

‘MIND’ AND OTHER POOR CONCEPTS – 4th draft

I. Introduction

1. The quest for unassailable fundamentals in philosophy seems invariably to fail. The cause of this is probably no more complicated than the fact that philosophy is conducted in words. Words must be learned which, from the point of view of establishing ultimate certainty, is a very significant failing. Further, (and relatedly), words do not have a perfectly reliable connection to what they supposedly refer to. We may get by, for example, calling trees ‘trees’, but this does not presuppose that trees are perfectly identifiable. We therefore reject the notion of perfect meaning.
2. This suggests something about ‘understanding’ and ‘truth’, for it would seem that we understand and/or judge as true (or false) assertions that are not perfectly secure. Understanding does not indicate that we have apprehended perfect truth but is, rather, at least partly an emotion that indicates (or marks, or labels) that something is accepted. We may *feel* something to be true quite literally. We may even acknowledge that such feeling may be a more competent indicator of truth than any justification we can utter. But it would be a mistake to suppose that feeling something to be true in any way indicates that it is enduringly true. It would be even more mistaken to suppose that feeling an assertion to be true in any way adds to its validity. If we are confronted by an assertion and respond by feeling it is true then it makes no sense to argue that our response adds validity to the assertion for this would be to argue that our response justifies our response. There is no basis for supposing any assertion can be enduringly or unquestionably true. (No paradox can be construed from saying so because there is no perfect truth or meaning in which to construct such a paradox.) The persistent notion that unquestionable truths are possible (and/or desirable) may gain some force from a misunderstanding. There is a compulsion in language to speak (or write) conventionally, without which communication is scarcely possible. It may be that we sometimes confuse this compulsion with the certainty of our meaning. For example, we may mistake the need to say ‘trees’ to mean trees, for the certainty that there actually is something perfectly defined corresponding to this word.
3. We thus adopt the view that meaning is not perfectly secure. Consequently we abandon the notion that assertions can be assessed or re-assessed as either finally true or finally false and we accept that some assertions can be assessed or re-assessed as neither true nor false but as confused or meaningless (or tautological if we wish to distinguish such statements from those that are meaningless). We take statements to be true, not because we have succeeded in expressing perfect experience in perfect language, but because they have been sorted as true. How assertions come to be sorted and accepted as true within a communication network (or part of it) cannot be stated in abstract principles (for how could we derive them?). Rather, it is a matter of observation.
4. Four influences on truth sorting come immediately to mind. An assertion is regarded as true because it is customary to do so. An assertion is regarded as true because it is politic to do so. An assertion is regarded as true because related assertions are regarded as true. An assertion is regarded as true because it increases the power of language ie. it better states what is so. The first two of these listed influences are clearly relativist and we are inclined to say of truths that are supported by these influences that although they may be regarded as true in practice they are not well founded truths. The third listed influence concerns the relationship of an assertion to established truths. It is this influence that fosters the hope that all knowledge might be securely derived from a key set of truths. We may and do organise knowledge in this way but we do not pre-suppose that uncertainty

can be eliminated such that all knowledge can be organised in this way in principle. Accordingly we put aside what may be termed ‘logical idealism’ – the view that all knowledge can be organised logically. The fourth (vaguely expressed) influence corresponds to our notion of objective truth. It is relativist in the sense that it is uncertainist or anti-absolutist, but it is not relativist in the sense that truth is determined by person or tribe (or culture). Just as we apprehend objects competently but uncertainly through perception, so are we able to make assertions about objects that are competent but nevertheless not beyond uncertainty. We are able to assert that there is coherence in the notions of perception and uncertainist truth, a point that will be reinforced throughout this essay.

5. The debate in the philosophy of science about the truth of theories is a debate about final or unassailable truth and hence we dismiss it as confused and pointless. To question the truth of a scientific theory (or any assertion or theory) is to question its competence, not its relationship to unassailable truth.
6. We thus introduce this essay by putting a great quantity of philosophy aside, which is perhaps to be expected in an essay that seeks to describe a viewpoint in which ‘mind’ can be regarded as a poor concept. The significance of this is that we set for ourselves the task, not of producing an unassailable work constructed from indisputable premises and rigorous proofs, but of producing a competent view of experience, a view in which the mind-body can be clearly seen as illusory.

II. Perceiving Objects

1. Let us suppose that we can use language to comprehend experience but in a way that is uncertain such that the possibility of revision cannot be excluded.
2. If we bring this attitude to the mind-body problem then we are able to question (or be sceptical about) whether these words- ‘mind’ and ‘body’ are secure in their reference. We are able to ask whether they are the most effective way to articulate (to speak about) our experience. Consequently the possibility of an alternative view presents itself to us – at least in theory.
3. We do not mean when we speak of ‘experience’ to imply that experience is a perfectly meaningful term for something out of which we are able to draw the concepts of ‘mind’ and ‘body’ ie. we do not mean to imply that ‘experience’ is a more fundamental concept. (Indeed we do not pre-suppose that knowledge can be organised into a strict hierarchy.) If we alter the concepts of ‘mind’ and ‘body’ then we would expect also to alter the concept of ‘experience’. Rather, ‘experience’ is intended as a word to indicate our subject and to be understood in the usual way but with the implication it carries about ‘mind’ and ‘body’ at least temporarily suspended. This is the sort of problem we might expect to face when using words while altering their meaning.
4. The security of reference of ‘body’ (or ‘objects’ or ‘the real’) has long been a subject of philosophical debate. Scepticism about objects can perhaps be divided into two types: - one which says there are no objects, the other that says that our knowledge of objects is limited by our perception of them. The former view can be obtained from George Berkeley's argument that existence can only be attributed to perceptions - there is no basis for supposing anything further exists. David Hume (“A Treatise of Human Nature”) can be understood as putting the latter view for he argues objects can only be considered in terms of perceptions. He also points out in his arguments on induction and cause that there is no logical necessity leading from the particular to the general and no logical necessity leading from patterns of events to cause.

5. Debate about the security of reference of 'mind' does not parallel that of 'body'. It is doubtful that there is any potent scepticism as regards the existence of mind. It would generally be supposed that saying "The mind does not exist" is immediately contradicted by the understanding that it is the mind that is proposing the assertion. The assertion seems self-contradictory. And so, conversely, an assertion like "I think therefore I am" is taken to be unquestionably or absolutely true. Although minds are usually regarded as unquestionably/certainly/absolutely existent nevertheless the assertion "Minds exist" has not become the foundation of a great edifice of knowledge. This indicates that we have not found a way to develop or analyse "minds exist" to produce further unquestionable truths. There are problems with both 'mind' and 'existence' that might explain why this is so.
6. The problem with 'mind' is that it seems that knowledge of minds is confined to the contents of minds. This means that either 'mind' is a theoretical entity deduced from the contents of the mind (and therefore of uncertain identity) or the mind apprehends itself directly. This latter implies an infinite regression for if the mind apprehends itself then it must apprehend itself apprehending itself and so on. We may confidently assert that such an infinite regression does not accord with experience. If the mind is represented or symbolised in the mind (as we usually presume it is for anyone who uses the concept) then the means by which this comes about has remained obscure. We have not managed to bridge the chasm between the certainty that we have a mind and our ignorance as to how we know we have a mind. The sceptical possibility arises that the representation of mind (supposedly in the mind) is mistaken or superstitious. The possibility arises that we may view the 'contents of the mind' in different way and regard them not as contents or contained. The possibility arises that we may sensibly regard the mind as non-existent.
7. The problem of how we know there are other minds is even more stark for if we understand our experience to be the contents of our own mind then the notion that there are other minds can only be deduced from the contents of our own mind ie. the notion that there are other minds is necessarily theoretical and uncertain. It should be noted that the problem of the existence of other minds is similar to the problem of the existence of our own mind - it seems both are deduced from the contents of our own mind. We assume other people have minds because we think that we ourselves have a mind.
8. The confusion concerning mind is reflected in the way we use the word. (Of course, much of what we say using the word 'mind' is idiom and is not closely connected to any formal concept of mind.) We say "I have a mind" but it is doubtful anyone means by this that 'I' is an entity that has an entity 'mind', mind itself being an entity that contains entities called perceptions. This mysterious 'I' also has a body for we also say, "I have a body". We might say, "I am my mind" but are unlikely to say, "My mind has a body". We might say, "My body has a mind". The relationship between 'I', 'mind' and 'body' is very confused in this language. It is language that uses metaphors from ownership ("have") and from objects directly ("contains"). This language looks, on the face of it, clumsy and incompetent.
9. The meaning of 'existence' seems most secure when applied to objects. We say that an object exists – and thereby call it real, or we say an object does not exist – and thereby call it illusory or imaginary. Much is sometimes made of the fact that it is not possible in principle to perfectly distinguish the real from the illusory but to an uncertainist this is to be expected and in practice we usually distinguish very effectively. In addition to this notion of existence we are likely to say that our own minds exist and may even claim that this is so beyond uncertainty although, as we have discussed, this certainty seems

inexplicable (meaning that it cannot be elaborated upon or further explained). Other minds, it is supposed, exist but this appears to be less certain, which is ironic for the assertion that something exists is most strongly demonstrated by the concurrence of others. We suppose that minds exist because we suppose that the contents of minds exist i.e. we suppose that perceptions exist. We may find ourselves saying that an illusion exists in the mind and thereby produce contrasting notions of existence – the existence of the contents of the mind versus the existence of things that are indicated by *some* of the contents of mind. These contrasting notions of existence are a manifestation of the mind-body problem. Further to these existences it is sometimes supposed that various abstractions exist – truth, meaning, number etc. Such idealisations seem obscure, abstruse and unnecessary to an uncertainist. Already we have indicated the uncertainist attitude to truth and meaning. In mathematics ‘there exists’ (∃) seems interpretable as ‘there can be produced’ or similar i.e. it is doubtful the concept of existence has any relevance in mathematics.

10. There is an asymmetry in the way we view ‘mind’ and ‘body’. Science has explored objects and become very powerful. Science has also become very accustomed to the uncertainist or contingent nature of what it achieves. By contrast the supposed certainty that we have an existent mind has not become the parent or foundation of a host of certainties – the relationship between the supposed certainty that the mind exists and the supposed certainty that the contents of the mind exist remains unclear. If the mind is the ‘container’ of experience then it is not clear how it can also be an item of experience, or, in the manner of the metaphor ‘contents’, how a box could be one of the contents of itself. We might maintain these supposed certainties and conjecture that our minds cannot, possibly even in principle, penetrate the obscurity that surrounds ‘mind’. We might create a conceptual trap for ourselves and define the mind to be the unobservable observer. On the other hand, we may adopt the uncertainist viewpoint and observe that obscurity is the means by which ‘mind’ retains its singular position as unquestionably existent. As an uncertainist we assert that there is no such certainty and view the confusion as a conceptual problem not a problem about unquestionable existences or the scope of our intellect. We observe that ‘mind’ is not a simple concept and it is not easily learned; it is not self evident that the mind exists. Rather, ‘mind’ may be regarded as a confused concept. Consequently, if there is an intractable mind-body problem then we would do well to suspect the concept of mind. Accordingly, as an uncertainist, we look to solving the mind-body problem by seeking to comprehend experience without assuming the existence of mind at the outset.
11. We thus begin our re-appraisal of experience, not by supposing that it is the mind that has these experiences or by using metaphors about containers (which are derived from our experience of objects). We do not allow, as Berkeley expects us to do that perceptions are *in* the mind (see “Of the Principles of Human Knowledge”, paragraph 3). Rather, we will speak of experience as we customarily do without, in the first instance, supposing what, if anything, has that experience. So we will say, for example, “I see an object”, “I feel sad”, “I remember doing that”, “I can imagine that happening”, “I am thinking about it” and so on without meaning to imply anything about ‘I’. What ‘I’ stands for has not yet been determined.
12. Our understanding of objects is both powerful and uncertainist and so we look to uncertain objects rather than to the unquestionable certainties of mind as a way of comprehending experience. This is an uncertain step and is itself a major act of comprehension. How much is meant by it has yet to be made clear.

13. We have a high level of confidence in our ability to recognise and communicate about objects. (What 'we' and 'our' refer to has yet to be determined.) Now inherent to our notion of objects is the notion that we perceive objects. This notion, the concept of perception, permits us to say that the identity of objects persists regardless of our variable apprehension of them ie. an object stays the same regardless of the lighting, or the perspective or abilities of the perceiver, or whether the object is perceived at all. The concept of perception permits us to say that different perceivers or the same perceiver at different times perceive the same object in spite of their experiences being different. We thus say that objects exist. This is what we take 'exist' to mean, (which is in decisive contrast to the notion that existence means the presence of perceptions in the mind). If we say something exists that is not an object then we mean either that its existence can be deduced from (existent) objects or that we are using the word 'exist' metaphorically. By viewing experience in this way we are able to say that objects, perception and existence are inter-related - existent objects account directly and obviously for much of the constancy underlying our variable perception. We are able to use these concepts to assert that our perception of objects is variably competent and that it may sometimes be so incompetent as to provide no indication of objects at all, experience that we call illusion or delusion. We may assert that the ability of the perceiver to perceive is always a factor in its experience, which is to observe that the object does not, cannot, impose itself on a perceiver such that it is perfectly apprehended. The concept of perception itself does not suggest that we are able to perfectly identify objects and nor does it require that objects actually have perfect identity (uncertainty that science finds itself unable to eliminate from its analysis of objects). We are thus able to argue that there is coherence in the concepts of perception, existent objects and uncertainty.
14. We have put aside the concept of mind and propose instead to approach the comprehension of experience using the concepts of 'objects' and 'perception'. 'Perception' permits the view that variable experience may include the apprehension of a (comparatively) unchanging object: - 'perception' is a concept that makes the notion of existent objects consistent with experience. Perception is concerned very significantly with objects. We therefore ask: - is perception explicable in terms of objects or, supposing explication is possible, must we recognise other existences in addition to the existence of objects ie. can we account for perception entirely in terms of objects or does perception imply the existence of entities other than objects?
15. If perception is explicable in terms of objects then we assume that objects can perceive objects. That this is possible seems to be well established, for in biology the ability to sense may be called perception. The mechanical process of sensing matches the uncertainty of perception so thoroughly that the defects and limits of perception can be explained in these terms. Perception understood in this way is not the apprehension of objects by a mind but is treated, rather, as an entirely mechanical process. For example, organisms are thought to see because light from objects enters the eye where it is transformed into a signal which is then processed in a way that enables an organism to behave 'knowingly' about the seen objects. The diversity just in species surviving at the present time is such that we can discern continuity in perceptual ability from the simplest to the most complex. This impression is reinforced when we observe the development of new individuals. In biology organisms are treated as objects and humans, it seems, can be fitted comfortably into that scheme. Biology is able to adopt a unified view that does not seek to separate living things from non-living things, and does not seek to separate humans from other living things. The argument is compelling that if the simplest

perception is mechanical then so too is the most complex. This scientific explanation of how organisms sense is an explanation of perception entirely in terms of objects.

16. This simple comprehensive view of perception, which unifies living and non-living objects, would be uncontroversial when applied to organisms with rudimentary 'perception', simple chemical or light responses for example, except that at the other extreme, the great complexity of human perception, it is highly controversial. Even so, science continues to pursue the study of objects successfully into human perception and there seems every prospect that the human brain can account entirely for human perception and no prospect that science will find the brain to be anything but an object. Further, we are able to conceive that an object may be indistinguishably human in its presentation. Nor can we, it seems, distinguish people from zombies in principle. We may thus assert that other humans are known to us only as objects, albeit objects that make sounds and communicate and behave in ways that we ourselves (as objects therefore) do. We may unite these views and assert that other humans are entirely objects – not despicable machines of cogs and levers but marvellously complex ones the complexity of which we do not perceive but which we seek to understand in terms of objects (objects as we apprehend them and from which uncertainty cannot be eliminated). In this way we are able to isolate the controversy concerning human perception to our own person. We are able to confidently assert that perception occurs in objects for all animals including humans but with the absurd exception (as yet) of our own personal self. We thus approach the mind-body problem, not by supposing we have a mind and trying to reconcile this with the appearance of others as objects, but by supposing that others are objects and trying to reconcile this with our own experience. The problem is one of reconciling our personal experience with the notion that we ourselves are an object. We are able to diagnose that the mind-body problem is a problem concerning how we think about our own perception.
17. Perception as a process that is explicable in terms of objects concerns an object that perceives, objects that are perceived and phenomena that passes between these two - light for vision, sound for hearing etc. In these processes the only entities that exist are objects. The entity that perceives is an object and no mind is evident (or required) in the explanation. When a perceiver (other than ourselves) perceives an object visually we understand this to mean that light is passing from the object to the perceiver in an orderly way and that the mechanism in the perceiver is such that the perceiver can respond to the object. Interference at any point in the process may potentially disrupt the perception process —the disordering or removal of light, the damaging of the eye, the damaging of the perceiving mechanism to the brain or in the brain. Any of these interferences might account for a failure to perceive competently or a failure to perceive at all. ('Competence' here is a relative term and should not be understood to imply that there is a single criterion for defining competence or that we currently have an understanding of perception that enables us to measure the relative competence of human perception.)
18. We would argue that an account such as this is a broad outline of human vision, an account in which there is no mind. But we also use it as an account of our own vision such that we would not be surprised, for example, if a neurologist explained a vision defect in ourselves in terms of brain structure. Whatever the conceptual difficulties may be to us regarding ourselves as an object that perceives these do not seem to inhibit the explanation of our own vision (what we see) in terms of objects. Such an account may be generalised to all the ways we perceive objects ie. touch, smell etc. Human experience, however, is not just confined to the present perception of objects and it seems clear that even the perception of objects by people is integrated with the past perception of objects such that

the perception of objects would be much less competent without such integration ie. the information mediated from an object is slight compared to the information that past perception can bring to bear. If a perceiver that is an object can perceive in the present (in a process that takes time) then it seems possible, in principle, for a perceiver to have a mechanism that brings to bear the past perception of objects, at least to some extent. And so it follows that if it is possible for an object to perceive objects in the present (in a process that takes time) then it might also be possible to re-perceive to some extent the perception of objects in the past, although for a perceiver to be competent such perception must be distinguishable from immediate perception. When we fail to so distinguish we call our experience 'delusion'. We are thus able to argue that if the perception of objects in the present is mechanical then so might our own memory be. And just as we accept a mechanical explanation for a defect in vision so would we accept a neurological explanation for a defect in memory. This argument may be further extended and, without conjecturing why a perceiver might be able to imagine something that could not be an object, we may assert that our imagination is perception and that such perception is mechanical. Similarly, thought, which is an experience that culminates in either uttered or imagined language (usually sound), may likewise be regarded as mechanical perception. In addition to the external perception of objects a perceiver may also perceive internally the object that is itself – perception that is mechanical. And because our perception of our own body at least to some extent overlaps the perception of emotion, then we may argue that if the former is mechanical then so too is the latter, a view that is thoroughly coherent with the alteration of mood by pharmacological agents. We thus argue that the notion of mechanical perception may be used very effectively to account not just for other perceivers, not just for our own vision, but for all our experience. If there is a conceptual obstacle to this understanding then it seems likely that this obstacle is illusory.

19. We began this essay by using the word 'experience' without the implication that it is a mind that experiences. We are now able to propose that all experience can be understood as *what we perceive* and that perception is a process that is entirely explicable (in principle if not in practice) in terms of objects. We are able to propose that it is objects that perceive; that other perceivers are objects that perceive; and that we ourselves are an object that perceives. It may be worth reinforcing the point here that a perceiver that is an object cannot eliminate uncertainty from its perception of objects. It does not, and ultimately cannot, perceive the mechanisms of its perception so that we are not surprised if a perceiver is profoundly unknowing about itself. We are not surprised that a perceiver cannot eliminate uncertainty from its understanding about itself or about the world into which it is thoroughly integrated.
20. Using this understanding we may speak of our personal experience in this way. We say, for example "I see a tree" when we see a real tree. We understand that 'I' is an object, which we may also perceive. Just as we perceive things that we say exist but do not perceive them beyond uncertainty, so too may we perceive 'things' (in parenthesis because 'things' unfortunately suggests existence) that have a tenuous or obscure relationship to what exists. We say "I perceive a memory of a tree" and understand 'I' to be an object. When we perceive a memory we understand that we are re-perceiving, probably in a diminished way, something that may no longer exist – which is to say that our understanding of the patterned change in the structure of objects enables us to say something existed but that it no longer exists. Similarly we say "I perceive an imaginary tree" where 'I' is, of course, an object. We would say the tree does not exist at all (which is what we mean by calling it imaginary) although it nevertheless retains some relationship to existent things – it has shape and colour and we call it a 'tree'. We likewise

say “I perceive a thought” or “I perceive the emotion of pleasure”. Our attempt to comprehend experience through the notion that we are an object that perceives leads us to speak of *what* we perceive. We are able to express a particular experience by saying “I perceive such and such”. We do not suppose that what we perceive is necessarily existent but rather we interpret the matter, an interpretation that is relative, for we do not suppose that objects can be perfectly perceived. (The analysis of objects in physics illustrates this observation to a startling degree.)

21. When a perceiver sees an object it is not of itself obvious that there is anything to be explained or that any explanation is possible. (It is not of itself obvious what explanation is or what it achieves.) If we have the experience ‘tree’ (subsequently interpreted as ‘I see a tree’) it is not of itself obvious that it is an experience (whatever we may come to mean by the term ‘experience’). It is not of itself obvious that ‘existence’ means anything – that the tree exists or that any other existent thing is related to this experience. By recognising patterns in our experience we are able to provide explanations with respect to these patterns. The recognition of objects (entities that persist regardless of our perception of them) is the recognition of just such a pattern. If we say “I see an object”, this implies that we have recognised further patterns related to ‘I’ and ‘see’. Thus, saying “I see an object” imposes considerable comprehension on our experience. Nevertheless we still might say “I see an object” without it being obvious that a question like “How do I see?” has a comprehensive answer. That such comprehension is possible only becomes clear as we study objects. The result of this comprehension is that we are able to say that objects are immensely complex and that our perception of objects is immensely complex. We may also say that our perception of thought is also immensely complex and are able to conjecture that the experience underlying some thought is so great that we would expect that it could only arise in a network of communicators over a long period of time. We therefore view Descartes’ “I think therefore I am”, or alternatively “I perceive therefore I exist”, not as a simple, unquestionably certain statement but as a statement that imposes comprehension on experience, comprehension that is extremely complex and by no means self-evident or unquestionably certain. This is not to suggest that Descartes himself used it to impose comprehension on experience for it appears, rather, that he was discovering his own conceptual architecture. As it happens we are able to agree with Descartes’ assertion but we differ in our comprehension of ‘I’, ‘perceive’ and ‘exist’ ie. perception does imply existence, but the existence of objects not mind; ‘I’ is an object that perceives; and perception is a process that is explicable in terms of objects. The certainty that Descartes draws upon is the same certainty we would *feel* when seeing a tree and saying “I see a tree”. The assertion seems undeniable (to the person who genuinely makes the claim) but it is only so within a given conceptual structure. This is no different to the certainty of mathematical statements with respect to the mathematical structure within which they are set. There is no unquestionable certainty attached to the fact that we perceive because it is not unquestionably certain that we do perceive (and not unquestionably certain what perception is). Such certainty is an indicator of conceptual limitation, of an inability to think otherwise, not perfect knowledge.
22. We have attempted in this essay to indicate something of the confusion that attends the concepts of ‘mind’, ‘object’, ‘existence’ and ‘perception’. We have attempted to resolve this confusion by proposing that our experience is that of an object that perceives. We have proposed that perception be understood as a process that occurs in terms of objects. This understanding requires no further existent entities and so we reject the notion that perceptions exist. We reject the notion that experience is an isolated entity in an isolated mind. Rather, our supposedly existent perceptions of an object we reinterpret to imply the

existence of the object that is perceived and to imply ourselves as an object (and hence also the mediating phenomenon and mechanism of perception). The perception of 'things' that are not an object are regarded as a variant of this. No perfect or ideal notion of an object is available to us in this understanding. This understanding unifies the concept of an existent real with uncertainist perception. The notion of an existent real, we would assert, is fundamentally what we mean by 'real' and 'exist'. We are able to assert that uncertainty is what the concept of perception comprehends – not the ideal (and inexplicable) existence of perceptions but the uncertain existence of what is perceived. This uncertainty is what makes it possible for us to be unknowing about existent objects and to make discoveries about them. Accordingly, we understand that what we perceive (our experience) indicates what exists (objects) to a variable extent and we do not expect what we perceive to perfectly indicate what exists.

23. This failure of perception to indicate objects completely and perfectly is why it is even possible to analyse objects and why we are able to discover such immense detail in them. It also accounts for the unreality that arises in our analysis of objects in physics. We explain this as follows. Objects as we perceive and comprehend them provide us with our notion of what is real, a notion that cannot be put beyond uncertainty because it is not based on the perfect apprehension of objects. Consequently it is unsound to assume that the analysis of objects should yield entities that are object-like. Indeed this would be an attempt to produce a circular or infinitely regressive explanation. It would be an explanation that says that objects behave the way they do because they are made up of objects. A physicist who supposes objects as we perceive them are made of atoms is concerned with what atoms are 'really' like. In discovering that atoms are made up of protons, electrons and neutrons the physicist now becomes concerned with what these are 'really' like and so on. There is simply no basis for supposing that this chain of enquiry should invariably produce entities that are like objects as we perceive them either in 'appearance' or 'behaviour'. A physicist who supposes we see objects because of the way light is reflected and absorbed by atoms can hardly argue that what we see is the perfect apprehension of objects and thus the ultimate standard of reality. We should not expect entities that we may identify in our analysis of objects to be object-like. (Similarly, we do not expect the aggregation of objects to be object-like either.) We should seek to comprehend physics through the conceptual pathway from object to 'fundamental' entities and not through the object-likeness of those entities. Indeed we may regard it as an indication of the success of physics that its explanation for objects is non-circular.
24. Just as it is unsound to expect the analysis of objects to yield objects so too is it unsound to expect to discover more and more detail in what we perceive just by considering what we perceive. What we perceive is not made up of ever-smaller pieces of what we perceive. Our memory of a tree, for example, does not provide the detail that is discoverable through actual exploration - when we see a tree in the distance we do not see its individual leaves. Similarly, when we see an object moving we do not see every fragment of its path (and we cannot assume that the path can be divided into smaller and smaller pieces).
25. The relationship between what we perceive and what exists is this: objects exist and perception is a process that occurs in terms of objects; what a perceiver perceives, including itself, indicates to a greater or lesser extent what exists. A judgement as to how competently what we perceive indicates the real can only be possible, we would assume, after a great deal of experience, judgement that of course cannot be put beyond uncertainty. The concept of objects perceiving seems to be adequately explanatory of human experience including our own. According to this understanding a perceiver considers what it perceives and makes a judgement as to what exists based on this. The

notion that we are objects that perceive does not yield an existent entity 'perceptions' or an existent entity 'mind' that contains them. Consequently it does not produce a mind-body problem.

III. Confused Perceivers

1. The notion that our experience is that of an object that perceives seems simple, and indeed it is. But this simplicity arises from the comprehension it imposes on experience, that is why it is simple, and this does not mean that the notion is self-evident or even easily acquired. We would argue that the concept of mind likewise imposes comprehension on experience and would observe that it too is concerned chiefly with the notion of perception. We have argued that there are serious difficulties with the concept of mind and in addressing them we have re-stated our aim: - we have sought, not to solve the problems concerning an existent mind, but rather have sought to comprehend experience. We arrived at the view that our experience is that of an object that perceives, a view in which there is no entity 'mind'. It is our view that the concept of mind and its various problems, the mind-body problem included, are obsolete. It is doubtful, however, that anyone who comprehends experience through the concept of mind will be able to put it aside easily in favour of comprehending experience in terms of an object that perceives. And it is likely that the notion that experience is comprehended in terms of an object that perceives will be confused with criticisms that are related to the mind concept. Such criticism would be illogical but nevertheless may be difficult to avoid. We will therefore try to show the conceptual structure of confusions related to the mind concept. In this discussion we will call the viewpoint that experience can be comprehended in terms of an object that perceives 'perceivism' (adjective 'perceivist').
2. Suppose we are looking at a tree. When considering this it is better to actually look at a tree than imagine it because, as will be discussed, imagining ourselves perceiving can double entities ie. produce duality. We would say "I see the tree" but we would regard the thinking or saying as additional to the experience. 'I' and 'see' are not intrinsic to the experience but are conceptual elaborations of the experience 'tree'. Accompanying experiences, perceiving emotions or perceiving our body, we would regard as just that – accompanying rather than directly related. We are likely to conceptualise in the following ways. One, we are likely to say we are having an experience and may thus imagine this experience grouped along with other experiences be they concurrent, remembered or imagined. Two, we are likely to say that we see a tree, which is a complex allusion to vision and to existent objects. Consequently we are likely to say that the tree exists and that we see because we have eyes and there is light. (The light itself we do not see but conceive rather that we see objects because they either emit or reflect light, a process that is well understood in terms of chemistry and physics.) Three, we are also likely to distinguish between the object and the appearance of the object. The appearance can be altered by lighting or the position of the observer but we do not suppose the tree is significantly altered thereby. We do not suppose that the object disappears when we cease to look at it. These conceptualisations bring a great deal of conceptual architecture to bear when we think about ourselves looking at a tree, architecture that is not directly evident when we look at a tree and which cannot be derived from just looking at the tree for a short while.
3. If, in conceptualisation one above we regard experience to be an entity in its own right we are likely to say that the experience exists rather than that we perceive something and we will say we *have* the experience or that the experience/perception(s) exist in the mind. Because of conceptualisation two above we are also likely to say that experience is at least

sometimes an experience/perception of something - we recognise that objects exist and are thereby able to distinguish a real tree from an imaginary tree. These two together put us in the position of saying that experience exists and that experience sometimes indicates existent objects. The notion of existent experience is the notion that we have perceptions that are existent, which then supports the notion of an existent mind. It leads us to deduce two types of existence from looking at a tree. It argues that the experience exists, experience that we call our perceptions of the tree, and it argues that the tree exists. In this way the perceiver's experience is separated from the real. This is, of course, the mind-body problem. According to this mind-body conceptualisation, perception concerns the relationship between existent perceptions and existent objects. In this conceptualisation how a perceiver's perceptions arise from its perception of objects is not clear because the conceptualisation emphasises that the perceiver has perceptions not that it perceives objects. In understanding that experience exists it is not clear to us whether we perceive the tree or whether we have perceptions of a tree. We may even convolute the language and speak of experiencing or perceiving perceptions. The 'experience exists' viewpoint, in saying we have perceptions rather than that we perceive things, disconnects our experience from the real and thereby produces a crisis when considering the perception of objects. Such a viewpoint emphasises or draws its strength from experience that actually is disconnected from the real ie. memory, emotion and imagination. It is a viewpoint that is often associated with the disparagement or subordination of objects.

4. The perceivist view of conceptualisation one above is that experience is what we perceive and that a perceiver may consider what it pleases as it pleases. Perceivers perceive objects (to varying competence and with varying contribution from past experience) but also perceive 'things' that do not exist. The experience 'tree' is interpreted as "I perceive a tree", an experience that is altered by the conditions of perception - lighting etc. The experience 'tree' is not interpreted as "I have perceptions of a tree".
5. Regarding conceptualisation three, when we look at a tree we do not both perceive the object and also the appearance of the object. It is not a dual experience and any conceptualisation that interprets it as dual must be regarded as suspect. If we understand what we perceive to be the appearance of the tree (a questionable understanding given the significant contribution past experience makes) then we may be deceived into supposing that there are two existent entities: - our experience/perception(s) of the tree and the tree itself (an object). To suppose that there is an existent entity that is the appearance of the tree is to make the assumption that perceptions/experiences exist. The consequence of this assumption is that the relationship between the appearance, which is all a perceiver is subject to, and what is perceived cannot be resolved because the perceiver is confined to appearances. Perception becomes a miraculous process that concerns the relationship between objects and the entity that is a person's perception of objects. The language may become convoluted such that we speak of our perception of the appearance of objects. What perception has to do with the physical process of sensing seems incomprehensible. The distinction between an object and its appearance may thus produce or insinuate the assumption that perceptions (or experience) exists and thereby produce the mind-body problem.
6. The distinction between an object and its appearance produces no difficulty (in principle) for the perceivist understanding of experience. A perceiver perceives the tree (the object) but is able to conclude from experience that it doesn't perfectly perceive the tree and is not perfectly knowledgeable about it. A perceiver only has at its disposal the appearance (meaning not just vision) of objects but is able to acquire and apply principles of appearance (scale and perspective, for example) and is able to integrate multiple

appearances to form a competent notion of objects. When we look at a tree we do not just see colour and line but understand it to be a tree and have a sense of its three dimensional shape, actual size, its parts perhaps and other characteristics. Consequently the tree's appearance is not that of line and colour but is that of an object – we perceive the tree and its appearance is that of an object. Furthermore, the perceivist view enables us to comprehend the appearance in terms of objects: - in terms of the perceiver's position among objects and the behaviour of mediating phenomena, and in terms of mechanisms in the perceiver that respond to that phenomena. To conceive of a tree as it is (as opposed to what is perceived) is self-deception for this is to conceive of just another appearance. It amounts to deceiving ourselves that a tree can be apprehended perfectly. In the same way we delude ourselves that the real in general can be perfectly apprehended – that it is ideal and that uncertainty can be eliminated. (It is this idealism that insists that objects must be made up of objects for there seems no possibility of them being made up of anything else – it underpins attempts to understand the real in terms of the real in physics even though such an explanation must be a non-explanation.)

7. The notion that the perception of objects is the representation of objects by a perceiver can produce a number of confusions. The most significant point to be made is that if a perceiver perceives an object it has no need to represent the object. If we were to understand perception to be representation then we would produce a regressive explanation. We would be saying something like – a perceiver perceives objects because it perceives (apprehends perhaps) its representation of objects. We could then legitimately ask – how do we perceive the representation of objects without producing a further representation? If we can perceive a representation without further representation then we may also perceive the object without any representation at all. The perception of objects cannot be understood as representation. The notion that our perception of objects is the representation of objects is complementary to the notion that the process of perception produces existent perceptions (a viewpoint we also reject) such that our supposed perceptions of objects may be described as a representation of objects. The process of perception as understood in terms of objects does not produce a not-object entity. A perceiver cannot legitimately argue that what it perceives indicates objects and therefore that what it perceives is an entity produced by objects – this is the baseless assumption of existent experience/perceptions. We may assert, rather, that we look to understand the perception of objects (ie. what we perceive) in terms of objects – how it enables the perceiver to negotiate objects, how the perceiver becomes able to remember or imagine objects, how the perceiver becomes able to speak of objects, and so on. This said, it is plain that we can remember objects and this indicates some ability in the perceiver to represent objects. (But here 'represent' is to be understood to mean 're-perceive'.) Furthermore, the perceiver contributes so much to its perception of an object (ie. to what it perceives) that what is perceived is explicable very significantly in terms of the perceiver and not so much in terms of mediating phenomena. Memory and the contribution of experience to perception (what we perceive) may encourage the view that the perception of objects (what we perceive) is representation, but we would assert that such a view is unsound.
8. It is hazardous to speak of one's perception of objects. Such language is often used to draw attention to the competence with which one perceives an object. For example, in speaking of our 'perceptions of the tree' rather than speaking just of the 'tree' we are drawing attention not so much to the object tree but to how well we perceive the tree. But it is likely we will misunderstand this distinction and contrast objects with our perception of them, a contrast which is baseless for we only ever perceive objects, not both objects

and our perception of them. At best we could contrast our perception of objects with more competent perception but even so we are left with the suggestion of two entities – objects and our perception of objects. In paragraph III 7 above we have used this phrase with its correct meaning in brackets. Removing the bracketed words could produce serious confusion.

9. The mechanical explanation of what we perceive involves two sets of imagery. (We will discuss the subject in terms of images for convenience.) There is the imagination of mechanism (since the mechanism cannot be perceived directly), imagination that is founded on what we perceive no matter how awkward or inappropriate this may be. And there is what we perceive, the perception of which we are trying to explain. What we perceive may be an object or the memory or imagination of it. If we conceive that the mechanism should produce what we perceive then we are interpreting what we perceive as an entity ie. we make the assumption of existent perceptions and produce a mind-body problem – we find it incomprehensible that what we perceive could emerge from mechanism. If, for example, we conceive that our experience ‘tree’ is the product of the mechanism of perception then we produce two quite different trees – the tree that is perceived in our imagination of the mechanism (understood as the real tree) and the tree that is the experience we are trying to explain. Perception does not involve mechanisms producing a not object entity called ‘perceptions’. There is no basis for supposing that what we perceive is produced by the mechanism; no basis for supposing that there are two types of entities. Rather, we account for what we perceive in terms of objects, objects themselves derived from comprehending what we perceive.
10. Probably the most significant and pervasive problem/error related to the mind concept is that which arises when we consider our own perception. When we do so we risk doubling ourselves into the self that considers and the self that is being considered. We thereby risk interpreting the self that is being considered as an entity comprised of experiences, with the result that we assume, not that the self is an object that perceives, but that it is an existent entity made up (according to a perceivist understanding) of what it perceives, which is to make the assumption that perceptions (experience) exist. This doubling of ourselves that occurs when we consider ourselves is not of itself mind-body duality but it becomes so if the considered self is understood as an entity of existent perceptions and the self that is doing the considering includes a concept of the real in its viewpoint. (The concept of mind does not appear directly but can be understood as the entity that unifies existent perceptions, hence the metaphor of it as a container, a metaphor that expresses the elusive nature of mind: - for the mind is usually not identified with anything that it contains but yet is known only by its contents; it is not a particular item of experience but the ‘embodiment’ of all our experiences.)
11. When we use the mind concept and conceive of the mind of another person we immediately produce the mind-body problem. We perceive the other person as an object. Their mind we do not perceive. We conceive that the other person has a mind by imagining he/she is like ourself ie. through the application of empathy, empathy we can (and do) apply or deny arbitrarily. The conceptual structure of this understanding that another person has a mind is as follows: - we interpret what we perceive as indicating objects and this includes the other person as an object; we interpret what we perceive as also indicating mind, which is to say that we conceive of what we perceive in its entirety as a single entity; we associate these two things with one another, that is, we associate the whole of what we perceive (understood as mind) with part of what we perceive (understood as the object which is the other person). Regarded as existent these two entities – what we perceive (part of it) interpreted as the other person as an object and

what we perceive interpreted as the other person's mind, cannot be reconciled because what we perceive does not indicate two types of existent entities. In conceiving that other people have minds and bodies we find ourselves doubling what we perceive and then imagining the whole following part of it around. The conception that another person has a mind is absurd.

12. This understanding of the relationship between mind and body applies not just to other persons. It is also the way we conceive of ourselves: - the concept of objects is understood in the same way and the concept of mind is understood in the same way. And it is similarly absurd to imagine that we ourselves are a mind following a body around. Experience supports the view that experience is what we perceive, a view that is coherent with our recognition of objects and the way they behave, a view that understands perception in terms of objects. Our experience does not justify the view that we are a mind in a body. (How a mind could be *in* anything is difficult to explain.) A perceivist viewpoint enables us to state our (mis)understanding of this very clearly – the connection between mind and body is imaginary.
13. This understanding of the way we conceive of mind and body gives us an insight into the conception of ourselves as dead. We recognise objects from what we perceive including the (dead) body of ourselves. We decline to associate what we perceive with that object because we conceive it no longer has a mind. As a consequence of this conception we find ourselves associating omnipresence with the notion of ourselves being dead because in conceiving of it we are, of course, still alive. The exercise of conceiving of oneself as dead is an exercise in separating what one perceives (experience) from objects, in particular it separates what we perceive from our own self as an object. It produces the assumption that experience is an existent entity in its own right. It is a clear way of teaching or reinforcing the mind-body concept (and also omnipresence). It is also paradoxical because thinking, "I am dead" indicates that we are not dead. (This paradox could be resolved by saying bodies die and minds do not, but this ought also to mean that bodies are born and minds are not and bodies sleep and minds do not. Add the notion of the unconscious to this, to be understood as a sleeping mind perhaps, and we have abundant confusion.)
14. The difference in conceiving of ourselves as compared to others is that there is extra confusion produced by the understanding that the mind is our own mind. Identifying or conceiving of one's own mind when it is this mind that is understood to be doing the conceiving is problematic. It leads to the confusion of infinite regression for if the mind can consider itself then it can also consider itself considering itself etc. This infinite regression is a problem that arises from the concept of mind and is not based on experience. A perceivist understanding of experience produces no such problem.
15. When we describe the mind-body problem from a perceivist point of view the confusion concerning the concept of perception is readily apparent. In the mind-body conception it is not clear what perceives, what is perceived, what perceptions are, or what relationship perception has to objects. The notion that perception is a process in objects that culminates in the production of existent perceptions in the mind is clearly erroneous.
16. From a perceivist point of view the relationship between the various infinite regressions and duality is also clear. The mind-body problem is dual because of the doubling that is required to conceive of it. The notion that perception produces perceptions suggests infinite regression because we may ask what perceives the perceptions. The problem of the mind perceiving or conceiving of itself is also a problem of infinite regression. Any attempt, therefore, to explain (from a mind-body point of view) that the mind exists or to

describe it in any way produces confusion because it involves a mind describing itself and therefore also a mind describing a mind describing itself and so on.

17. An example of mind-body confusion as it is practised can be seen when a neurologist tries to relate brain mechanism to (existent) perceptions (rather than to what is perceived). Suppose the neurological subject says he/she sees something green. The neurologist wonders how it is that networks of firing neurones could produce this experience. The neurologist thus conceives of two types of entities (which are, of course, based on what the neurologist perceives): - one, objects as indicated by what the neurologist perceives, objects that are then used imaginatively to conceive of brain mechanism; and two, the experience of (or perception of) something green, which the neurologist interprets as an entity rather than that they perceive something green. The problem the neurologist is considering is not about the person being studied but about themselves – the neurologist imagines the perception of something green rather than observes it in their subject. The neurologist is effectively asking what the relationship is between objects and *their own* perception of something green (sometimes confusingly abstracted to ‘greenness’). The neurologist assumes the existence of objects based on what he/she perceives and, also based on what he/she perceives, imagines (rather than observes) what the subject is perceiving. The neurologist has put aside the consideration of his/her own perception when considering the perception of the subject but it is this understanding of their own perception that is the problem. The neurologist may properly consider the subject as an object and attempt to relate all observations concerning that object. This is the entirety of the subject of neurology. This is the way in which the study of the brain has successfully proceeded.
18. The study of the human brain could conceivably enable us to tell a perceiver what he/she is perceiving based on the neural activity of the brain (to the extent that language can effectively state this). This amounts to having two quite different instruments perform the same task for we may also regard the perceiver as an instrument that may tell us what he/she is perceiving directly. The perceiver is able to do this, we assume, by virtue of the complex integration of perception and language, which is the brain. A perceiver can even sometimes competently state what another perceiver is perceiving by imagining themselves to be in their place i.e. by the use of empathy. Each of these two sources of information, the personal and the technological, has its strengths and weaknesses. A human perceiver is an organism (meaning it arises biologically) that is designed (through the process of survival) to provide such a report directly (to like perceivers) whereas the study of neurones requires a high level of intrusive artificial (human made) technology. (By comparison to artificial technology the brain can be called natural or bio-evolved technology). The direct report by the perceiver, however, is subject to the competence and foibles of that perceiver- he/she may have perceptual deficiencies relative to other humans, he/she may be lying, whereas the neurological report is based on what exists (objects) and offers the possibility of a profound understanding of perception.
19. The colour problem, the notion, for example, that one person’s experience ‘blue’ might be another person’s experience ‘red’, is difficult to resolve from a mind-body viewpoint. In the mind-body viewpoint we cannot access someone else’s experience directly and the relationship between experience and objects is obscure (‘imaginary’ a perceiver would say). From a mind-body viewpoint this colour inversion seems possible but there seems to be no way of telling. But this inability to resolve the question is at odds with other understandings we have about perception - we accept, for example, that in colour blindness one person’s red may be another person’s grey. We know this because of the behaviour of objects. (It seems likely, incidentally, that colour vision is a more efficient

way of recognising objects than grey vision.) The colour problem is not dismissed in the same way because it is assumed that colour is relative such that there could be no discernible consequences if perceivers did see in different colours. This colour relativity is understood in science to be a consequence of the mechanism of colour perception rather than the nature of light, light being describable as a spectrum and not a colour wheel. It may be that colours are interchangeable but this is by no means certain i.e. the assumption in the colour problem, that there could be no discernible consequences if perceivers saw in different colours, may be false. From a perceivist point of view we argue that a perceiver is confined to what it perceives. A perceiver may use empathy (imagination) when considering what another perceiver perceives. In this way a perceiver may appreciate what it is like for another perceiver to be partially blind, colour blind, or to wear sunglasses etc. A perceiver may consider that they themselves are colour blind (as humans are in the infra-red and ultra-violet). Similarly a perceiver may consider the possibility of colour inversion and would seek to explore the matter in terms of the real that it recognises from comprehending what it perceives. The mind-body viewpoint treats what perceivers perceive as existent and then tries to reconcile this with the real and with other perceivers who also have existent perceptions. The colour problem highlights the failure of the mind-body view to comprehend the relationship between perception and objects. The perceivist sees the problem in terms of an object perceiving something. To a perceivist the colour problem can be resolved in terms of mechanism. To a 'mindist' (one who uses a mind-body viewpoint) the problem is one of comparing isolated existent perceptions. The difference in these two viewpoints can be distilled to this: the mindist supposes 'blue' exists as a perception; the perceivist supposes the experience 'blue' can be comprehended as a perceiver perceiving something blue.

20. We have argued that our experience 'the tree' cannot be understood as both the perception of a real tree and the presence of the perceptions of a tree in the mind. We have argued that we can comprehend experience in terms of objects and perception, a comprehension that asserts that experience is 'what we perceive'. The 'what' that we perceive is comprehended very powerfully through recognising objects, a recognition that we mark by saying that objects exist. The notion that perceptions exist is unlike the assertion that objects exist. According to a perceivist understanding, insisting that perceptions exist is a mistaken way of saying that we perceive something. Perceiving something does imply existence according to a perceivist understanding but not the existence of perceptions and not necessarily the existence of what is perceived. The certainty we feel when we say we have (existent) perceptions may thus be re-directed to the notion that we perceive something. Such high certainty indicates that this is how we comprehend experience but it is not an ultimate certainty of the type Descartes was seeking and had claimed to have found. It is worth contrasting this viewpoint with that of George Berkeley's, for we may interpret Berkeley's argument denying an existent real as also springing from the recognition that the unitary experience 'the tree' cannot be both the perception of something real and existent and also the presence of existent perceptions in the mind – either both are mistaken or one of them is redundant. Berkeley would argue that the perception(s) of the tree exist in the mind i.e. he links existence to perceptions and accordingly modifies the meaning of existence when applied to objects – he argues objects exist in being perceived. We have argued the opposite. We would say objects exist regardless of whether we perceive them or not. We would argue that this is what the concept of perception is for – it accounts for our variable experience of something stable. Our experience is, of course, variable because we cannot perceive perfectly and cannot perceive everything at once. We are an object that perceives, not a corrupted and transitory fragment of omniscience. Whereas perception for Berkeley means the

'presence' of perceptions in the mind, a view that does not seem to permit any effective elaboration, we argue that it is a process that can be understood in terms of objects. Accordingly, the notion that an organism could perceive something but not imagine, remember or articulate the fact is possible for a perceiving object but difficult to comprehend in terms of perceptions in the mind. (The notion of the unconscious seems designed to reconcile the notion that we may perceive something and not be able to imagine remember or articulate the fact, with the notion of the human mind - it being argued that 'lower animals' do not have minds at all.) We would argue that Berkeley is clearly incorrect. We would argue that his error stems from the assumption that perceptions exist in the mind – effectively the assumption that the mind exists. Bertrand Russel's approach to Berkeley is a useful pointer to the unwarranted academic complexity that can be brought to the problem. He writes ("A History of Western Philosophy", 2nd ed., Chap. XVI paragraph 4): *"He (Berkeley) thinks he is proving that all reality is mental; what he is proving is that we perceive qualities, not things, and that qualities are relative to the percipient"*. It seems unlikely that an effective comprehension of experience could come from the notion that we perceive qualities. The tendency of Russel's approach seems to be to emphasise the analysis (or abstraction) of what we perceive rather than a comprehension of it, with the result that it is not clear what the subject of the analysis/abstraction is.

21. We have suggested that perception is a concept that reconciles erratic experience with the stability of objects (stability/permanence we acknowledge by saying they exist). We have suggested that erratic experience can be accounted for if we regard perception as a process that occurs in terms of objects, a viewpoint that produces no entity that is experience itself (or existent perceptions). A perceiver considers what it perceives and this is very often, but not always, objects. Viewed in this way we may argue that perception does not enable the perceiver to perfectly apprehend an object - there is no basis for supposing that objects can be perfectly apprehended. The ultimate nature of objects eludes the perceiver and a perceiver has no basis for supposing that objects even have perfect identity. We therefore agree with David Hume's scepticism on cause and induction ("A Treatise of Human Nature"). We are able to assert that this scepticism is a consequence of the concept of perception and we are able to assert that it is an uncertainist argument rather than an annihilatingly sceptical one. We are able also to comment on Hume's admitted failure to reconcile his views with the self. (See "A Treatise of Human Nature" Book 1 Part IV, Section VI and Appendix.) Hume adopted the view that the self is "bundles of perceptions". How they could be perceptions, what perception is, what they could be perceptions of, how they could be metaphorical bundles when it is not clear there are real bundles, what perceives them, and how there could be other bundles of perceptions (ie. other selves) remain inexplicable. The **perceivist** view is that these bundles of perceptions do not exist but rather refer to what the perceiver perceives, a conclusion we obtain from interpreting what we perceive (experience). Hume's understanding of the self is, like Berkeley's, that of existent perceptions, which effectively, as Berkeley argues, makes notions of further existent entities redundant.

IV. Consciousness and Free Will

1. Up to this point the concept of consciousness has not been discussed. 'Consciousness' has a close affinity with the concepts 'mind' and 'perceptions' and at least to some extent a discussion on consciousness is superfluous. It may be felt, however, that 'consciousness' is a sufficiently independent concept to warrant specific mention. This raises difficulties that are not central to our discussion ie. the relationship of consciousness to 'mind' and 'perceptions'. We have argued that minds and perceptions are imaginary and do not exist

and so, to the extent that consciousness resembles these concepts it too can be put aside. We have argued that the concepts of mind and existent perceptions are confused and so we do not expect the relationship between these concepts and consciousness to be clear. We are likely to say our consciousness of an object is the sum of our perceptions of that object. We speak of the conscious and unconscious mind ie. the word 'conscious' is used to describe the mind. How an existent entity 'consciousness' is derived from our understanding of this adjective is not clear. Presumably, if consciousness is an entity then so too is unconsciousness a distinct entity but this also is not clear. It is not clear whether we perceive we are conscious or whether we are conscious that we perceive or whether we are conscious that we have a mind or whether the mind is conscious that we are conscious, and so on. Definition of some kind is required for any orderly discussion and so we will proceed by defining ('translating' is perhaps a better word) as follows. When we say we are conscious of an object we mean we perceive an object, but since we understand that we might also unconsciously perceive an object we mean when we say we are conscious of an object that we know we perceive the object. (If we merely say, "I am conscious" then we are saying that we are perceiving but without specifying what.) 'Knowing' we regard as a concept related at least to memory and language – this is a matter of study and it seems likely that 'knowing' will not prove to be a precise concept. We may thus resolve the amusing paradoxes of saying, "I am conscious" when we aren't, and saying, "I am unconscious" when we actually are, for speaking, of itself, is not enough to indicate that we are conscious. This definition – that to be conscious of something is to perceive it in conjunction with the perception of language and memory, means the concept 'to be conscious of' does not add to our previous discussion.

2. The notion that a perceiver is a complex of mechanisms that are integrated to a greater or lesser extent enables us to easily comprehend that a perceiver may or may not *know* what it perceives (knowing being concerned at least with the perception of memory and language). Also, the relationship between the mediating phenomena and the contributions the perceiver itself makes to what it perceives means the identity of what is perceived is by no means unambiguous and it means that we do not expect that what a perceiver perceives can be perfectly defined or that it can be considered (analysed) in ever greater detail. (What we are conscious of is not composed of 'atoms' of consciousness.) We would not expect it to be perfectly clear what we are conscious (and unconscious) of.
3. When we say someone else is conscious we may be conceiving that he/she has a mind. Often, however, we are using a medical viewpoint and are concerned with the readily observable behaviours of a perceiving object. These behaviours include (for most humans) that he/she is alive and that he/she can speak and thereby indicate that they can remember. The notion that we are an object that perceives offers the possibility of a unified understanding (in terms of objects) of these different viewpoints: - "I am conscious" and "He is conscious".
4. The abstraction 'consciousness' is a degree more obscure than (existent) 'perceptions'. 'Consciousness' seems concerned with extending the concept of the knowing mind (which we reject) so that it can be understood to 'contain' both the supposedly existent perceptions we know about (consciousness) and the presumably existent perceptions we don't know about (unconsciousness) ie. it is an attempt to comprehend how a mind can respond to things it either doesn't know or *apparently* doesn't know. If minds don't exist then these components of the mind are of no concern to us.
5. The notion of consciousness perhaps adds additional confusion to the controversy about zombies for it offers the option of regarding zombies as either unconscious (ie. having a

mind but only an unconscious one) or as having no mind at all (and hence no conscious or unconscious). The concept of zombies is probably an extension of the notion of the sleepwalker and sleep-talker. The notion that the people around us might be zombies in this sense is unsustainable for sleepwalking and sleep-talking is distinct from normal behaviour and can be recognised as such, although not perhaps immediately. The notion that zombies are objects with no mind at all but nevertheless indistinguishable from ourselves is an insoluble problem in a mind-body view of experience (because the attachment of a mind to a body is imaginary) but it is simple from a perceivist viewpoint. We regard the zombie as a mythical creature that is founded in the mind-body view of the world and we assert that they no more exist than minds do.

6. The question as to whether a machine can be conscious can also be easily answered. People themselves may be regarded as machines (and are so regarded) but they do not carry with them an entity that is consciousness. Similarly, just as machines cannot have consciousness nor can they have minds because minds don't exist - people don't have them either. It is an extraordinary human accomplishment that the boundary between human-made machines and biological machines is being bridged but in perceivist terms it is quite comprehensible (at least in the sense that it does not present us with a philosophical conundrum).
7. There is just one further topic we will touch on before concluding and that is the subject of will and free will. The notion that one has free will is the notion that one may voluntarily lift one's arm, for example. Such experience invites us to suppose that physical action can be produced by thought. To a perceivist the perception of thought (thought being imaginary language) cannot produce action because thoughts don't exist. The relationship between the thought and the moving arm is that both are perceived. The concurrence of these two experiences suggests that the mechanism of the object perceiving the thought is linked to the mechanism for producing action. The relationship between these mechanisms is a matter of study. It is interesting that people can will objects to move that are not connected to them. This ought to raise serious questions, not about telekinesis, which we assume does not occur, but about the relationship between our thought/will and our own bodies. If we can delude ourselves that distant objects might move because we will them to move then we could hardly fail to delude ourselves where our own body's movement is concerned. Interestingly, we often describe our body movements as unconscious i.e. not directed by thought. Clearly people can deliberate and then act on those deliberations but perceiving the thought does not cause the action. As a further illustration we observe that one may deliberate and act without ever perceiving clearly articulated thought. Telekinesis is not possible because although thoughts and objects are both perceived only objects exist. Similarly, although perceivers may have empathy and imagine what it is like to be another perceiver, there is no such thing as telepathy because thoughts do not exist and cannot, therefore, transfer from one object to another. This is unaccountable in the mind-body viewpoint.
8. Just as for thinking and moving one's arm, discussed above, one may also exercise one's will and choose to think something (to perceive imaginary language). In this case the perception of the will (probably a mixture of thought and a feeling of determination) and the perception of subsequent thoughts are related, but the relationship is not directly causal. We do not need thought to initiate thought and, amusingly, thought can't be used to reliably stop thought either as this instruction "Stop thinking NOW" illustrates.
9. The traditional concept of free will is that of the self (self as mind rather than object) as an initiator of cause (hence its relationship to the notions of ultimate personal responsibility

and ultimate justice). The scientific study of objects, however, has led to the replacement of the notion of initiated cause with the notion of a chain of causes, a notion that has been extended from inanimate behaviour to animate behaviour. Consequently, just as the concept of God has been made obsolete in the description of physical cause so too has the concept of a self that initiates cause. The traditional notion of free will has no merit in explaining animate behaviour. On the contrary, free will is the notion that some behaviour is beyond explanation. This is problematic not just in the consideration of cause but also in the consideration of morality - a self that initiates cause, to the extent that it is unresponsive to causes, is arbitrary and capricious. This is an unacceptable basis for morality: a self with free will cannot be both moral and arbitrary. It could be a moral agent to the extent that it can be influenced by communication but this would require it to surrender itself to *cause* that arises from communication. The concept of free-will does not adequately found the concept of morality and we may propose, rather, that morality, the notion of what one ought to do, arises from the ability of a perceiver to act voluntarily and to be influenced in that action by communication. These behaviours may occur through mechanisms i.e. they may be comprehended by the concept of cause. This determinism of communicative and voluntary behaviours does not diminish a perceiver as a moral agent because the concept that an outcome is pre-determined (causal) is just one of many concepts that may engage the mechanisms of communication and choice. The concept of determinism does not of itself recommend any course of action and it does not and cannot disengage the mechanisms of communication and choice through which it itself operates. Determinism, therefore, has no moral relevance.

V. Conclusion

1. This essay has dealt with a number of the great problems in philosophy and touched on others. Its perspective is that of an individual struggling to comprehend personal experience. This is fitting for these great problems are about ourselves, they are about our understanding of our own experience. Our cultural heritage in these matters is diverse, deeply specialised, confused and contradictory and it is inevitable that any comprehension will put a great deal of it aside.
2. There are perhaps two notably significant points of comprehension. One is the realisation that experience is what we perceive, a realisation that unifies thought/language with objects ie. we perceive them. Adopting this as the basis of one's considerations enables one to put aside abstractions and idealisations related to meaning, thought and truth. The other is the recognition that one cannot become infallible (not even at the insistence of books or of others). The resulting viewpoint is realist and uncertainist. It says that we are objects that perceive and that we know about objects through that perception, which means that uncertainty cannot be eliminated. No mind or existent perceptions are implied by this viewpoint. We are able to confidently assert that minds do not exist. We are able to conclude that 'mind' is an obsolete way of comprehending experience.

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