one might have on this alien world, but that is speculation, for perhaps even the physics are different between worlds. If the pictures are truly alien making little connection to earthly matters then your sorting can do no better than chance.

There are other ways to present this thought experiment, such as to technologically erase one's memory or to assume experiential naiveté and then ask that person to perform a similar task with pictures of earthly objects. You may say the picture example above is unfair, for you cannot confirm what the color of the alien apple ought to be without further exploration—but then we already agree. Or perhaps you believe that knowledge of the physics of the alien world will allow you to identify the distorted picture; yet strangely, an average but scientifically uneducated person on earth does not require such information to categorize earth-bound objects.

What I am trying to say is that illusions and non-illusions are never recognized in themselves, but always in the context of a model or theory or expectation that is constrained *a priori*. In the alien picture sort above, we cannot separate real from illusionary objects because an individual perception taken by itself, removed from memorable context, says nothing about its standing in reality—it simply is.

Compare the alien sort to the task of categorizing terrestrial pictures in a similar manner. We presume it would not be too difficult, at least not for typically-sized objects; we imagine we would appeal to empirical memories and previously learned descriptions of objects, yet neither of these important categories of ‘learning’ directly suggest what is real and not. Recognition, whether sensory or descriptive or otherwise, does not guarantee the real just as unfamiliarity does not justify illusion. The sensations we have about our world, derived from experiences in the Milky Way, are not so different than alien pictures. Yes, we possess many more moments of sensation, and they are woven together in a particular ordering, but apart from order and quantity, we are living in an alien land without an epistemological grasp on the world around us.

We rely upon models of the world to guide our actions and thought, and like humans, any organism that has learned to persist must possess at least a basic template that orders its collection of perceptions. I imagine that all transient organisms, from protozoa to primate, are partially preconfigured with an infant observational theory. This workable model will have placeholders that hold the value of the creature’s biological sensors, and as the world of experiential evaluation conflicts with the constraints of infant theory, the difference between theory and judgment and survival will initiate a learning cascade that seeks

to destroy the old model, forming a new one that accommodates the previously ill-fitting experience. Error continues to be felt, but rather than representing the conflict between reality and illusion, signals a misstep of the dance between judgments and the personal constraints that created those judgments. Once one's judgments no longer conflict with personal theory, the stimulus for change decays and one becomes frozen in his theory, achieving an icy state that is too often confused with Truth. This last statement brings to mind our children who have no interest in the adult concept of Truth. It is not that children lack schooling in Truth, but rather that their theoretical world-orientation morphs too quickly one day to the next—they hopefully have not yet experienced the feeling of personal stagnation.

A REAL ASPECT OF ILLUSION AND REAL'S ABSENCE

How would one argue that perceptual illusions are objectively real rather than personal conflicts? The circularity in that question prompted a quick and unexpected laugh, but I am certain that true believers will construct clever arguments in support of Illusion. Like the wife who defends her physically abusive husband out of love, philosophers will likewise come to the aid of this parental concept. Perhaps they can find a way to support objective illusion without first invoking a metaphysical appreciation of perceptual reality, but my vision for such an argument is too blurry at this point. And the Cartesian worry of faulty cognitive equipment...is faultiness not dependent upon an entity's *morally* proper form and function? Dreams, hallucinations, and mind-controlling demons—these are different aspects of reality, none of which highlight an epistemic flaw in the mind or fabric of the universe.

Logically the universe is faultless, not because we exist in the best of all possible worlds through God's design, but because the universe, when considered as the possible whole of all that can be, leaves no room for transcendent error. Universal fault would require additional possibility or a place from where fault can be noticed outside of the universe of consideration, contradicting our original notion of universe because it includes all possibility and actuality from the start. Nor is the universe perfect, for universal perfection requires the possibility of universal fault. Perfection and fault are meaningless words when applied to the universal whole and are, I suspect, equally useless when applied absolutely to beastly mechanics.

The skeptic, then, who speaks of the *possibility* of mere appearances, unreliable faculties, or inaccurate perceptions has already assumed far too much. Each of these concepts derives meaning in opposition to real Perfect perceptions—but where does the idea of a real perception come from, why does the skeptic accept it as a meaningful concept or possibility, and then, quite miraculously, deny its possibility in knowledge? In other words, for our followers of logic: if the skeptic cannot rationally gather instances of real perceptions into a set, as he reasonably implies, then how can he possibly make any sense of the concept of a real perception at all? A characteristic that is fundamentally impossible to identify surely follows from unsubstantiated guesswork at the start and should not be presumed meaningful in any argument for or against knowledge.

It seems to me we are speaking of an invisible dream. And you may say that the concept of a real perception and an instance of a real perception are two separate things. But again I ask, where does the concept of a real perception arise? In natural language it is a perception that conforms to—mirrors, reflects, represents,

resembles, copies, tracks—reality. We assume that our perceptions, in some way, resemble reality, but why must reality take the form of human perception? If reality were anything, if reality mattered at all, would it not be more sublime than any solitary perception, impossible to be completely reflected in the sensations of any one being?

And what of reality? That concept I will grant you, that is the thing we are trying to figure out. Reality exists in the question ‘what is *this*?’ where *this* has ambiguous reference and is certainly unknown yet palpable nonetheless. We sense reality without grasping its structure—it may lack structure all together; impossible I know, but explaining reality as structured assumes too much. The *this* in ‘what is *this*?’ refers to the word ‘this’, the sentence and paragraph and complete text containing ‘this’, the physical page ‘this’ is written upon, the visual experience of ‘this’, the mind that gives ‘this’ meaning, the physical environment ‘this’ is in now, the city and country and planet and galaxy and universe, your world of linguistic or physical or logical or holographic idealism, and whatever theory may come. *This*, as a question, bores down to the pillars of reality at the cost of withholding definite reference. Even if you presume a reality composed of quarks, leptons, and bosons; those particles came together in the form of a bipedal creature who one day spoke ‘what is *this*?’ a question that requires at least a modicum of physical ignorance, in addition to particles, to make sense.

We accept reality as a meaningful concept, but still, what are these real perceptions? When initially presented with the concept of a real perception, the skeptic should have stared quizzically and asked, ‘what do you mean by real?’ I am not convinced that perceptions are closely connected to reality, just as the liquidity of water is, in theory, torturously connected to its component

quantum fields through elaborate routes. And please clarify, are real perceptions part of reality, or are they isomorphic to reality, existing as external reflections? If the latter, then the conflict between internal and external reality is given; if the former, then we must presume that illusionary perceptions are part of an unreality that exists neglected in scientific study.

I speak of the real perception, and I use these two words in a way that makes sense to us both. In many ways I am referring to the problem that has been transmitted from ages past, where the terms of the problem have acquired meaning within the uncertainty and assumptions of the question—so it is with most philosophical concepts. I am looking for more, however. I desire for my own benefit an experimental basis for these real perceptions, or a ‘what it’s like’ to behold a real perception, yet search as you will, there is no phenomenal experience of the real as far as sensual perceptions are concerned. I do not deny the feeling of new understanding or the confirmation of an expectation or the eureka that accompanies a change in perception that simplifies previous uncertainty. I am, more practically, targeting everyday experiences. In daily life, who among us glances out a window to see a sparrow on a snow-covered tree and says, ‘now look at those real perceptions?’ Nor do we sit down to dinner and judge that our food is real before eating it; in everyday life, we almost never judge a particular perception to be real. It would be exhausting and absurd to continually judge each of our billion-billion perceptions in this way, and thus we do not consciously judge the realness of perceptions apart from the rare situations that request epistemic categorization.

Although real perceptions lack the phenomenal stigmata of realness, they can be differentiated from illusionary perceptions through an emotional absence, that is, a feeling of betrayal or

surprise couples to the experiential content of the illusory perception while the real perception lacks a treacherous history. The text you are reading, the sounds on the wind; these are real by unconscious assumption alone and possess no feeling, no experience of realness apart from an absence of suspicion. Illusory perceptions, however, are empirically discovered where this discovery is identified by a memorable transition in judgment requiring the movement from X is A to X is B (not A). For now, ignore that you are compelled to value one judgment over the other. Focus on the transition itself which has a phenomenal aspect independent of the meanings or truth of X , A and B . After such a transition is witnessed we may label one judgment, e.g. X is A , a mistake or error or false, while the experience associated with both judgments becomes the illusory situation that deceives. X is A , rather than being innately misleading, derives its deceptive meaning through its empirical association to transitions in judgment. Its deceptiveness has nothing to do with the specific content of X or A or even the relation between X and A .

The concept of illusory perceptions is thus grounded within the realm of empirical investigations of experience through feelings of transition and change. Illusions, as perceptual experiences associated with multiplicitous and often contradictory categorization of a fixed subject, are measurable and observable scientific objects. Real perceptions, however, are not so generous. They do not deceive, meaning, they have not yet been associated with empirical transitions in judgment. Today's real perception can become tomorrow's illusion, yet until that transformation the real perception has the definitive, negative character as a perception that has not yet been associated with an experience inconsistent with personal expectation. In this sense, real perceptions are experiences that evoke theories that have not yet been abandoned or

are simply unchallenged. Illusionary perceptions recall theories that have been discarded—e.g. the theory of a bent branch underwater that is thrown away after further consideration.

For reasons of practical computational convenience, most experiential subjects are not associated with transitions in judgment. The screen in front of me, well, I will continue to classify it as the solid screen in front of me as I type. My explanation remains constant and I have no reason to change my current judgment or reason to predict that it will change during the course of my life. In good faith, I leave room for the possibility of it being a Demon's perceptual implantation or something more alien, but without a transition in judgment about this screen, I will never know deception in this situation, will never consider this screen an illusion, and can continue to call it a real perception.

You are compelled to ask: is this perception really real and how can I tell? But real, when understood by its mechanistic usage, means the perception that conforms to possible expectation and not correspondence to a hypothetical reality. The confusion is all too understandable—empirical reality is a function of one's complete set of expectations taken in totality. In idealistic philosophy, reality is the presumed invariant structure of existence, but even this definition has its origin in the expectation of the self. What is self other than the experience of self-invariance or invariance itself?

I have said that my memory of transitioning judgments about a perceptual subject differentiates real from illusionary perceptions, but I am not so rigid to require that one actively render aware judgments or experience transitions to categorize perceptions. You may label an optical illusion an illusion simply because it is commonly associated with transitions in judgment among other people or because, when looking at the illusionary subject,

you are inclined to make a judgment in the present context that you predict you would abandon in another. We assume that illusion requires one judgment to be correct and the others false, but these unobservable properties have nothing to do with our ability to recognize and experience illusion. No matter how many times you awake from a dream it is always possible that you are still sleeping, and to construct illusion you need only judge that you are awake now but dreaming before. While we value one judgment over the others for its consistency, affability, usefulness, history, or some elaborate function of multiple factors, the precise method of valuation and its veracity are irrelevant to the establishment of illusion.

It becomes clear why the Cartesian dreamers and postmodern Matrix dwellers label everything an illusion. Unable to grasp multiple potentialities at once, these careful but serial thinkers inhabit one theory to the next, changing their judgment at each step. In becoming material transitions of judgment they operationally create, by definition, the empirical experience of universal illusion in themselves. But the postmodern illusion is not a state of knowledge or truth or reality or generative narrative—it is a personal physical procedure characterized by the worship of empirical transition itself. Anyone can play this game. Anyone can become mechanical illusion by following the rules. Often I am guilty myself. I would not have recognized the behavior otherwise.

DECEPTION AND LOSS

True episodes of deception are often associated with feelings of surprise, and more, when the deceiver is a human being close to us, the *initial* unveiling of deception often brings with it the knife

of pain and anger. But why should deception hurt, and subsequently, be feared? A thorough explanation would require me to discuss in depth the pain of loss that threatens most human beings. This I will not do; it suffices that you have gone through loss in some way—the loss of a parent, a lover, a limb, a job, a valued possession.

Witnessing deception, too, is a form of loss. Newly unveiled deception entails the destruction of old ways, for once a theory can no longer be maintained, once experiential forces stretch a theory beyond its ultimate tensile strength, the original theory fragments and contorts, loses its shape, then unhinges from the mass of the whole and evaporates back into the void.

Romantic relationships, for example, are often built upon the belief of ‘being loved by one who loves no other’. But when we discover that our partner has intimate feelings for another, this belief is no longer tenable and is subsequently wrenched from our being and replaced by something foreign. This immediate loss of a cherished belief and reciprocal mental laceration are proximately associated with pain, and it is this memorable pain that helps give deception its solid empirical grounding.

If no one has done so already, I suggest that the historical immorality of deception has little to do with affronts to truth or Kantian imperatives but derives largely from the repeated associations to pain that follow the acute loss of loved beliefs.

MEASURING DEFINITIONS

Perceptual illusion evolved as theoretical inconsistency marked by experiential surprise, and then became, by accident of philosophical thought, invincible as reality’s distortion. A too accepted definition of perceptual illusion, wrought with philosophical rigor

and good intention, reads ‘any perceptual situation in which a physical object is actually perceived, but in which that object perceptually appears other than it really is’. But suppose that an object perceptually appeared other than it really is—how could any perceiver know this was the case? *Really* implies, in my mind, an absolute truth about the universe, and only someone knowingly acquainted with an object’s real perception, or who has knowledge of the reality of the object augmented by knowledge of how that object creates perceptions wields divine right to differentiate illusion from its opposite. As I possess neither, I must conclude that I have no knowledge of objective illusions, and while I know well the experience of error—in the sense of disbelieving a previous belief—such error need not imply anything real about the world.

I expect quickly to be told that the plethora of optical illusions establishes the authenticity of objective perceptual illusion. For instance, many of us have seen the classic Müller-Lyer effect where two parallel lines drawn to equivalent perceptual length perceptually differ in length when one is adorned with arrowheads and the other with arrow tails. One assumes that the adorned lines, appearing to differ in length, represent an objective illusion because the lines, when measured by ruler or otherwise, yield identical lengths.

The reason I do not see objective illusion here is quite simple—I have not confused a useful method of measurement with Reality. A method of measurement, if we must briefly dissect the concept, is a standardized practice that allows us to make comparisons between various perceptual situations, and is grounded entirely upon previous theory and a host of perceptions. Although I support measurement, and feel that we should measure at every useful opportunity, by what logic is a procedure

of measurement known to represent pure Reality? It makes sense within our theory of the world to say that the lines possess equivalent length, for the concept of length is in part understood by standardized procedural comparisons. We must, by human practice, say that the line lengths are identical in quantity, but the conflict in the Müller-Lyer effect is between our method of quantified length—a standardized procedure involving perception and theory—and an un-augmented perceptual judgment. Reality has no role in the dispute nor does objective illusion.

While two measurements may *appear*—and I use this language against itself—to be the same when measured by ruler, how can we be certain that when using some other measurement technique, or when measuring under different conditions, the lines will not appear to differ in length once again? We should say, rigorously, that when measuring with technique A under conditions X, the measurement procedure produces identical results. But what happens with technique B under conditions Y? These results may substantially differ, and the only way to establish the reality of the situation would be to choose, in advance, the measuring technique that ‘conforms to reality’ and to establish, perhaps arbitrarily, a set of background reference conditions. Although not necessary, a comparison between Cartesian rulers and Einsteinian light-clocks should at least make this argument more palatable. Knowing the reality of line length via measurement requires us first to know the reality-conformity of a measuring procedure, which requires one to understand Reality itself from the start, or minimally, the portion relevant to the measurement of interest.

When we believe that two lines differ in length, as in a naive beginning of the Müller-Lyer demonstration, we expect this belief to persist under different contexts. But a simple ruler measure-

ment opposes our expectation, and more, transforms our belief about the lengths of the lines in question. The line-lengths are *assumed* to be constant; our judgment about the lengths changes. X is A becomes X is B . We label this *movement* illusion, independent of the Truth.

There is reason to question the logic of comparing, within illusion, the unaided judgment of length to the judgment associated with ruler measurement, for these two forms of length are not obviously the same, nor do they necessarily differ only in degree. Rather, whatever computation that occurs to produce judgments of relative perceptual length when two lines are nearby, that procedure is likely not the same as the procedure that reads off ruler measurements. Since length is at least partially understood with respect to its method, in the Müller-Lyer situation we are comparing judgmental apples and oranges and cannot even begin to create the conflict that gives rise to the possibility of illusion. More specifically:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| 1. | X_1 = naïve line-lengths | are | A = different |
| 2. | X_2 = ruler aided line-lengths | are | B = the same |

How can these judgments give rise to true error when X_1 and X_2 differ conceptually at the onset? They are two different ways of assessing the same situation that yield different conclusions. You may instead argue that the lines in question are the rightful constant objects that generate conflict, but still, if the concepts of length differ, then the illusion still cannot begin:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | X = the lines | have | A = different naïve lengths |
| 2. | X = the lines | have | B = the same ruler aided lengths |

Seen from this perspective, the two judgments apply to the same object, but the properties in question, A and B, do not form a contradiction, and therefore X can be both A and B, and at no point have we been witness to error—we have simply augmented our perspective.

It is too easy, and perhaps psychologically expedient, to confuse useful theories and rigorous procedures with Reality, but we cannot logically conclude that the latest measurement technique of the day corresponds to an absolute of the universe. We may of course define length by holding a standard ruler against objects of interest to be measured, and if two objects produce identical spots on the ruler, we may say the objects have identical length. We may also first attempt to assess the length of two lines without ruler measurement by comparing the lines ‘in our minds’. The raw comparison and the standardized measuring procedure may disagree, but it is still possible and probable that the measurement procedure does not correspond to a fixed Reality. As all optical illusions are founded upon a conflict between perception and various quantification procedures that depend upon theory and perception as well, it appears that optical illusions are only disagreements between various methods of judgment. While a measuring procedure may produce more consistent or coherent results in comparison to raw perceptual judgment, this increased coherence, although undeniably useful, does not imply the Truth of a measurement.

I can no longer see Reality in practical measurement or straight branches. Generalizing from this case-report of one person, I must conclude it is possible that homosapien-sapien has never possessed the real perception of any object, and along with the absence of real perceptions, *has never once faced a shadowy Illusion*. By this I mean, to know Illusion requires one to know

Reality, and without the latter the former exists as a metaphysical proposition, lacking adamant form. I suspect that binary thinkers will have difficulty with this position, but it is possible, with a continuum point of view, to have particular perceptions that are closer to Reality than to others without committing to the truth of any of them. Nor do we say that our perceptions—being distant to Reality—are Illusions, as Illusion implies an appreciation of perceptual Reality that we do not possess. Human perceptions may suggest only aspects of Truth, but partial Truth need not imply falsehood or deception in any way. Although clear and distinct human perceptions are noisy transients on the universal scale; noise, rather than indicating deception, reliably communicates everything that we do not yet comprehend.

SKEPTICS

A skeptical argument against the perceptual reality of an object looks something like this: We are accustomed to looking at objects, such as branches, in the air and not through air-liquid interfaces. We assume that just because the branch appears straight under common conditions—in a homogenous gaseous atmosphere near the surface of planet earth—that the branch is really straight, but we should not be so quick to reach firm conclusions within our infinitesimal space-time volume of the universe. How would that branch appear near the event horizon of a black hole, in a world without photons, to a perceiver the size of an atom, or during other conditions beyond my imagination? Really straight means: measured straightness under the common conditions of one's existence—nothing more, at least not yet.

Early skeptics, using the observation of perceptual relativity, argued that it is impossible to identify the real perception of an object since the object will appear differently under different external conditions and between different types of perceivers. What they did not stress, and what the pragmatists have noticed, is that an objective illusionary perception is equally impossible to identify. Since true illusion exists only against the backdrop of the real, then without the real, we cannot hold that any perception is illusionary either. I am sure that many of you are fearful that I am leading you to the relativistic void, but please remain calm: a suspension of the real/illusion dichotomy of objects does not leave one empty-handed. We shall continue to possess the experience of perceptual relativity, but rather than constructing an untested and untestable philosophical device that separates the real from its opposite—or good from bad perceptions—we may strive to explain the perceptual relativity directly.

I offer you nothing new here. A common scientific orientation assumes perceptual relativity as a starting point and struggles to understand the variability of our perceptions. The bent branch in the water and the straight branch in the air are both accepted as honest perceptions, and the goal of science, the way we find comfort through science, is to explain the relativity of these perceptions. Even though a scientist may latently assume that one perception has reality on its side, she is not held captive by this belief and desires most to understand the inconsistencies of his perceptions. Instead of branches that bend in water—a belief that is at odds with the apparent firmness of wood—she posits a more pliable communicating medium that bends at the air-water interface. Thus a portion of perceptual relativity is explained, not ignored or feared or celebrated, while the reality of context

continues on. I wager that ancient skeptics, with a few drops of pragmatism and a teaspoon of dogmatic commitment, would have been the first honest scientists.

Nor does the scientist possess truth in light rays, but he (or she) does possess much more than the hominid who frantically jumps up and down upon viewing branches bent by soft water, and more than the philosopher who tries to separate reality from illusion with argumental contraptions destined to break at the onset. Influential thinkers like Descartes and Plato felt that perceptual relativity could be tamed by reason and faith, unaware that a fear of Illusion shaped their understanding of the present more than pure reasoned thought. But I am not completely fair. I do believe that philosophy can and must see beyond empirical science and that in some cases a philosophy may be closer to Truth than the science of the day. So please forgive my impatience this moment; my anger is against Illusion and the millennia of wasted effort at its bidding, not towards any particular person.

For those of you who need to see Illusion in order to remain calm, I can tell you that I understand the difficulty in abandoning this belief. I am quite crazy to suggest that a nurtured concept like true Illusion makes no sense to me, and although I provided an alternative, this will not be enough to turn minds enmeshed in Illusion's selfish influence. One must be willing to let go of the perceptual reality of objects in order to break free from Illusion's circle. I acknowledge the high price, but unless others take up the fight, objective Illusion will continue to contaminate the present, perpetuating itself by feeding upon the anxiety of every being that does not resist.

THE WHITE ROOM

Let us talk through a classic example in the skeptical tradition, but this time as our ultimate target the impossibility of true Illusion. Perhaps you sit in a supposedly white room, painted with paint labeled ‘white’ on the can, but during the course of the day the perceptual color of the room changes with the ambient lighting conditions. In the afternoon it may appear white, then later in the day yellow as the sun begins to set, and at nighttime you will find yourself surrounded by dark shades of grays and blues. But by what reasoning can you call the real room white in the first place? Certainly your designation of white was based upon the common procedure of categorizing colors under particular background lighting conditions, and not by any appeal to the supposed real color of the room. The assumed real color of the room is, by practical method, the reported color of the room as it is to a statistically typical human under statistically typical conditions—a non-colorblind, typical human on earth during recent geological time and in western culture who views the room under broad-spectrum light having intensity neither too bright nor too dim and...

Like the volume of hydrogen gas measured at standard temperature and pressure (STP), the white of the white room is a perceptual measurement made under standard perceptual conditions (SPC). It would be quite reassuring if one could ground the whiteness of the room other than by selecting arbitrary background conditions for our perceptual measurements, but unfortunately our perception is dependent upon both an object and the context of that object. The urge of some philosophers, then, is to rigorously establish a set of ‘normal’ conditions, and somehow tie this normality to necessity, thus establishing the white room as an absolute perception of an object. But what

meaning does normal possess outside of statistics and morality? I see only average and standardized conditions that, like room temperature, are arbitrary except for the practical convenience of the user.

No scientist would proclaim a volume measured at STP to be the real volume of a gas, and likewise, we cannot make sense of an object's real color simply by observing it at SPC. The independent reality of color is not our target—we mean that a wall lacks a 'natural' color just as a gas lacks an intrinsic or predisposed volume. While seeing the room as white may be more common than seeing the room as yellow or gray, this statistical difference should not persuade a rigorous mind of the reality of one color over another. It is not surprising that the standard conditions for determining various colors are now decided upon by international committees and companies, and not by philosophical or scientific thought.

A natural philosopher may insist that the real color of the room has something to do with the electromagnetic spectrum reflected by the room, but this position will not recover an objective concept of illusion or realness. The reflected spectrum is in part determined by the physical characteristics of the room material or paint, and in part dependent upon the ambient electromagnetic radiation that happens to illuminate the surrounding area. Our sun, a yellow main-sequence dwarf star, emits a spectrum that is further filtered by earth's atmosphere, producing daytime light relatively specific to the life on our planet. Other stars and other atmospheres would produce ambient light with different spectra, yielding alternative common perceptions of the room. Further, if the room was illuminated with red fluorescent light then the room would appear red, if with blue light then blue. We cannot rationally identify a unique set of

background conditions that select out a unique reflected spectrum, even if the molecular structure of the paint is determined. While physics may elaborate the possible reflected spectra given various materials and ambient conditions, it does not say how the spectrum ought to be, and without this ought there can be no coherent notion of objective illusion. The white room, from a scientific perspective, is a fleeting product of the paint's molecular structure in the context of particular ambient electromagnetic radiation; and while the atomic structure of paint carries an air of permanence, the ambient lighting whimsically changes from one spectrum to the next.

Borrowing from the scientific perspective, one could further argue that the supposedly white room as perceived by mere human beings is in fact a partial and diluted perception of the real room. An alien creature with advanced perceptual apparatus may be able to experience the full electromagnetic spectrum of the room rather than perceive only the homosapien tri-chromatic reduction of the spectrum. In birds we already possess a model of how more complicated visual perceptions may exist. Birds, using at least a four-color system of color perception, perceive differences in electromagnetic spectra that we humans cannot—does this imply that human perception is flawed and that birds see the real? And as much as we tri-chromatic humans do not perceive truly, do not bi-chromatic colorblind individuals perceive even greater distortions of reality?

There is a vast world of possible perceptual systems, and one can imagine an actual diversity of perceptual apparati within and between species. My two eyes perceive (forgive the terminology) color somewhat differently; the left is biased toward blue while the right coats all with a touch of red. I do not consider one pathway superior or real relative to the other in any rational

way—although my preference is for the left. Some of us perceive small differences between musical notes and others cannot, even with careful training. Optical illusions do not ‘work’ on the entire population, even in those with otherwise smoothly running brains.

Taking these considerations back to the possibility of objective illusion, were we to define standard conditions, like room-temperature, for making a perceptual measurement, the perception established under those conditions would still be dependent upon the perceiver and make no connection to an absolute. At best we may select a SP (standardized perceiver), place it within a room under SPC, and use the reported output as our reference point, enabling us to make relative comparisons between future reported perceptions at other times and places. This is a form of measurement. We do it routinely already, and there is but one interesting philosophical question to ask about it: why do standardized perceptual labels generate so much comfort that we mistake them for reality?

WHAT HUME SAID

The phrase *white room* leads us to believe that there is a Humean necessary connection between white and room, and that the perceptual color and the theoretical object are bound together for all time rather than only during those fleeting moments of active perception. We are almost compelled to say that the room really is white, and it is, but only during your observation of a white room. Analogously, we may observe a supposed effect after observing its cause and infer that the two are necessarily connected together, but this conclusion, if we are to believe Hume, goes beyond actual experience. While there are many

occasions when the theoretical room is associated with perceptual whiteness, and indeed, these associations may be quite common for a particular room, we have no guarantee that whiteness will always and eternally be associated with the room in future perceptions. The same room, if I can make this assumption, may be yellow or gray at future times, and will only appear white when a white room is perceived.

Without a necessary connection between white and room, it makes no sense to speak of the actual color of the room apart from the immediate perception of the color and the room together. I am not denying that whiteness and the room are bound together in my perception during certain moments, for clearly I connect them together, just as one might observe an effect followed by a cause on a single occasion. It does not follow, however, that I will always see the room and whiteness together on the next day, or even in the next minute. Nor can I assume that a particular branch and straightness will always be connected, or what I call a lime and the taste of sourness. The Humean critique of necessary connection extends directly to all relations between perceptions and objects that we carelessly associate together with an assumption of necessity.

We observe that a particular room may be associated with different colors at different times. To help organize our vast array of perceptions in memory, we assume that in some way, external to present perception, that a particular room is necessarily connected with a particular color even though our experience tells us otherwise. But where is this realm where an object and a specific color are necessarily connected? It is not in our perceptions or experiences, for these clearly demonstrate the exact opposite, nor does a scientific worldview establish the connection. A physical way of thinking points to the absence of neces-

sary connection as well—the reflected spectrum of an object playfully changes from one moment to the next depending upon nature’s context. If not experience or science, then the connection must be founded upon an unsubstantiated assumption that, although practically useful in organizing our history of perceptions, makes no claim on Truth.

Since *white* and *room* lack a firm and enduring necessary connection, it seems quite strange to argue that when the room is a different color that we should call this variation in color a distortion of the senses or some sort of optical illusion. I again hesitate to say that possibly all such connections between objects and perceptual features of objects are non-necessary, transient associations that may change from moment to moment. Regardless of how many times a particular branch is associated with straightness, there is no law requiring it to be straight the next instant, and no sense in claiming illusion should it not.

MOMENTARY DIGRESSION

I am not denying all empirical propositions, yet I deny that the ‘the room is white’ has an obvious meaning beyond speculation. Do you imply that the room and whiteness are bound for all time? Do you mean, in a tautological way, that everyone—or at least every homosapien that sees as you—will agree, or should agree, that the room and whiteness are bound? Do you mean to say the room ought to be white under universal duty even though the room may, at times, disobey? If you mean that the room possesses the property or a disposition of whiteness, then please explain this without reference to SPs and SPCs, or include them in the proposition at the start.

Ambiguity, not relativity, plagues the classical empirical fact because copular predication without qualification runs without limit. When I look upon the walls around me and see the color white, I have a Protagorean thought: ‘the room is white to me now.’ The copular bond persists in the moment, but subdued by *now*, I refrain from metaphysical projection into future times and limit the meaning of my words. Granted, Zeno’s problems may arise. Do moments exist? How can propositions apply to infinitesimal slices of time, or do propositions apply properly to small but finite segments of existence?

These questions will have to wait, but still, I see no way to form *workable* empirical propositions without embracing a transient context in the effort. All perceptual experiences are transients—appending now or an index of sorts is nothing more than linguistic and scientific rigor; noting the measurement apparatus (e.g. to me) completes the experimental entry. Similarly, the velocity of our earth around the sun varies with time, and it is ambiguous—dare, meaningless—to say that the instantaneous velocity is a determinate number without expressing the dynamic spatiotemporal context of that number and how it was measured. An average velocity during a specified period of time also makes sense, just as the commonly reported color of a room during an epoch does so; the former is a statistical average and the latter the statistical mode.

If it is possible and meaningful to contextualize empirical propositions with temporal and observer contexts, yet one chooses to abstain from this practice in philosophical and everyday communication, then how are we to know what anyone is talking about? We cannot know precisely, for each empirical proposition empty of context leaves a space to be filled with the assumptions of both sender and receiver. Epistemology has

flourished within this potential space of ambiguity; notions of Illusion greedily feed upon it, and both lose power upon filling the space with an incomplete awareness of *now*, whatever *now* may be.

Used as qualifier of empirical propositions, *now* references all of existence in a blink, holding it fast for a precise moment of meaningful but unknown context. It is a grand random variable able to take on the value of whatever may be, large enough to contain the universal instant while simultaneously leaving no room for an alternative context other than a change in itself. On brief analysis *now* means approximately 'and everything else I am unaware of or have left unspoken.' It is an act of humility signifying the unknown depth of each proposition attached to it. And vulgar time, as an impossible sequence of *nows*, indexes nothing more than the flux of my ignorance. If you are more mathematical, forget this poetic *now* and look at the time on a functioning clock when speaking an empirical proposition. This act alone can help dispel an illusionary trance.

I focus on *now* partly because of its magic and also as a pragmatic reminder that many things have changed between the utterance of two empirical propositions that become united in one example of illusion. A room color does not change in isolation. Branches do not appear straight and then bent without the universe contorting in some other way. We cannot move from 'the branch appears straight' to 'the branch appears bent' without a change external to the content of these propositions. Time is the first change, and when taken as an index, points to an unnoticed universal transformation that underlies change in predication and judgment.

We have forgotten that a timestamp on a proposition does far more than determine sequential order—it reminds us that many things may differ between the worlds described by each proposi-

tion, that we are largely ignorant of what those differences might be, and that we are unsure how those differences shape the meaning of each statement.

APPEARANCE OF

Why is it almost necessary to speak of the appearance of an object when the nature of this relation eludes us more so than both the unknowable object in-itself and the ineffable appearance? Between an appearance and object we posit a relationship connecting something that is fragile and transiently existent but intimately part of us, the appearance, to a relatively unchanging object that is not part of our being. From here the classical problem of how one gets to know objects in the world arises, for the connection between appearance and object remains vague but presumably necessary to knowledge, yet our original understanding of each suggests an unbridgeable separation. If the appearance is part of our being, but the object is outside of or independent of or simply not part of our being, then appearances and objects must be ‘topologically’ disjoint.

But perhaps the appearance is not part of our being. An appearance may be an entity in-itself that too must be grasped through other unknown connections. What prevents the appearance of an appearance? Nothing obvious prevents us from claiming that sensations and qualia exist within the world first—whether they exist *within* the being of men and women, and what this withinness might mean are unknown. Or perhaps the object is intimately part of our being rather than outside of it. We can place both the object and appearance, equally, inside or outside of our being and preserve a conception of their distinction. From this semantic invariance we conclude that the relations of appear-

ances and objects to our being are unnecessary constituents of their problematic meanings. Rather, the difficulties with the appearance of an object consist of the problems of simultaneous separation and connection, the invariance of object versus the relativity of appearance, the 'nearness' of appearance before object, and the directionality from object to appearance.

But is this a mystery? After all, do not objects, even if unknown, causally create appearances already? Our inquisition finds momentary reprieve in the comfort of causality. But our answer comes too quickly. Have we not simply exchanged words and taken this as our solution? The effect of a cause is at least partially analogous to the appearance of an object. Cause and object act as originators; effect and appearance are 'directed' consequences of the originators. Effects and appearances are 'felt'; objects and causes must be 'tracked down' in a philosophical treatise or forensic laboratory. Causality, rather than being a solution to the problem of the appearance of an object, is a repetition of that problem from an internal perspective. In causality we focus upon a relationship while glossing over the relata. In the appearance of an object we focus upon the nature of two relata that stand on either side of an unspecified relationship.

We assume that appearance and object are connected to each another yet distinct, but if two things are ontologically connected then they are also one in some sense. This connectedness contradicts itself. It repeats, on a more local level, the universal problem of the one and the many, and we see this contradiction in the relations of cause-effect, potential-actual, past-present-future, and likely others. More, while no particular appearance is necessarily connected to any particular object, we continue to demand that the concept of appearance is necessarily connected to the

concept of object, but we have no way of establishing or supporting this assumption, and further, it contradicts our alleged tokens of appearance-object pairs.

The contradictory-connectedness of the appearance-object relationship can be quelled by denying either side of the relation—either deny the existence of objects via idealism or the existence of sensations through materialism, or maintain strict dualism and deny the connection all-together. It is perhaps safer to acknowledge that we understand neither object nor appearance nor the relation between them.

RECOGNITION

I have a sense that our assumptions about memory help ground our understanding of the appearance-object relationship. A short analysis of memory may be helpful. Under a classical interpretation, memories are fixed objects that we may always turn to for grounding; they are there for us apart from neurological disease and, like material objects, exist ‘outside and independent of the attention. Yet how is a memory known to be a singular object at all? How do we know that there is ‘a memory’ that is the same throughout separate recollections? We may recall an object for the first time, then the second and a third. The object of memory is thought to be invariant, but when do we compare our first recollection of the object to the second, or the third to the ‘original perception.’ Although we can compare our recollection of a recollection to our recollection of another recollection, this comparison alone does not ground the invariance of memorable objects.

Let us relax the assumption of invariance. Through an act of recollection we create within attention, if only dimly, particular movements and settings that, we believe, repeat aspects of

themselves. Formally, memory is thought to be the possibility of a sequence [presence absence presence absence...], where each presence is similar to the other, and each absence is dissimilar to each presence. Although many experiences assume this repetitious form, the memory sequence is differentiated from ‘sensual’ sequences in at least two ways: the memory presence can be called-forth by an act of naming, and it is always recognized and familiar.

This latter differentia may feel unnecessary to you. Are not memories recognized or familiar because we have witnessed the ‘actual’ object in the past? This explanation presumes that the witnessed object has already become a memory, but not all witnessed objects do so. Many things are ignored or transiently existent in ‘working memory’, never making it to long-term storage. There is something circular in saying that memories are recognized because they follow from prior experiences *that have been memorized*, but neither can we drop this final clause. We cannot say that memories are recognized because they follow from actual experiences in the past because past experience is not sufficient by itself to ground recognition. As a remedy, we may conjecture that selected experiences form ‘traces’ while some do not, but this will not help. Our circular reasoning only lengthens and becomes: past experiences that have formed traces are recognized because these traces have been formed.

Recognition is necessary to, but distinct from memory. We may recognize something past seen (memory), not recognize something not past seen (tautology?), recognize something not past seen (*déjà vu*), or not recognize something past seen (*jamais vu*) where each direct object (e.g something past seen) is a *personal assumption* of knowledge.

Suppose I tell you that ‘some wombats are made of cream cheese.’ You will likely reply that you do not recall anyone saying that before. You may recognize each of the words individually, but together they are unfamiliar and not recognized as previously heard or seen. We wish to ground this unfamiliarity by claiming an absence of a memory, but what does this explanation add to our knowledge? *Our only ‘objective’ evidence of an absent memory is our lack of familiarity and recognition at the start.*

Recognition has unjustly been a by-product of memory even though the possibility of memory was initially based upon the empirics of recognition and unrecognition. I am unsure what being-recognized is. It is partially a quiescence of the processes that attend, recognize, and label; and I say this because unfamiliar things are often associated with an excitation of these processes. Unfamiliar things grab our attention and demand linguistic categorization while the familiar can pass by almost unnoticed. We take the familiar for granted; we expect that it will be available always, so much so that we almost forget about it.

To recall a memory is to create something within attention that is recognized. But we worry, can we not create within attention objects of fantasy that no less strike us as recognized? As any good empiricists would say, those objects of fantasy are pieced together from other recognizable parts, parts that need not have been recognized together except for this first episode of imagination. Once together, we may recognize this fantasy again as a ‘true’ memory of past experience.

Memories are called-upon, recognized objects within attention. They can come into being through calling, and presumably, there is a particular method of calling associated with each object of a recollection although we can neither demonstrate this calling nor prove that its method or consequences are meaningfully fixed.

While the name of a memory may be fixed, this invariance does not guarantee a similar invariance, or even similarity, between the recollections created through that name.

With these considerations, let us return to the relation between appearance and object and the possibility of illusion. Appearances are said to be illusionary when the appearance calls forth a recognized object, a recognized object that is not the object being recognized. In our example, a bent branch is the recognized object and a straight branch is the object being recognized. I am speaking of the two varieties of object that have always been hiding within the concept of illusion: a recognized object caused by appearances and an object being recognized that causes appearances. The former reminds us of phenomenological objects except that we further ‘bracket’ all assumptions about an internal world of ‘mind’ and ‘consciousness’. The latter object follows from the idea of a thing in-itself.

What objectively grounds this illusion? How do we know that the recognized object is not the object being recognized? We use the proof that other appearances—perhaps measured appearances—call forth a different recognized object that conflicts with the currently recognized object, while maintaining that a single object is being recognized that causes the appearances that are recognized as conflicting objects. Even when we allow the object being recognized to exist, the conflict in illusion always occurs between two or more recognized objects, and never between a recognized object and an object being recognized.

As Descartes taught us, the object being recognized may derive from your interaction with an evil demon or a Matrix program or a probabilistic cloud of quantum strings. This demon (or innocent object) may ‘cause you’ to recognize a straight branch on one occasion and a bent branch on another, yet *this difference* has

nothing to do with objective illusion or faulty cognitions. Neither the straight nor the bent branch need be an object in-itself—both may be recognized objects caused by something else—and thus the concept of objective illusion that proliferates out of these conflicts cannot begin.

Nor can the demon create any deception at all. Are we saying that when a demon ‘causes’ us to see a branch, we ought not see the branch but something else? Are we saying that when our ‘cognitive faculties’ and the world are such that we recognize a particular object, we ought not recognize the object that our faculties and the world made us see? If so, our cognitive faculties alone are not faulty; rather the entire universe itself must be somehow malformed. The Cartesian thought experiment presumes, as given, that *something causes* us to recognize a particular object. Within this pretend example our recognized object could be no other. Even if the demon caused God to recognize a branch, then God would recognize a branch—but only as a logical given.

The object being recognized, be it demon or particle cloud, may play an important role. It presumably unites the different recognized objects in an act of comparison and conflict, and in this sense, has made the idea of illusion possible.

LONELY OBJECTS

You may continue to believe that the bent branch underwater represents a true Illusion because the branch appears bent but is straight, but what more is straightness other than a coherent theory you cling to despite a transient push to believe otherwise? Perhaps you and I possess not only a proposition but a model of bent branches associated with expected color patterns, touch patterns, linguistic usages, possibilities and constraints for

dynamical evolution, and much more. As you look into a shimmering pond, the vision of bentness under water, as a pattern of color, is but one part of your complex and multi-legged theory of bent branches. You can in all honesty behold a color-pattern faithful to bent branches and not *commit* to the complete bent-branch theory. Morally speaking, a careful observer ought not commit to the bent-branch theory upon observation of color alone, for an isolated color-pattern that melds with bent-branch theory is compatible with many other theories as well—a hologram, alien technology, a Cartesian demon, or a straight branch partly submerged.

When looking upon the water one could say that bent-branch theory and a color-pattern mutually stabilize each another such that they occupy one's attention across moments, leading to the reification of this attention into a 'material' association possessing temporary permanence in working memory. Once stabilized, we expect the reciprocal relationship between bent-branch theory and the color pattern to persist across varying situations. Without a history or theory to the contrary, we would not expect angular movement within the water to perturb this relationship, nor would we expect a change upon lifting the branch in the air. But a failure to abide by these theoretical expectations need not imply illusion, and meeting them does not confirm a reality of bent branches. When an expectation is not met—and I should say more fully what this might mean—an event has not occurred, something goes unfulfilled, or an absence is felt.

In this example I assume, as a hypothetical starting point, that you have witnessed geometric bentness of color. Although this assumption should be challenged, it remains the beginning of the concept of illusion that we wish to deny. A geometric bentness of color, as an appearance, may be caused by many objects including

bent branches and straight branches partly submerged. As a verb, ‘appears’ means that at least one expectation of a personal theory has been met, or our model and the experience stabilize each other, or that one has received some support for a theoretical proposition and is awaiting further observation. Color-patterns are one component, one expectation of object theory. The branch ‘appears’ bent implies that the visual image alone reminds me of my current indigenous model of bent branches. Future observations may conflict with bent-branch theory; if that time comes I can abandon or modify bent-branch theory or perhaps dogmatically cling to it, ignoring the push of inconsistency all together.

Dissimilar objects may cause similar appearances. That fact that we, at times, carelessly conclude that the appearance belongs to a particular object, but then change our decision later does not support the notion of objective illusion. It only says that our judgments may change and that we should be careful in committing to the nature of the object generating the appearance at hand. Although one judgment may be true, our empirical examples of illusion do not require knowledge of this truth for grounding.

Illusion says nothing about real or false perceptions, but it does teach us that appearances are dependent upon the object and the relations of the object to other things in the world. Although two objects may be similar—such as a straight branch in the air and a straight branch partly submerged in water—when the object and its relations are considered in whole, the concept of perceptual falsehood becomes less necessary. Relational differences ‘in the world’ ground the differences in appearances, and we expect the appearance of an object to change should the worldly relations of that object change.

An object does not have an appearance in-itself, and not because of a hypothetical mind that shapes the appearance, but rather the object's appearance derives from the object and its particular set of relations to other objects in the world. This 'objective' dependency questions our ability and need to separate appearances into real and illusionary categories, for why would one set of object relations be epistemologically superior to the other? Each is a valueless feature of the world? Even when we grant degrees of epistemological value, the discrete and hard-lined separation of appearances into illusionary and real categories ignores the continuum of possible relations to other objects. Nor is it clear that these so-called illusionary appearances would be less epistemologically valuable than 'real' perceptions, for illusions often open up opportunities for new understanding while real perceptions are easily ignored.

Somewhere along the way we acquired the belief that an isolated object produces an appearance in an imagined, empty world. That is, when contemplating the appearance of an object, we imagine a universe that exists exclusively of the object, its appearance, and laws that connect the two. To generate the idea of objective illusion, we conflate this ideal scenario with the object's statistically common appearance and worldly contexts. We assume that the appearance of the branch in the air under daylight sun approximates this ideal empty universe, but this assumption has no basis within our world. There has never been a 'context free' appearance of an object. The common branch is always related to billions of worldly objects, most of which are unknown to us that moment. If we admit that the appearance of an object is always dependent upon other objects in the world, and that the ideal appearance is an act of imagination, then what could we possibly mean by the correct or veridical perception of

an object itself? There is no meaning; we are always dealing with the appearance of a *situation*, which is why philosophers attempt to establish the 'correct' set of object relations (conditions) that give rise to the 'best' appearance of the object, not realizing that each appearance contributes to our grasp of the world and object in its own way.

This analysis will not deter others from contriving ideal worlds that establish the appearance of an object as it ought to be, at least to them. As a first approximation, someone probably has imagined a world that consist only of the object and 'uninterrupted' light rays, establishing the appearance under these conditions as true, ignoring that a world of light rays and metaphysical objects is not our world, and missing that *appending* true to this sort of appearance adds nothing to the author's intellectual work. If the author makes a distinction such of 'interrupted' versus 'uninterrupted' light rays, then the explanatory work is done. Presuming that interruption corresponds to objective faultiness is another matter entirely.

Another way to ground illusion is through measurement, and we have approached this sort of illusion through the Müller-Lyer situation, noting that techniques in measurement do not necessarily correspond to Reality and that they too are appearances. We also pointed out that length means one thing when we calculate it by ruler, another when judged by sight alone, and yet something else when measured by light clocks. There is no need to invoke the concept of illusion when length computed one way conflicts with length computed by another, although it is reasonable to conclude that one method is more 'coherent' or consistent or more 'useful' in certain situations, noting that these values need not imply truth.

HOPEFUL REMARKS

Scientists have not been deterred by the problem of perception; they welcome illusions and hallucinations for each signals that more laboratory work must be done. If we see a difference in the length of two lines, but expect to perceive lines of equal length, then we should seek explanations and not be constipated by epistemological dilemmas that lead to nowhere. Illusions, rather than preventing direct access to the world, create opportunities so that we may grasp it. As in physics, the unexpected and theoretically inconsistent empirical observation is a precious finding that suggests our present understanding is thankfully incomplete. Perceptual conflicts that manifest as illusion do not highlight an epistemological problem of perception; they confirm that our theoretical understanding of possible experience is inconsistent and that additional exploration is required.

Not long ago the Earth occupied the sole center of the universe, and understandably, we continue to believe that ‘veridical’ human perception rests at a unique center of the perceptual landscape, but my perception and yours and the madman’s are simultaneously distinct and centrally located. The Earth is the center of the universe when the universe is viewed *from* the Earth, and your perception is the center of perception when viewed from yourself. Whatever illusions may be, like stellar aberrations, they are physically relative to one’s referential center.

Our compassionate universe is likely speckled with perceivers, each perhaps perceiving quite differently than our glorious species, and all of them working, consciously or not, to connect the pieces of perception into a meaningful whole that abides by each individual’s history of being. It is an *effort* toward an unknown universe that we have in common, for although two organisms may have entirely disjoint perceptions, they may share

similar ideas, permitting the possibility of mutual understanding even between creatures separated by a billion light-years. That is, once we begin first to understand our neighbors, and ourselves.

CHAPTER 2. INTERLUDE

7

Here is a question I offer to save time only: what would you prefer to know completely, a single judgment accompanied by clear argument, or the person that created the judgment? Argue or agree with me, I will not ask why—I will want to know who you are. Fine, if there is time we can argue later.

8

Similar perceptions may enter awareness by means of alternate routes, or be sensorial moments of an extended whole. In a dream a familiar object may be perceived, an apple perhaps, but this object will have followed a different path than the apple seen in waking life. We assume the dream apple arises from memory while the awake apple begins as a path through the retina. However, the dream apple from memory began as a path through the retina itself, and the apple experienced in waking life may find

its way to memory and contribute to a future dream of fruit. A dream apple and an apple in waking life, as part of the same path, are perceptual slices of a solitary object extended in time.

9

Pitch darkness is as much a visual sensation as a Hawaiian rainbow.

10

The historical ‘mere appearance’, as the adjective suggests, points to moral rather than epistemological concerns. In Plato, Descartes, and Kant we see the systematic devaluation of appearances. In Nietzsche we witness the reaction of one who seeks a reevaluation of this moral assessment, and today we find ourselves between those philosophers who worship appearance as a hyper-real, ontological first substance; and those who condemn appearance in the ancient tradition while searching for a means of its destruction.

11

Theories morph, reach out, grow new limbs and slice off their gangrenous parts. They lust after time, collectively competing for the stability of the moment. I suspect that Truer theories are correlated with a greater degree of spacetime self-stability, but a theory’s stability may derive from attributes other than truth: dogmatism, denial, avoidance, promotion, aesthetics, comfort, and price are a few stabilizing forces commonly associated with the theory of the day.

12

Theories create spaces for possible experiential judgments, and experiential judgments can tessellate together to form theories. A theory itself is judged according to a goodness of fit. If new experiential judgments fit into old theoretical spaces, then the theory is judged to be consistent, good, correct, useful, or verified—these are some of the words we use to describe the measure of a theory. If a judgment does not fit, the theory (or judgment) may always be contorted to make the fit more agreeable.

13

Some experiences do not fit snugly within any theory yet they have occurred nonetheless. These sorts of things cause trauma or inspire awe, and they tend to dominate the men and women that live with them.

14

Do not say that theories are in the mind, for mind is a theory and ‘in the mind’ is another. Expectation and judgment connect theory to experience. A correlation between theory and experience is beyond both, but it can be fudged.

15

An expectation that is fulfilled is not true, it is filled. True and false do not apply to expectations, nor are they a form of belief. Expectations are either filled or unfilled—they are transient, temporal things that may evaporate, and their endings have nothing to do with choice, logic, faith, belief, or truth. An expect-

tation is a lock that may be opened by a key, except that the key is both temporal and spatial, and the lock creates the key, and the key, the lock; a lock that once turned, transforms into something else.

16

Every theory is a repository of anxiety and a source of comfort—including this one. (I would not debate someone who wanted to swap the roles of anxiety and comfort in this claim.)

17

Listen carefully: science does not reduce the uncertainty of the universe; it deepens the ever-swelling, radiant abyss of the unknown. For each solitary prediction given by physical theory and law, a billion new opportunities are opened, all of which are uncounted, unobserved, and unexpected by man. The value of science and art are similar—both expand the unmoral possibilities of existence by unleashing the fiery unknown.

18

Here is another definition of science: it is the process of reintegrating the discrete experiential blocks of attention that were split off from the unified self-interacting volume. In relating experiential blocks together, we begin to acquire a picture of the unified volume as it is relative to the person who fragments it. Since every act by men and women is part of the dynamic volume itself, the process of scientific reintegration necessarily complicates the very thing it is trying desperately to understand; consequently, *science creates* far more than it will ever explain.

19

Uncertainty is not the antithesis of knowledge, it is its prerequisite.

20

Since the beginning, an absence of knowledge has been confused with the presence of illusion—but what is an absence of knowledge? Clearly the absence of knowledge, if known, is the presence of some other type of knowledge and not illusion. Yet illusion only becomes possible in the presence of knowledge. Knowledge that the world is unknown permits us to say that we are always deceived, but this deception is caused by knowledge itself. How can true knowledge birth true deception? And how do we know that the world is unknown?—perhaps this supposition itself holds the only deception to be found.

21

God secretly hoped for Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

22

Whatever our explanation of the universe on the smallest scales will be—quantum particles, fields, strings, or stranger things still—you can be assured that these minute atoms of reality will themselves be a function of the universe taken as whole, and the universe a function of them.

23

Prediction is cheap. Any mass-produced algorithm with enough training can do it well.

24

All change is a form of loss but only sometimes of gain. Change is a gamble.

25

Attentional objects, including internal and external impressions, are always labeled and indentified by a ‘recognition’ process that already exists, including those things that are unrecognized and unlabeled. We would like to speak of the ‘raw’ substrate that submits to the processes of attending, recognizing, and labeling; but whether this substrate is known or unknown, these processes are largely indifferent and dedicated to processing the ‘form’ of that substance. If substance is known, then only the form of that substance can interest us; if unknown, then the form is all we may know at that moment. Conversely, substance is grasped in the negation of attention, recognition, and labeling.

26

Thought is expectation partially uncoupled from experiential biasing. It has achieved partial freedom from the past and future, which is why thought is glorified.

27

Someone said this before. Present assumptions create the past, and the future is your collection of expectations right now. Fortunately, assumptions and expectations are like energy—neither is easily created nor destroyed.

28

We do not ‘have’ beliefs and experiences and thoughts, nor do objects ‘have’ properties, and words do not ‘have’ meaning. ‘Have’ is a distorted relation that implies necessity without doing any work. Berkeley’s idealism and later phenomenology developed out of the inadequacy of the relation ‘have’ that is sloppily scattered about philosophical discussions. To the tuned-in mind, each careless locution of ‘have’ in serious philosophical argument is a laughable pause that signals an obvious conceptual avoidance by the writer. The few individuals who have felt the impotence of the possessive ‘have’ necessarily produced influential thought. Berkeley, for instance, is refreshingly rigorous about the equivalence between an object and its properties upon declaring that objects are collections of properties. When other writers dogmatically state that A’s have B’s, I have no idea what they mean by this possessive, or any other possessive that is not a structurally assumed necessity. Do objects own properties, control them, exchange goods for them?

29

A mark of Truth: the ability to perceive another being’s perceptions.

30

A faulty F is either not an F, because it lacks something necessary of F-ness, or still an F, where the fault identifies a possible way of being an F. If the former then fault is merely a way to point to other, perhaps related objects and makes no claim on objective error. If the latter then we can ask, why is a particular way of being an F objectively improper? There are many ways of being an F, all of which are ontologically sure and true. You may say, in a moral way, that an F *should* be one way rather than another, but

then are we not talking of value or sin? A faulty F, so long as it remains an F, means an F that *is other than I projected it to be*. Whether it is something more, I cannot say.

31

Physical processes of the universe, should such things exist, are outside of fault in understanding. A proton cannot commit a dynamical error, nor can two, nor a billion-billion entangled together. And when a particle appears to transgress its physical bounds, physicists do not see fault; they extend the notion of particle to include 'virtual' and 'symmetry breakage' or they may transform the theory altogether. Physical errors, like Godly errors, are impossible. Therefore, should not the physicalist conclude that particulate men and women have never, not once, committed an *objective error*, conceptual or otherwise?

32

Color is an illusion to be sure, but this proposition is an illusion itself. Color only appears to be an illusion. Any paid philosopher ought to be clever enough to write a compelling manuscript supporting this regressive view.

33

If allowed to run free, 'appears' and 'looks' are infinitely regressive verbs that always apply so long as you can contrive a series of alternative theories regarding the subject in question. We welcome these two in everyday speech. They are efficient. In philosophizing they make a joke of your entire project.

34

Illusion is an illusion.

CHAPTER 3.
ANALYTIC RESIDUE

You are no longer safe, dear Illusion. We see you laughing within the idea of Truth—the same Truth you claim to conceal while simultaneously offering as a prize if only we would worship deception’s power. But there are no epistemological shackles to break off and no veil of ignorance to cast aside. Illusion is illusion in every sense of the word, for as soon as one predicates Illusion upon itself, it disappears in an instant of necessary contradiction. Analytically speaking—and other thinkers are far more able to proceed here than I—if Illusion is illusionary in a Platonic sense then Illusion is not itself, but what sort of concept trembles before the innocence of self-predication?

Illusion is a vampire—consider their similarities. Both concepts are embodiments of evil (Illusion as Descartes’ deceiving demon and Plato’s shackles), both are manifestations of self-contradiction (Illusion is not itself, vampires are the living-dead), both require life-giving objects to feed upon (Illusion requires reality while Dracula needs human blood), both lack

definite substance under self-reflection (vampires lack a mirror reflection, Illusion disappears under self-predication), both are powerful and seductive (Illusion has directed millennia of thought, vampires control the mind directly), and both are burned by the light of knowledge. I believe a careful consideration of the above comparisons by the reader will be enlightening, if not humorous.

Despite my words, do not suppose that illusion is a useless concept. I do not believe this at all; I simply contend that Illusion is not what it has appeared to be. We are so tired of rigorous thinkers holding this illusion before us as if it meant something more than a personal change of theory. A list of the usual suspects: 'time is an illusion', 'consciousness is an illusion', 'identity is an illusion', and our favorite 'reality is an illusion'. Yes indeed, reality is an illusion where the very meaning of illusion depends upon God-like apprehension or knowledge of reality from the start. 'Reality is an illusion', when spoken by a learned scholar—even Einstein—means that a commonly accepted theory conflicts with a new and improved theory devised by this scholar. By appending 'is an illusion' to a philosophical situation, the writer attempts to portray an omnipotence that pierces beyond common assumption to a realm of Truth. Let us turn this tactic against its users. Anytime a writer honestly professes or even suggests that a particular philosophical object 'is an illusion', we should immediately question the worth of his subsequent arguments for they follow from a suspicious premise, and worse, from a mind that truly believes it can see reality.

Philosophers who wish to understand the mind 'in a natural way' commit endless crimes in the name of illusion, applying this label, in one way or another, to theoretical conflicts that are a priori beyond resolution. They venture beyond the already

careless procedure of attributing objectivity to Illusion, positing illusionary situations that, unlike the Müller-Lyer effect, cannot be explained by further empirical-logical investigation.

Recall that the classical use of illusion arises from perceptual conflicts (a white room that appears yellow, a straight branch that appears bent), where a single object can be experienced in two or more possible ways, one of which is claimed to be the real perception. Now, how shall we react to the illusionary claim that, for instance, color is itself an illusion? This sort of conflict is not between one perception and another, but between one ontological theory and another. No further observation will clarify the situation; in fact, observation, if you believe that to mean something composed, in part, of the color experience, will only perpetuate the disagreement. Scientific investigation cannot explain the conflict because current science evolves out of the tension between experiential judgment and mathematically oriented theory. In calling any experience an illusion, one cannot mean that experience or color do not exist, at least not based upon observational findings, for observation is another name for the very thing the illusionist hopes to deny.

If consistent, a philosopher who believes in a physical world verified by observation should believe in the physicality of color well before stars, plants, atoms, or anything else observed with the aid of color. For example, given a printed photograph of a pie, would a scientist believe first in the physicality of the photograph itself, or in the matter presumed to constitute the pie which may or may not be a digitally contrived pattern having no definite physical counterpart? It seems quite backward to argue that the pie is physical but the photograph is not, but this is what many natural philosophers do quite readily when arguing about experience. We observe before us a visual field associated with angular

extension and testable discrimination capacity, and like a photograph, we should believe in the existence of the experiential field more so than the patterns of color that can be categorized within that field. Perhaps both or neither exist, but this issue is not our concern. We are more interested with priority of rank over proof of either.

These simple arguments prove nothing, but are forwarded to suggest that conflicts originated under the disguise of illusion ought to be courageously ignored. Any great philosophical problem or solution that even slightly resembles in form 'x is an illusion' rests on nothing other than the power of illusion to move our minds into analytic action. If you accept the premise that 'x might be an illusion' and attempt to argue that it is not, then you have already lost the battle. Illusion has won again; your act of defense only cements illusion's power to control you. Illusion forces one into a dogmatic position—'x is not an illusion', 'x is an illusion', 'x might be an illusion'...all of these assert that illusion is a legitimate, objective concept from where we can begin to find knowledge. As careful scholars argue back and forth about what is and what is not illusionary, Illusion sits idly by, watching the squander energy at its bidding. Illusion does not care which side of the argument wins. 'X is not an illusion' affirms illusion and 'x' simultaneously; what is negated is the relation between them.

Any philosophical theory of error that partakes of the illusory relation does nothing but repeat the illusion of illusion with unnecessary words. With such theories, we believe we have journeyed deeper into truth when we have only snuggled up more closely to Illusion. And you see how difficult it is to talk about these things without becoming trapped oneself? As soon as one contrasts a presumed false belief with a corresponding 'actuality',

the lie has already occurred. These things should barely be said, but they must not remain hidden, and yet I cannot call out illusion without becoming its slave.

Illusion is an illusion. Do I commit the same sin I accuse others of in appending 'is an illusion' to a philosophical concept? Yes, I am guilty. Do I believe that I see more than those who continue to believe in objective illusion? Yes, but they see more in other realms, and neither of us possess reality. 'Illusion is an illusion' is an illusion. Of course, concepts like these revel in infinite regress.

35

The materialist and the postmodernist share at least one thing in common—both are driven by mystical tendencies. Materialists run from appearances, unconsciously transforming their fear of specters into our alleged deception. Postmodernists, as the dual to this fear, embrace appearances in the temples of Illusion.

DISBELIEF OF DECEPTION

What does it mean to disbelieve a perception? It means, pragmatically, I should not use this perception as a starting point for thought, judgment, or future action; except in the case of scientific enquiry when one wants to understand the nature of deception. Why should I not use it as a starting point? Because subsequent cognitive and behavioral movements, based upon illusionary perceptions, will be ineffective in achieving many goals, assuming I move for some purpose. If I see an apple and wish to grab it, but the visual perception is a hologram, then my grabbing will not succeed in obtaining the apple. I will have been misled by the perception.

Perceptions, people, beliefs, theories, signposts, and most other markers of direction can lead us poorly. We have goals, and we *look* for help in finding those goals. If we follow a particular experiential marker whose meaning purports to lead to a goal, but when followed does not, we have become accustomed to labeling the marker a fundamental distortion of reality. It led us poorly, to be sure, in the sense that we did not achieve our goal, but it is only upon a subsequent failure of destination that allows us to label the signpost in error. If our goal of grabbing and eating the apple was satisfied, we will say that the perception of the apple was veridical; if we instead reach for the apple and grasp empty air, we will call the perception non-veridical—it misled us, our hunger was not satiated. Deception arises from the relation between one's expectation and the subsequent denial of the fruits promised by that expectation. To be misled is to follow the wrong path, but the wrong path, rather than being objectively deceptive, is the path that leads us to where we do not want to go.

Suppose you experience the visual perception of an apple. It is surely an apple by visual assessment alone, and as you look around the apple from different angles, then under bright and dark light, nothing about the scene evokes suspicion. But rather than reach for the apple, you decide to leave it be and never to disturb it. The apple, for all you know, may be a volumetric display (I'll use the word hologram as well) or a visual experience implanted upon your brain by alien technology. Since you did not challenge the perception further, you cannot claim that the perception was an illusion, nor can you claim that it was real either. And this example, which appears at first to be a contrived thought experiment, illustrates a significant but forgotten aspect

of our lived experience. Billions of perceptions are never challenged, and the few that are; well, those that do not live up to our *a priori* expectations are called illusions.

Deceptions are temporally constructed—perception, expectation, and denial of expectation upon challenge. Language allows one to atemporally label a particular perception such as the Müller-Lyer effect an illusion, but the perception itself has nothing to do with deception; the expectation of a ruler to measure the lines differently and then to fail is the illusion—which is why one must first harbor an assumption and then go through the process of measurement to appreciate the illusion.

Whenever we use the words illusion or hallucination, we simultaneously imply a past or possible relation, a ‘deceptive’ relation that is associated with a particular perception. Although the so-called illusionary perception participates in the deceptive relation, the perception by itself never deceives. We have become accustomed to calling particular perceptions themselves illusionary, for instance, the apple described above, but the visually experienced apple that possesses no palpable counterpart is merely that—an apple color-pattern alone that happens to be unaccompanied by a touchable surface. Why is this entity an illusion? The holographic apple or partially implanted alien perception may lack specific perceptual parts, but it is not clear that sensory absence warrants the title of illusion, nor, if it were touchable, tasteable, and smellable, that we should call it real. An experiential subject either lives up to one’s expectations or it does not. If not, we record this discordance ‘in memory’ to avoid experiencing frustration again, and then perhaps evolve a new theory of the sensory perception that is more consistent with future experiences.

Philosophers present ‘objective’ examples of deception that pretend to have nothing to do with an individual’s expectations and past experience, for instance, hearing human voices when in fact no one is speaking . Are we to believe that this situation, without additional clarification, is an adequate example of true deception? Who cares if one hears voices when in fact no one is speaking, that is, unless experiencing voices and the absence of a speaker are already related in existing assumption? There must be an assumed relation between the two, unmentioned in this example and most others, that supports our intuition of deception, something like: one cannot hear voices when no one is speaking. But then our example contradicts itself. A softer, subtler, and less definite relation is required.

To avoid an untidy discussion of this relation, upon forwarding an example of deception the typical philosopher strips the situation out of context and presents the entire dilemma before us without considering the sequence of events that take place in the world they are describing, our history of expectation, or the characteristics of the individual who is experiencing the voices in the example. Most people who hear voices expect to see a speaker nearby or a device that generates sound. The experience of voices activates, automatically and unconsciously, the predicative expectation of a speaker because we have learned to associate the experience of human voices with the visual perception of a person or audio device. If this historical, learned or innate expectation goes unfulfilled, then the experience of voices garners suspicion—we may frantically search for a hidden audio device, conjure up a fantastic explanation of alien transmitters and demons, assume we are dreaming, or label the experience a hallucination. However, if the person hearing voices did not expect to identify an origin of the voices; if the person, oppositely, expected not to

identify a visual originator of the voice, then that person would have no reason to label the experience of voices a hallucination. You imagine that this expectation is ridiculous, but the schizophrenic who commonly experiences voices in the absence of people nearby learns, quite rationally, to expect such an association.

A philosopher's impoverished example of deception such as 'hearing voices when in fact no one is speaking' rests upon an expectation that forms out of the learned, non-necessary, perceptual association between the experience of voices and the experience of perceiving an originator of those voices nearby. Without an expectation of repeated association, deception does not exist. We know that one who expects nothing is never deceived—of course you may believe he is deceived, but only because your expectations differ.

There are scientific ways to describe the relation between hearing voices and the absence of a speaker, but these too need not have anything to do with epistemological deception. Here is one sort of relation: most people do not hear voices when no one is speaking, but some people do. We have identified two groups, very well, now what shall we do? A scientist, having partitioned a set of people into two groups according to some observable characteristic—in this case the verbal report of experiencing disembodied voices—will try to explain the variability between the two groups by identifying environmental-neurobiological differences that correlate with the differences in perception between the groups. If you are a philosopher, then you may try to formulate a theory that differentiates the two groups. Deception, however, has nothing to do with it. Both the scientist and the philosopher are attempting to explain why two groups of people have different types of theories and experiences, one group that reports the experience of disembodied voices and another group

that does not. The charge of deception, given the above relation, is an interpretational layer that adds nothing to the explained differences.

What philosophers do, what I am trying to do, is to collect all examples of illusion and hallucination together and to offer a theory that unites them. In everyday life, as opposed to the examples in philosophical thought, an episode of deception begins with an experiential judgment that is accompanied by a collection of conscious and unconscious theoretical expectations given that judgment. Until subsequent experiences are compared to expected experiences, we have no ground for claiming that we were deceived. That is, deception takes on substantial form after and only after a denial of experiential expectation. I am sure that expectation and experience traverse both ways, influencing each other; even denial of an expectation may precede that expectation, regardless, deception is a personal problem.

36

We cannot find a compelling distinction between hallucination and illusion. Both are derivative of conflicts between expectation and experiential judgment whose difference arises from speculative claims about internal versus external origins. In the case of visual hallucination, we expect to perceive nothing—meaning, more accurately, the air and things in front of us—but instead perceive a pink rat that ‘blocks’ the perception of what one expects to perceive. In illusion, we expect to see a straight branch, but instead perceive a bent branch. How do you know that the bent branch is not an entirely distinct perception arising internally from your head that ‘covers up’ the straight branch like a hallucination? How do you know that the pink rat is not an external 3-dimensional volumetric illusion?

37

Suppose, to you, there is a color pattern that you classify as a material apple. However, later on in the day, you examine the apple with touch and find that it has no palpable surface and decide it is an illusion. Surely, then, you were deceived at first but then found the truth? But I do not see deception here. Your original theory, based upon the color pattern alone, did not live up to your expectations about material apple theory, which was abandoned after further examination—not idealistically falsified or found to be untrue, but physically discarded like any other object that no longer serves a purpose.

38

Suppose, to you, there is a color pattern that you classify as a holographic apple. However, later on in the day, you examine the apple with touch and smell and find that it has a touchable surface and a fruity smell. You eat the apple. Surely, then, you were wrong at first but then found the truth? But I do not see wrongness here. Your original theory, based upon the color pattern alone, did not live up to your expectations about holographic apple theory, which was later abandoned upon further examination.

39

Suppose, to you, there is a color pattern that you classify as a holographic apple, but someone else feels that the same image of discussion is a material apple. After further examination, you both agree that the apple is holographic. Surely, before exploration, you were correct and the other person was wrong. But I do not see correctness here. The expected sensations associated with

your original theory are more consistent with the sensations felt upon further exploration. When did a relatively greater degree of correlation become equivalent to absolute truth?

40

Philosophers will attempt to fashion gedanken purporting true, objective illusion. They will do so by saying or implying something like this: suppose there is a real apple or an actual apple or that in fact there is an apple. They will use counterfactuals and futurefactuals to get us to commit to the possibility of an objective object, displacing realness just beyond reach so that we do not question it too closely. Perhaps they may say, plainly, 'there is an apple' hoping that we will not see the millennia of metaphysical bolts and glue that hold their meaning together. When will theoreticians learn that one cannot create reality and subsequently true-illusions simply by stating their existence in a written example?

CHAPTER 4.
FALSE FALSEHOOD

I spoke of galactic repetitions, of failure and fear. Oh, and I have repeated Descartes well. I fear Deception. I have sought its destruction in anger. I have been led by Deception to this place and this moment, pulled along by a nonexistent lease that I imagined I could unhook.

Oh Deception, your righteousness has been hidden for too long. You are God's bastard child, placed upon Earth as a source of our Good yet destined to be always rejected. God knew that human creatures would not tolerate a world of deception; God knew men and women would fight it to freedom. But why does deception drive us so cleanly? Why is the concept of present deception unbearable?

Deception spoke, "Your world is a lie and you are a fool."

"I will see through you," said Awareness.

"You will see nothing but me."

"I will at least try."

“Do what you must—you will fail, I will be here, and you will remain the fool.”

An Observer intruded and to Awareness said, “Why does it matter if the world is a lie and you are a fool?”

“Because I will not be deceived. I will not be made fun of,” replied Awareness.

“Why not?” said the Observer.

“Deception is uncomfortable and unstable. It may disappear any moment. Truth is permanent and secure.”

“And if I told you that your deception is eternal, impossible to be overcome?”

“Then I would have no reason to struggle against it. It would look more like Truth.”

“And if I told you that your deception could only transform into more deception?”

“Again, I would have no reason to oppose it.”

“So the force of deception, in you, arises from the possibility that it can be annihilated and replaced by something indestructible?”

“Yes”

“What else?”

“The possibility of deception’s destruction is only part of its force. If deception is to leave, then something that I once believed must fall. I fear the loss of a once cherished belief that will one day become illusion. But I love all present beliefs, so I am torn. To overcome deception, I must destroy part of myself. I must feel the pain of loss—I am not eager to mourn.”

“So why do you seek to bring about pain in opposing deception?”

Awareness shriveled before a thousand winds, was torn apart by hungry shadows and replied, “To be surrounded by beliefs that will never leave.”

Deception is a paradoxical force: we fear the threat of loss suggested by Deception, but we also desire to bring about that loss in the hope it will birth Truth, thus ending the threat of loss eternally. Deception, applied to the whole of the present, acts as the primordial mover and does so with a curious honesty. The present does change. The present is always lost and replaced. Deception taunts with this threat and then the loss occurs, thus solidifying Deception's hold on the moment. We fear the present because it will change. It will leave us. The exile from Eden still hurts. And we seek a final change, an unbearable once-and-for-all loss that if tolerated will reveal a permanent moment of existence, a permanence that matters because further loss will be impossible and the threat finally extinguished.

41

Deception is not Evil. Its offspring may have become Evil, degraded and worn out over time while used as a tool to procure goods and services and comfort. Any tool may become Evil, no? But Deception in its initial inception was a means of creation. Its purpose was to incite growth, and it has, more so than any idea. Just ask Descartes.

42

Deception, as the fear of loss, propels us toward future ideas that resist displacement—what idea has been more unmovable than true Deception? Many of you reject Gods and Demons. Many of you reject Truth and Reality. Many of you reject the possibility of Love and Science. Many of you have discarded Good and Evil, and still you protect, vigorously and ceremonially, the omnipotence of Illusion.

As Descartes taught, there is a rather simple way to minimize or avoid nearly all forms of human deception. I am not sure what this has to do with epistemology, ontology, and philosophy on the whole, but it works quite well. For some reason we have assumed that deception requires only one person to exist: the deceiver. But you and I play a part in the creation of being deceived, do we not? The deceiver is talking to you, the receiver, and you must have something to do with the formation of deception within yourself. Let us ignore that the deceiver may be deceiving herself and focus upon the deception as it manifest within you. To be deceived, you must first believe what the deceiver is saying, so without your consent, deception cannot exist within you.

Avoidance of deception requires no more than your immediate disbelief of what is being spoken. Ancient skeptics knew this well. Speak whatever you choose, tell me you are the king, or ate an apple for breakfast, or like the flow of my hair; you cannot deceive me because I must first believe what you are saying. Since I automatically assume disbelief, or at least the possibility of disbelief, then objective deception within me does not occur. Your words, your propositions—I understand what you are saying and I observe what you have said, but at no point have I been deceived.

Let me put it this way: to me, all of your propositions are theories or can be used as such. By theory I do not mean ‘mere’ theory or anything like that. Your theories to me are, in some ways, on par with the quantitative theories of physical science. Granted, a propositional theory is more subject to various interpretations than the mathematical theories of science, but for my purposes the similarities will do.

Scientific theories are, formally, formalized expressions that are logical, self-consistent, testable, and predictive. I see these properties in the phrase ‘Jane ate an apple yesterday’ and most other propositions. There is nothing illogical or contradictory here, and I can put the theory through tests. I can ask Jane if she ate an apple and if anyone witnessed it. I can, inappropriately, dissect her insides and look for apple traces of digestion. Perhaps apple cells are still lodged between her teeth. The proposition meets my expectation of what a theory must do.

You will discover many differences between physical theories and my humble proposition above, and to say that the two are equivalent, as belonging to the category of theory, is unfair. It may be better to say that all propositions are hypotheses. In the end, I do not ask for equivalence or identity between propositions and scientific hypotheses; I wish to point out that they can be used in roughly similar ways. And just as our best scientific theories, at least as viewed by honest scientists, are neither true nor false; trying to figure out, philosophically, when propositions are true or false is possibly hasty.

44

My initial, primary reason for viewing propositions as tentative, scientific claims has to do with deception. I wanted to show myself, and you, that it is difficult to be deceived when assuming a linguistic-empirical stance. When one considers each proposition to be a theory about the world, and subjects the tentative statement to the experiential, logical, and consistency checks one would of more quantitative, traditional theories; then deception becomes more difficult to find. I mean, a theory about the world cannot deceive—it is a transient creature that participates in the world to varying degrees that one day may disappear. Is, for

instance, Newtonian gravitational theory deceptive? Some of you will say yes, but remember, to be deceived someone must know the truth, and how do you know you have that now? Physical theories never deceive—they may be useless, they may be inconsistent with observations, and they may make predictions that go unfilled, but they do not deceive, and likewise, a proposition, when viewed as a scientific hypothesis, has no connection to deception.

One can treat philosophical propositions as scientific hypotheses sans the empirical checks that are required by physical theory. Surely, when empirical checks are available a philosophical position will embrace them. When impossible, we worshipers of reason rely upon measures of internal consistency, logic, and coherence to other propositions alone. But hastily, these internal and external checks that philosophers use to argue for particular propositional hypotheses have been identified with Truth itself. Instead of recognizing that these checks are measurement tools, rigorous thinkers conflate them with truth theories going by names such as correspondence, identity, coherence, pragmatics—but these so-called truth theories have nothing to do with Truth; they describe, in approximate form, the procedures and measures we use to support our theories against foreign attack. A theory *measured* by correspondence, coherence, and usefulness is, all things being equal, more fit than its competitor.

While it is common for philosophers and academics to subject propositional statements to checks, in daily life we do not. On TV you will hear propositional theories of all sorts and forget that each promise is a theory awaiting further exploration. Likewise, when a friend tells you he is happy, this is, to you, a scientific hypothesis first. Even propositional self-thoughts are theoretical,

and you need not believe or disbelieve any of these propositions in the moment. It is enough to hold them in suspension, to observe them, and to use them as you see fit.

I know, you think it is impossible and impractical to hold every proposition up to such high standards of analysis, and more, humans do not work this way in daily life. We do accept some propositions without question and begin using them in the moment. Our awareness is limited in time and processing power, and complete analytical suspension of every propositional theory would leave us impotent to do anything else. The human creature would not halt if had adopted my methods. You all know this to be the case. And I agree, many of our hypotheses are not actively scrutinized nor viewed from a distance. They have withstood or avoided or repelled analysis by our destructive faculties. We call these privileged theories beliefs.

45

The confusion between belief and theory is not new, and you perhaps know that the classical concept of belief does not entail uncertainty or careful reflection in any way, yet in natural language this forbidden meaning is quite acceptable. ‘I believe it rained yesterday’ and ‘I hypothesize...’ mean nearly the same thing to me; both are speculative, theoretical assertions that may be subjected to the logical and empirical measures that some people find compelling. This second version, however, has no relation to the first according to classical thought. Belief does not suggest a possibility, they say; it reflects a state or content of the mind that is ‘accepted’ to be the case. To some, a belief is a theory whose meaning has been actualized, or you might say, transformed from abstract possibility into a substance or relation that exists within the mind.

46

My treatment of theories, of propositions, is not uniform. Some theories I love and protect. My proof? I keep these theories close by and use them again and again if you read me carefully. Of course, some theories that I support, I do not truly love them, and others that I attack are intimately part of me. My anger against them reflects our tenuous relationship. The least influential theories within me are those that I ignore in language, behavior, and thought; that when within awareness, I feel nothing or indifference. But I could be hasty. Perhaps ignored theories are the strongest.

47

The propositions that we argue against—they live and breed within us. These are our mind-controlling parasites that we wish were not there. Although we argue against theories that conflict with our loved ones, the presence of conflict suggests a shared resource or value that nourishes both. We must be, in some sense, composed of the things we love and despise.

48

Beliefs are those propositional theories that I embrace, support, and guard against outside forces. As an idea, belief reflects my intimate relationship with particular theories that I will fight for in battle—because they, my beliefs, have resisted every attempt I have made at their destruction. You will counter and say, in some fashion, that we protect certain propositions because they are valuable and ought to be protected, but what is this moral value that warrants protection? Why do we argue for centuries to preserve some beliefs over others? And do not forget, argument against a particular theory is support for others. You

may search for auxiliary reasons. You may derive, in a scholarly fashion, the intrinsic or moral properties of beliefs that necessitate protection and argument, but a less metaphysical approach is available. Beliefs are the theories that we struggle to preserve. They are also the theories that we use, and maybe, we protect them because they are used, because without them, we would not be who we are.

I do have a metaphysical theory that explains our protection of particular theories above others: some theories are part of me and others are not, or, theories have a degree of membership or existence within the whole. The theories that are melded to my whole, they are, in a tautological sense, the theories that I use because they are there and part of me. I protect them as I would a limb. And let me clarify: I do not have beliefs. Theories are part of this whole, or partially part of the whole while others are not. I am a poorly demarcated blob of interacting theories and experiences contained in nothing.

You may wonder: where are theories and experiences if not in the mind? They are of the universe, but I am hesitant to localize them further within space and time. They are also part of the present, this I can say, but it says very little.

The conflict between mind and matter arises when one supposes that theories and experiences are ethereal and insubstantial, and then opposes these hypothetical properties to the conjectural objects of physical theory. But the objects of physics are substance by assumption as well. This assumption resonates with some people, and as a belief, may become an integral part of the whole person, becoming the defining *substance* and stability of that person. That is, the content of one's most cherished theory, in addition to binding that person together, becomes the believed being-of-the-world within that person. One can

likewise, without contradiction, take up the position that physical objects are ethereal abstractions lacking substance and that theories and experiences are substantial. Or perhaps both theories and particles are substance, or theories are more likely to be substance than particles, or the reverse, or neither.

49

Like Descartes, I trust in the existence of theories more so than the entities they suggest. Is particle theory itself an illusion? I am not talking about the veracity of the content of the theory, if such phrases make sense to you, but the existence of the theory itself. For the physicalist, particle theory as a theory is an illusion or non-existent entity or something reducible to real subatomic particles. But it is odd to argue against the actuality of the theory, for the theory tends to outlast the object it speculates. The physical theories of today will probably be epistemologically outranked by the theories of tomorrow, and the entities suggested by the theories of old will become useful fictions and at best incomplete truths. Particles of today will be discarded but the particle theories of today that suggested those particles will live on. Newtonian theory, albeit relegated to approximation, still thrives. Newtonian force, at least according to most gravitational physicists, does not exist.

50

If deception exists within people, it does so upon the back of belief. Consider a proposition or theory that you do not believe—is it possible for that proposition to be deceptive within you? Like the classic analysis of knowledge, deception too can be analyzed as a form of belief. Once analytic philosophers begin to apply the same seriousness to justified false beliefs as they do to knowledge,

they will find that the skeptical criticisms against knowledge can be leveled against deception with little adjustment, and that the Cartesian triad of knowledge, deception and skepticism annihilates itself.

51

As an example, in writing the last paragraph I got lost in considering the process of deception. We typically say that the deceiver attempts to instill something within the receiver that the deceiver believes is false. Although the deceiver begins with a proposition that he believes to be false, the proposition itself need not be false; it is his belief in its falseness that matters first. On this analysis, a deceiver may unknowingly deceive another person with a true belief because he accidentally held a true proposition to be false. But this makes little sense. How can one be deceived by a true belief? So one may argue that the deceiver must not only believe that his proposition is false; the proposition must be absolutely false, yet according to the skeptic, the deceiver could hardly know that this is case. The deceiver may believe that something is false and may be justified in doing so but he does not necessarily know its falseness.

Attempts at deception are therefore random shots in the dark, and we can never know when someone has been deceived, not even ourselves, yet this conclusion collides against the common assumption that we frequently identify episodes of obvious deception. We know we have been deceived in the past. We think we know what deception looks like, and the deceiver thinks he knows when his attempt has been successful despite his inability to know if the transmitted belief is true or false; yet on a skeptical account, your certainty of past deceptive episodes is a deception itself for you cannot be absolutely certain that you were deceived.

Therefore, I must either have known deception in the past—as the non-skeptic would suggest—or, in justly extending the skeptical argument, I am absolutely deceived about my certainty of past deceptive episodes.

But how can the skeptic know that he is deceived on even this, and specifically, how did Descartes absolutely know that his senses deceived him in the past? Only by certainly apprehending reality, at least once, could he have known that he experienced deception, but certain perception of reality was discovered only after his claims of deception. Just as the Cartesian skeptic cannot possess Cartesian knowledge, he can neither possess the objective Cartesian deception that opposes and prevents this knowledge, yet the meditation originates from Descartes' dogmatic acceptance of deception as obvious, empirical, and certain.

Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once. (Med. 1)

Each deceptive episode of the youthful Descartes must have coincided with the subsequent appreciation of a reality that grounded the realization of that deception—but such appreciation is denied at that time in the conclusion. Descartes only knows that he exists now. The only possible objective deception, for Descartes, would be if he previously believed in his non-existence, but later discovered, in shock, that he existed. This is probably what happened.

Of course Descartes knew more than his existence; he knew that whatever was perceived clearly and distinctly had to be true, but this knowledge alone was not enough to explain the nature of

deception and error. Within the *Meditations* error takes on several forms, and something seen unclearly and vaguely was not one of them.

Firstly, knowledge of true deception and episodes of error were assumed at the onset, permitting the beginning of this skeptical enquiry. We could equally begin a skeptical philosophy by assuming that deception is impossible and has never occurred, noting that this assumption does not logically entail the possession of absolute truth.

Error was next described as an absence of knowledge which somehow should be there even though it is not, or a faculty that lacks some perfection which it ought to have; and he associates these privations with the will of God. These *shoulds* and *oughts* belong in the field of morality, and we cannot explain the meaning of this error without understanding some form of broken ‘natural’ duty. We would need to understand the Creator’s will to make sense of this error, thus Descartes rightly yields that God’s causes are beyond his knowledge, but instead of leaving the explanation of this error within the confines of theology, he goes on to provide a structural description of what this error might be:

So what then is the source of my mistakes? It must be simply this: the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters which I do not understand. (*Med.* 4)

Since the intellect does no more than enable one to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgments, Descartes decides that it is the will that is deficient. As I understand neither will nor intellect, on that ground alone I see no compelling reason to call this formula the source of objective error; but even should we accept these concepts, how do we make sense of and recognize

the equi-limitations of will and intellect since they are distinct and governed by different principles? What is the common substrate or field, that in limit, each ought to submit?

Given the nearby religious context of this error, I suspect that Descartes had in mind an idea of pious restraint in the face of sin. In the *Meditations*, restraint of the will is analogous to the temperance of desire. The will is driven to make judgments; it desires to judge so to speak and to end uncomfortable states of indifference. And judgment is, at least in the moment, fulfilled by true and false judgments alike just as both fresh and (unnoticed) spoiled food may nourish immediate hunger. The error of the will follows from the will's passion to judge and restlessness should it not, but without this drive, the will would not judge. It would sit idly, impotent, and not be a will at all. Therefore, the will must be passionate if it is to move us, if it is to be what it is, but this passion, unrestrained, can lead us to sin. We limit our eating as we do our judging, and we do so in accordance with what is 'best' eaten and 'best' judged', where best depends upon how one values the action on the object at hand.

I see, in Kant, a theoretical elaboration of this notion of error that culminates in the transcendental illusory appearance:

Our purpose is to speak of transcendental illusory appearance, which influences principles...but which leads us, in disregard of all the warnings of criticism, completely beyond the empirical employment of the categories, and deludes us with the chimera of an extension of the sphere of the pure understanding. We shall term those principles, the application of which is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, immanent; those, on the other hand, which transgress these limits, we shall call transcendent principles.

Instead of will and intellect we have the 'empirical employment of the categories' and the 'pure understanding' coupled to principles that transgress previously analyzed limits. And Kant adds

much more to this illusion, so much so that it hides what it is, yet the gross nuts and bolts of his error appear as they do with Descartes. Although Kant points to the presence of this illusion in proofs on God and Soul, the surest example of transcendental illusion within his work is found where Kant could not look:

In our reason, subjectively considered as a faculty of human cognition, there exist fundamental rules and maxims of its exercise, which have completely the appearance of objective principles. Now from this cause it happens, that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our conceptions, is regarded as an objective necessity of the determination of things in themselves.

This concept of the transcendental illusion is itself a transcendental illusory appearance, for the transcendental illusion appears to be a perfectly objective principle itself, a principle that grounds objective error, although it can be no more than the subjective necessity of a certain connection of Kant's concepts. He knowingly acknowledges that transcendental illusion itself involves a connection that is necessary as well as impossible for the subject to avoid. He says this of examples of the illusion, in the definition and causes of the illusion, and as a property of transcendental illusion itself; yet he implicitly offers it as an 'unconditioned' object created through, I assume, the application of a transcendent principle of reason. A more careful critique by a scholar will show that transcendental illusion is no less metaphysical than the metaphysical objects it was meant to undermine.

The *possible* existence of objective deception is a premise of Cartesian skepticism. Deny this premise and the argument cannot begin.

53

Pyrrho's ancient skeptics believed, truly, that objective deception was impossible. How could they know this was true, and how did they prove it?—through faith and the impossibility of demonstration. *These* skeptics could not have been deceived. No skeptic believed that the earth was flat. No skeptic believed that objects were material or extended or actually mental impressions. As such, no further observation or theorizing could have thrown a previous belief into the category of deception since Pyrrhonians disbelieved and doubted from the start. In contrast, Cartesian skeptics, asserting the possibility of untrustworthy epistemic equipment, invoked unnecessary ontological machinery to create the 'genuine' doubt that Pyrrhonians acquired through less metaphysical means.

Yet why did Descartes' brand of doubt reverberate through history while Pyrrho's doubt—far more expansive and justified—fade away? In our being, atheists included, the fear of being objectively defective must be more 'acceptable' than the fear of being authentically uncertain about the world.

54

Illusion may also be analyzed as a justified belief, such as the earth is flat, that is put into conflict, through contradiction, with another justified belief, such as the earth is round. The earth cannot be both flat and round simultaneously, therefore we are compelled to choose sides. The belief that is retained acquires the title reality, while the one that is discarded becomes illusion or appearance; but initially, that illusionary justified belief was no such thing. It was an honest justified belief that, upon further investigation, was abandoned. In time, the victorious belief of today may be discarded as illusion as well.

The illusionary-real dichotomy is a means of ordering belief, of resolving conflict, where illusionary implies the *less* justified of two beliefs that share enough in common to contradict each other. When given a well-defined means of justification, both concepts work together as a rigorous ordering relation. Given an individual with a fairly static method of justification, I speculate that illusionary-real oppositions stabilize that individual. Between individuals, however, justification procedures differ almost without bound, rendering the above illusionary-real distinction relative, that is, except for the invariant aspect of illusion, which, as I discussed before, involves a transition of judgment.

I cannot differentiate deception from the ebb and flow of my transient beliefs, nor do I believe that any of these cherished theories are eternal, not even this one. Beliefs are acquired and discarded like any other material possession. The ones that I call false are the ones that I throw away or prevent from attaching to my whole. I tell false beliefs to go away. I argue against them and the people that offer them protection.

On a pragmatic account, true and belief are labels we apply to theories that we support and embrace, and false, accordingly, are those theories we attempt to shun or have rejected. They are not part of us, or we are trying to excise them or are attempting to make sure they never grab hold upon us and others.

These behavioral aspects of true and false are their most obvious properties, and it is not clear that we will find anything more in these concepts, yet we are not satisfied with explanations based upon external relations. We would like to know the

internal nature of true and false, their structure, and their essence; that is what we have been striving for. The pragmatics are undeniable, yet we speculate and practice lazy science if we think that pragmatic aspects are the end of the story, nor do behavioral and dispositional analyses seem to quench our thirst for understanding.

How, then, can we expose something about the internal nature of true and false when we cannot, beyond random chance, identify an object or proposition that exemplifies either of these very properties? Inductive inferences cannot even begin because we do not know what we are looking for. At best, we may contrive theories designed to separate true from false, but without experimental grounding these theories cannot rise above descriptive and perhaps useful fiction.

I have said that my true theories are those theories that are shielded from uncertainty, but of course a theory may be protected for many reasons, and to call all protected theories true generalizes the idea of protection too far. I may be afraid to challenge a theory and therefore avoid a thorough investigation of it, but I should not think it has earned the title true because of my fear.

And no matter how many times a theory has withstood attack, and no matter how much certainty we have in a proposition, it is always possible that a theory may fall. Empirically, it is likely that all theories will leave. Whatever truths you protect now, you may always abandon them later, especially if you continue to put effort into their destruction.

Yet we do fight for particular theories, but it does not help us to call fought-for theories true. These theories resist destruction and uncertainty, and they can be associated with a particular

vector of force, but we need not associate these descriptions with the notion of true. Independent of truth, our positive understanding of a protected theory is something in itself.

Should we say, reciprocally, that false theories are those theories that welcome destruction? Are they associated with an intrinsic force of their own annihilation rather than protection? Contradictions have historically had this character: F is simultaneously P and not P . Does this proposition not generate immediate suspicion and get quickly expelled? Of course many people—and the number surely grows—protect this proposition, too. And once protected, the contradiction that had been so obviously false becomes dialetheistically true. But what is contradiction?

57

Suppose an obvious contradiction destroys itself and is immediately rejected from the whole. What of other suspicious propositions that are not direct contradictions? These are the vast majority of our falsehoods. Perhaps I say this text is purple—that proposition is not intrinsically contradictory, but it likely contradicts another proposition, this text is black, which you and I protect. I cannot say that the text is black is true in any deep way, but I may say that I afford this proposition a great deal of protection. It forcibly resists questioning; I hold on to it and will defend it against attack.

While any proposition may be labeled false at whim, many propositions are, within an individual, observationally false, but in a way that does not depend directly upon the content of the proposition or any comparison to facts. Empirical falsehoods are recorded and given a firm basis through conflict with protected propositions. In formula, if P is false, then there exists a Q that is protected such that P and Q form a contradiction. Or, since P and

Q contradict each other, and Q is protected, then P must be false (or attacked). When I write the sentence ‘this sentence has four words’, I say it is false because it contradicts my protected judgment that the sentence has five words. The content of the original sentence is not objectively in error or inaccurate, rather it opposes, through contradiction, another judgment that I protect, and is therefore attacked. I embrace the theory of natural numbers and the process of enumeration because these are shielded from my analysis within the above context.

The contents of P and Q are relevant in two ways: 1) they must together form a contradiction, and 2) there must be a location or place where they can interact, a place that can potentially support and nourish each content but with room only for one. I am here imagining a Darwinian struggle between contents for the privilege of protection and sustenance where a loser is rejected and the winning content becomes an influential part of a whole that sustains that content.

Protected theories spawn false propositions through contradiction, although protected theories are not true, they are protected. Protected propositions may be mathematical axioms, physical laws, ontological theories, present beliefs, memorable judgments; I protect many things, all of them may potentially contradict other propositions and each may ground a moment of empirical Falseness. The everyday form of falsehood, then, follows from a structural-logical description involving contradiction, while the form of truth, the logic of truth, is rigorously established only as the negation of this form of falsehood. Any proposition that does not contradict a protected theory fits the description of what truth is, and fittingly, this is why notions of truth have multiplied and

degraded in time. Logical truth has always been an absence of observed contradiction. Aside from this requirement, any proposition or theory will do.

58

The theory of falsehood has a space for the experience of falsehood, but the experience of falsehood is based upon contradiction, therefore, the theory of falsehood must necessarily contain a contradiction, so that it can hold experiences of itself.

59

We are now living in a world where truth is questioned at every step, not because the firmness of the world has slipped away, but because the meaning of logical truth never had anything to do with firmness in the first place. We are just beginning to use this word in a manner that stabilizes its meaning. The history of logical truth follows from absence, and saying that logical truth is absent itself finishes the circle.

60

Contradiction and transition are substantial entities that support notions of Falsehood and Illusion. Falsehood grounds itself in the contradiction of protected theories. Truth is grounded in an absence, a lack of witnessed contradiction. Illusion grounds itself in the transition of protection between contradictory theories. Reality is grounded in an absence, a lack of observed transition. Since the meanings of truth and reality are grounded in absence, propositions possessing these properties may be evoked and proved at whim, simply by looking away.

61

Falsehood and Illusion form the basis of creation and observation, or, contradiction and transition account for this grounding. All science is the study of the limitations and potentials of transition, how some thing(s) become other thing(s) whether expressed in compositional formula, dynamical relations, or natural language. Science is not concerned with what is—its domain covers the region between what we have and what that something becomes. Contradiction is the tension that sustains change.

62

What are our physical analogies of contradiction? A particle and its anti-partner annihilate each other upon collision. In Pauli exclusion, two identical fermions may not occupy the same quantum state simultaneously. Both of these physical conflicts depend upon simultaneity of space-time, and while the necessity of temporal co-occurrence is carried over, if only implicitly, to our notion of propositional conflicts in contradiction, the need for a co-occurrence of place or space has been largely ignored.

You may ask, isn't the subject of a proposition the place of contradiction? Yes, but in what sense is a subject a space in which contradiction can occur? Does this space permit certain contradictions and not others? Do all subjects have room for contradiction? Is the space of a subject a collection of possibilities, can the space be filled with actualities, do actualities conflict or are the possibilities contradictory? The formula of contradiction in propositional logic, $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$, cannot begin to address these questions for as a subject of discussion, it lacks the space.

The example of tossing a coin is a richer starting point. The conceptual outcome of a coin toss—this is our subject—may take on a value of heads or tails. Both values are potentially possible

within the space of the subject, even if only due to our ignorance. At some point the outcome may acquire an actual value. For the moment, ignore how this might occur and what we might mean by actual, even though these considerations are impossible to completely evade. A value in this example cannot be actualized as heads and tails simultaneously within the same outcome, but only because *the space of the subject, an outcome of a coin toss, expects (awaits, has room for) a single value and not more*. A different subject with a ‘contradictory’ space may expect something else.

An outcome of a coin toss is a ‘space’ that may be filled, as in this situation with heads or tails. The subject’s space is a variable waiting to be set, to be evaluated, or to be observed. A situational space and its process of evaluation identify the possible and actual values of the space. If the space allows only or demands one way of being, the other is denied entrance. A contradiction, then, is relative to the space given, but absolute in describing the form of that space.

We may assign a value to outcome. The value is a determinate meaning allowed by the particular subject. Proposition valuation in logic abstracts from this form of everyday valuation. Instead of a subject like ‘the outcome’, the entire proposition ‘the outcome is heads’ becomes the subject of valuation where the value of a whole proposition as subject is allowed to be—has space for—true or false. From an exterior valorizing perspective, all propositions are identical with respect to their potential space.

Within the coin toss, when an outcome as subject is assigned a value of heads, we do not look to any theory to establish this valuation because the value is an observed result. Nothing more need be done. Further exploration may determine that the value becomes otherwise, but the initial value was not incorrect or in

error: it was the value observed in the circumstances surrounding it. Propositions are likewise observed to be true or false, or we may be uncertain and in-between.

63

Heads and tails are both potential values of a coin toss. True and false are both potential values of a proposition. How can different values 'fit' into the same space of the subject? Is it any different than an equation that has multiple, distinct solutions? And are not many solutions conjugates of one another as in $ax^2+bx+c=0$ with a negative discriminant? Whether a proposition is true or false, both values are solutions to that problem. Choosing the 'right' solution means appealing to constraints outside of the original equation, although in our physics both solutions often have importance. Perhaps, as in the coin toss, we do not decide the truth value of a proposition, but rather, the value is a physical outcome determined by constraints beyond our control. A protected belief is also an outcome. It is an event that belongs to a pre-defined space that is already filled, or stable, or observed.

64

Non-contradiction means that there is a subject with a place or space fit to possibilities whose members cannot actualize and occupy the space simultaneously. The possibilities empirically constrain, *in evaluation*, what the subject has been, may be, and can become.

65

Is it the evaluation process that limits the simultaneous multiplicity of values within the subject, or does the space of the subject fundamentally disallow—lack room for— multiple values simultaneously? How can a particular value take up as much space as a possibly infinite set of possibilities

66

Within exterior propositional space, true implies a predicate that points to a member of a particular space of possibilities of the subject and that, upon evaluation, presently occupies that space. False is a lack of occupancy of place by the predicate-pointed subject-space element upon evaluation, but the only way to *observe* a non-occupancy of place by the predicate-pointed element upon evaluation is if *something* else already occupies that place. An unoccupied space open to possibilities is unevaluated and thus neither true nor false yet.

67

The difference between true and false lies in a ‘misdirection’ by the predicate. In falsehood, the predicate points to an unobservable possibility within the space of the subject. It is unobservable because the space is already occupied and observed as something else. In truth, the predicate points directly to the occupant of the space, and thus no further looking around is necessary.

68

Visual space is completely occupied—no point of one’s visual field is, or can be ‘empty’. Empty visual space does not belong to the visual field at all. Within empiricism, the historical ‘givenness’ of visual space follows from the presumed human *inability*

to ‘control’ or ‘manipulate’ the color values in this space when compared to our presumed ability to ‘determine’ or ‘choose’ the truth values of propositional space. Both sides of the comparison fail. Color values may be manipulated at will, if only slightly, and I highly doubt my ability to choose or determine any truths.

69

Geometric space is neither filled nor unfilled. It is a potential space at all times and thus unobservable. This condition does not forbid us for hypothesizing an object at a particular point in geometric space. One can conjecture a value in a potential space without that value ever being.

70

‘Empty’ physical space, the space of everyday physics, is geometric space not associated with hypothetical objects. It is an absence of relation, not a lack of occupancy in itself. How do we observe an absence of relation? It is an inability to create a shared space between subjects despite trying to do so.

71

A truly unoccupied space is unnoticeable by all the senses, thus it must exist beyond sensation. An unoccupied space that is still a space is a space for something to be, a space of possible occupancy fit for particular occupants. The only potential occupants of geometric space are the ‘points’ of that space. For example, a square *cannot* occupy Euclidean geometric space anymore than the color red can occupy auditory space—although a color may lead to the fulfillment of a sound as in synesthesia. When talking about Euclidean geometric shapes, we can say that the *relations*

between geometric occupants occupy a space that has the square as its possible value. A space suited to geometric shapes will have the square as a singular ‘point’ of potential occupancy in that space.

72

A proposition creates sense when the subject-space, as a whole, is pointed-to by the predicate prior to evaluation. Within a proposition, predicate-subject pointing and sense are synonymous. A predicate that does not point to a subject-space within a proposition is nonsense of direction. An example: ‘redness is a cucumber.’ Here, the subject has a space, but not a space that is pointed-to by cucumber—the cucumber points only to itself. The copula ‘is’ can be thought of as a directive to forge a directed pointer across itself, if possible.

73

An ‘apparent’ contradiction is a contradiction within the space of the subject of discussion. To resolve a contradiction is to create a different subject space. When created, we tend to lose sight of the old subject space—should we fall back into the old space, we will see the contradiction once again.

74

To be deceived by another, one must first accept and become the subject space of the deceiver, then, one must occupy that space with something pointed-to by the deceiver, a pointed-to element that differs from the occupant of the deceiver’s similar space. The deceiver attempts to *make* the other different relative to the deceiver, but such that the deceiver understands this difference explicitly through a grounding of the subject space and its possible occupants. This allows the deceiver to know what and

where and how the deceived is, and prevents the deceived from achieving similar knowledge about the deceiver. In a relationship between the two, the knowledge-of-the-other differential grants the deceiver excess freedom, power, comfort, certainty, and stability at the expense of the deceived. Again, theft of these valuable commodities and the pain of their loss establish the historical immorality of deception. To avoid crude deception, you need not stop talking to or trusting others. You can always take in the subject space of another and fill it with whatever you choose.

75

If propositional truth is based upon pointed-to occupancy on evaluation, then what more can we say about the structure and logic of truth? In this truth, the predicate suggested subject-space element occupies its space. This can be said many ways: I see what I am conditioned by the statement to see, I am told to await something and it arrives, I am placed in a position to find something and I do. The very act of comprehending a proposition puts one relatively closer to observing the predicate-pointed subject-space element as occupant than not because finding an unpointed-to element as occupant requires more effort. Thus a necessary *selection bias* is associated with every propositional truth and falsehood. We first observe occupants that require the least time and energy to evaluate.

76

The characteristic nature of oracles and prophets lies within the essence of the proposition itself—the mechanisms or bodies that speak propositions add little to their mystery.

77

Every proposition is partially a self-fulfilling prophecy because the predicate has an advantage in filling up its own subject. A negated predicate, e.g. this text is not red, partially overcomes this bias. A negated predicate points to the entire spatial set of the subject rather than a defined subset, although still uses the positive portion of the predicate as an entrance for evaluation. One cannot evaluate 'not red' without traveling through 'red' first. The static meaning of 'not red' is: point to red then away from red. 'Not red', read this way, implies everything in the universe viewed from the origin 'red'. Those things thought closest to red, such as blue and green and purple, are often the first things seen when looking away from red, but the colors do not exhaust the collection of pointed-to elements in negation. Nor does 'not red' have an identical meaning between people, as the spatial positioning of elements, with respect to red, differs from person to person.

78

What of this pointing from predicates to subject-spaces? A predicate cannot point on its own, or at all. By point I am describing in vectorial terms the conditioned flow of attention as it moves from one place to another.

79

I assume that I am occupied by theories, but theories are unevaluated possibilities and unobservable, so how can I see that these things occupy me? Theories form the space of the subject for potential occupancy. They occupy nothing, not even me. I do, however, evaluate theories. I am that which evaluates and forms occupancy. What are the unconditional conditions for the possi-

bilities of these abilities? I never liked these questions. Could not multiple, perhaps infinite sets of distinct conditions be responsible for the same ability?

PLACELESSNESS OF THEORY

Let me ask, how did you acquire your beliefs? By what mechanisms and what materials? You have your theories about the world, your philosophy, and your denial of understanding outside of your own, but we can always ask: how did these come to be? Are your beliefs a creation of God? Are they an emergent illusion, constructed from quantum loops and strings? Philosophy, using the word truth as an alias, has considered several belief mechanisms and materials above others.

I acquire beliefs in many ways. I allow propositions to interact with sensual experiences, waiting to see if they can be explained by one another. If so, I may learn to believe the proposition. Some theories I find useful in achieving my goals. I believe these pragmatic theories because they minimize the distance between my desires and their fulfillment. Other propositions I believe because they tautologically follow from my other beliefs, or at least do not obviously contradict current beliefs. If the proposition fits in with these other beliefs then I may believe it as well.

Some beliefs I acquire because they originate from, according to my perspective, an assumed justifying source. These relative authority figures, the first being my parents, are responsible for many of my beliefs simply because I witnessed what they did and heard what they said. Religious figures, celebrities, Nobel laureates, athletes, writers, lovers—each may become an automatically

justifying source to someone. Any conceptual framework may do it. Society as a whole may be considered a justifying source, and the common beliefs of a society may become my own.

Within me, each of these theoretical mechanisms of belief acquisition may be inverted. Briefly, in correspondence-type theory, I may selectively attend to some experiences above others or reshape my experiences so that they are explained by a particular proposition—the proposition becomes a belief through purposeful construction rather than through natural comparisons. The pragmatists, they ignore the force of seduction. With the promise of a deeply desired goal—sex, drugs, power, truth—one will often believe anything, even when the goal is never realized. Coherent groups of propositions are well-known to be cheap: with a bit of hammering, rearranging, and repression, any group of propositions may become coherent. And lastly, authoritarian frameworks rarely instill only beliefs into their subjects. Like teenagers, anyone subjugated by a system of belief will, with high probability, react with reciprocal disbelief towards particular believed content of the authoritarian network. All of history suggests that authority both perpetuates and undermines aspects of itself.

I embrace all of these theories, and I have nothing to say about their truth right now, rather, I argue that these historical truth theories have little to do with truth or at least can be taken to be about something else. I call these theories ‘mechanisms of belief acquisition’. I cannot prove that this is their content, but when viewed as such, the theories themselves support their topic of discussion. In a circular way, I believe that these theories are about belief’s construction because this belief is more coherent, more useful, and corresponds more with my experiences than the belief that they are about truth itself.

Let us take correspondence theory with the following proposition: correspondence truth theory is about truth. While correspondence theory says that it is about truth, asserting something does not make it true, at least not according to correspondence theory. We must compare this proposition to the facts, but the fact is that correspondence theory conjectures truth as correspondence—if there were external facts on the matter we would point to them.

What of the proposition: correspondence truth theory is about belief acquisition? I do notice that I acquire some beliefs about the world through a correspondence-type approach. How do I notice this? I observe myself comparing propositions to other sensory experiences, a process that sometimes results in an entity I call belief.

We can experimentally set up a correspondence situation according to this theory and then measure, via surrogate markers, the acquisition of beliefs. If correspondence situations successfully induce beliefs, then a correspondence theory of belief acquisition will be believed according to the pragmatic theory of belief acquisition; that is, since correspondence theory works to predict belief acquisition it will be believed like any other scientific theory that is useful.

A correspondence theory of belief acquisition will only be believed if it corresponds with the facts, but these facts are rigorously established by the application of the theory in experiment. Belief after successful application of a theory is related to the pragmatic standard of belief. These two truth theories, when viewed as mechanisms of belief acquisition, are bound together in support of one another, but when viewed as theories of truth they

are isolated and fragmented creatures that fight. Upon a coherence approach, I am more likely to believe that these theories are about belief acquisition rather than truth.

I would like to construct a more graceful argument, but I cannot. Consider these paragraphs a coarse description of what I might mean. But let us look at the general dilemma—when we have multiple competing theories *labeled* by the same word or phrase, on what ground can we claim that the theories are all *about* that word's reference. Truth theories are not necessarily about truth. Linguistic theories are not necessarily about language. We would need to know absolutely in advance what we were talking about—Cartesian certainty?—in order to assign a definitive topic to our theory, yet this is what we do not have if a theory must be expressed.

Disparate theories labeled by the same word suggest that we may be talking about multiple topics and not one, hence philosophers often posit a 'plurality' resolution to ancient conflicts but this will not do. You may hypothesize that there are a plurality of truth theories, and that all are true in some way, but still, what unites this plurality of theories under the single topic of truth? Why not say, "there are a plurality of theories, we have lumped them under a single topic out of convenience, out of historical associations and personal conjectures, but beyond the commonalities indigenous to the theories, they are alien to one another and should not be assumed equivalent in topic."

We should say this, but we do not. Instead, we assume that one theory deserves its historical namesake above the others. We assume that one theory is the real/true theory of (insert label here) while the others are illusionary/false. The label of a theory

is analogous to the physical object of a perception, and I suspect that the skeptical arguments that deny knowledge of real objects also deny the connection between a theory and a true label.

80

Like biological organisms, like religions, like galaxies; theories branch off from a founder which is one reason we relate disparate entities to each another, yet with enough generations and schisms, separate entities that burst forth from a founder may become ‘structurally’ uncorrelated to each other and even the founder itself. As an example, the earth helped give rise to humans on the biblical and Darwinian accounts, but they, both pairs, are unrelated except for a distant, often forgotten asymmetric respect.

81

It is underappreciated that people primarily argue because they *assume* they are arguing about the same topic. For instance, two philosophers who imagine they are arguing about theories of perception are not arguing about perception at all—each is likely arguing for something distinct. Unless the topic in question is fundamentally contradictory, only the shared or at least non-contradictory features between theories can be consistently associated with a fixed topic of discussion.

82

Once we question the assumption of topic-equivalence between competing theories in philosophy, many philosophical arguments look something like this:

Philosopher A: "I'm talking about perception."

Philosopher B: "No, I'm talking about perception. You're talking about something else."

Philosopher C: "Perhaps neither of you is talking *about* perception?"

Philosopher A: "Ridiculous. One of us is talking about perception. The other is confused."

Philosopher B: "Yes, I agree. Except I'm the one really talking about perception."

Philosopher A: "No, I am."

It is difficult to stop arguing. We are convinced that there is a 'right' way to describe or talk about a topic, even though the topic itself, if it is more than its description, 'generated' the many contradictory ways that the topic is talked about. Or, the many ways of talking formed the topic of discussion. Or, a description acquires a name like a newborn child and not the other way around.

But isn't physical science different? Do we not agree upon scientific theories, or at least have the ability to rank theories with respect to degrees of correspondence to the truth of a topic? Can we not say that Einstein's theory is closer than Newtown's theory with respect to the topic of gravity?

The way physical science began to overcome ambiguity of topic was by abandoning the assumption of a metaphysical object that underlies the topic at the onset. Instead of theories of gravitation we have, more humbly, theories concerned with particular collections of experiential judgments. The theory *initially* refers to a collection of measurements and not to a hypothetical object of reality such as gravity. The theory compresses, in one among many ways, the commonality between the elements of the collec-

tion. It matters not that the measured experiences depend upon theory at the start—or that a measurement is a hypothetical object, too. Every isomorphism between a theory's model and a set of measurements is of some value.

APPENDIX A. FREEDOM

83

The only way to be free is to accept that you are not—then to search for freedom anew.

84

Even if freedom is localized to the human organism, that freedom is a formal property of the universe and not of man. The question of free will, in this sense, is synonymous with the question of the possibility of a free and open universe, the question of the existence of any freedom at all anywhere.

85

Freedom is the acquisition of atemporal potential—the can now, which persists until that potential is destroyed or expended.

86

Freedom is roughly the acquisition of ability, regardless of mechanism. Even if you are coerced by a mind-controlling alien into acquiring new potential, you may still claim that potential in the name of freedom. And note: abilities that cannot be exercised are not abilities.

87

The acquisition of new abilities requires the destruction of old ones.

88

Freedom is following a difficult path, believing that easier paths exist.

89

Freedom is following the path of greatest resistance, of wasting energy in the moment for a future promise that may never come to be. In this way, freedom and the Good often conflict.

90

Freedom is the capacity to expend energy in excess to the needs of transient survival.

91

Freedom is a violation of action physics.

92

Any path that is followed with ease makes no claim on freedom—like the branch that follows the flow of a river. It does nothing to oppose the surrounding current. A fish in the same waters may swim other ways, but not without burning fuel.

93

Suppose the opposition between an object and its path makes sense, then, freedom is a form of dependence where the path of an object is dependent, in part, upon the object itself.

94

Freedom is the opposition of one's desires and fears—out of the desire and fear of freedom.

95

To do what comes unnaturally to you—that is freedom.

96

A feeling of choice suggests the vacillation of an unstable machine. An efficient machine will damp out these transient oscillations quickly. Someone who 'can't choose' is unable to dissipate a chaotic mode; that person lacks an ability and therefore lacks some freedom.

97

The persistence of choice within indecision highlights an absence of freedom, not its presence.

98

Freedom is understood in the meaninglessness of choice.

99

Anxiety is related to freedom, but not through choice. We become anxious when expending ourselves while following the difficult path, the path of freedom.

100

I can no more control the movement of my arm than the rising of the sun. Here is why. I am said to control the rising of my arm when 1) I expect first that my arm will rise, and 2) then I judge that it does. If I did not expect my arm to rise yet it did, I could hardly say that I was in control of its movement. It would be moving, rather, against my will. With the sun, too, I expect it to rise each day, and then I judge that it does; and in this sense I am in control of the sun. While, in comparison to the rising sun, there are many more instances during the day when I expect my arm to rise and then I judge that it does, this increase in expectation-judgment pairs is all there is to this control. We believe we can cause our arm to rise anytime we choose, and it does rise without a fixed periodicity, but it only rises when it rises, and only the times when I expect it to rise before it rises can be associated with control. As I cannot directly alter my expectations at will, I control the sun as much as my arm.

101

Physical energy makes no sense in a deterministic universe. Potentials and stored capacities are linguistic fictions in a world that evolves according to fixed dynamics. Nor is it clear that a nondeterministic quantum mechanics fairs any better.

102

The universe determines its dynamical constraints and the dynamical constraints determine how the universe changes. As the universe evolves, there are new constraints and new dynamics—a new universe dominates that was not contained in nor predicted by the old. Conservation of energy, as a presumed meta-law between all universes, works so well because of its

inherent ambiguity, flexibility, and potential space of expansion. Energy theory is able to follow the flux of the cosmos, for as the universe changes we may always change, add, or subtract terms in the formula. Each energy term is, abstractly, a form of change potential or potential for change. Energy theory and hypothetical energy substance share this potential for change—*the theory and the substance both have the potential to morph into new forms*. This theory-substance meta-consistency grants energy its dominance in its world. Although the total potential for change can be made constant for theories based upon continuous time, in our world where time is not understood, the theory of energy conservation limits our actual potential for change. The theory creates what it means; it makes energy constant because it constrains our present understanding of change, time, and potential.

103

Change is substance and form.

104

Everything that is, is now. Freedom is not.

105

Each moment is change.

106

Experience requires change alone—space and time are superfluous.

107

Relations between moments may manifest in the void, but these connections are far removed from our physical laws.

APPENDIX B. PART-WHOLE

108

A whole sustains its parts, and the parts create the whole.

109

A part within a whole cannot exit the whole and maintain its identity as the part, or, a part's identity is conditional upon the whole.

110

A part is undefined in itself. A whole is defined by its parts.

111

A whole may fragment. The fragments will be multiple wholes, or will become parts belonging to a new whole.

112

The fragments will be dissimilar to the parts of the whole. If they are identical, then the whole was not a whole to begin with; it was a collection of multiple wholes.

113

Wholes may accrete, but they must fragment to do so.

114

All wholes have parts.

115

All parts belong to wholes.

116

Parts do not have parts, but parts are not atoms. Atoms have identity outside of the whole, parts do not. Atoms can accrete, parts cannot.

117

Parts can neither fragment nor accrete. Wholes accrete by fragmenting.

APPENDIX C. A HOPE WITH DESPAIR

PART 1.

118

A black blob fills the volume of my head; not formless but poorly formed, writhing as an organic infestations of gooey, plasma-like resin that I am waiting for its departure...But it will not leave, at least not upon my command, and God has no interest in my humble infection. It will likely clear on its own, I am sure—I hope. I do not even require the intervention of a doctor or mother or wife. We, the blob and I, are close friends for all time, and as much as I hate the blob, I must believe the blob's hatred for me arose only in defense of my initial, unjustified anger directed at this poor, unaware creature.

119

Now the blob, black and gray and slightly shiny, mimics the shape of a mouth with its amorphous and every-changing material substance. What possibly could it be trying to tell me at this time? It sounds like growling or gurgling, but behind these muffled noises I can make out the barest formation of human-like words. They are becoming more clear, more intense and necessary, as if the blob needs to expel a secret of past crimes, a capital sin that infects the blob from the inside. Presumptuous me! I thought the blob was a disease upon me. But wrong, wrong, wrong. I am inside of it, trying to vomit myself into clean air so that I can breathe.

120

I am on the ground covered in mucinous, black-green slime, able to breathe but only while gurgling through the sticky substance in my mouth. I dream of rest, but the blob continues to ungulate before my eyes, shaking more and more quickly, vibrating in all direction simultaneously and I expect that it will shake itself apart and cover me further with its remains. But the blob relaxes. Why? I must understand the processes that govern its behavior, but why must I ponder even this? A new net overcomes me, this one made of rope and steel, tossed upon my body, weighing me toward the ground. I look up and the blob appears sad, even compassionate about my captivity. The blob had no wish for this outcome after discharging me from its insides. The goal was freedom.

121

A rainbow bursts through the ground, throwing debris that freeze in mid air. I walk around the broken ground as it hovers before me, looking underneath each piece for something but I don't know what. Then I strike at the pieces, hoping to break them further.

122

While spinning in the air I look down upon the previous scene: the compassionate blob, broken ground, and I held captive. My head becomes large; my eyes larger, my mouth a cavern, and I contemplate devouring the entire picture, but instead I look away into nothing, a void with pinpoints of light that might represent a night sky, and I am pulled away and apart, my head stretching as if near the gravity of a massive black hole. I am quickly thinning.

123

Surprisingly, a flock of birds flutter on top of a blue sky. It has started to rain acid but nothing is burned—we are able to play in the rain regardless of its composition. And I run, laughing at nothing, thinking of nothing, feeling the slippery ionic rain on my fingers. I rub it into my face and expect my skin to peel off in response to this noxious chemical, but as I have already said, nothing *here* is burned. We are fireproof, acidproof, and waterproof; not invincible, but unaffected by the chemical reactions that transform the substance of our being. We remain identical under transformation. Invariant.

124

Mathematical relations take on solid, physical form; part symbolic expression and part material substance, filling space—they are space—like a length of colorful ribbon. The bonds of the math support me, and I hang above ground by relations that touch me ever so softly. I am frozen here. Stagnant and comfortable. And so very unsatisfied. The ribbon wilts in response to my lack of faith and begins to appear sad like the black blob of before. I watch as the mathematical illumination loses form, loses color and light, and coalesces into a compassionate, amorphous shape. I have always been bound by the same thing.

125

The room and ground appear unchanged, except now there is nothing to see. I am alone without even a body for warmth or to localize me in space and time. It feels as though I have eyes, so perhaps I was mistaken. I am two eyeballs, staggering back at forth, looking at the writer who writes these words. These eyes can see through my lies. They beg me to continue on with a bit of friendly encouragement. “Why don’t you continue writing?” they say. Why not indeed. Explanations are unneeded so long as you have friends.

126

My eyes go shooting off in opposite directions like a subatomic transformation, pair production the physicists call it. We are truly alone now, but for some reason I use the plural pronoun, assuming that others are watching or perhaps here, in this empty room without walls, with me, alone. I was going to describe the walls as they appear to disintegrate into dust, but before I commit

to that picture, I have decided to reconstruct and resolidify the prison surrounding the essence of me. I seem to enjoy being trapped.

127

Let us place more people in the scene. Well-dressed men and women, cutout figures of actual human beings actually, chat with each other, hold alcoholic drinks in contemporary glassware—stylish martini glasses and the like. Everyone is talking, but like Pink Floyd, I can't hear what they are saying, nor do I believe that they are saying anything at all. The cutouts move about from side to side, smiling; they seem happy, unaware, and then suddenly develop fangs. One gentleman, expectedly, must be a type of vampire, drinking bloody margaritas, talking louder and louder, always trying to get me to listen. Stop, it says. Then louder, stop!

128

The cardboard cutouts of actual people slowly fall to the floor, spin for a second, and then disappear. Plants, trees, and animals take their place, but these organic objects are animate, almost real, lively, joyous. I am in the treetops sitting on the solitary leaf of a fragile branch, aware that this is all like a dream, enjoying the creatures as they move through the foliage. The animals, smiling, ask me to *come on down*. "Of course," I reply, and I slide off the leaf and fall hard onto hard and then muddy, mushy earth. I almost sink down but not this time—I'm too careful, too propelled. I'm not even covered in mud this time. It just appears that I am. Mud and flesh flash back and forth on my body, lighting a small patch of jungle like a mud-flesh lamp. Animals hide just beyond the edge of my illumination, curiously waiting for something more to happen, or trying to make sense of this

alien spectacle. Am I unwelcome? The animals are neither angry nor frightened, yet nor do they know what to do with me. And why should it be their job anyway?

129

Spinning, I'm often spinning with vortex lines swirling around me. I am a spinning zebra, whatever that means. I am also tilted.

130

A square of space expands from the void. In this world, space is composed of only two dimensions; the third is the home of Gargoyles who watch the expansion unfold, but even these creatures cannot see the edge of the wave. I am on the edge of an expanding x-y plane pushing space into itself, trying hopelessly to contain its growth and preserve the void. Space pushes back against my stomach, causing my body to warp under pressure. There are no colors here, and the edge I speak of is only identified by the pathetic mass of mostly water that curls against space's invisible presence. Still, I have hope. I would not have told you about water otherwise.

131

A lion mauls my head, but he seems friendly. He is choking on me, trying to wrestle his white fangs free from my skull, so I reach up and try to pull off his mouth. Why does this friendly appearing lion bite me at all? I must have purposely rammed my head into the lion's mouth, but this action too requires an explanation, and I have little time. I am stuck and in pain while the lion requires food and water—my head is not a suitable meal. We struggle together for hours then days without making progress. I have an idea, "Go forward," I say to the lion, and he swallows me whole.

This is what I wanted anyway. Inside the lion's stomach I smell that he is not satisfied—or is he simply upset? I crouch to conserve space and then decide to stand, stretching the lion's abdominal walls from within, seeing the expression of pain on the lion from without. I am full height and walking, unrestricted, but covered in the lion's skin from the inside and prevented from interacting with the world. We are together, the lion and I.

132

I no longer wish to write like this. In the morning I had a vision of being melted except for my resilient eyes, but that was a forced thought undeserving of a place here. And then I thought of the initial blob and where it came from. That part was personal, but now there is more: these words, the thoughts of others, and my boredom of the process. I am hoping for a change.

133

Writing for me necessarily evokes the constipation of writing. I have nothing in common with words. I am a physical being wanting to thrust itself upon the universe, needing to become part of the manifold, and words, these impotent little creatures, are the lifeless carriers of meaning that should be trashed as soon as the meaning is witnessed. (I have since discovered that words are useful, too, you nasty little creatures).

134

I am waiting for the next vision. Multiple pictures flashed before me, none holding fast except for a field of white noise that I confuse for energy. How do you interpret my meaning? I wonder. Are you a curious face or someone who uses the word

‘weird’ as if that word meant something other than a lack of personal understanding—‘beyond one’s world-theory-experience’ is a fair synonymic phrase.

135

I am running in the park. I want to say at night, but that is cliché; in truth there is neither sunshine nor darkness. I am sweating and fearful, trying to look behind for signs of pursuit but I can’t manage to turn my head completely around. If something follows, I will never see it, so I decide to stop. The scene zooms out. I remain in focus as a white outline, panting in the park while the camera moves in and out tracing an invisible quarter spiral rotation. There are large, gloved hands holding the camera, and it becomes obvious that I am part of a diorama. A childhood memory of a morning nightmare returns to me. In the dream it is morning as well. I am in bed, awake, listening to deep thuds patterned as footsteps, convinced that a planet-sized creature is lumbering toward me. From bed, looking outside two windows, I see trees and rooftops against the gray sky but no monster. The thumping continues, becoming louder and deeper and I assume closer. I am frightened, but not of death. I fear truth.

136

I feel guilty about using the word ‘I’. I desire my experiences to be yours, but fear my self-indulgence and lack of grace will in part prevent our connection. Whoever you think I am, I will not be. I am a creation in your mind, and whatever attributes you bestow upon this person, they include aspects of my experiences necessarily coupled to and interpreted in within your uniqueness. Your creation will be both greater and lesser than me. We will be similar as well.

137

A fire burns in the middle of this page; hands reach into the flame for warmth. Others gather near, drawn by the light of many human beings. Everyone wears earthy colored trench coats, heavy leather gloves, and cotton scarves. These are the homeless men and women that we ignore each day, but they could care less. They have urgent matters to discuss, and as they talk, the fire grows hotter and higher, making music like a choir. A witch briefly shows her face and then disappears—no one notices. People begin to take off their gloves as the warmth of the flame pushes back the cold. We turn around and away from the fire. The talking ceases. Isolation sets in. Could it be that too much heat prevents connections within electronic circuits and networks of people identically? Cold and hunger at first brought us together. Now we are most attracted to each other by the magnetic force of confusion.

138

Before, *it* was a bright streak in the night, although now it appears as an eager, dynamic ribbon, gesturing me to come along for a trip. “Why are you so playful?” I think. I hesitate, and the ribbon becomes angry...no, confused. It grows spikes that twist into ram-like spirals; these must be children of the ribbon. They elongate then dart away. The process repeats again and again, faster after each generation of offspring. I think of a lizard-like dinosaur that must have formed out of the math. It runs away to go play in the jungle.

139

I am a comet's head in the cold Alps. Snowflakes fall on and through me—they were supposed to melt, I think. Am I zigzagging through the night sky on a hopeless mission to find another soul? An animal? A village? And I see them all below me, a composite of the creations of the world thrown together in an angry mix, disjoint, disinterested; a collection of objects with nothing in common other than elemental atoms. The atoms alone deserve our praise, clever creatures, for they know how to live in harmony, forming covalent bonds, offering their individual gifts to the universe. I see two tiny atoms, at first unstable yet full of possibility, that upon meeting sacrifice the essence of each other to create a fused organism of greater potential than either atom taken in isolation. Intelligence does not understand—from a moral perspective—what the tiny atom has accomplished. It, intelligence, greedily hoards personal possibility and experience. Oh miserly mind.

140

I see two arms shaking hands through a periscope perspective. My immediate interpretation of this scene relates to the bonding of atoms, and I suspect that cultural, physical greetings are intended to mimic the moral perfection of molecules. The periscope moves to the right on a clockwise rotation, revealing a group of living limbs, a mix of arms and legs that perhaps have bodily owners outside of my line of vision. A single head pops up from below. He has rough blond hair, large round eyes—too large to be human, more likely a cartoon—and a maniacal smile. It is a child's toy rotating on a stick. He blinks at me while his mouth remains fixed and frozen. The head morphs into a biological

human without hair and barely a head who begins walking away from me through the mass of moving limbs. I am not horrified, but rather pleased at my growing ability to perceive fully formed people.

141

As I struggle and have struggled, the black blob has grown hairy spider legs and a large circular mouth full of spiky, steel teeth. The teeth chatter up and down as quickly as a chainsaw turns. I am moving slowly toward the open mouth, but it is not me that it wants—my mind is the prize. None of this makes sense because the spider blob already lives in my head; to eat my mind would be to eat its home, but the creature is not deterred and begins munching on my web-like beliefs. It buzzes with a desire for its own destruction. My beliefs are dismantled and swallowed within themselves, passing through the spider's empty enteric cavity and expelled undigested. Nothing has been accomplished, like eating plastic. Upon reflection, this last phrase refers to all I have written thus far.

142

Upon further reflection, a day later, I disagree with my former self and stomp on the spider blob which at first resists then pops under pressure. Had I known I had feet I would have done this a bit sooner, but as you know, sometimes I question whether I have limbs or not. It makes sense that an honest mind would be skeptical about limbs; scientifically speaking, the only connection I have to arms and legs are the electromagnetic impulses that migrate through spacetime along linear, subway-like routes. You see, we are not tissue; we are relations between matter, and these wires and levers and pulleys that move when we move are no more than helpful, simple machines that increase our relevance

to the universe. The stomach is a different creature entirely. My advice to you: do not bully your stomach—it probably has more consciousness than a chicken, experiences joy, sadness, and loss to a limited extent; and can perform simple arithmetic calculations.

143

I am again a set of numbers written on a white sheet of paper ‘2 3 8 7 6 3...’ The numbers are different sizes, and rhythmically move in harmonic patterns on the page. They appear to levitate off the page, but remain connected through nearly invisible bonds that prevent full separation. Nor will the numbers ever leave the page; the white sheet allows the numbers to be what they are. The sheet folds on itself, around itself as a mobius strip connected 10,000 times to itself, and the numbers from opposite corners of the page are gently attracted to each other, recursively multiplying, dividing, and subtracting. Functions are a community of numbers that share common cultures, customs, and locations. But what attracts numbers to each other at all? Where is the tension that gives rise to change? Page and number must be fundamentally tense, and although numbers are quite stable, there is a law that the more stable a structure, the greater the perturbation of everything outside of that structure. I am drawn into dialectic anxiety.

144

When will it ever end? And I am not sure what I am talking about. Several options present themselves: these paragraphs, my life, the universe. A shadow crawls on the ground behind you, rises up slowly, silently, and then reaches over to shake your hand. You refuse and the shadow pleads; it makes dark gestures with its hands and mouth, trying to inaudibly explain the situa-

tion from the perspective of a shadow, but you cannot understand the message. One must be educated in the school of darkness in order to communicate with one's shadow. Only then may you both talk nostalgically as childhood friends about the sun and other sources of light.

145

I worry too much about what has been written and where *this* is going, and I know too well that such worries convert interesting thoughts into non-recyclable plastic, yet I have not figured out a robust way to suppress my expectations except to include them in the story itself—not as a confession of my flaws but as a technique to overcome them. Even now, I worry that this method too will fail.

146

I am reminded that nothing really matters, but at least today, this moment, I see that nihilism is merely a psychological coping strategy for a world that matters too much. In our universe, an exquisitely sensitive organism will be overwhelmed by the onslaught of meaning to the point of meltdown. Nihilism is a useful device that, in times of crisis, constrains and prevents a total systems failure. I believe in both God and Nothing simultaneously, but I must confess; this simultaneity of belief begins to feel like a dynamic God who furiously oscillates between Nothingness and Something, both bound together by a force I cannot yet describe or name.

147

The screen fills with the white, static noise of a television of old. I have seen this picture before in my thoughts, and many times in waking vision. A bulging circular deformation evolves in the

center of the screen, trying to give organization to the unstructured noise. I hear in the static the voices of 10,000 souls talking at once. There are moments when a small voice stands out from the others, and I can almost discern words, or moans, or music in the unpatterned hiss. It becomes an orchestra of percussion, brass, and string; the instruments transiently take shape within an ocean of all frequencies, almost as if the instruments were breaking through the surface of a pool just to play a brief tune for the world before melting away. I am enjoying sound.

148

There is a short story I must tell you. Why? Because it keeps telling itself to me. A girl without a name walks through life imagining the destruction of the people she meets. The destruction is not abstract in anyway—she sees a man on a plane decapitated by a circular steel blade, and a classroom of fellow students hit by a rocket launcher and then burned. The images of death are only in her mind, but the people are in fact quite real, for she overlays these mental images of accidental murder, like transparencies, on top of actual people. Some are strangers while others are family or friends. For many years she has played out these scenes with innocent subjects, unaware of committing any crime. Nor did anyone ever suspect that she possessed unacceptable thoughts; her dresses were too clean. Apart from violent images, she is compassionate down to the molecular level. She cannot watch, without crying, the struggle of a worm as it crawls on dry gravel searching for moist, rich earth. She of course has these same feelings of love for all human beings, but the magnitude of suffering and hopeless movement of men and women overwhelmed her empathic organ early on, converting her

compassion into a desire for murderous relief. One day she told me that her rage was always directed toward suffering itself and never at the people who speckled her life. I only believed her in part.

PART 2.

149

A clear sheet of plastic begs for attention. It is partly curled on one end like a rug, and as I look, it begins to roll up more fully. You might think that I was standing on the plastic, but I was not. I am not in the scene at all.

150

The plastic sheet was the only object in the universe—the void is more apparent now that the sheet is rolled up. I see scattered, small, white, oozing pockets that squeeze out of the void and then rhythmically retract. Is the black blob now white? Is it trying to get to me, even though I am not there?

151

Nothing.

152

The rainbow, it has returned at the mention of truth. Then it melts. So close.

153

If the cycle cannot return, then it will choose to stop entirely, extracting perfect revenge upon the parts that attempt to quell it. We must strike a deal, cycle and not-cycle parts. I say, let us work together as one, making fun of the land we are in. But my acceptance of you is not enough, for it presumes our separateness and perpetuates the divide. What is left? I will listen to you, please, give the orders again, but do not mistake my submission for an invitation of infinite abuse.

154

How shall I insult you, dear observer? Where do your weaknesses begin? Let me see, let me search around these parts, under the table, in the car, under a box. Yes, under a box I found you hiding in a dark closet, listening to those people downstairs. Why did you want to hide from family? It is silly to think it would cause you that much pain, but it would have. Who were you taking bullets for? Who shoots you now?

155

That girl in the garage...she was yelling at you for something, and you were crying. Who struck first? And why do you still bleed?

156

When surrounded by hyenas, one cannot help but develop a taste for rotting meat.

157

I was on a merry-go-round...by myself?

158

I was lost, and then found.

159

I touched the pitchfork of the devil...and grabbed it for myself.
I could have taken hell if I wanted it.

160

I have never rejected what I have done in *pursuit* of fear. What kind of bias is that? Should not some things done for fear be denied, just as things done for desire? Why do I trust fear so much more than its opposite? In the past, perhaps fear always guided me along the most interesting path. And it is still a good rule of thumb, but the problem, as it has always been, is the avoidance of desire—a logical error on my part. But is not my denial of desire a fear of desire, so to speak? And if I fear desire, then perhaps desire is what I should now approach, but not out of a fear for desire; rather, out of desire's affirmation.

161

The wind of the moment lashes between the sheets, without hubris, it denies the solitude of a safe flight. But no less, I cannot become the multitudes of what I wish I were not, so I languish in despair, reaching for nothing but the wisp of dark threads that surround my room. In contrast to the night, I am what I wish I were—to be an innocent speck on the background of the earth's crust, deeper, below the core of hot magma lies the sleeping dragon of children, blowing cold smoke in the inferno.