

# Why Consciousness Cannot Have a Physical Cause

## and why that gives rise to a paradox

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## **Abstract / Introduction**

This document, shows, through rigorous argument, why existing ideas about consciousness ( or 'the mind' ) are generally incorrect. It shows why consciousness cannot be physical and, also, why it cannot really even have a physical cause. So far as I am aware, no other argument actually demonstrates these things.

The second part of the argument, which is also based on rigorous logic, shows a paradox concerning the relationship between consciousness and wider reality. This leads to a radical conclusion about philosophical problems in general.

Following this, I consider a range of possible objections to my argument and explain why they are unjustified.

Later, there is a summary of all the main points covered by the argument and in relation to the objections.

Definitions of 'physical' and 'consciousness' are given as part of the main text. ( Definitions of some other terms, such as 'true', 'real', 'exist' and 'thing' are given in Appendix 1. )

## **Existing Theories on Consciousness**

There is a range of theories on what consciousness is and how it relates to physical things, such as the brain. Here are some of the better known ones.

According to the theory of 'materialism', everything is physical. This idea seems to be currently widespread among scientists and philosophers. One kind of materialist view is that the mind and consciousness are really just physical features ( i.e. structures or processes ) of the brain or of the nervous system.

Another materialist view is that of some behaviourists, according to which, the existence of 'consciousness' simply means the existence of particular kinds of physical behaviour, such as some kinds of response to a stimulus.

Another idea is 'dualism', according to which, there are two different kinds of 'stuff', the physical and the mental. Many dualists now seem to believe that, even though consciousness is not itself physical, it is somehow caused by things which are physical, such as the brain.

According to another theory, a kind of 'idealism', there is only consciousness. This idea does not seem to be currently popular.

Yet another idea is 'functionalism', according to which, what can be understood about 'consciousness' is that it is a state which is caused by a physical stimulus and which causes a physical response.

For reasons which I will explain, my view is that there would be a logical contradiction if consciousness was either physical or caused by anything physical.

### **What I Mean by 'Physical'**

At this point, I should describe what I mean by 'physical'. For the purposes of this document, I think the following description of what I mean by it is adequate. 'Physical' refers to anything which can be described by the science of physics. This includes, for example, all matter and energy and also the dimensions of space, or of space-time, and all the things that consist of matter, energy, and space or space-time. ( Any such things as anti-matter, dark matter and dark energy would also be included in this definition of 'physical'. ) Therefore, such things as stones, planets, empty space, people's bodies and brains, and such as the processes that all these things undergo, and the energy that powers those processes, are all 'physical' according to the definition of 'physical' that I am using.

I will use the term 'physical thing' to mean anything that is physical according to my

definition of 'physical', including, for example, not just objects but also processes and empty spaces. ( For further clarification of my definitions of 'thing' and 'nothing', see appendix 1. )

### **What I Mean by 'Consciousness'**

What I mean by 'consciousness' is something that consists of experiences, and consists of nothing else. By 'an experience', I mean a subjective awareness (of any kind).

Perceptions, sensations, emotions and thoughts are all experiences.

An experience has a content. For example, the content of a sensation of pain is some pain that is subjectively felt or experienced. The content of a perception of a view of a tree is the view that is subjectively experienced.

A significant point is this. What I mean by 'an experience', consists of nothing other than the content of that experience. I am using the term 'an experience' to mean something that is subjectively experienced, and this means that 'an experience' will consist only of the content of an experience.

That is how I am using the term 'an experience' in this document. Others may use the term to mean something else. (Whichever terms are used does not alter the truth of what I mean when I use the words. See objection 7.) If the words 'consciousness' and 'experience' are defined in this way (i.e. as consisting of the content of experience /experiences), then all the following seems to be the case.

### **Why consciousness is not physical**

This section explains the first main point in my argument.

The content of an experience does not consist of the structures or processes of a brain (unless that is what is being perceived within the experience).

The distinction between conscious experience and the physical brain may need further

clarification. The point I now intend to show is that a complete description of what any particular physical thing is, on the one hand, and a complete description of what an experience is, on the other, are different.

The complete truth, on the subject of what any physical thing is, is vast. This applies to any physical thing, whatever its size. (For the purposes of this exercise I will use the term 'physical thing' to mean anything that is physical according to my earlier definition of 'physical', including, for example, not just material objects but also processes and even empty spaces. Like other physical things, empty spaces have many properties, such as the properties concerning their location. )

A complete description of what any particular physical thing is, which covered the complete truth on the subject of what that thing is, would include reference to all of that thing's properties. So, to start with, this complete truth includes all the details regarding any size, structure, mass ( and / or weight ), chemical composition and electrical charges that the thing has. ( In the case of a completely empty space, this truth would include the fact that it had no mass, chemical composition or structure, for example.)

This truth also covers the thing's location in relation to other physical things. For example, supposing a particular physical thing, called z, is in location x with respect to object y. That would mean that, regarding the question 'is z the thing which (along with all its other properties) is at that location?' a correct answer would be 'yes'. Therefore, the location of z with respect to y, forms part of the complete truth on the subject of what z is.

On the same principle, a complete description of z (i.e. of what z is) would also include reference to everything else in the physical universe, since it would have to include the truth about the location of z with respect to all physical things. The same principle applies to a complete description of anything else that is physical.

Even the physical things studied by quantum physics ( or 'quantum mechanics' ) seem to have properties which concern their location in relation to all other things in the universe, even if they don't always have a precise location. Therefore, the complete truth about these things would also include reference to all the other components of the universe. ( This point on quantum physics is explained in more detail under objection 1. )

The truth about z ( from the earlier example ) would also include the complete truth about object y and thus about everything else in the physical universe.

The complete truth ( i.e. on what z is ) also covers all the things which are not true about z, which, of course, covers a larger amount of information than the rest of what is true about z.

The point I'm leading up to here is this. An experience is quite unlike anything physical. A complete description of anything physical would include reference to everything in the physical universe. However, the same does not apply to a complete description of an experience.

An experience only consists of its content. What is experienced within an experience (i.e. the content of that experience) is only whatever is experienced (i.e. whatever is subjectively perceived, felt or thought) within that experience. There would be a contradiction *if anything beyond what is experienced* in a particular experience, is included in what the content of that experience is.

Therefore a complete description of what the content is, which covers the complete truth on the subject of what the content is, would only describe what is experienced (in the experience).

Now, it is quite possible that the content of any particular experience would not include an experience of every detail of the physical universe. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that the content of any experience would include that. Let's use the label 'E1' to mean an experience of every detail of the physical universe. No experience, of which I know, includes E1. If an experience (let's call it E2) doesn't include E1, then a complete description of what E2 is (i.e. of what its content is) would not include a reference to everything in the physical universe.

On the other hand, as earlier explained, a complete description of any particular physical thing (i.e. of what that physical thing is) would include reference to everything physical. If the complete description of an experience would not include such a reference, *then the*

*experience cannot be physical.*

The difference between what is physical and what is experience can perhaps be reinforced by pointing out that, if there is this difference between a complete description of the one and of the other, then there is a corresponding difference in their properties. So, for example, given what is covered by its complete description, an experience can only have the properties of whatever is experienced within it. On the other hand, the properties of anything physical include some which concern its location relative to everything else that is physical.

Following the argument above, I can say that, unless there is an inconsistency, no experience, of which I know, can be anything physical, such as a physical aspect of the brain.

### **Why Consciousness Must Exist**

It would surely be a mistake for any individual to think that their own consciousness, and the experiences within it, did not (at least in some way) exist. (This applies to their own consciousness in whatever constitutes the present time as far as that individual is concerned.) This must be the case, since one's own consciousness is what one experiences and is the only thing that one experiences.

Furthermore, an experience only consists of itself being experienced. So, by the fact that it is experienced, one knows that the experience (at least, in some way) exists.

Thought is a conscious experience. Therefore, it cannot be correctly *thought* that conscious experience does not exist ( or even that it might not exist ). No consciousness can correctly think that that consciousness does not (at least, in some way) exist. By comparison, any objective realm outside this consciousness is merely hypothetical.

### **A Consciousness Has Only One Experience at a Time**

All the things that are experienced at one time, in a consciousness, are not experienced separately from each other. They are experienced together. For example, if one is

currently experiencing a sensation of pain and a view of a tree, the view is not experienced without feeling the pain. All the things that are currently experienced in the consciousness are experienced together in one experience. ( This point has relevance, later in the argument, on the subject of how an experience relates to other things and also regarding 'objection 8'. )

For the purposes of the following argument, I will use the term 'an experience' to mean the totality of all the things that are experienced at the same moment in one consciousness. This means that at any one moment, a particular consciousness and a particular experience are the same.

### **Why There is Only One Reality**

Having established that conscious experience (in some way) exists, but that it isn't physical, one could ask how it fits into the rest of reality. For example, could there be an overall, or ultimate, reality, within which both subjective consciousnesses and an objective physical realm are contained, and within which they all exist? I will answer that question in stages. Firstly, in this section, I will show that logically there must be only one reality.

( At this point, I will just insert concise versions of my definitions of 'reality' and 'true', which are as follows. The meaning of 'reality' is such that, if a statement is true, it describes all, or part, of 'reality'. For example, if 'the world is round' is a true statement, it describes a real occurrence of the world being round. 'Reality' means that which is real, or, in other words, that which 'exists'. The meaning of 'true' is such that, if x is y, then the statement 'x is y' is true. This applies whatever 'x' and 'y' mean. For example, 'x is y' could mean 'the world is round'. See Appendix 1 for fuller definitions of 'real' and 'true'. )

To continue with my argument. Regardless of the extent to which reality is physical or subjective or anything else, the following argument shows why it is contradictory to think that there is more than one reality.

Firstly, if there is one reality which is the only thing that exists, I call that an 'exclusive reality'. An exclusive reality would be described by an 'exclusive' overall truth. If there is an exclusive reality, then something either exists as all, or part, of that exclusive reality or it doesn't exist at all.

Now, if there is no exclusive truth, one cannot correctly speak of '*the* truth'. Therefore, one cannot correctly say 'the truth is that there is no exclusive truth'.

It may be thought that there are a number of truths and realities. Suppose A and B are two of the realities that exist. If A exists and B exists, it is true that they both exist. So there is an overall truth that both A and B exist. As explained, my definitions are such that 'reality' means that which exists and a 'true' statement is a correct description of all, or part, of reality. So if there is an overall truth it describes an overall reality. In this case, there would be an overall reality in which both A and B exist and, therefore, in which they co-exist.

If, on the other hand, A exists without co-existing with anything else, such as B, then A is the exclusive reality.

Either way, this means that there is a single overall truth and a single overall reality ( i.e. an exclusive reality ), although it may include many different things.

### **Why an Experience Only Exists Within Itself**

Having seen that there can only be one overall reality, I will now examine the question of whether a conscious experience can co-exist, along with other things, in a single overall reality that contains both the experience and the other things.

The extremely surprising answer is that it can't exist in such a reality. This can be explained as follows.

An experience does not consist of anything other than its own content being experienced, and that only happens within the experience.

The only existence the experience has is within that experience (i.e. **as** that experience). The only existence it has is subjective. (Note that by using the word 'subjective', I am not implying the existence of a 'subject' outside the experience itself.) An experience only exists within (or for, or to) the consciousness, which, at that moment, consists of that

experience.

Another way of explaining this is to say that an experience only exists 'from the viewpoint' of the consciousness which, at that moment, consists of that experience.

So the actual experience only exists subjectively.

Other than subjectively, does the experience exist? Unless the answer is 'no', how can it only exist subjectively?

So, other than subjectively, it doesn't even exist. This has extreme consequences. If something doesn't even exist other than subjectively to itself, it doesn't form part of a common reality with anything else.

As explained in the previous section, if there is a single, overall reality, then there is a single, overall truth which describes everything in that reality. Things that exist in a common reality form part of the complete truth about each other. If X and Y are parts of the same reality, then part of the truth about X is that it is in the same reality as Y. However, if Y forms part of the truth about X, then this would be inconsistent with a fact that Y does not even **exist** other than subjectively to itself. Therefore, something that only exists subjectively, to itself, cannot form part of a common reality with anything else.

One of the extreme consequences of this is that something that only exists to itself (such as an experience) can form no part of a reality larger than itself. It cannot even exist in the same reality as anything else.

Another consequence of this is that an experience cannot be explained in terms of an objective, physical realm. It was earlier shown that an experience is not itself physical. It has now been shown that it can't be part of the same reality as anything else, which means it can't even be part of the same reality as anything physical and therefore can't be caused by anything physical or explained in terms of it.

As earlier described, a consciousness only has, or consists of, one experience at a time. Therefore, if an experience doesn't form part of the same reality as anything else, neither

does a consciousness.

### **Why One Experience Should be the Only Thing That Exists**

Based on its previous stages, my argument now becomes more extreme ( although, as at every stage of my argument, it cannot be rejected without philosophical error ). I will show a paradox. First I will give reasons why a particular thing should logically be true (although it is extreme). Afterwards, I will give reasons why that same thing cannot be true.

The first stage is as follows.

The following facts have been demonstrated.

- 1) There is a single, exclusive reality, and nothing else exists.
- 2) Consciousness must exist in some way.
- 3) No consciousness can exist in the same reality as anything else.

From these three facts, it should logically follow that a single consciousness must be the only thing that exists in any way. In fact, since, at any one time, a consciousness consists of just one experience, it should follow that, at any one time, one experience must be the only thing that exists.

That will most likely seem to be an absurd and extreme assertion, but how can the argument that leads to that point possibly be wrong?

### **Why One Experience Cannot be the Only Thing That Exists**

Although what is stated in the previous section is based on logic, it may still seem extremely difficult to believe. Having shown ( above ) why there is a logical contradiction *unless* it is true, I will now show why there is also a logical contradiction *if* it is true ( thus arriving at the paradox ).

If there was a truth that a single consciousness was all that existed, then that would be a truth which would describe a reality that existed. However, in order to exist, that reality would have to be experienced within the consciousness. This is because, if the consciousness was the only thing that existed, then nothing except what was experienced within the consciousness would exist.

Furthermore, in order for it to be true that one consciousness was all that existed, a large amount ( at least ) of what has so far been stated in this argument would also need to be true. ( Any alternative to that, would not be consistent. See Appendix 2 for more information on how much would need to be true. ) Therefore, at all times the consciousness would have to be thinking (and believing) all the ideas that constitute all the parts of my argument that would need to be true. ( I will refer, below, to these parts of my argument as the 'relevant parts of my argument'. )

However, it is quite possible for a consciousness not to be thinking of that at every moment!

It is also possible, for example, to doubt that one experience is everything that exists. If even the tiniest such doubt was experienced, this would make it impossible for it to be reality that one experience is the only thing that exists. (This is because what would then be experienced would not be that one consciousness is everything.)

I invite you, the reader, to ask yourself whether it is *definitely* true that a) you are currently thinking all the relevant parts of my argument (referred to above) and that b) nothing exists apart from your consciousness. In considering how to respond to this question, unless you are prepared to make a judgement which is consistent with the answer 'yes, it is definitely true, without the smallest doubt', then that would be inconsistent with it being true. Are you prepared to make that judgement?

I will assume that you are not.

This seems to show an inconsistency, or contradiction, within the idea that one experience is all that exists.

## The 'End-Point'

The argument in the previous section ('Why One Experience Cannot be the Only Thing That Exists') shows why it cannot be true ( without inconsistency ) that a single experience is the whole of reality. However, the argument that precedes the previous section shows that there is an inconsistency *unless* a single experience is the whole of reality. It appears that if either argument was incorrect, that would constitute an inconsistency, or contradiction. Therefore, contradiction is unavoidable. It would be contradictory for either the whole of reality to consist of just one experience or for it not to consist of just one experience.

This leaves no possible truth that isn't contradictory. This means ***it is contradictory (and therefore not possible) for anything to be true.*** This seems extreme, but, how can the argument which leads to this point be incorrect?

If we pay close attention to the following group of questions, they can give guidance on the meaning of the point the overall argument has reached and how to avoid misunderstanding it.

- Given the arguments above, can anything be true?
- Unless something is true, can one think anything which is correct?
- Taking account of the previous questions, ***can one think anything which is correct?***
- For example, ***can one correctly think that the answer to the previous question is 'No, one cannot think anything which is correct'?***
- Can one state anything which is correct, rather than ask questions?
- Can one correctly think, or state, that nothing is true or that no idea is correct?

- ***Can one think correctly on what the meaning of this conclusion is?***

I generally refer to the point, which the overall argument has now reached, as an 'end-point', rather than a conclusion, because the word 'conclusion' might imply something that can be said or mentally grasped. Regarding the above questions, I will later refer to them as 'the guiding questions'. I recommend careful consideration of the 'guiding questions' as a way to prevent misunderstanding of the end-point's meaning. Misunderstanding does not seem to be difficult. To go against what any of those questions point to, is to misinterpret the end-point's meaning.

Later on, under 'Experiencing the Meaning of the End-Point', I discuss further whether the meaning of this end-point can be experienced and whether it is related to Zen, for example.

### **An Explanation of my General Approach on Contradictions, Statements and Questions and of What is Necessary for my 'Conclusion' to be Defended**

Having reached this point in my argument, it now seems appropriate to explain some general points.

In this document, I am not trying to reach a conclusion that can be stated. My aim is to reach the 'end-point' by first showing the contradiction in any idea.

In the following text, I deal with a series of objections to my overall argument. When responding to an objection, I will tend to argue that the objection is wrong or contradictory. However, since my overall argument shows that any idea or statement is contradictory, I cannot strictly make correct statements, so I cannot strictly be correct in stating that the objections are wrong or contradictory. Strictly, it would be better to deal with the objection by asking an unanswerable question, such as 'how can the objection possibly avoid being contradictory?'

For example, supposing I am dealing with an objection that consists of an idea that can be referred to as 'C'. My response to C shows the contradiction within C, and yet, strictly, I cannot state that C is contradictory. Strictly, it would be best to deal with the objection by

simply asking 'given the arguments, how can C possibly avoid being contradictory?'

However, if I just ask an unanswered question, the reader may miss the point of it. So, for the sake of communication, I will tend to respond to the objection by stating that C has been shown to be contradictory. But the reader should remember that such a statement about C is just a part of the overall argument which ultimately arrives at a point where any idea or statement has been contradicted.

Sometimes I will appear to be arguing for one idea ( a ) against its alternative ( b ), even if, elsewhere, I show ( a ) to be contradictory. In such a case, my aim is to show that there is a contradiction unless ( a ) is correct. In other words, I'm aiming to show that ( b ) is also contradictory, so that both ( a ) and ( b ) ( and all other options ) have been shown to be contradictory.

Next I will discuss the issue of the justification of my conclusion.

For the same reason that I will use statements, rather than questions, in responding to objections, I will use statements in the following paragraph.

In the light of the overall argument of this document, one cannot be philosophically justified in thinking, concerning anything, that that thing is true. That means that, in the light of my argument, one cannot think, concerning any idea, that it could be correct, without making a mistake in the process of one's philosophical thinking. (See my response to 'objection2', which follows later, for a fuller explanation of why this is. Also, taking account of my response to 'objection 3', one cannot, without making a mistake, even think, concerning any particular idea, that it *might* be correct.) How can one justifiably think that any answer to the 'guiding questions' is true? I don't see how one can. On the issue of whether one can justifiably think that anything is true, no option can be left except the 'end-point'. One cannot fail to arrive at the 'end-point', without making a philosophical mistake.

So long as it appears to be philosophically a mistake to think that anything is (or could be) the case, that provides an adequate basis for defending the 'end-point'.

(Without the argument of this document, or one that achieved the same objective, I think it would be philosophically justified to think that something is true. Also, if my argument

allowed the possibility that something is true, then I think it would be justifiable to think something is true, because, in those circumstances, the alternative would appear contradictory. It would appear that the alternative to 'something is true' is, in terms of my definitions, that nothing is true, which would be a contradiction because it would mean that it is true that nothing is true.)

### **Eleven Objections to my Argument and How They can be Overcome**

I will now consider a range of possible objections and questions concerning my argument, and show ( in the 'response' to each ) how it seems to me that any objection to my argument is unjustified.

**Objection 1.** Perhaps some items studied in Quantum Physics do not have locations in relation to other things.

As part of my argument as to why physical things are different to consciousness, I said that even the physical things studied by quantum physics ( or 'quantum mechanics' ) seem to have properties which concern their location in relation to all other things in the universe ( although they don't always have a precise location ). It could be objected that this may not be true.

#### **Response**

I am not a physicist, but the following appears to be consistent with generally available knowledge on 'quantum physics' ( otherwise known as 'quantum mechanics' ). Within quantum mechanics, there appear to be various competing 'interpretations' of its findings. I believe the following takes account of these different interpretations.

As is widely known, some of the properties of the things that are studied in quantum physics are unlike the physical properties which are described in other branches of physics. For example, depending on the way in which some sub-atomic items are observed, they can appear to be either particles at particular locations or to be electromagnetic waves. Also, the locations of the observed particles do not seem to be precise (

or precisely determined, depending on the 'interpretation' ) until an observation of them is made, although the probability of them being observable in particular locations can be determined.

However, all the items, which quantum physics is dealing with, have properties concerning location. This is the case, even though, when those items are not being observed, they may not necessarily have a precise location ( as described by one interpretation ), or even if, when not observed, they don't have a definite existence ( as described by another interpretation ). There are a variety of ways in which it can be true that these items have properties concerning location, which I will describe below.

Firstly, some sub-atomic items which are observed do have locations.

Secondly, any sub-atomic item which exists, but which is not being observed, will be a feature of an approximate location, and that location will have a relationship to other locations and physical things. Also, in many cases, such a sub-atomic item will also be a feature of a particular larger item ( such as an atom or larger structure ) which has a location in relation to other things.

Thirdly, any sub-atomic item would form part of the same overall reality as all other physical things, and so the information about the other physical things would form part of the overall truth about that sub-atomic item. ( See the previous section 'Why there is only one reality'. )

Fourthly, any sub-atomic item which exists, would be regarded by scientists ( rightly or wrongly ) as having the potential to take particular forms, in particular locations, with particular probabilities, if it is observed. If it did have that potential, this would form part of the truth about that sub-atomic item.

Fifthly, any particular example of a sub-atomic item, would have the property of being one of a particular kind of item - along with all the other examples of that type, which are distributed in the universe - and so all the information about that distribution ( or even lack of it ) would form part of the complete truth about that particular example.

Sixth, some sub-atomic items may have the property of *not* having a precise location in relation to everything else in the universe, in which case, information about the rest of the universe still forms part of that truth about these items.

Seventh, in accordance with an alternative interpretation, such sub-atomic items, when not being observed, may not exist ( leaving only items which do have locations ).

In conclusion, anything discussed within physics, if it exists, does seem to have some properties concerning its location ( or even its lack of location ) in relation to all other things in the universe. Therefore, the complete truth about these things would also include reference to all the other components of the universe ( and therefore these physical things are different to conscious experiences ).

**Objection 2.** There must be something wrong with the argument. We know some things exist, such as the world we can see and hear, or such as our conscious experiences.

**Response.**

One may believe that what one sees and hears is a real physical world, or one may believe that one can be certain that one's conscious experiences exist, or one may believe in something else.

We may generally take it for granted that there is a real physical world, but how can one know for certain that the 'information from our senses' about such a world is not some kind of delusion (such as some kind of hallucination, dream or virtual reality)? I do not see how one can know this for certain. On the other hand, for the reasons given under 'Why Consciousness Must Exist', I consider that it would be contradictory to think that one's own consciousness did not exist.

However, none of this alters the fact that, in the light of my argument (above) , which leads to the 'end-point', and of my arguments in response to the objections, it appears that *any* idea about what exists is contradictory. After all, at the end of my argument, there are no possible truths which wouldn't be contradictory. This means that, for example, my argument shows a contradiction in the idea that there is a physical world. Regarding

consciousness, on the one hand it is contradictory to think that one's consciousness does not exist, but, on the other hand, since my argument does not leave any possible truths, it appears that there is also a contradiction in the idea that consciousness exists.

In the light of my argument, how can any concept of the existence of anything fail to have a contradictory meaning? Can we see how an assertion such as 'the world exists' can fail to have the same meaning as a contradiction? I do not see how it can.

The ideas that there is something physical, or that there is consciousness, are ideas. Whatever it is that is going on, *can we justify really believing in such ideas, given that my argument seems to show that it would be contradictory for either of those ideas to be correct?* I do not see how we can. On the same principle, belief in any other idea does not seem to be justified.

For this reason, it seems to me that, in the light of the arguments in this document, one cannot be philosophically justified in really thinking that any particular idea is correct and one cannot think that any idea is correct without making a mistake in the process of one's philosophical thinking.

Thinking that something must be true would seem to be justified unless there were an argument, such as mine, which seemed to show that there is no possibility of anything being true without contradiction. My argument makes it unjustifiable to think that something must be true.

I would ask you, the reader, these questions. After careful consideration of how my argument seems to show that there is no possibility of anything being true without contradiction, would you actually still believe, concerning any particular idea about a physical world, or about consciousness, that it *is* true? Would you think that you would still be justified in believing such a thing and that you could believe in it without making a philosophical error? Would you make a judgement that such a thing is true? Would you be philosophically justified in making such a decision? I will leave the reader to consider these questions.

**Objection 3.** Can't one even think that something *might* be true, without making a philosophical mistake? The previous objection deals with whether it's a mistake to think that a particular thing *is* true, but what about the issue of whether, without making a philosophical mistake, one can think that a particular thing *might* be true? For example, could one think 'X might be Y'? ('X' and 'Y', in this case, could have any meaning. For example 'X might be Y' could mean 'a physical world might be real'.)

### **Response**

My argument shows how it is contradictory for anything to be true. Therefore, my argument can show that it is contradictory for it to be **true** either that any particular idea means anything or that that particular idea is anything. This means, for example, that, with respect to the idea which is expressed by the words 'a physical world might be real', it is contradictory for that idea to mean something. Taking account of this, one cannot be philosophically justified in making a judgement that a physical world might be real, if, in doing so, one is making a decision in favour of any idea (such as the idea that a physical world might be real).

Therefore, it seems that one cannot think that there is any possibility of any particular thing being true, without making a philosophical error.

As I said, under '*An explanation of ....what is necessary for my conclusion to be defended*', so long as it appears to be philosophically a mistake to think that something is (or could be) true, the 'end-point' can be defended.

**Objection 4.** It surely can't be right that *everything* is contradictory, or that *nothing* is true. There must be a mistake somewhere.

### **Response**

This deals, to some extent, with the nature of the 'end-point'. There is a problem in making statements about the 'end-point'. It would be strictly more valid to respond to the

objection with the use of unanswerable questions. After all, how can one think correctly on what the meaning of the 'end-point' is?

However, the purpose of unanswered questions may not be understood. So, for the sake of communication, my response will partly consist of statements. However, we should remember this question; 'how can I make correct statements?'

Here are several points.

Firstly, the objection assumes that the 'end-point' means either that nothing is true or that everything is contradictory. But, in the light of my argument, how can any idea (including the ideas 'nothing is true' or 'everything is contradictory') be correct, or constitute my conclusion? I do not see how it can.

Secondly, although, on the one hand, I could support the objection by asking 'Isn't there a contradiction unless something is true?', on the other hand, in the light of my argument, how (without contradiction) can something be true, either? I do not see how it can.

Thirdly, this kind of objection seems to be confusing the 'end-point' with something that can be understood. It seems to require having an idea of what the 'end-point' is and what it means. In this case, the idea is that the 'end-point' means that nothing is true, or that it does not allow anything to be true or that it means that everything is contradictory. But, in the light of my argument, how can one correctly think what the 'end-point' means, or what its nature is? I do not see how one can.

This objection is making a statement. The statement is 'It surely can't be right, that everything is contradictory etc...'. To believe in this objection is to think that that statement is true. But, in the light of the argument of this document, how could you be justified in thinking anything is true? I do not see how you could be. What would you believe is true, having carefully considered it in the light of the argument of this document?

To look further at the issue of whether it's possible to experience the nature of the end-point, see the later section 'Experiencing the meaning of the end-point'.

**Objection 5.** In my argument, I say that a conscious experience cannot be physical because a complete description of an experience is limited to a description of the experience's subjective content (whereas a complete description of a physical thing includes reference to many other things). However, if an experience is not physical, then a complete description of that experience (i.e. of what the experience is) would include the fact that it is not physical. Therefore the complete description of the experience would not be limited to a description of what is subjectively experienced in the experience.

**Response.**

My overall argument aims to arrive at a point where there are no possible things which can be stated without philosophical error. It does this by showing that there is a paradox on the subject of whether one experience is the whole of reality.

It may be that there is also a paradox on the subject of whether a complete description of an experience would be limited to a description of its subjective content or whether it would also include the fact that the experience is not physical. (I will call this possible paradox 'P'.) But, whether or not that is the case, there is an inconsistency unless a complete description of the content of any experience (i.e. of what that content is) is limited to a description of what is subjectively experienced. (Therefore, according to my definition of 'an experience', there is an inconsistency unless a complete description of an experience is covered by that description of its content.)

There is an inconsistency unless all the parts of my argument, that are necessary to reach the argument's 'end-point', are correct.

If there is a paradox P, I believe this would provide an alternative route to the same 'end-point' that my overall argument arrives at. However, a rigorous demonstration of that particular paradox is likely to require more work.

**Objection 6** Perhaps my argument is flawed because logic itself is flawed.

## **Response.**

Logic just means working out what is consistent and not contradictory. To disagree with logic (if it is really logic) is to choose contradiction. If one is taking a contradictory position, for example by disagreeing with logic, one is not correctly asserting any idea. Therefore, one can't correctly assert that, because logic is flawed, my argument in this document is flawed. The idea that logic (if it is really logic) is flawed is contradictory.

If logic is possible, then truth must be logical. But is logic possible and is anything really logical?

I see my argument as an examination of whether anything can ultimately be logical. I look at all possible options to see if any of them could be logical, and to see if any could avoid contradiction. In the light of my argument, I would ask how anything can ultimately be logical.

It is only by examination of whether anything can possibly be logical and whether anything can avoid contradiction, that the 'end-point' can be philosophically justified. If something could avoid being contradictory, the 'end-point' would not be justified, and then the truth would be logical.

**Objection 7.** Not Everyone Would Accept my Meanings of Words, such as My Meanings of the Words 'Consciousness', 'Experience', 'Physical' and 'Truth', etc.

## **Response**

I have defined my meanings of 'physical' and 'consciousness', etc. within the main text. I have given brief definitions of my meanings of the words 'truth' and 'reality' in the section 'Why There is Only One Reality'. I've also given more detailed definitions of 'truth' and 'reality', and also of the words 'something' and 'nothing', in Appendix 1.

If other people appear to use different words to mean what I mean by any of those words ('truth', 'consciousness', etc. ), then my argument could be translated into the words that

they would use, so they could understand what I mean.

If my argument is logical, it will be logical in whatever words it is expressed, as long as it has the same meaning as it has for me.

I think that to not accept any argument which meant the same as mine, would involve taking a contradictory position.

**Objection 8.** Part of my argument is that an experience can only exist within itself. It might be objected that perhaps one experience could exist within another larger experience.

**Response.**

As previously noted, everything within an experience is experienced together.

Therefore, a 'larger' experience, P, would not be able to experience a 'smaller' one, Q, as a bit of itself. This is because, Q does not include experience of the other bits of P, whereas any component of P includes experience of all the other components of it. In order to be Q, Q would have to exclude experience of the other bits of P, otherwise it ( Q ) would be a different experience. If it was part of P, it couldn't exclude these other parts.

Because everything in an experience is experienced together, an experience does not have bits that consist of some elements without the others. Therefore there cannot be any components that are the same as those of a different experience. Logically, therefore, any experience is entirely different from any other.

What the smaller one consists of only exists within itself.

Therefore, any particular experience can only exist to itself.

**Objection 9.** Part of my argument is that it would be contradictory for there to be more than one reality.

However, what about the idea that there are some things that neither absolutely exist nor absolutely don't exist? Does this undermine the idea of a single reality?

To help understand this, let's first consider whether the past and the future exist. One possibility is that what appears to us to be 'the present time' is actually only part of the present and that, actually, the so-called 'past' and the so-called 'future' are also parts of the present, although they appear to us to be past and future. In that case, the so-called 'past', 'present' and 'future' would all actually exist and exist now. However, regarding a past that is really past and which no longer exists, it would seem contradictory to say that it exists. Likewise, concerning a future which really has not yet occurred; I would not say it exists, because, at the present time, it doesn't.

However, what about things that neither absolutely exist now, nor absolutely don't exist now? If I understand it correctly, Einstein's idea of space-time involves this idea. His idea seems to be that it cannot be said, in absolute terms, that an event in one location, or frame of reference, is either at the same time, or at a different time, to an event in a different location, or frame of reference.

### **Response.**

The following response seems to show that any objection to my argument would be contradictory if it (the objection) is based on the idea that some things do not either *a*) absolutely exist or *b*) absolutely not exist. If Einstein's theory involves this idea (that some things do not either absolutely exist or absolutely not exist), then my response also seems to show a contradiction in his theory. I apologise if this response is not particularly easy to read, or if it appears unnecessarily long.

A relevant issue, here, is whether Einstein means that there **are** (i.e. are now) different frames of reference, such that, there is one frame, within which there is one set of things,

and there is also, for example, another frame, within which there is a different set of things.

If this is what he means, then this still appears to be an idea of a single, overall reality, within which there are these different frames of reference with their different contents. It is an idea of a single reality, within which it is completely true now that there are all the frames of reference, each with their own contents. If this is what Einstein means then this provides no basis for objecting to my overall argument.

But perhaps Einstein's view is that we can't correctly say either that other frames of reference exist now or that they don't. Therefore, his attitude could be that, with regard to the other frames, we can't correctly say either that they absolutely exist or that they absolutely don't exist. (For the reader's sake, rather than saying 'neither absolutely exist, nor absolutely don't exist', for example, I will shorten it to 'do not absolutely exist'.)

My overall argument is about what exists, *using my definition of 'exist'*. So, if Einstein's idea means that, in terms of my definition of 'exist', some things do not absolutely exist, then my argument could perhaps be affected by whether his idea is correct. However, unless his idea means that, in terms of my definition of 'exist', some things do not absolutely exist, it isn't relevant to whether my argument is right.

The following argument seems to show that any idea that some things do not absolutely exist (using my definition of 'exist'), is contradictory.

If some things do not absolutely exist, then, in terms of my definition of 'true', the statement 'some things do not absolutely exist' is true. Also, in terms of my definitions, a true statement describes something that exists. This gives us a clue as to what could be wrong with a supposedly true statement that describes what does not absolutely exist rather than what exists. But there is still the question of whether there could *exist* an incidence of something not absolutely existing. If so, then there could be a genuinely true statement that described such an incidence. The following argument shows why there cannot be such an incidence. (I apologise again if this is not easy to read. The wording is to overcome particular possible counter-arguments.)

Any true statement is a description, or at least part of a description, of a real incidence ( or

occurrence ). This applies to the statement 'x does not do activity y', if it is a true statement, and it applies whatever 'x' and 'y' mean. Any alternative would be contradictory. Therefore, if 'some things do not absolutely exist' is a true statement, then that statement also forms, at least part of, a description of a real incidence. ( Subsequently, I will omit the words 'at least part of', but they should be taken as read. )

Let's use the term 'an incidence A' to mean an incidence described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist'. If some things do not absolutely exist, this also appears to mean that there is a situation which is different to a situation in which there is not *absolutely* an incidence A. If there is not *absolutely* an incidence described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist' but some things do not absolutely exist, there appears to be an inconsistency. ( This is because 'some things do not absolutely exist' means exactly the same, in effect, as 'there is an incidence described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist'', whereas what could be described by the words 'there is an incidence A' is not the same as what could be described by the words 'there is not absolutely an incidence A'. ) So if some things do not absolutely exist, an incidence A absolutely exists.

On the other hand, if there is an incidence described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist', there is an incidence of some things not absolutely existing. Unless there is an incidence of some things not absolutely existing, can there be an incidence described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist'? It seems to me that it would be contradictory if there was one without the other. So it seems that, if there is an incidence A, then there is an incidence of some things not absolutely existing.

This should mean that incidence A consists, at least partly, of some things not absolutely existing. So, if there is incidence A, there is the existence of an incidence which consists, at least partly, of some things not absolutely existing. This would mean that there is something which exists and what it, at least partly, consists of is not absolutely existing.

There is a contradiction if incidence A exists but what A (even partly) consists of is not absolutely existing. You can't correctly say that something exists if part of it does not absolutely exist. This is because 'exists' has a different meaning to 'does not absolutely

exist'.

So, regarding the objection that, in terms of my definition of 'exist', some things do not either absolutely exist or absolutely not exist, the preceding paragraphs seem to show that the objection is contradictory. (As previously stated, it is only because it is based on the idea that some things do not absolutely exist *in terms of my definition of 'exist'*, that it could be an objection to my overall argument.)

It may be that the theory of space-time does not mean that some things do not absolutely exist (in terms of my definition). However, if it does mean that, then it appears to contain inconsistency. (With regard to any objection that empirical evidence supports the idea of space-time, I think my response to objection 2 deals with objections based on empiricism.)

The above seems to deal with objection 9.

From all the above, it appears that any idea that is inconsistent with the idea that there is a single, exclusive reality, is contradictory.

Of course, my overall argument eventually arrives at a point where it is contradictory for anything to be true. The point I'm making here is this; the ideas that there might be more than one reality, or that some things do not absolutely exist, are contradictory and can't be used to correctly argue that my overall argument is wrong.

**Objection 10** I have argued that any physical thing has a location (or properties concerning its location) relative to every other physical thing. Does this apply to a physical thing in a parallel universe?

### **Response**

According to some theories of physics, there are parallel universes. A physical thing in a parallel universe might not have a location relative to things in our universe. However, as

shown under 'Why there is only one reality', there would be a contradiction unless any

parallel universe formed part of the same overall reality as our universe. Therefore, the complete truth about any physical thing in a parallel universe would include the fact that that physical thing was part of the same reality as our universe, and therefore that it was part of the same reality as all the things in our universe ( and even part of the same reality as the particular locations which the things within our universe occupy ). Therefore, the complete truth about any such thing, which is in a parallel universe, would include reference to the location of all other physical things.

**Objection 11** Perhaps my argument is based on a failure to distinguish between 'necessary' and 'contingent' properties. There is an established tradition, in philosophy, of distinguishing these two types of properties. A 'necessary' property is one that a particular entity must have in order to be that entity, whereas a 'contingent' property is one which the entity can either have or not have, without this affecting whether or not it is that entity. For example, it would normally be thought that I could be in one location or another, without this affecting my identity, and so my location is a contingent property of mine.

Perhaps this distinction, between necessary and contingent, shows a flaw in my argument. I have argued that the truth on the subject of what any physical thing is ( i.e. the truth on the identity of any physical thing ) includes its location in relation to all other physical things. Some people might object by saying that an object's location is a contingent property and that it can still be the same object in different locations.

## **Response**

Firstly, what I have said, in my argument, about physical things is correct. This means the complete truth, on the subject of what any particular physical thing is, does include the information about its location in relation to all other physical things. To use the same example as I did before, suppose a physical thing, called z, is in location x with respect to object y. That would mean that, regarding the question 'is z the thing which (along with all its other properties) is at that location?' a correct answer would be 'yes, z is that thing'. If

that answer was not correct, there would be a contradiction. Therefore, the location of z

with respect to y, forms part of the complete truth on the subject of what z is.

An entity cannot currently fail to have any of the properties which it currently has and still manage to be itself. However obscure one of its properties is, unless the entity is the entity which has that property, along with all its other properties, then it cannot, without contradiction, be itself.

This raises the question of whether the same entity can, for example, exist at two different moments. If object z exists at moment 1, can it also exist at moment 2, if any of its properties (such as location) have changed? This could be seen as an issue of semantics. Z may be defined so that 'z' refers to an entity with some properties which are different at different moments.

However, it can be argued that if anything changes, then everything else does. Consider this example. Suppose, at moment 1, object z, and all its component atoms, are objects within a universe in which another atom 'a' is in location 'b'. At moment 2, 'a' is at a different location, 'c'. Arguably, this means that the identity of every component atom of z is different in moment 2 from the identity it has in moment 1. Why? Because, in moment 1, what each of those atoms is (i.e. its identity) is such that it is an atom within a universe in which 'a' is at 'b' not 'c'.

One of the consequences of this, is that it seems to mean that there can never be any entity which has some properties which are different at different times. (There are other consequences, which I won't go into here.) It also seems to mean that, in reality, no properties are contingent.

However, even if the reader is not willing to accept this radical (although apparently logical) line of argument, it should, nevertheless, hopefully, be clear that (as stated above) an entity, which currently has a particular set of properties, cannot currently fail to have any of them and still manage to currently be itself. Therefore, the whole truth, about what any physical thing is, does include its location in relation to all other physical things.

**Summary of Main Points,  
covering both my argument and the objections to it.**

According to my definitions, 'consciousness' consists of subjective experiences and 'subjective experiences' consist of their subjective content; i.e. what is subjectively felt, seen, thought, etc.

Regarding the whole truth about what a subjective experience is, this only concerns what the subjective content of that experience is, and therefore does not concern every detail of the physical universe. Regarding the whole truth about what any physical thing is, this covers all of its properties, including the details of particular location in relation to everything other thing in the physical universe. Therefore, subjective experiences and consciousness are different to physical things and so are not physical.

The next issue is whether consciousness and physical things co-exist in one overall reality. There can only be one overall reality. This is because, if any two things exist, it is true that they both exist, so there is an overall truth that they both exist, which ( by my definition ) means there is an overall reality in which they both exist.

Since thought is a conscious experience, it cannot be correctly thought that consciousness does not exist. Therefore, consciousness exists. However, a subjective experience only exists subjectively (i.e. **as** that experience). In other words, it only exists 'from the viewpoint' of the consciousness containing it ( i.e. the consciousness which currently consists of that experience ). Since it does not exist other than subjectively to itself, an experience cannot logically even form part of the same reality as anything else.

Since, a) subjective experience exists, b) there is only one reality and, c) a subjective experience cannot exist in the same reality as anything else, this should logically lead to the extreme conclusion that one subjective experience is the only thing that exists. However, there is also a logical argument against that extreme conclusion, which is as follows. If reality was such that one experience, or consciousness, was all that existed,

that fact would have to be constantly experienced within that consciousness ( otherwise it wouldn't be real ). However, such a 'fact' is not constantly experienced within consciousness.

Therefore, there is a logical contradiction a) unless one experience is the whole of reality and, also, b) if one experience is the whole of reality. This leads to the 'end-point', at which I ask the reader to ponder ( but not to answer ) the question; 'can one think anything which is correct?'

The overall text contains a far more thorough description of the argument and 'end-point'.

Regarding the subsequent 'objections' to my argument, these and the main points in my responses to them can be summarised as follows.

Objection 1 concerns whether items in quantum physics actually have locations. My answer shows that anything discussed within physics, if it exists, does seem to have some properties concerning location in relation to all other things in the universe. My answer, describes a number of different ways in which this would be the case, taking account of different 'interpretations' of quantum physics.

Objection 2 is that we know some things exist. In answer, I say as follows. The ideas that something exists ( such as something physical, or such as consciousness ) are ideas. My argument appears to show that any idea about what exists is contradictory, and so, when when my argument is taken into account, one cannot be philosophically justified in thinking that anything exists.

Objection 3, concerns whether one can say that something *might* be true without making a philosophical error. My argument shows that it is contradictory for anything to be true and, therefore, that it is contradictory for it to be true that any particular idea means anything. This applies to any idea that this or that particular thing might be true.

Objection 4 is that it surely can't be right that *everything* is contradictory, or that *nothing* is true. This objection is based on the mistaken assumption that the 'end-point' of my

argument is a graspable idea, such as the idea that everything is contradictory.

According to Objection 5, if a conscious experience is not physical, then that is a fact which should form part of a complete description of the experience. This would contradict my claim that such a description is limited to a description of the experience's subjective content. In my response, I say that there is an inconsistency unless a complete description of the content of an experience is limited to a description of that content. This assertion forms part of my overall argument, which ultimately shows that no idea can avoid being inconsistent. This is regardless of whether the inconsistency, which objection 5 points out, may indicate an alternative route to that overall goal.

Objection 6 suggests that perhaps my argument is flawed because logic itself is flawed. In my response, I explain that, if logic is possible, then truth must be logical. My argument is an examination of whether anything can escape logical contradiction.

Objection 7 says that not everyone would accept my definitions of words, such as 'consciousness', 'experience', 'physical', 'truth', etc. I respond that, if other people want to use different words to mean what I mean by any of those words, then my argument could be translated into the words that they would use, so they could understand what I mean. If my argument is logical, it will be logical in whatever words it is expressed, as long as it has the same meaning as it has for me.

Objection 8 suggests that perhaps some experiences could exist within other larger experiences, and, therefore, some experiences might not only exist 'from their own viewpoint'. In response, I explain that, since everything within an experience is experienced together, an experience has no actual components which can exclude some of the other components.

Objection 9 questions my claim that there is only one reality. It does this on the grounds that Einstein's idea of space-time may mean that some things cannot be said to absolutely exist ( or not exist ) at the present time. In my response I explain the following. My argument is about what exists and what is true, using my definitions of 'exist' and 'true'. To undermine my argument, it has to be shown, in terms of those definitions, that some things do not absolutely exist. However, I define a true statement as describing only something

that exists. Furthermore, it is contradictory for an incidence to exist, if that incidence consists ( even partly ) of something which does not absolutely exist.

Regarding my claim that any physical thing has a location in relation to the rest of the universe, objection 10 questions whether this applies to a physical thing in a parallel universe. I answer that the truth about anything in a parallel universe would include 1) the fact that it was part of the same overall reality as our universe and 2) the locations of all the contents of our universe. Therefore, the principle of my argument would still apply.

Objection 11 suggests that my argument is based on a failure to distinguish between 'necessary' and 'contingent' properties. In particular, I claim that the location of a physical thing is part of what it is ( i.e. of its identity ), when its location may be a contingent property. I respond that it is correct that the complete truth, on the subject of what any particular physical thing is, does include the information about its location. I illustrate this with an example. I say that an entity cannot currently fail to have any of the properties which it currently has and still manage to be itself. I then explore related issues, as part of which, I argue that no properties are contingent.

### **Experiencing the Meaning of the End-point**

It seems that, in searching for the truth and in the light of the preceding overall argument, you cannot fail to end up at my overall argument's conclusion, or 'end-point', without making a philosophical mistake.

But what is the meaning or nature of the end-point? I will now look at whether it is possible to experience its meaning and, if so, how.

I recommend that the 'guiding questions', set out in the section entitled 'The End-Point', are used as a criterion when trying to avoid misinterpretation of the end-point's nature.

However, in the light of the 'guiding questions', how can I, strictly speaking, make any statements on the issue of the end-point's meaning? Rather than saying what I say in the

following paragraphs, I could try to achieve much the same without making statements.

For example, instead of making a statement 'A is B', I could ask 'how could A not be B?'. On the other hand, if I made no statements and only asked questions in this section, the effect is likely to be rather tedious and unclear. I will make statements, but we should remember the question: 'how can I make correct statements?'. The following statements should perhaps be regarded as attempts to say something useful or to guide.

The preceding arguments seem to show that reason leads to the end-point. But, given the issue of whether one can think anything correctly, how can one intellectually understand the meaning of the end-point itself?

Experiencing the nature of the end-point seems to require a different kind of exercise to the one of trying to intellectually understand or mentally grasp things. I would certainly not claim to be expert on how to see the meaning (or claim to be good at seeing it) and I would not make the same kind of claims about the truth of my ideas on this subject as I would about the logical arguments that lead up to the end-point and which show the relationship of the end-point to reality. Others may be better than me at finding ways to experience the end-point's meaning. However, the following are the kind of thoughts I've had on how one would experience it, assuming that it is possible to do that and one was able to do it.

One approach to trying to see the meaning is to contemplate the question; 'Can one think anything correctly?'. You can't answer the question, so I don't mean you should think analytically about it. Rather, the intended experience is one that leaves behind intellectual thought.

In trying to experience the end-point's nature, it seems one needs to be detached from, or unattached to, ideas and one needs to avoid making assessments and mental 'comments'. (Or perhaps I should ask 'how could we think, assess or comment correctly?'.) Preconceptions seem to be an obstacle to seeing the end-point. How can we have any idea what it is?

It seems to be a subtle exercise, requiring a form of concentration, intending to see

something without knowing what it is and which seems to be generally not easy to see. If

the experience is possible, it seems to be something you pay attention to, rather than something you experience by thinking about it. (I generally try to do this while sitting facing a blank wall, which is also how Zen meditation is done.)

If the meaning of the end-point can be experienced, you may experience it, but you can't understand it. How can any attempt at understanding it be it?

To the extent that I have an impression of the meaning of the end-point, it is of something beautiful and of great value. Something towards which it is appropriate for me to have an attitude of reverence.

Now for some comments on the relationship of the end-point to Zen. Without knowing for certain that Zen is the same as an experience of the end-point, I would say that, based on descriptions of Zen (see 'References'), it has a range of characteristics which look, to me, likely to be consistent with an experience of the end-point. For example, one who is experiencing Zen is described as being 'empty of beliefs', as being not attached to beliefs, as making no judgements, as seeing without preconceptions, as having 'beginner's mind', as neither rejecting nor hanging on (to ideas, for example), as simply being without adding anything or taking anything away (which, to me, suggests avoidance of mental 'comments'), as having 'direct experience' and as experiencing reality. In 'Zen Flesh, Zen Bones' by Paul Reys, there is a story in which some students of Zen try to express it. Part of what one student says is that truth is beyond affirmation and negation. The student who is silent expresses it best.

If, in these respects, Zen is consistent with the end-point, this indicates that Zen is consistent with it. Given that my overall argument seems to show that reality cannot be anything that is different to the end-point, if the end-point is consistent with Zen, this would indicate that the experience of Zen is experience of reality. If that is the case, although it

does not necessarily mean that Zen Buddhism is right about everything, this provides guidance on the nature of the end-point.

This is not to say that there are not other ways of experiencing the meaning of the end-point.

### **Useful ideas and ultimate truth**

I'm not certain about this section. It's not based on the earlier logical arguments. However, it strikes me that it is likely to be useful.

It strikes me that people who accept my argument are likely to be confused about how they should think about ordinary beliefs (such as 'I live at such-and-such address' or 'the world is round'). The previous section talks about how to experience the end-point's meaning, but when we're not experiencing it, we may be confused about what the implications of the end-point are with regard to such ordinary beliefs.

Two of the 'guiding questions' that are relevant here are 1)'Can one think anything that is correct?' and 2)'Can one think correctly on what the end-point means?'. In the light of the first of those, how can we correctly think that any of these ordinary beliefs is right? On the other hand, in the light of the second, how can we correctly understand what the end-point means on the subject of whether any of these beliefs is correct?

It strikes me that certain ideas are likely to be useful for practical purposes, even though, in the light of the arguments in this document, I wouldn't treat such ideas as being ultimately true. Such ideas include some ideas about practical situations. For instance, at the time of writing, I would regard the idea that I'm sitting on a chair as being a useful idea for practical purposes.

In the light of my overall argument, I wouldn't regard that idea as really true, but neither would I consider that I can understand what is really true *with regard to whether that idea is true* (bearing in mind that I can't grasp the meaning of the end-point) and, in the

meantime, the idea that I'm sitting on a chair appears to be a useful idea for a practical purpose.

I could explain my point as follows.

I could have thoughts about

a) whether I'm sitting on a chair, and

b) what my argument means, and what its implications are, concerning the subject of whether I'm sitting on a chair.

If reality is what is perceived when the nature of the end-point is perceived, then how can anything that I could think about those two issues be correct? How can I, without making a philosophical mistake, believe in any idea of what is the case on those issues? (I don't see how I can.)

But, in the meantime, if I'm not perceiving the nature of the end-point, there are some ideas which can be useful.

Personally, I would also tend to regard ideas that are supported by science as being useful ideas for practical purposes ( but I wouldn't consider them to be absolutely true ).

## **Finally**

I will finish by asking the reader to consider whether, in the light of the arguments in this paper, if one is searching for the truth, one can fail to end up at my overall argument's conclusion, or 'end-point', without making a philosophical mistake.

## **Appendix 1; Definitions of 'true', 'real', 'thing' and 'nothing'.**

Here is an explanation of the meanings that I am using for the terms 'true', 'real', 'exist', 'something' and 'nothing'.

The meaning of 'true' is such that, if x is y, then the statement 'x is y' is true. Also, if x has attribute y, then the statement 'x has attribute y' is true. This applies whatever 'x' and 'y' mean. For example, 'x is y' could mean 'the world is round'.

The meaning of 'reality' is such that, if there is a true statement, it is a statement which actually describes, or reports, all, or part, of 'reality'. For example, where 'x is y' is a true statement, it describes a real occurrence (or incidence or instance) which is such that x is y, and of x being y. 'Reality' means that which is real, or, in other words, that which 'exists'. So if it is true that the world is round, then what exists, at least partly, consists of the round world.

It may be thought that there is more than one way of existing, and that therefore the word 'exist' does not necessarily have a clear meaning. For example, it may be thought that in addition to a) existing physically, there is b) existing subjectively, or c) existing in a parallel universe. Within the main document, under the section 'Why There is Only One Reality', I show why it is contradictory to think that there is more than one reality. If there is just one reality, and if 'reality' means that which exists, then something either exists as all, or part, of that reality, or it doesn't exist at all. This should answer any objection that says that 'exist' does not have a clear enough meaning for my argument to be valid. ( Much of the main document deals with the separate issue of whether ( and to what extent ) the single reality consists of physical things or of consciousness.)

My definitions are also as follows. 'A thing' means 'not nothing'. 'Nothing' is such that if nothing has the property x, then the property x is not had, and, if nothing does x, then x is not done. 'Anything' is any thing, and 'something' is some thing. Therefore, according to my definitions, empty spaces and processes are examples of things rather than of nothing. This is because if, for example, a particular empty space has a particular shape or location, then the property of having that shape or location is possessed by that space.

With regard to all these definitions, I am not saying that these words have to have the meanings that I have described above, but that, in the text of my argument, this is what I mean by these words. If, for some other reason, my definitions are not universally accepted, and/or if that is thought to be a reason to not accept my argument, that is dealt with under 'Objection 7'.

## **Appendix 2; What needs to be true, for one consciousness to be the whole of reality.**

This appendix describes some things which would need to be true, if one consciousness was the whole of reality. ( This relates to the part of my text which argues against one consciousness being the only real thing. )

The following things would need to be true.

Consciousness is what I have described it as being.

It exists and can only have one experience at a time.

Consciousness only exists subjectively and not in the same reality as anything else ( the nature of consciousness requires that to be true ).

There is only one reality.

If the subject of physical things arises, what I say about them and consciousness is true.

## References

I have only used references concerning quantum physics and for the small section on Zen. They are as follows.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum\\_mechanics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_mechanics)

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