

William Call

The Time of Your Life

Our stay on earth is temporary. When it's over is that the end or is "life" somehow a survivor? A new perspective offers insights concerning cyclical renewability. The self/body relationship is indefinitely extended as the end of one cycle becomes the simultaneous beginning of another.

Introduction

The world is an entity that is characterized by qualities. The qualities that characterize the world are unique to the person that perceives them, and therefore, there are as many worlds as there are perceivers of qualities.

A common definition of the term “perceive” is to become aware of or to understand something. According to this definition the infinitives “to perceive” and “to understand” are synonymous. We also associate the infinitive “to perceive” with the senses. To perceive something with the senses is to gain an understanding of it. Although these definitions are commonly accepted, they take something that isn’t stated for granted. When a person perceives an object with the senses the person’s awareness of it is limited to the object’s characteristics. The object itself isn’t perceived. To reach an understanding of what the object is we must determine what it is that the qualities we perceive characterize.

By failing to acknowledge this point we also fail to recognize the role that perception plays as we attempt to make sense of our existence. That which we perceive is primary. Interpretations of what we perceive are secondary. By pursuing the secondary while ignoring the primary, we fail to recognize that as perceivers we are necessary existents. As perceivers we are equals to that which we perceive. Both the perceiver and the perceived are necessary. Existence arises from the one in relationship to the other.

Belief Systems

Modern science, an applied discipline, is a highly institutionalized interpreter of existence. Status, recognition, and monetary return motivate institutions to sponsor scientific research that leads to the development of new technology. By contrast, in the 16th and 17th centuries when the Scientific Revolution was first taking root, initiators of new views concerning the natural world, including Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, and Johannes Kepler, thought of

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themselves as “natural philosophers.” They worked as individuals as they broke new ground and developed new ideas. By contrast, today’s developments are created by teams of specialists. Although the work of individual researchers is unified as products are developed, they each focus on that portion of a project to which they contribute.

Although science generally relies on empirical observation and controlled experiments to verify its claims, such theories as Isaac Newton’s law of universal gravitation are too broad both as to their theoretical conceptualization and assumed application to be either empirically confirmable or experimentally testable. As a means of addressing this limitation science turns to inductive reasoning, which relies on a limited number of observations to support general conclusions. While theories make universal claims, observations are of particular instances. Although many believe that a given theory is valid throughout the universe, because observations and experiments are of individual occurrences, they are not sufficient to confirm the belief.

When observations relating to a scientific theory are applied in specific instances and the results of the application are determined, knowledge of the results is attained. This is an example of “scientific knowledge.” One-time applications can’t confirm the veracity of a general theory but are in specific circumstances able to provide a comparison between that which is predicted by a theory and that which is observed. While general theories may be accepted as true, successful applications of them confirm the applications rather than the theories. Scientific knowledge is limited to particular occurrences. Knowledge of what works is of what occurs in specific circumstances. Only knowledge of what is, were it attainable, is universal.

A difficulty presents itself when laypersons with but a cursory acquaintance with the specifics concerning scientific knowledge fail

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to distinguish between the existence of something and its functionality. For science a description of what things do suffices. They leave the question of what things are to others. Although they, for example, may generally believe in atoms, they describe them in terms of their functionality rather than addressing questions concerning their existence. Do atoms exist in unobserved places? The question is of course beyond the purview of a discipline that relies on empirical observation. The success of science as a developer of new technology leads laypersons to believe it has answers to questions it cannot address. The limitations of scientific knowledge are seldom stated and laypeople seldom enquire concerning them. The result is a gap between the specifics of what scientists know and the generalities that laypeople believe they know.

Although science is unable to verify the claim that the universe is material, it nonetheless makes statements that imply the claim. It claims, for example, that the universe is made of “matter,” which is interpreted to mean that the universe is a material entity. While scientists may generally believe this to be the case, making the observations that would prove such a claim would negate the difference between specificity and generality. To equate materiality with the universe is to make the term “material” undefinable. The “Standard Model of Particle Physics” is a current theory that attempts to describe materiality in technical terms. The claim that the theory is applicable to the universe generally, however, isn’t verifiable. Nonetheless, confirming theories that would provide a definition of the term “material” isn’t necessary to make a belief in materiality a fundamental tenet of modern culture. The Industrial Revolution coupled with the ubiquitous presence of technology throughout the world today has been sufficient to accomplish it.

The ubiquity and dominance of a belief in materiality in today’s society provides an opening for religion, which contrasts itself with science by acknowledging the existence of immateriality. The existence of material things is temporary, including the existence of

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the human body, which serves a purpose for life but does not survive death. Science says nothing concerning an afterlife while religion comes equipped with a long tradition of beliefs concerning it. Such beliefs rely on the assumed existence of immaterial things.

Monotheistic religions claim that God is an immaterial being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Despite the belief, however, just as science is unable to define the term “material,” believers refer to the term “immaterial” without a knowledge of what it means. Similarly, when believers refer to the afterlife as a “realm of spirits” or a “spirit world,” they do so without knowing what a “spirit” is or if such “immaterial entities” as spirits exist.

Although believers don’t know what the term “immaterial” means, they are able use it in the context of a belief system with which they are acquainted. Their use of the term doesn’t require a knowledge of its meaning. For them an immaterial afterlife is an extension of the material present life. That their afterlife will be real is, they believe, attested to by the reality of life in the present. They differentiate between the terms “immaterial” and “material” without, however, knowing the meaning of either term.

For science materiality is an essential even though no scientist knows for sure what it is. For religion immateriality is fundamental even though believers have no knowledge concerning it. Both science and religion conduct their affairs without identifying that on which their respective claims are founded. The essentials of a belief system need not be identified when interests in it are pragmatic only. When reasons for acquainting oneself with a subject are what can be attained from it, the attainment suffices. An understanding of an associated belief system is of secondary interest.

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We Don't Know

From youth to old age we struggle to make sense of who are we, what are we, and where are we. Traditional religious beliefs offer a generalized view but are short on specifics that would tell us how we arrived, where we came from, what we should accomplish during our stay, and what will happen to us when we leave. In our youth we hope to learn more as we age. In our later years, however, we come to realize that maturity offers no guarantees of increased understanding. We perceive the characteristics of things, while taking our capacity to perceive them and their capacity to be perceived for granted. We fail to realize that the match between what's out there in the world and what's in here in us rather than coincidental is essential and that without both our existence and the existence of the world, existence itself would not be possible.

During the thousands of years human civilization has endured past generations have handed down innumerable myths, hypotheses, theories, speculations, doctrines, and beliefs designed to answer questions our existence leaves unaddressed. With these as guides we make our way as best we can. We try to ground ourselves, but an existence that extends back to an unknown before and forward to an unknown after lacks a context. Our inability to orient ourselves leaves us as though swinging from a rope with no clear understanding as to where we should or will eventually land. We find ourselves in a place that appears to have a one-way entry in and a one-way exit out. Once in we can't go back out, and once out we can't come back in.

We have histories that are narratives of the past and predictions that are indications of the future. Both, however, are based on viewpoints of the present. Although the present informs us of neither what came before nor what will happen after, we have no choice but to focus on it because it's all we have. Taking our place in society we engage in politics and for a broader more idealized perspective look to religion. These two, however different, are

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concerned with the same questions: who is in charge, and what are the limits of proper behavior? Although religion may be the more inclusive approach and politics the more focused and narrow, both are concerned with the perceptible present. They may speak of a before and an after but can't step back to the past or ahead to the future. We who are limited to the present can't see through the eyes of those who came before or will come after.

Qualities as the Characteristics of Entities

An alternative to traditional methods of addressing our surroundings is to view them from the perspective of qualitative relationships. Ralph Waldo Emerson speaks of "An inevitable dualism [that] bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another to make it whole." Qualities are the perceived characteristics of entities. Emerson indicates that we perceive them in pairs such as "spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay (*Selected writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, the Modern Library, 1992, p. 156)."

An idea in here in the mind is constant. A quality perceived out there in the world is changing. Water is a constant idea that is characterized by qualities that are changing. If water is hot it may become cold. If it is cold it may become hot. Despite these qualitative changes the idea of water remains constant. The conceived idea of water remains the same even though the perceived qualities that characterize it are changing.

Our sensory organs are designed to detect qualitative changes. We perceive qualities as they change. If they did not change there would be nothing for our senses to detect and therefore nothing for us to perceive. When we refer to a change, our reference is to changing qualities that we perceive. When a quality changes it becomes different than it was before the change. Because the after is different than the before, it is the contrary of the before just as the before is the contrary of the after. The contraries of a quality are

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different although to be different they must be comparable to something that is the same. The qualities *hot* versus *cold* are different, while the quality *warm/cool* is the same.

We are not able to perceive the qualities *same* versus *different* with our senses. We can't see, hear, touch, taste, or smell either the quality *same* or the quality *different*. We are, however, equipped with a cognitive faculty that enables us to consider the relationship of these two qualities. Change is inclusive of a before and an after. With our intellect we are able to consider the relationship of a quality before and after it changes. A quality that has changed is different, and a quality that is different is in contrast to what the quality was prior to the change. As the result of change the quality *hot* may become the quality *cold*.

When we perceive a quality, because the quality is changing as we perceive it, it is followed by its contrary. Our intellect enables us to consider the relationship of a quality and its contrary. Although the qualities *hot* versus *cold* are contraries, because they are the before and after of the same quality, they constitute a pair. Our intellect informs us that as contraries they are different and that as different they are two while also informing us that as members of a pair they are the same, and as the same they are one.

As a quality changes it may be regarded as two different qualities. When the quality *hot* changes we may perceive it to be the quality *cold*, just as when the quality *cold* changes we may perceive it to be the quality *hot*. With our intellect we are able to compare the two qualities and determine that they are different. If, however, the quality *hot* changes to become cooler, and the quality *cold* changes to become warmer, at some point our intellect after comparing the two may indicate that these two different qualities *hot* versus *cold* have become the same quality *warm/cool*. Because paired qualities change, our intellect may inform us that they are two qualities

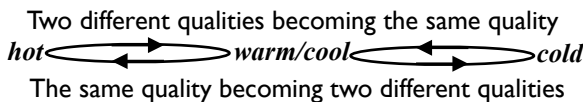
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separated by difference or that they are one quality united by sameness.

Although paired qualities may be judged to be either two separate qualities or one united quality, because they are changing they are neither absolutely separate nor absolutely united. Water that is changing can be perceived to be neither absolutely hot nor absolutely cold. Neither the difference between nor the sameness of the qualities *hot* versus *cold* is absolute because as the qualities change their relationship also changes. Because changing qualities are never absolutely different or absolutely the same, there are no entities characterized by them that are absolutely cold or absolutely hot. There are instead only entities that are changing.

Qualities that characterize an entity are perceived in paired relationships. They are paired in relation to the qualities *same* versus *different*. If the qualities *hot* and *cold* were absolute they would be either absolutely the same or absolutely different. If they were absolutely different they would be two absolutely separate qualities. If they were absolutely the same they would be one absolutely united quality. But because they are changing they are neither absolutely different qualities nor absolutely the same quality but are instead either two different qualities becoming the same quality or the same quality becoming two different qualities. Figure 1 below indicates the relationship of the changing qualities *hot* versus *cold* and the corresponding relationship of the changing qualities *same* versus *different*.

Figure 1



In Here versus Out there

We distinguish between the qualities *out there* and *in here*. The quality *in here* is paired with the quality *out there*. The perception

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of the quality *in here* implies the perception of the quality *out there* and vice versa. Existence consists of these two qualities in relation to each other. The removal of one of the qualities has the effect of removing the other also. To view the quality *out there* separately from the quality *in here* negates the relationship of the two qualities. To consider the two qualities separately is to assume that existence can be cut in half and that each half can be perceived separately from the other half.

We might assume that a conclusion arrived at by considering half of existence is reliable in the context of that half. Our assumption, however, would fail to note that the quality *out there* exists only in relation to the quality *in here* and vice versa. The objective out there can't be considered separately from the subjective in here because the objective is out there only to the extent that the subjective is in here and vice versa. Without an in-here there is no out-there, just as without an out-there there is no in-here. To remove the one is to remove the other also.

We orient ourselves in here in relation to the world out there. We are aware of the world out there *as* we are aware of ourselves in here. The relationship of the out-there and the in-here is reflected in our cognitive capacity, which consists of the perception of qualities out there and the conception of ideas in here. We perceive qualities such as *hot* versus *cold* out there in the world. We conceive the idea of an entity such as water in here in the mind. Just as the removal of the in-here would remove the out-there and vice versa, so too the removal of our capacity to conceive ideas would remove our capacity to perceive qualities that characterize them and vice versa. Our perception of qualities is in the context of ideas of entities we conceive, and our conception of ideas of entities we conceive is in the context of qualities we perceive.

The qualities we perceive with our senses are characteristics of entities. To perceive an entity is to perceive its characteristics. The

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table at which I work is rectangular in shape, medium in size, and brown in color. Its surface is smooth, and its legs are sturdy. Because it is rectangular it isn't round. Because it is of medium size it isn't large. Because its color is brown it isn't black. Its smooth surface isn't rough, and its sturdy legs are not fragile. While science theorizes concerning the components of which an object is made, what we perceive its characteristics to be is what they are. They are not reducible to something smaller or more fundamental. Although two people perceive a characteristic of an object differently, a perception is always "correct" from the perspective of the perceiver. This is the case because a quality is what it is as it is perceived.

Perception is temporal. The perception of a quality is an event that occurs in time. A duration is marked by a beginning and ending time. A perception that begins and ends is an event that occurs in time. When we are conscious we are aware of events that occur as we perceive qualities that characterize them. When we are not conscious we are not aware of events because we are not perceiving qualities that characterize them.

We believe that an entity such as water exists out there in the world because we perceive qualities such as *hot* versus *cold* that characterize it out there in the world. Because the idea of water is characterized by qualities that exist out there we believe its existence is out there where it is characterized. Our belief, however, is not confirmable because the qualities *hot* versus *cold* are never perceived in here in the mind where the idea of water is conceived, just as the idea of water is never conceived out there in the world where we perceive qualities that characterize it. The idea of water is conceived in here while the qualities that characterize it are perceived out there. The idea we conceive and the qualities we perceive are related. We ask how the relationship of the two is accomplished? How does what we conceive interact with what we perceive?

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Although we are not aware of the mechanics that enable their relationship, we are aware that ideas and qualities come together in the mind. The relationship of qualities and ideas is necessary. They make sense in relation to each other but not separately. Perceived qualities are meaningful as they characterize ideas. An idea of an entity is meaningful when it is characterized by qualities. Perceived qualities would be superfluous as characterizers of entities if there were no conceived ideas of entities to characterize. Similarly, conceived ideas of entities would be superfluous if there were no perceived qualities to characterize them. We are aware of ideas of entities in here as they are characterized by perceived qualities out there. We are aware of perceived qualities out there as they characterize ideas of entities in here.

Modern Myths

Representations of gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks were modeled after the people who revered them. Although as gods they were believed to be immortal, defy gravity, and appear and disappear, in other respects they were believed to be characterized by human-like qualities. Their images were characterized by qualities similar to human characteristics. Greek gods were believed to speak Greek, and their behavior was judged in accord with the norms of Greek culture. The Greeks honored their gods with ceremonies and public spectacles. The pantheon of gods recognized by the Greeks reigned over Hellenistic societies for centuries. With the rise of the Roman Republic, which was later replaced by the Roman Empire, much that was Greek including Greek religion retained its prominence. Later, however, as the Roman Empire began to falter, the polytheism rooted in Greek culture began to decline. Christian monotheism, supported in the 4th century CE by the Roman Emperor Constantine, rose to prominence in its stead.

The worship of a monotheistic God, rather than a chance occurrence, was both a defensive and a defiant act on the part of the people of Israel whose homeland was situated between the poly-

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theistic kingdoms of Mesopotamia to the east and the polytheistic beliefs of the Egyptian Pharaohs to the west. The autonomy of the Israelites was challenged. As a means of differentiating themselves from their neighbors, they set aside the worship of gods represented by outward images, directing their loyalty instead to a deity they believed dwelt inwardly in their hearts and minds. The idea of their deity wasn't characterized by perceived qualities. The uncharacterized state of their God was a unique feature of their religion. As a means of acknowledging the cultural difference between themselves and their neighbors, they condemned images associated with foreign gods. As the second of the Ten Commandments states,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Exodus 20: 3-6).

While the images of polytheistic gods could be and sometimes were violated when the shrine of a polis or monarchy was attacked by hostile forces, the God of the Israelites was beyond the reach of invaders. A deity that isn't characterized by changing qualities, although its reality may be questioned, is unassailable. The golden calf forged by the Israelites perished and the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written were lost, even as the idea of a monotheistic God conceived in their minds endured from ancient times to the present. As times change an uncharacterized idea may fade or become less prominent but remains constant nonetheless.

Just as there are polytheistic deities characterized by perceived qualities and a monotheistic deity that isn't, so too are there two classes of conceived ideas of entities: those that are characterized

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by qualities and those that are not. While perceived qualities characterize ideas of entities, ideas that are not characterized are abstractions that have no discernible features. They are ideas that have no qualities. The perceived qualities *good* versus *evil* may characterize a person perceived out there in the world, while the ideas of “The Good,” or “The Bad” by contrast, are uncharacterized, abstract ideas conceived in here in the mind.

Philosophical, scientific, and other esoteric writings may refer to ideas that are abstract. They are separate from the characterizations of perceived qualities. Abstract ideas are typically associated with a belief system and are regarded as meaningful by those who are acquainted with the system. We are able to conceive the abstract idea of an entity even though we can't confirm the existence of the entity because we can't perceive it. The God of the Israelites is an abstract idea of an entity, the existence of which can't be confirmed because it is not characterized by perceived qualities.

Another abstract idea of an entity is “matter,” which according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, is “the material substance that constitutes the observable universe (<https://www.britannica.com/science/matter>).” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “matter” as “the substance of which a physical object is composed (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/matter>).” Although a person may believe that physical objects are composed of matter and that the universe is a physical object made of matter, these beliefs do not verify the existence of matter, which is an abstract idea conceived in here in the mind that has no qualities perceived out there in the world that characterize it.

We identify materials such as wood, iron, and plastic by perceiving their characterizing qualities. We can't identify matter as a material because it is an idea that is believed to represent materiality but lacks the perceived qualities necessary to identify it as material. Although material qualities change as they are perceived, the idea

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of matter doesn't change but is rather an unperceived, uncharacterized constant idea in the mind.

Another conceived idea that isn't characterized by perceived qualities is "energy." According to the Encyclopedia Britannica,

energy, in physics, is the capacity for doing work. It may exist in potential, kinetic, thermal, electrical, chemical, nuclear, or other various forms. There are, moreover, heat and work—i.e., energy in the process of transfer from one body to another (<https://www.britannica.com/science/energy>).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "energy" as

a fundamental entity of nature that is transferred between parts of a system in the production of physical change within the system and usually regarded as the capacity for doing work (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/energy>).

As in the case of matter, energy is a constant abstract idea of an entity. There are no particular instances of its existence because it has no qualitative characteristics. What the above quotations concerning energy have in common is that they indicate what energy does without saying what it is. They claim that energy is transferred even though a transfer isn't verifiable because the transfers they assume are not perceptible. Rather than an entity characterized by perceived qualities in the world out there, energy is an abstract idea conceived in the mind in here.

The idea of energy is central to the belief system that permeates our society. It is as influential in our times as the idea of a monotheistic God was in the Middle Ages. That people today believe energy is an actual existent goes without saying. Physics professors lecture to students, utility companies communicate with their customers, and technology firms conduct research assuming that energy is an entity that exists out there in the world rather than

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an abstract idea that exists in here in the mind. Trained professionals the world over, believing that energy is a real material entity, seek to discover ways to access it and put it to use.

Effects attributed to energy are everywhere present. The existence of energy as a cause is, however, nowhere to be found. The difference between energy that causes effects and the effects that are caused is striking, but in our society the difference is both unrecognized and unacknowledged. With our senses we distinguish between moving and stationary vehicles, hot and cold water, and light and dark rooms. We, however, can't distinguish between the presence and absence of energy because it isn't perceptible. We believe that energy causes a vehicle to move, water to be hot, and a room to be light, but have no means of confirming our belief. We can confirm what we believe to be the effects of energy but cannot confirm the existence of the cause of the effects that we refer to as "energy."

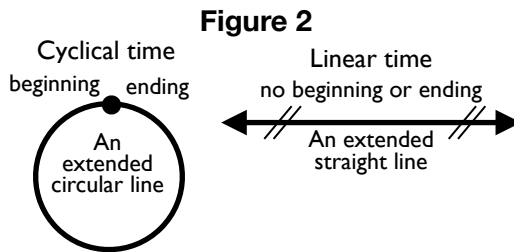
Although scientists posit the existence of energy, because it is not characterized by perceived qualities, it must be believed in. Beliefs concerning energy are based on abstract ideas the meaning of which is dependent on an associated system of beliefs. From the perspective of science the test that confirms the usefulness of a belief is not that the ideas it is based on are characterized by perceived qualities but rather the extent to which the ideas contribute to the development of applied methods.

Cyclical versus Linear

In our society we measure time as events in a series that is either circular with a beginning and ending or linear with neither a beginning nor an ending. Circular or cyclical time consists of related recurring events, while straight or linear time is made up of separate nonrecurring events.

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A sufficiently extended circular line forms a circle. An observant traverser of it recognizes the point at which the end of the line joins the beginning. The point of beginning is the same as the point of ending even though from the perspective of the traverser the two points are 360 degrees apart. By comparison, an extended straight line, because it has neither a beginning nor an ending, continues in each direction into infinity. A traverser of it, moving in one direction or the other, continues on indefinitely without crossing any point on the line twice (Figure 2).



A solar year is a cyclical occurrence. It consists of three hundred and sixty-five recurring days, with the ending of one solar year followed by the beginning of another. By contrast, the existence of the universe is calculated using linear time. It is believed to be about 13 billion years of age, although it has neither a confirmed time of beginning nor a confirmed time of ending. It could theoretically extend back to an infinite past and ahead to an infinite future.

While the distinguishing characteristics of paired qualities enable us to differentiate one entity from another, a number in an infinitely extended series of numbers is not distinguishable because the numbers in the series are all the same. In an infinitely extended series the only characteristic that distinguishes one number from another is its positioning. Numbers of neutral value except for their positioning can be used to represent abstract quantitative relationships but are unable to refer to qualitative characteristics because while numbers are constant ideas in the mind, the character-

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istics of entities consist of changing qualities perceived out there in the world.

We measure the length of mortal life using cyclical time. A life cycle begins at birth and ends at death. It extends from infancy to old age with new life continually entering into existence as old life exits from it. By contrast, a common belief is that life after death continues into infinity. In the afterlife there could be no references to the qualities *young* versus *old* because in an existence that never ends there is no such thing as age. In a linear existence that extends into infinity there are no clocks that measure time from a point of beginning to a point of ending.

Perceptible versus Imperceptible

Even though the quality *imperceptible* isn't perceptible, the paired qualities *perceptible* versus *imperceptible* are perceived in relation to each other. Our inability to perceive the quality *imperceptible* should preclude us from perceiving the quality *perceptible* because the two qualities are perceived in relation to each other as a pair. The removal of either quality would negate their relationship and in turn negate the perception of both qualities. Nonetheless, the quality *perceptible* is perceptible, which makes it the contrary of the quality *imperceptible*. Likewise because the quality *imperceptible* isn't perceptible, it is the contrary of the quality *perceptible*. The two qualities are relative to each other. The perceptibility of the one is paired with the imperceptibility of the other.

We can't perceive the difference between the quality *perceptible* and the quality *imperceptible* with our senses. As previously stated, the qualities *same* versus *different* are perceived by the intellect rather than by the senses. With our intellect we perceive that the quality *perceptible* is different than the quality *imperceptible*. We can't detect this difference with our senses but can detect it with our intellect.

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That the universe exists because it is perceptible is a half truth. Joined with it is the other half: that it exists because it is imperceptible. Falling objects are perceptible. Gravity or that which causes them to fall is imperceptible. The quality *falling* is an effect. We perceive the effect but can't perceive the cause of the effect. An imperceptible cause is the glue that holds the perceptible universe together. The universe is real not because it is perceptible only or imperceptible only, but because it is characterized by the relationship of the qualities *perceptible* versus *imperceptible*.

Permeating the universe are qualities that characterize entities. Some entities are perceptible while others are imperceptible. Moving objects are perceptible. Kinetic energy that causes them to move is imperceptible. We perceive hot objects but can't perceive heat that causes them to be hot. The quality *light* is perceptible when it characterizes objects but light as a cause is not perceptible.

Entities that are perceptible are characterized by qualities that are perceptible. Water that is characterized by the quality *hot* is perceptible. We feel it when we touch it. Heat that causes water to be hot isn't characterized by perceptible qualities and is therefore imperceptible. *Light* as a quality that characterizes objects such as a room or the sky is perceptible. Light as a cause, however, isn't a quality and is therefore imperceptible.

We are taught that the food we eat provides nourishment that energizes our bodies. We believe that energy in our bodies enables us to move our muscles, maintain a consistent body temperature, etc. Calories are units of measure that are believed to indicate energy levels in the body. Excess energy is believed to take the form of body fat. To monitor the intake of energy we count the number of calories we ingest. We do this even though the presence of energy in our bodies is imperceptible as are calories that are believed to be units of measure of energy levels.

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We feel our heart beating and our blood pulsing. If our heart stopped beating and our blood stopped pulsing, our capacity to perceive would terminate. For the heart to beat and the blood to pulse energy is required. Where does this energy come from? Where is it located? Why is it “in” the body? When our heart stops beating and our blood stops pulsing where does it “go”? We don’t know. If we could utilize the energy that sustains us without interruption we would endure indefinitely. We, however, for some reason at some point are no longer able to utilize it.

Our perception indicates qualities are changing, but nothing perceptible indicates why they change. Because perception is divided between the perceptible and the imperceptible, when we see an image it is changing and vibrant, but when we picture it in our mind it is constant and faint. The vibrancy and change that was perceptible has become imperceptible. We are able to rehearse former occurrences by recalling images in our minds, but they appear in the form of a muted “slideshow,” with each of the “slides” in the “show,” vague and static rather than vibrant and moving.

We are acquainted with the technical aspects of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling, but technical knowhow doesn’t provide us with an understanding of why we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. We don’t know what enables us to see sights, hear sounds, touch objects, taste flavors, and smell aromas. Although the technical aspects of cameras are like those of eyes and the workings of sound systems like those of ears, the difference is that with eyes we see and with ears we hear, while our cameras are blind and our sound systems are deaf.

Just as something imperceptible makes the perceptible possible, so too does something perceptible make the imperceptible possible. These two qualities, *perceptible* versus *imperceptible*, perceived in relation to each other, make a world that is in part perceptible and in part imperceptible.

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Believed-in or Perceived?

First incident: A carpenter, hammer in hand, pounds a nail into a board, then after several strokes exits the room. A second carpenter enters, sees the half-driven nail, picks up a hammer and pounds the nail into the board. Question: between the time of the first carpenter's exit from the room and the second carpenter's entry into it, did the unperceived nail exist?

Second incident: A girl, phone in hand, is listening to music. As the music is playing she puts the phone down and exits the room. Moments later a second girl enters the room, hearing the music she picks up the phone and listens. Question: between the time of the first girl's exit from the room and the second girl's entry into it, did the music exist?

At issue in the first incident is the existence of a material object that no one is observing. In the second, the issue is whether tonal qualities exist when no one is present to hear them. In our society nearly everyone would agree that a partially-driven nail exists even though no one is present to see it. Whether sounds exist when no one hears them is, however, a more involved question. The focus of some people is on sound waves whereas the concern of others has to do with qualities heard by a listener. Sound waves are associated with the production of sound, while sound itself exists as a listener hears it.

George Berkeley published his *Principles of Human Knowledge* in 1710. In it he expounds the view that qualities characterize entities such as "a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things" and notes that there are both qualities that are perceived and perceivers that perceive them. He concludes that the existence of qualities consists in being perceived. He describes qualities perceived by sensory perception as follows:

There was an odor, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a color or figure, and it was per-

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ceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi* [their existence consists in being perceived]... (George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*, Penguin Books, 1988, p. 54).

Berkeley contrasts absolute with perceived existence. He refers to an absolute existent as something believed to exist but isn't perceived. The difference between a quality that is perceived versus one that is not perceived is implied in the question, "If a tree falls in a forest does it make a sound?" A modified version of this question is addressed in a Wikipedia article that describes a conversation between Albert Einstein and two colleagues:

While physicists and good friends Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr were equally instrumental in founding quantum mechanics, the two had very different views on what quantum mechanics said about reality. On one of many daily lunchtime walks with fellow physicist Abraham Pais, who like Einstein was a close friend and associate of Bohr, Einstein suddenly stopped, turned to Pais, and asked: 'Do you really believe that the moon only exists if you look at it?' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/If_a_tree_falls_in_a_forest)

Einstein's question seems to reflect the universal belief that objects exist when no one is present to perceive them. The belief supports the notion that the existence of the world and its contents necessarily exist without reference to the extent that they are or are not perceived. Although no one is present to observe the revolving earth, we who dwell on it believe its rotation is a necessary condition of our existence. Many other examples of necessary existence could be cited in support of our belief.

Nonetheless, our belief, however justified, misses Berkeley's point, which is that because objects are characterized by perceived qualities, when we consider the existence of an object without perceiv-

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ing its qualities, we fail to take into account that of which the object consists. We may believe that beneath the characteristics of an object is an underlying substance to which we refer when referencing the object. We may believe that if we could strip away the qualities that characterize an object the substance that underlies them would be visible. We, however, can't remove the qualities and accordingly can't identify the assumed substance.

Although we believe that the earth necessarily rotates, we are at a loss as to what the earth is apart from the qualities we perceive that characterize it. Although science claims that objects are made of molecules, atoms, and particles, to identify an object an indicator of some sort is necessary. When we propose the existence of something that has no indicator, how are we able to either prove or disprove the proposal?

This is a technical question that we in the course of our daily activities need not and are unable to address. We identify objects by perceiving the qualities that characterize them. If we couldn't perceive the qualities we couldn't identify the objects. The qualities that characterize them are necessary. This is what we mean when we say the a quality exists as it is perceived and the contrary that it doesn't existence when it is not perceived. Because objects consist of the qualities that characterize them, the objects exist as they are perceived and do not exist when they are not perceived.

The apparent result is that objects both do and do not exist when they are not perceived! This apparent paradox is the result of our use of the term "exist" as referring to both something we believe in and to something we perceive. That in which we believe is not the same as that which we perceive. That which we believe in requires no indicators of its existence. That which we perceive requires perceived qualities to characterize it. That in which we believe we don't perceive and that which we perceive we don't believe in.

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But there is another more striking difference between perception and belief. As noted the qualities we perceive with our senses are graphic, vivid, and striking, whereas an object we believe in is vague, dull, and faint. The difference between the two is the difference between an existence that is believed in and an existence that is perceived.

The existence of changing qualities is especially apparent when listening to music. Its changing sounds exist as we hear them. These sounds characterize musical ideas we conceive in our minds as we hear the music. The sounds of music are meaningful as we hear them. Apart from the sounds we have no means of accessing the music. The visual arts, like music, exist as they are perceived. While a painting stored in a closet may be said to exist, the art work exists only when a viewer is viewing it. Art in its various forms consists of an interaction between creators of qualities and perceivers of them. The interaction occurs only as the perceiver perceives the qualities the creator has created.

Once we are aware that objects exist as qualities that characterize them are perceived, we are also aware of the necessary role we play as perceivers of qualities. On the one hand qualities exist as they are perceived. On the other we as perceivers exist as we perceive qualities.

Material versus Immaterial

With an eye on the efforts of generations that have preceded us, the belief that a culmination of past achievement should occur in the present may seem justifiable. After much has been done to prepare the way, our generation may be positioned to accomplish what was not previously possible. This is not the place to critique the claims of those who have preceded us except to say their beliefs raised questions they could not answer. They did their best with what they had but were burdened by a dependency that in the context of the then prevailing circumstances couldn't be challenged. Though

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what was needed was not available to them, what they accomplished may have prepared the way too make it available to us.

The Christian belief that we humans are constituted of both a body and a soul (spirit) has been standard in Western cultures for centuries. Many of our forebears based their views concerning immortality on the belief that at death the material and the immaterial separate, with one part placed in a grave as the other passes “through a veil.” While variations of these beliefs are still held today, they are challenged by secular alternatives that set immateriality aside in favor of the material.

Although claims concerning an immaterial soul or spirit are regarded by many as spurious because they lack supporting evidence, opposing claims concerning a material-only existence are also challengeable. Beliefs are necessarily based on assumptions that are taken for granted. Believers in materiality claim that material objects are made of a “material substance.” A similar claim is made that spirits or souls are composed of something that is immaterial. Although believers in materiality may scoff at claims concerning the existence of immaterial substances, they are challenged when they attempt to identify the substance of which they claim material objects are made.

The difficulties associated with the definition of “substances” fall by the wayside when the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are perceived in relation to each other. Their perceived relationship is necessary because it enables a comparison of the one with the other. Separately the two qualities have no meaning. Their meaning becomes apparent only as they are perceived as a pair in relation to each other.

When we touch a material object the sensation we feel indicates its materiality. That we can't touch something or feel an accompanying sensation is an indication that it is immaterial. Although we

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can't touch immaterial things, there are, nonetheless, immaterial ideas, emotions, and desires as well as the immaterial "places" such as the mind, the "heart," and the "gut" where immaterial "things" are "located." Our inability to touch them or to feel an accompanying sensation associated with them confirms their immateriality. The meaning of the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* is evident when we compare the one with the other and note the difference between them.

If existence consisted of material things only, there would be no point in specifying that a thing is material because only material things would exist. If everything that existed were material the term "material" would be superfluous because there would nothing to compare it to and no alternative to put in its place. The same would be the case regarding the term "immaterial." By comparing the two qualities we are able to identify the difference between them. The comparison is possible, however, only as we perceive the two qualities as a pair in relation to each other.

The prevailing view that the present world is material and the afterworld immaterial provides a readymade venue for intriguing stories and imaginative narratives. There's a market for portrayals of outer space adventures and afterlife encounters. Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Einstein's formula $E=mc^2$ respectively assume an immaterial-only or a material-only existence that stirs the fancy and excites the imagination. That neither realm actually exists adds to the mystique and accentuates the fantasy. These seminal works, that of Dante appearing in the 14th century and that of Einstein in 20th century, portray the cultural beliefs of their respective eras. Their significance is especially apparent when considered in the context in which they were created.

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Paired Relationships

While qualities are perceived in paired relationships, absolutes are separately conceived ideas that are abstract because they are not characterized by perceived qualities. They are often associated with an institutional belief system, which provides a context for and an institutional definition of what would otherwise be a meaningless term. The absolute standalone quality *immaterial* is essential to religion as the absolute standalone quality *material* is a fundamental of science. While in disagreement as to which of the two is real, science and religion agree that whichever it is it takes precedent over the other.

An alternative to a reliance on absolutes arose with little notice in the early decades of the 19th century. Already quoted is Emerson's statement concerning "An inevitable dualism." A passage that appeared in the *Book of Mormon* published in upstate New York in 1830 reads as follows:

...for it must needs be, there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass; neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery; neither good or bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body, it must needs remain as dead, having no life, neither death nor corruption, nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense or insensibility (Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, Palmyra, New York, 1830, pp. 62 and 63).

The opposites cited in this quotation and in Emerson's statement indicate that paired qualities perceived in relation to each other offer an alternative to beliefs that rely on absolute ideas. As perceivers we are firsthand participants in the perception of qualities perceived in pairs. As believers we play little or no personal role in either the conception of the ideas on which institutional beliefs are founded or the interpretation of what they mean.

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Although an institutional belief is based on an absolute, believers may refer to it casually in a way that contradicts the absolute claims of the belief. Believers, for example, frequently claim that God though an absolute immaterial existent, interacts with the material world. Believers in “energy” claim that it is the cause of effects without, however, specifically identifying the cause and differentiating it from the effect.

Because paired qualities are perceived in relation to each other, the perception of one of the qualities of a pair either accompanies or implies the perception of the other. The quality *material* is perceptible to the senses, while the difference between the quality *material* and the quality *immaterial* is perceptible to the intellect. The perception of the quality *material* by the senses either accompanies or implies the perception of the difference between the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* by the intellect. Because these qualities are paired they are perceived in relation to each other rather than as separate absolutes. As indicated in Figure 3 below, qualities that characterize the quality *material* are paired with qualities that characterize the quality *immaterial*.

Figure 3

Qualities that characterize the quality <i>material</i>		Qualities that characterize the quality <i>immaterial</i>
<i>changing</i>	versus	<i>constant</i>
<i>spatial</i>	versus	<i>non-spatial</i>
<i>temporal</i>	versus	<i>eternal</i>
<i>finite</i>	versus	<i>infinite</i>

As noted we confirm that objects are material by feeling a sensation when we touch them. We confirm that the entity we refer to as the “self,” which is inclusive of the capacity to perceive qualities, to conceive ideas, and to maintain an awareness of self-identity, is immaterial because when we attempt to touch it we don’t feel anything. The entity that accompanies the immaterial self is the mate-

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rial body. The material body and the immaterial self in relation to each other constitute the “person.”

The material body is changing, exists in and takes up space, is temporal because it occurs in time and has finite or defined boundaries. The immaterial self, by contrast, is constant. As non-spatial it does not take up space, as eternal it doesn't occur in time, and as infinite it has no defining boundaries.

The qualities *changing*, *spatial*, *temporal*, and *finite* are perceived by the intellect in relation to and respectively paired with the qualities *constant*, *non-spatial*, *eternal*, and *infinite*. Just as the quality *material* characterizes the body, so too does the quality *immaterial* characterize the self. Because the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* are paired, when the body is characterized by the quality *material*, the self is characterized by the quality *immaterial*. Further, when the quality *material* is characterized by the qualities *changing*, *spatial*, *temporal*, and *finite*, the quality *immaterial* is characterized by the qualities *constant*, *non-spatial*, *eternal*, and *infinite*. Because these qualities are respectively perceived in pairs, there can be neither an absolute body nor an absolute self. On the contrary, the body exists in relation to the self just as the self exists in relation to the body.

Religion claims that God is absolutely immaterial, constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite, while science suggests that the universe is absolutely material, changing, spatial, temporal, and finite. Despite their widespread acceptance, these claims are not confirmable because as absolutes these qualities are not perceptible. By contrast, the qualities *material* versus *immaterial* together with the qualities that respectively characterize them are perceived in relation to each other, and accordingly our perception of them confirms their relative existence.

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Cyclicity

If the material body were a separate existent it would be mortal and would begin at birth and end at death. If the immaterial self were a separate existent it would be immortal and would neither begin nor end. The material body would be characterized by the qualities *changing, spatial, temporal, and finite*, and the immaterial self would be characterized by the qualities *constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite*. But neither the material body nor the immaterial self exists as a separate entity. The two instead either exist in relation to each other or not at all. This means that the material body is mortal only to the extent that the immaterial self is immortal. It also means that the material body is characterized by the qualities *changing, spatial, temporal, and finite* only to the extent that the immaterial self is characterized by the qualities *constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite*.

As relational existents the body and the self constitute a person, which rather than mortal or immortal is characterized by the qualities *mortal* versus *immortal*. We would be wrong to say that a person is mortal, but would be equally wrong to say that a person is immortal. A person is neither the one nor the other. It is instead the one in relation to the other. This is the case because the qualities *mortal* versus *immortal* are paired and are therefore perceived in relation to each other.

A person is characterized by the qualities *changing, spatial, temporal, and finite* only to the extent that it is characterized by the qualities *constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite*. Because these qualities are perceived in relation to each other, we would be wrong to say that a person is *changing, spatial, temporal, and finite*, just as we would be wrong to say that the person is *constant, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite*. Because these qualities are perceived in paired relationships, a person is *changing* versus *constant, spatial* versus *non-spatial, temporal* versus *eternal, and fi-*

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nite versus *infinite*. A person is neither the one nor the other but rather the one in relation to the other.

The life of a person is cyclical because the qualities *beginning* versus *ending* that characterize a person are paired. If we said that a person begins and ends we would be wrong, just as we would be wrong if we said that a person does not begin or end. For a person to begin and end the person must also neither begin nor end, which is to say that a person's beginning and ending is in relation to the person's ongoing existence that neither begins nor ends.

At the end of a cycle the existence of the self continues as the existence of the body terminates. Because the self cannot exist separately from a body, a new body that results from reproduction is paired with the ongoing self. Although neither of the two could exist separately, together they constitute a new person that is about to enter into a new life cycle where it will encounter new intrigues, fascinations, and challenging opportunities.