

William Call

**Are We
the World
or
Is the World
Us?**

**After the before but before the after,
To pursue the end from the start
Unravel the riddle, enigma of ages:
“The two together are apart.”**

Introduction

Changing qualities characterize entities. They are perceived in pairs and are defined by the difference between them. Aristotle refers to them as “opposites,” and categorizes them as “principles.” He also indicates that rather than characterizing each other, they characterize or act on a “third thing” or principle, which he implies is substantive in contrast to the opposites that “never seem to constitute the substance of anything.” His statement reads as follows:

There are a finite number [of principles], then. But if so, there is some reason not to restrict them to being only two, because it is difficult to see how density could make rarity into something, or vice versa. And the same goes for any other opposition. Love does not combine hatred and make something from it, and hatred does not act on love in an equivalent fashion either: both of them act on some third thing....

Another difficulty we might encounter if we do not posit the existence of a third principle which underlies the opposites is that the opposites never seem to constitute the substance of anything (Aristotle, *Physics*, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 22-23).

Substance is defined as the “ultimate reality [of a thing] that underlies all outward manifestations and change” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/substance>). When opposites or pairs of qualities act on something they characterize it but do so without changing its “substance.” A leaf, for example, may change from green in summer to yellow in fall but the “substance” of the leaf (that which determines that it is a leaf) remains constant. The relationship of change and constancy is necessary. Change accounts for difference while constancy accounts for sameness. An object is different at one time as compared to another, but for the change to be meaningful something about the object must remain constant. If change were absolute there would be no way to account for sameness. If constancy were absolute there would be no way to account for

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difference. *Same* versus *different* are qualities. They are meaningful when perceived in relation to each other.

Existence may be regarded as either something that is or something that happens. Something that is is constant. Something that happens is changing. When we put the two together we get something substantive that is constant underlying something characteristic that is changing. The latter consists of paired qualities or opposites that are perceptible because they are changing. The former, however, remains unidentifiable because it is constant and therefore not perceptible. Aristotle refers to it as “the third thing.”

1. Observation

Subjects observe. Objects are observed. While the subjectivity of a subject and the objectivity of an object are the necessary conditions of observation, the relationship of the two is an open question. Their equal emphasis would preserve the balance between them, while cultural bias may favor the one over the other.

As a new generation arises its self-imposed purpose is to remedy what it perceives to be the ills of the generation that preceded it. At the beginning of the 17th century when the younger generation looked back at the Middle Ages, some saw what they believed to be the unwarranted prominence of subjectivity. Their view was that the effect of emphasizing the subject at the expense of the object was a belief in a supernatural rather than the natural world. To fix what they thought was broken they reversed the emphasis, focusing on the natural as opposed to a supernatural world.

But because only a fraction of the natural world is observable, an unexpected effect that arose from this new emphasis was the assumed existence of objective entities that were neither observed nor observable. When, for example, Johannes Kepler developed his three laws of planetary motion, he worked out the theory mathematically using Tycho

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Brahe's data to make the necessary calculations. He of course couldn't observe the planets as they orbited the sun, but nonetheless believed the mathematics he developed faithfully represented their motion. Later, Isaac Newton, following in Kepler's footsteps, developed the theory of universal gravitation. He, like Kepler, couldn't empirically prove what his theory proposed, but proceeded nonetheless to present it in his famous *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.

Theories make assumptions that cannot be confirmed by observation. Newton's theory of universal gravitation assumed an attractive force between material bodies. Attempts were made to detect this force empirically though none were successful. Efforts were made by others to observe heat as a material substance, but it likewise was not observable. An additional effect that arose from the focus on objectivity was an assumed observer of cosmic phenomena. Big Bang theory, for example, describes the expansion of the universe from an initial state of high density to its present condition as if an observer were present to witness the change. While the events described are assumed to be actual occurrences and the description of them to be accurate, an observer of them is of course only imagined.

Observations can be effective in confirming the practical application of a theory. Measurements relating to the effects described by a theory can be observed even though the hypothesis on which the theory is founded is only assumed. Observations make theories applicable in practical circumstances but fail to indicate if what a theory claims represents reality.

2. Context

We may smile at the claims of our forefathers. Their beliefs were grounded in traditions that are questioned today. Nonetheless, that they held their beliefs to be both sacred and fundamental is evidenced by the zeal and sacrifice with

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which they embraced them. However untidy their beliefs may seem to us and however unconvincing we may find them, our attempts to replace them with other more acceptable beliefs have been less than successful.

We may regard our way of life as superior to theirs, even as we struggle to deal with an equivocal contextual grounding. As the Middle Ages gave way to modernity, belief underwent significant change. Having doubted many of the beliefs that served our forebears, the question we must ask ourselves is what opinion our descendants will have of the beliefs we pass on to them.

Although our stay on earth is marked by a termination that is steadily approaching, we find ourselves striving to make sense of our existence because we have failed to find for ourselves a meaningful context. Dying is a seminal event that we try to ignore because we don't know how to deal with it. Modern culture is dominated by materialistic claims that are believed to be confirmed by observation. In this context we struggle to understand the role that the immaterial plays in our existence.

If we were writing a novel or play the ending would be important for obvious reasons. The end of our existence also needs careful consideration. An activity that lacks a meaningful conclusion is as frustrating as it is disappointing. We want the parts of our life to fit together including when the time comes to wrap things up and close the curtains. Our inability to address the end puts into question our ability to attain a meaningful present.

We wouldn't want a world where everything was spelled out for us, where there were no surprises, and where the routine of everyday existence was determined in advance. Still, it's one thing not to know the future, quite another to embark on a journey that has no destination. A future to face is our most valuable asset, making it meaningful our

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most challenging task. Our worst fear is that we might be expendable. Uniqueness is our means of sustaining our relevance. Creating value is our means of making our uniqueness sustainable.

To the extent we are unique our uniqueness extends from our origins. According to religion we owe our existence to a creator. Science says we arose from inert matter. What we believe concerning what we came from has a direct effect on our views concerning our present and future existence. The creation account in the Book of Genesis was accepted by our predecessors who, no doubt, viewed it from a perspective different than our own. We are challenged to discover what they found compelling concerning it, even as we focus on aspects they may not have considered.

3. The Creator/Created Relationship

In accord with the creator's status as an independent existent, nothing in the Genesis narrative implies that the act of creation was necessary to fulfill an obligation, to right a wrong, or to pursue an objective. The account doesn't indicate the effect the creation had on the creator's existence. The narrative doesn't specify if it added to or detracted from the significance, value, or stature of its creator.

And so we are left to wonder. If creation was of no advantage, if it had no benefit, why would there be a creator and, if there were one, what would motivate the creator to create? Creation that is of neutral value, where nothing is either better or worse because of it, doesn't seem to be an option. Despite the autonomy of the creator's existence, if it mattered then what resulted from it must also have mattered. If it did then what the creator created must have been to the creator's credit, which would mean that the value of the creator's existence must to an extent have relied on the value of the creation.

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But the value of an act of creation is at odds with the claim that the creator exists as an independent entity. If creation's value was apart from and other than the value of the creator, the creator's existence would not be independent because its value would depend on the value of something apart from it.

We are all creators to whatever extent, and we who create do so believing that what we create is of value. If it is, the value of our existence is dependent on it. Value and existence are necessarily connected. An existent exists for a reason, and whatever value an existent's existence may have, it cannot affect the existent only. It will necessarily have an effect on both the existent and on that which is apart from and other than the existent.

Some may claim that a creator may exist solely for itself and that what it creates is of value to itself only, but the claim is problematic because from creation comes the existence of something that did not have a prior existence. Because it didn't exist before, its creation had an effect that was the result of creation. An act of creation is prompted by the recognition that something is lacking and creation is necessary to supply it. That it is lacking prior to creation indicates its otherness—that it is something other than and apart from its creator. When a creator creates, it cannot do so for itself only because the act of creation is necessarily inclusive of something that is other than the creator. Whatever that otherness is it necessarily effects both its creator and things apart from its creator.

Some early Christian writers claimed that God created the world *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. This view highlighted the omnipotence of God. It is based on the belief that nothing except God existed prior to creation. Others, including the poet John Milton in his extended poem *Paradise Lost*, said that creation was *ex materia*—out of existing material, from which arose the earth, moon, stars, etc.

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Both creation *ex nihilo* and creation *ex materia* address the question of existence prior to creation but say nothing about the relationship of the creator and what the creator created. Whether a creator is divine, human, animal, or inanimate, its existence and the effects of what it creates are necessarily connected. Nothing is neutral as to effect. Whatever is created will have an effect and that effect is an indication of its value. Intent may accompany creation but isn't necessary. We humans create things we do not intend to create. What we create has an effect whether we intend it or not. No creator is independent because every creation has an effect that is apart from yet connected to its creator.

Existence is divided between the animate and the inanimate. Animate things perceive sensory qualities, feel emotions, move according to their volition, and make judgments. Inanimate things are not alive, are incapable of perceiving sensory qualities, emoting, willing, or making intellectual judgments. According to religion an animate creator exists of its own accord while the existence of inanimate things is dependent on an animate creator. According to science it is the other way: the animate exists as a result of the inanimate. The inanimate is an independent existent capable of existing separately from the animate.

Science, in support of the belief that the material universe exists independently, claims the universe was not created by a power apart from it but is instead the result of an inherent-in-itself process. From this belief comes the claim that while living things are beholden to the inanimate, the inanimate is an independent existent beholden to nothing but itself.

In response to their study of the fossil record, biologists claim that when conditions on the inanimate earth were favorable for the development of animate life, it appeared in abundance. They attribute its appearance to "abiogenesis,"

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a process in which life in the form of organic molecules emerged from (or were created by) non-living matter.

If the animate arose from the inanimate, as biologists claim, this “act of creation” would have constituted a prime example of something creating the existence of something that is other than the something that created it! If the inanimate is the creator of the animate, the value of the animate would extend to something other than the inanimate that created it, in which case the inanimate could not be independent since its value would depend on the value of the animate apart from it.

4. Beginnings

Our beginning starts upside down followed by a slap on the bottom, the sound of ourselves crying, the feeling of cold air, the warmth of a blanket, and the touch of a mother’s hand. The menagerie of sensations we encounter at birth constitutes our official welcome into the world. From our first moments, rather than observing objects, we perceive qualities. Our perceptive capacity enables us to distinguish the difference between such qualities as *warm* versus *cool*, *hard* versus *soft*, *near* versus *far*, *up* versus *down*, *thirsty* versus *quenched*, and *hungry* versus *satisfied*. While our perceptive ability increases as we mature, no prior training, coaching, or monitoring is required to prepare us. No one questions our perceptive capacity or that the sensations we associate with qualities we perceive constitute a necessary condition of our existence.

Spoken language is not a prerequisite of perception. We perceive sensations associated with qualities even though we can’t name the qualities we perceive. As we mature we acquaint ourselves with an expanding range of qualities and learn to take advantage of positive sensations and minimize negative ones. The qualities we perceive are direct and immediate. There’s no guessing, no trial and error, no intermediaries, and no time lag between a perception and a

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resulting sensation. Perceived qualities are not just characteristics of our world, they *are* our world. We apprehend the world by perceiving the qualities of which it consists.

In our childhood we don't confuse qualities and entities because our awareness is limited to qualities. Our belief in entities will come later as we become acquainted with the society of which we are a part. In the meantime our childhood world is qualitative. It consists of qualities that are perceived.

In our initial weeks and months we mix sensory qualities with qualities of emotion and volition. When we are pleased we smile. When we want something we cry. When we are tired we are fussy. When we don't want to be held we struggle to free ourselves. When we want to be held we cry until someone picks us up. We learn that certain sounds and motions serve as indicators of our emotions as they relate to our wants and desires.

Later on as we mature we learn to differentiate ourselves from our surroundings. We become aware of ourselves in relation to things that are other than ourselves. Our awareness includes ourselves as perceivers "in here" in relation to the world that is perceived "out there." The difference between the two enables a recognition of an in-here/out-there relationship that is fundamental to our existence.

Although our role as perceivers is an essential without which existence would not be possible, because creation accounts make no mention of perception as it relates to existence, they fail to indicate that perception is a prerequisite of existence and accordingly fail to distinguish between the perceivers of qualities and qualities that are perceived.

The recognition of the necessity of perception is also a recognition of the necessary existence of perceivers. Traditional creation accounts make no mention of this distinc-

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tion, which is an indication that those who wrote the accounts were not aware of it. Once the division of existence into perceivers and perceived is acknowledged, an account of the origin of existence must address the question of the origin of perception. Because existence consists of the perceiver/perceived relationship, the origin of the perceiver is necessarily tied to the origin of the perceived and vice versa. Further, because the one cannot exist without the other, the existence of the one presupposes the existence of the other. That being the case the traditional view of creation “in the beginning” is not applicable, since the perceiver could not precede the perceived just as the perceived could not precede the perceiver.

5. Paired Qualities

Our organs are configured to detect qualitative changes that are a prerequisite of perception. We perceive qualities as they change. We see changes in light, hear changes in sound, feel changes in touch, etc. We perceive qualities as they change, and qualities change as we perceive them. If qualities were not changing we would not perceive them.

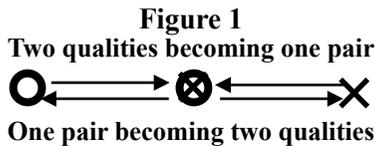
When a quality changes it becomes different. As the quality *hot* changes it becomes the quality *cold*. As the quality *cold* changes it becomes the quality *hot*. If a quality were constant it would remain the same. Because it is changing, it is becoming different. As we perceive the qualities *same* versus *different*, the quality *different* is changing to become the quality *same*, just as the quality *same* is changing to become the quality *different*.

From perception comes change, from change comes difference, and from difference comes division. As a quality changes it divides itself into two qualities, one different than the other. Because these two qualities are changing, the sameness/difference between them is also changing. If these qualities were absolutely the same they would be one absolute quality. If they were absolutely different they

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would be two absolute qualities. But because their sameness/difference is changing, they are either one quality becoming two or two qualities becoming one.

The difference that results from change in turn results in the pairing of qualities. As the qualities of a pair change their relationship changes. As the quality *O* changes it may become more like the quality *X*. As the quality *X* changes it may become more like the quality *O*. As these changes occur the relationship of the qualities *O* versus *X* changes. Perception consists of the changing relationships of paired qualities. As illustrated in Figure 1, when qualities change they are two qualities (*O* versus *X*) uniting to become one pair (*O/X*) or one pair (*O/X*) dividing to become two qualities (*O* versus *X*).



6. Entities

In our childhood our perception is of paired qualities. Later as we enter our adolescent years, we shift our attention from individual pairs of qualities to pairs of qualities grouped into sets. Becoming familiar with sets of qualities, we distinguish one set from another by recognizing its identifying characteristics. For future reference we specify that a set of qualities together with its name is an entity.

As a result of changing qualitative relationships we don't know how long the characteristics of an entity will endure. Because perceived qualities are changing and because we are unable to retain perceived images of qualities in memory, we turn to our conceptual capacity to conceive constant ideas in our mind. We associate a conceived idea with a set of qualities. The two together constitute an entity. A constant conceived idea serves as an ongoing reference to an entity despite changes in its qualitative characteristics.

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Some ideas of entities are said to be “abstract” because they are not accompanied by sets of perceived qualities. These entities have no means of identification other than the ideas that accompany them. They include the entity “God” in religion and “matter” in science. We may believe they exist but because they have no perceived characteristics, we have no means of identifying them apart from the ideas we associate with them.

“God” is believed to be an immaterial entity that is constant and exists in contrast to a changing material world. With the scientific revolution of the 17th century came a belief in materialism and with it the claim that “matter” is the stuff of which the universe and the entities of which it consists are constituted. “Matter” is believed to be both a constant and a material entity, but because it is not characterized by qualitative relationships, it is conceptual rather than perceptual.

At times, unsure of how long entities will endure, we are caught off guard when we are suddenly confronted with a change we haven’t anticipated. A surprise is especially unwelcome when we are faced with the loss of something that was highly valued but is now no longer. Although constancy remains fixed in our mind, qualities that we once perceived have disappeared. Lacking a memory of sets of changing qualities, a constant idea remains, which means that what we can’t forget must now take the place of what we can’t remember.

7. A Believed-in versus a Perceived Existence

In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which first appeared in 1689, John Locke said,

Our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them: and thus we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat,

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cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities... (Prometheus Books, 1995, pp. 59-60).

George Berkeley published his *Principles of Human Knowledge* in 1710. He was in agreement with Locke that qualities perceived by the senses are ideas in the mind but specified that because the mind is immaterial, ideas that result from perception are also immaterial. Locke and Berkeley used the term “ideas” to refer to qualities. They did not distinguish between changing qualities that result from perception and constant ideas that are conceived as concepts in the mind.

Berkeley expounded the view that for qualities to be perceived there must be perceivers to perceive them and that sets of qualities are perceived as entities such as “a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things.” He noted that there are both qualities that are perceived and perceivers that perceive them. He concluded that “the existence of an idea (a quality) consists in being perceived.” He described qualities perceived by sensory perception as follows:

By sight I have the ideas of light and colors with their several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive, for example, hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odors; the palate with tastes, hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition....

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 perceived 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], nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them (George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*

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and Three Dialogues, Penguin Books, 1988, pp. 53 and 54).

Berkeley uses the phrase “absolute existence” to refer to “unthinking things” that are believed in but not perceived. The difference between a quality that is perceived and a quality 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 may be interpreted to mean that perception is not a prerequisite of existence but rather that entities exist perceived or not. If that is what Einstein meant, we agree with him. Believing in the “absolute existence” of unperceived qualities and having observed the furnishings and arrangement of a room, when absent from the room we believe the qualities we have perceived continue to exist more or less as they did when we last perceived them.

Although we don’t believe that entities come into existence when they are perceived and to go out of existence when they are not perceived, we nonetheless wonder what an entity looks like when we are not looking at it. Does it lose its color, its shape, its size, etc.? We may believe that an entity is what “actually exists,” that it doesn’t change, and that it underlies changing qualities. But because we can’t

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perceive the constant that is believed to underly the changes we can't confirm our belief.

Belief in an underlying constant is a variation of the view that Plato stated in his Theory of Forms. He didn't acknowledge that his belief in the separate existence of conceived ideas was dependent on perceived qualities even though qualities necessarily precede ideas because a constant idea is meaningful only in the context of changing qualities. We may claim that something exists behind what we perceive, but our claim makes sense only after we perceive qualities that are changing. We conceive an idea in our mind that we associate with an entity but only after we have perceived qualities that identify the entity. Once we have perceived an entity's changing qualities, then we are able to conceive a constant idea and associate it with the entity. By coupling changing perception with a constant idea in our mind, we are equipped with what we need to believe that the entity continues to exist when we are not perceiving it.

Our belief in the existence of unperceived qualities seems both reasonable and necessary because we otherwise couldn't make plans or go about our daily affairs. We have to be able to reference entities we are not currently perceiving and to be reasonably certain that when we next perceive them they will be more or less as they were before.

To assure ourselves that entities exist when we are not perceiving them we focus on the idea of the entity that is constant. If, however, we go a step further and claim that qualities that characterize the entity are irrelevant and only the idea matters (which Plato did), we remove our ability to identify the entity. The idea we conceive in our minds helps us to focus on an entity we are not currently perceiving, but cannot take the place of perceived qualities by which we identify the entity.

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That perception is essential becomes especially evident when we consider entities that some claim exist that have no characterizing qualities and consequently no means of identifying them. We've already mentioned "God" and "matter" that fall into this category. Other abstract ideas conceived by Plato include the "Good," the "Just," and the "Beautiful." Others posited by science include, "energy," "atoms," "subatomic particles," and "quarks." Still others posited by Christianity include "spirit," "angels," "demons," "heaven," "hell," "eternal life," and "resurrection." We don't question the existence of commonly perceived entities such as houses, trees, and sidewalks, but none of the entities represented by abstract ideas are perceived. Claims may be made that they have been perceived but not by ordinary people in ordinary circumstances.

A fundamental difference between qualities and ideas is that the former are perceived in pairs while the latter are conceived separately. Although the pairing of qualities makes them inconclusive, it adds to the meaning of the qualities by offering a positive and negative perspective simultaneously. Pairs of qualities are implied even though both members of a pair may not be perceived in a given instance. A man who appears to be tall when standing alone may appear short when standing next to a still taller man. The wealth of a person may appear great until compared to that of another that is greater. Such comparisons are implied in qualities perceived but not in ideas conceived.

When an entity is regarded as a set of qualities, it of course only exists when the qualities are perceived. Although for convenience we may believe that qualities exist unperceived, something essential is lost when we trade a believed-in for a perceived existence. We may believe the moon exists when we are not looking at it, but a believed-in moon has no qualities. Such a moon may suffice in some

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contexts but can never serve as a replacement for a full moon on a moon-lit night.

8. Change and Constancy

The statement, “Things change,” acknowledges both change and constancy. Although a thing changes, something about its “thingness” remains constant. From change comes difference, from constancy sameness. Aristotle says that opposites (paired qualities) “act on some third thing,” then adds that “the opposites never seem to constitute the substance of anything.” He implies that though opposites are not substantive the “third thing” is. But what is the “third thing?” Although the opposites that characterize a table, for example, are not substantive because they are changing, the table is also changing because it is acted on by the opposites.

Cultures have historically sought to identify something that remains constant as qualities change because without an offsetting constant there is nothing to counteract the uncertainty of change. From the time of the ancient Israelites through late antiquity and the Middle Ages Western culture held that a Supreme Being remained constant even as the world was changing. “I am that I am” the deity is quoted as having said to Moses (Exodus 3:14). Implied is that God doesn’t change. Nonetheless, as the governor of the world and in particular of the people of Israel this deity became involved in worldly concerns. A transcendent God could remain apart as a constant. The God of Israel, however, played an active role in affairs of the Israelites. The tablets that contained the Ten Commandments were said to have been written by the “finger of God.” An act of writing is of course an act of change.

A belief in the “God of Israel” was, with some modifications, sustained from ancient to pre-modern times. During the 17th and 18th centuries, however, a competing belief arose claiming that physical matter is a constant that under-

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lies the changing physical world. This entity, however, was also viewed as changing. Matter came to be regarded as consisting of atoms and subatomic particles that are believed to be changing. Rather than something constant that underlies change, matter is believed to be a changing component of the changing world.

Although we confirm the existence of the set of qualities of which a table consists by perceiving it with our senses, we only assume the existence of an unchanging “third thing” because our senses are unable to perceive it. Nonetheless, the statement “the table changes,” implies both change and constancy. If we said that, “change is changing,” our statement would be either redundant or unintelligible. The statement, “constancy is changing,” would be contradictory. Because the table seems to be both changing and constant, our challenge is to identify what changes and what remains constant.

The changing qualities of a table are material. The quality *material* is characterized by such qualities as *tangible*, *spatial*, *temporal*, and *finite*. Material qualities that characterize a table include *hard* versus *soft* that are tangible, *large* versus *small* that are spatial, *available* versus *unavailable* that are temporal, and *wide* versus *narrow* that are finite. By contrast, constant qualities are immaterial. They include the qualities *intangible* (untouchable), *non-spatial* (not existing in or taking up space), *eternal* (timeless without beginning or end), and *infinite* (without limits or boundaries).

We note that the qualities *immaterial*, *intangible*, *non-spatial*, *eternal*, and *infinite* are the respective negatives of the qualities *material*, *tangible*, *spatial*, *temporal*, and *finite*. Although we are able to perceive these positive qualities with our senses but not negative qualities, because these qualities are paired, we either perceive them in relation to each other or not at all.

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We don't doubt the tangibility of the qualities *hard* versus *soft* because we confirm it with our senses. When we touch a hard or soft object we feel a sensation, which is our means of confirming that the object is tangible. Tangibility by itself, however, is not enough. If we always felt a sensation whenever we touched something, touching wouldn't be a confirmation because there would be no alternative to compare it to. When we, however, attempt to touch an emotion or a thought we don't feel anything. The difference between feeling and not feeling a sensation is the difference between the qualities *tangible* and *intangible*.

Sensory perception does not distinguish between the qualities *tangible* versus *intangible* because while it is able to perceive the former quality, it is unable to perceive the latter. The difference between the two qualities is an intellectual rather than sensory difference. With our senses we either feel or do not feel. With our intellect we distinguish between feeling and not feeling. The qualities we perceive with our senses are out there in the world. Qualities that we do not perceive with our senses are in here in the mind. With our intellect we distinguish between the qualities *out there* versus *in here*. Qualities out there are material, tangible, spatial, temporal, and finite. Qualities in here are immaterial, intangible, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite.

When we say a table is changing, we mean it is acted on by qualities that are changing. We, of course, don't mean that after the table has been acted on it will no longer be a table. Even though the table is changing, the word "table" to be meaningful must be associated with something that is both changing and constant. As changing the table is out there. As constant it is in here.

As previously noted, we are equipped with two faculties of cognition. With the faculty of perception we perceive qualities out there in the world. With our faculty of conception we conceive ideas in here in the mind. The qualities we

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perceive are changing. The ideas we conceive are constant. When we refer to the table as a material entity that is changing, our reference is to changing qualities, but when we refer to it as an immaterial entity that is constant our reference is to a constant idea. The perceived qualities of a table are tangible, spatial, temporal, and finite. A conceived idea of a table, by contrast, is intangible, non-spatial, eternal, and infinite. When we join the two, the constant idea of the table conceived in here underlies the changing table acted on by qualities perceived out there. The table as both changing and constant is characterized by the qualities *tangible* versus *intangible*, *spatial* versus *non-spatial*, *temporal* versus *eternal*, and *finite* versus *infinite*.

A table is an example of an entity that is both material and immaterial. Another example is the world. A table exists as its perceived material qualities are underlaid by an immaterial conceived idea. If we couldn't both perceive the qualities and conceive the idea, we couldn't make sense of the existence of the table. The world is the same. It consists of both perceived qualities and an underlying conceived idea. Both the qualities and the idea are necessary to make sense of the existence of the world.

9. Distinguishable versus Indistinguishable

The pairing of opposed qualities has been recognized in many cultures from antiquity to the present. The terms *Yin* and *yang*, representing opposite yet interconnected qualities, are of ancient Chinese origin. Aristotle's references to the term "opposites" were written in the 3rd century BCE. John Locke offered examples of paired qualities in the 17th century. A generation later George Berkeley wrote concerning the existence of qualities, indicating they exist as they are perceived. Ralph Waldo Emerson published his essay "Compensation" in 1841. In it he spoke of "an inevitable dualism" that

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bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole: 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).

A description of paired qualities with special emphasis on the opposition between them is found in the *Book of Mormon* on pages 62 and 63 of the original printed edition published in 1830. It reads as follows:

...for it must needs be, that 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 nor 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 nor insensibility.

According to this text opposition or difference between paired qualities enables a perceiver of the qualities to distinguish one quality from the other. Difference distinguishes the quality *righteous* from the quality *wicked*, the quality *holy* from the quality *miserable*, and the quality *good* from the quality *bad*.

When two qualities are distinguished by the difference between them they constitute one pair. To be distinguishable all qualities must be paired, or as the passage indicates, “all things (qualities) must needs be a “compound in one.” A standalone quality, one that isn’t paired, is “one body.” Because it has no partner to compare it to, it isn’t distinguishable. As indistinguishable it has no meaning and “must remain as dead.”

When a paired quality characterizes an entity, the entity is distinguishable from another entity that is characterized by its opposing partner. A dog characterized by the quality *big* is distinguishable from a dog characterized by the quality *small*. Were there but one dog, the quality *big* would not

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distinguish it because there would be nothing to compare it to.

Because the world is characterized by the quality *material*, it is distinguishable from a mind that is characterized by the quality *immaterial*. If the world were the only existent it wouldn't be distinguishable as material because there would be no immaterial existents to compare it to.

A person characterized by the quality *alive* is distinguishable from a person characterized by the quality *dead*. Were there only one person it couldn't be distinguished as either alive or dead because there would be no other comparable persons.

The opposition between paired qualities eliminates the possibility of an absolute characterized entity. A quality that is comparable isn't absolute. A quality that is absolute isn't comparable. For a characterization to be meaningful a comparable characterization must be provided. A positive requires a negative comparison just as a negative requires a positive comparison. When the required comparison isn't provided, no characterization is possible. Accordingly, there can be neither an absolutely material or immaterial world nor an absolutely alive or dead person.

Comparatives are meaningful because they are distinguishable in contrast to superlatives that are not meaningful because they are not distinguishable. We don't know how great the "greatest one" is because it has no comparatives. Superlatives provide emphasis but lack meaning. We may be impressed by the term "Almighty" even though we don't know what it means. The qualities *alive* versus *dead* rather than absolutes are comparable. One person may be more alive or more dead than another person. This is the case because neither the quality alive nor the quality dead is absolute.

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Existence isn't absolute because it consists of paired qualities. The difference between paired qualities is not resolvable because if it were resolved the qualities would no longer be paired and would accordingly no longer be distinguishable. An entity exists as it is characterized by paired qualities. If the qualities were not paired the entity wouldn't be perceptible because the qualities that characterize it would not be distinguishable. Previously mentioned entities such as "God" and "spirit" in religion and "matter" and "energy" in science are believed to exist, but their existence isn't perceptible because they are not characterized by paired qualities that are distinguishable.

We perceive the qualities of the world and conceive the idea of the world. If we didn't perceive the qualities and didn't conceive the idea, neither the qualities nor the idea would exist. The world is the provider of the qualities we perceive, and we are the providers of the ideas we conceive. We conceive the idea of the world as we perceive the qualities of the world. If the world did not provide the qualities we wouldn't perceive them, nor would we conceive the idea of the world. The world exists as we perceive its qualities and conceive an idea of it. We exist as we perceive the qualities and conceive the idea. Because without the world we wouldn't exist, and without us the world wouldn't exist, we are the world, and the world is us.