

Logical Mysticism; why paradox is unavoidable.

By Peter Spurrier

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NB. As of August 2019, parts of this document have been amended. See more details, in the introduction, below.

Introduction

Although there is an inescapable problem involved in trying to describe what this document achieves, the following seems the best way to try to explain it.

The argument of this document appears to be rigorously logical. It deals with the issue of whether anything can be unreal. This is an issue that has been addressed by others before. For example, as some readers will know, Bertrand Russell considered that we cannot correctly make statements about what is unreal and he developed a system for talking about what is real without ever having to talk about what is unreal.

My argument shows a flaw in Russell's thinking by showing that there is a contradiction unless some things can be correctly said to be unreal. On the other hand, my argument also shows that there is a contradiction if anything *is* unreal. Therefore, there appears to be a paradox. Bizarre though it sounds, the argument reaches a point at which all possible ideas, about anything, have been shown to be contradictory. The meaning of the 'conclusion', which this leads to, is not something that can be intellectually understood, but it may be possible to experience it in a different way.

The argument commences by describing its 'central argument' and 'conclusion'. Following that, the document considers a wide range of possible objections to the 'central argument', and explains why I think none of the objections are justified. The explanation as to why 'objection 2' is not justified is particularly important to the overall argument. The topics, which the objections are concerned with, also include ordinary empirical beliefs, an analysis of Russell's famous article 'On

Denoting', current philosophical thinking on the issue of whether anything can be unreal, the idea of space-time and many other subjects. I then provide a summary of all the main points that have been covered.

As of August 2019, there is a new version of the particular objection, which concerns Bertrand Russell, and of my response to it. This is mainly because I decided that, to overcome Russell's theory, I needed to change my response to it, and also because I realised that, on a different, smaller point, I had misunderstood Russell's position.

Also, the later section, which summarises my overall argument, has been lengthened.

No specialist knowledge is required to understand this document. Much of it is best read slowly. In some places, I think a good method would be to try to understand no more than one or two sentences at a time, so that they are understood before the next bit is read.

Some Definitions

To help prevent confusion in the following argument, I will explain the meanings that I am using for the terms 'true', 'real', 'exist', 'something' and 'nothing'. (Since my full explanation of these definitions is a bit involved, I will explain a short version here, so the reader does not get unnecessarily bogged down at this stage. The more detailed version is given in an appendix at the end of the argument.)

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'.

The meaning of 'reality' is such that, if a statement is true, it actually 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'.

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.

I am not saying that these words have to have the meanings that I have described above, but that, in the following 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 3'.

The Central Argument

I will examine whether anything can be true or untrue (and whether anything can be real or unreal), by examining whether it can be true that, for example, the world is round. (The principles of my argument on whether the world can be round also apply to any other shape that the world might be thought to be.)

Some of the statements in the following argument might seem unnecessary, or strangely phrased, but they are there because they can be used to overcome particular possible counter-arguments.

There would be a contradiction unless what I say in the following paragraph (A) is true.

Paragraph A. If the truth is such that the world is round, then the truth cannot be such that the world is not round. In other words, it cannot be such that there is currently an occurrence of the world being not round. If we call such an occurrence or incidence (of the world being not round) a 'Z', this means that none of reality consists of a Z. If 'None of reality consists of a Z' is a true statement, then, what is meant by 'a Z' must have an identity which is such that it (i.e. a Z) is not real. In other words, a Z must be unreal.

However, this gives rise to a paradox, because there would also be a contradiction unless what I say in the next paragraph (B) is true.

Paragraph B. It is not possible for anything to be something that does not exist, for the following reason. It is not possible to actually **be** something that does not exist. It is only if a particular thing exists that the state, or condition, of being that thing can occur. For example, in a reality in which there is no unicorn, it's impossible for anything to be a unicorn. It is possible for something to be something that exists. It's not possible for anything to be something that does not exist, and so it is not possible for there to be any occurrence of being an unreal thing. In terms of my definition of 'a thing', if there is no thing which is unreal, then there is no occurrence of being unreal at all. Being unreal is not possible. There can be no state or condition of being unreal. However, this contradicts the earlier statement that a Z is not real.

The following points are central. Paragraph A shows that if the world is round, a Z must be unreal. On the other hand, Paragraph B shows that Z cannot be unreal, because it is not possible for anything to be unreal. So that means that, if the world is round, there is an incidence of something that is impossible (i.e. an incidence of a Z being unreal). This means that it is contradictory for it to be true that the world is round.

On the same principles, it is contradictory for anything else to be true. (For anything to be true, an occurrence of its opposite would have to be unreal. But being unreal is impossible.)

It might make it easier to understand my argument, if I describe it this way. Imagine two boxes, box 1 and box 2. Box 1 contains everything that is real. Box 2 contains everything that is not real. (The 'boxes' just represent the two categories of the real and the not real, but they may make it easier to envisage what I'm saying.) Put simply, my argument is this. In order for box 1 to contain something, there must be something else in box 2. However, there cannot be anything in box 2, so there cannot be anything in box 1 either (or, at least, it would be contradictory for anything to be in box 1).

Now, various objections to this argument may have occurred to the reader. As stated, I will address a range of possible objections later. However, let's first see where this argument leads.

My argument shows that it would be contradictory for anything to be true. So how, without contradiction, can anything be true? I do not see how it can.

If we carefully consider the following questions, they can give useful guidance on the meaning of the point that the argument has reached and on how to avoid misunderstanding it.

- Given the preceding argument, can anything be true?
- Unless something is true, can one think anything that is correct?
- Taking account of the previous questions, can one think anything that is correct?
- For example, can one correctly think that the answer to the previous question is; 'No, one cannot think anything that is correct'?
- Can one state anything that 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 is at the end of the argument as an 'end-point', rather than a 'conclusion', because the word 'conclusion' might imply something that can be said or mentally grasped. I will henceforth refer to the above questions as the 'guiding questions'. I repeat, 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.) An important point is that to go against what any of these guiding 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

Now that the reader has seen the 'central argument', this seems the best place 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 the 'central argument'.

When responding to an objection, I will tend to argue that the objection is wrong or contradictory. However, since the 'central 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'. I think that my response to C shows that C is contradictory, 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 against its alternative, even when the idea I'm arguing for is one that, elsewhere, I show to be contradictory. In such a case, my aim is to show that there is a contradiction unless what I'm arguing for, at that moment, is correct. In other words, I'm aiming to show that the alternative idea (which at that moment I'm arguing against) is also contradictory, so that all options are 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. (Taking account of the response to objection 5, one cannot even think, concerning any particular idea, that it *might* be correct, without making a mistake.) 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. This is because, in those circumstances, 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.)

12 Objections to the 'central argument' and how they can be overcome

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

To start with, these objections are listed, as follows. I have made comments in italics about the significance of some of them.

- Objection 1 An hallucination can be something that does not really exist. *This is a straightforward objection to overcome.*
- Objection 2 Perhaps 'a Z' is meaningless or nothing, so there is no incidence of an entity, a Z, being unreal. *Philosophically, this is a crucial objection to overcome.*
- Objection 3 Not everyone would accept my meanings of the words 'truth', 'reality', 'something' or 'nothing'.
- Objection 4 There must be something wrong with the argument. Some things exist, such as the world we can see and hear, or such as our own conscious experiences. *This deals with objections based on ordinary beliefs about reality and objections based on empiricism.*
- Objection 5 Can't one even think that something *might* be true, without making a philosophical mistake?
- Objection 6 Can't there be more than one reality? Alternatively, can't there be some things that neither fully exist nor fully don't exist? *This relates to various ideas, including consciousness, parallel universes and space-time.*
- Objection 7 Could my 'central argument' be overcome by Bertrand Russell's theory of descriptions? Or, alternatively, could it be overcome by Frege's method of distinguishing meaning from denotations? *This relates to some established philosophical theories that my argument opposes. Russell's theory is particularly important. I show flaws in those theories.*
- Objection 8 It surely can't be right that *everything* is contradictory, or that *nothing* is true. *This deals more with the nature of the end-point.*
- Objection 9 Perhaps my argument is flawed because logic itself is flawed. *The response also covers why an argument like the one in this document is necessary to philosophically justify the 'end-point'.*

- Objection 10 Isn't part of my argument similar to one that has been made before, by Parmenides?
- Objection 11 The 'central argument' looks like it might just be a play on words.
- Objection 12 Doesn't current philosophy provide other reasons for objecting to my argument? *This covers existing philosophical ideas on the subject.*

(The issue of some other, more obscure objections is mentioned at the end.)

I will now consider each objection in turn, and respond to it.

Objection 1. Paragraph B of the 'central argument' claims that there is nothing which can be unreal, but an hallucination can be something that does not really exist. Therefore, it is possible for something to be unreal.

Response.

Consider an example. Let's assume an objective unicorn does not exist, while an hallucination of a unicorn does exist.

Something can be the thing that does exist; e.g. the hallucination. But it would be contradictory for anything to be the thing that doesn't exist; e.g. the objective unicorn.

(On the question of whether an hallucination exists in the same way as other things, see the answer to objection 6.)

Objection 2. In the 'central argument', an incidence (or occurrence) of the world being not round is referred to as 'a Z'.

Perhaps 'a Z' is meaningless or nothing.

Just because none of reality consists of 'a Z', it need not follow that 'a Z' is unreal. Perhaps 'a Z' is meaningless or nothing, in which case there would not really be an incidence of an entity, 'a Z', being unreal.

This could mean that the world could be round without this contradicting the principle that it is not possible for anything to be unreal. (If objection 2 is right, then, in terms of the 'boxes' that I talked about in the 'Central Argument', this would mean that box 1 could contain something without box 2 containing anything.)

Response.

Philosophically, this is probably the most seriously challenging objection. This argument gets very complicated and I have divided it into several numbered stages, 2.1 to 2.4. I start off giving an argument to show why there is a contradiction unless 'a Z' is something. I then deal with some objections to that argument and show that objection 2 (above) is wrong.

(This is not very light reading. It took a long time to work out. I recommend reading it slowly. Some of the arguments are subtle, but they seem to be sound. As stated previously, it may sometimes seem that I am using unnecessarily complicated statements, or ways of expressing things, but this is to deal with particular possible counter-arguments.)

2.1 An argument showing why there is a contradiction unless 'a Z' is something.

Whatever else would, or would not, be contradictory, if the truth is such that the world is round, the truth can't actually be not such that the world is round.

Therefore, the truth must be **not not** such that the world is round, or otherwise there is a contradiction. (This might seem to be strangely or comically phrased, but it seems necessary in the argument.) I will refer to the statement 'the truth is not not such that the world is round' as 'statement 1'.

Later on, for reasons explained in the following sections, some questions will be raised about whether it is contradictory for statements such as statement 1 to have a meaning. That issue will be dealt with at that later stage.

The following statements should mean the same as statement 1 ('the truth is not not such that the world is round'), in terms of what is real.

- The truth is not such that the truth is not such that the world is round.
- The truth is not such that there is a reality such that the truth is not such that the world is round.
- The truth is not such that there is a reality which is not such that the world is round.
- The truth is not such that there is a Y (where 'a Y' means 'a reality which is not such that the world is round.').

So we have established that, if the truth is not not such that the world is round, then the truth is not such that there is a Y.

I will refer to the statement 'The truth is not such that there is a Y' as 'statement 2'. (Not to be confused with 'objection 2'.)

Now comes the important point. If statement 2 is true, then whatever occupies the place taken in it by 'a Y', is not real. My definition of 'nothing' (as previously explained) is such that, if nothing does x, then x is not done. Therefore, according to my definition of 'nothing', if there is nothing that is not real (i.e. if there is not anything that is not real), then there is nothing that can take the particular place within a true statement that 'a Y' is occupying in statement 2. Again, according to my definition of 'nothing', if there is nothing that is not real, there can be no incidence of occupying that place in a true statement (i.e. occupying that place in a true statement is something that cannot be done). At least, it would be contradictory for there to be any incidence of occupying that place.

However, in 'statement 2', which is true, a Y is in that place. This is inconsistent with the idea that there can be no incidence of occupying that place in a true statement. It follows that it is not true that there is nothing that is not real. It also follows that whatever is in that place is not nothing. Therefore, a Y must be something. (At least, the alternative to these conclusions would be contradictory.)

Since the truth is not such that there is a Y, and since a Y is something, there would be a contradiction unless a Y is something unreal. Therefore, the preceding argument shows that if one particular thing (a reality in which the world is round) is real, then there is something (a Y) which is unreal.

A Z ('an incidence of the world being not round') would be an essential part of a Y ('a reality which is not such that the world is round'). There would be a contradiction if a Y was something without a Z also being something. Since a Y is something (as has been shown), a Z must be something also.

There would also be a contradiction if a Y was something which was unreal without this also meaning that a Z was something that was unreal.

Given that the preceding argument is correct, it shows that it would be contradictory for a Z to fail to be something (and for it to fail to be something unreal). Therefore, objection 2 appears to be refuted.

This supports my 'central argument'. It shows that Paragraph A (of the 'central argument') is correct to say that, if one thing is real, then something else is genuinely unreal (or, at least, it shows that there would be a contradiction if that was not the case). This is despite the fact that (for the reason given in Paragraph B of my 'central argument') it would *a/so* be contradictory for anything that is unreal to be something rather than nothing. Taken overall, this supports the claim of my 'central argument' that there is no option which is not contradictory.

2.2 Regarding some objections to 2.1.

A necessary part of the argument of 2.1 is that, for the reasons described above, it would be contradictory for statement 2 to fail to be true.

There are some arguments as to why it is contradictory for statement 2 to be true (which are described below in 2.3 and 2.4), but it will be shown that those arguments also contradict themselves and, therefore, cannot be correct. It will be shown that there is a contradiction unless 2.1 is correct and unless objection 2 is wrong.

I think 2.3 is important because it deals with a kind of objection to my 'central argument' that I expect from established philosophy. 2.4 deals with a type of

objection which I thought of myself, and which, for a while, seemed to me to overcome my 'central argument'.

2.3 An argument as to why there is a problem or contradiction with statement 2 ('the truth is not such that there is a Y'), and why this same argument contradicts itself.

The reasons for discussing the issues dealt with in 2.3 and 2.4 may not be obvious at first sight, but they concern possible objections to what is being said in 2.1.

One argument in support of 'Objection 2' is that because things that don't exist, such as 'a Z' or 'a Y', are not actually real things, any words for them don't really mean anything.

For example, it could be argued as follows. If statement 2 is correct (i.e. if the truth is not such that there is a Y), what 'a Y' means does not actually exist, so 'a Y' does not mean anything which actually is anything. What it means is not actually anything. It cannot, without contradiction, mean anything or have a meaning. Therefore, how can 'statement 2', which includes the term 'a Y', be correct? I will call this objection to statement 2, 'objection 2.3a'.

(This paragraph is an aside. Objection 2.3a is an attack on statement 2, on the basis that statement 2 talks about something that does not exist, 'a Y'. The principle of that attack could be applied wherever there is a reference to something that does not exist (i.e. a 'non-existent'). I can explain it most clearly in relation to the reference, in statement 2, to 'a Y'. Therefore, I have explained the principle in relation to statement 2. However, because the principle can be applied to any reference to a 'non-existent', it could also be applied to earlier features in 2.1. For example, if the world is round, it could be argued that the phrase 'not such that the world is round' does not mean anything that actually

exists, and so the same principle applies to that phrase where it occurs in statement 1. Below, I will explain some arguments against the attack on statement 2 and the same principles would apply in argument against similar attacks on other parts of 2.1.)

I will use four counter-arguments against objection 2.3a. (This might seem a lot, but this issue is important to my overall argument.) None of these counter-arguments prevent it being contradictory for 'a Y' to have a meaning, but they each show that there is also a contradiction unless 'a Y' does have a meaning.

My first counter-argument to objection 2.3a is as follows. (Where I put 'etc', this should be taken to mean 'otherwise the truth would be contradictory'). The meanings of the first 2 sentences in 2.1 and of 'statement 1' are such that there is a contradiction unless they are correct. This is the case even if those meanings are such that (for the kind of reasons given in objection 2.3a) it is also contradictory for those meanings to exist. Since statement 1 is true, etc, there is also a contradiction unless its meaning exists. Since this all applies to statement 1, statement 2 follows from statement 1 (for the reasons explained in 2.1) and the same all applies to statement 2 as to statement 1, etc. Therefore, there is a contradiction unless statement 2 is correct and unless the meaning of the whole of statement 2 exists.

My second counter-argument is as follows. Objection 2.3a is based on not accepting the existence of the meaning of 'a Y'. However, if that meaning really didn't exist, there would be no such thing as that meaning and, so, there would be nothing that the objection was not accepting the existence of. If there is no such meaning, what meaning is it that the objection is claiming is not possible? If there is no such meaning, then there would be no meaning for the objection to claim is impossible. Therefore, there cannot be any meaning, concerning which, the objection can claim, without contradiction, that it does not, or cannot, exist. In which case, there would be nothing that objection 2.3a was objecting to

and so it wouldn't be an objection. Therefore, objection 2.3a cannot correctly object to statement 2 or its meaning.

My third counter-argument has similarities with both my second and fourth ones, although they are not the same. It is as follows. In order for objection 2.3a to object to the possibility of the meaning of 'a Y', the thing (or possibly one of the things), that it is denying the possibility of, must **be** that meaning. Therefore, the objection requires that there is an incidence of being the thing that it alleges it is not possible to be.

My fourth counter-argument is as follows. It is only because of what 'a Y' would mean, if it did have a meaning, (i.e. a reality which is not such that the world is round) and because that meaning would be such that what 'a Y' would mean does not exist, that there is a basis for 2.3a to make the particular objection that it does to the existence of that meaning. If that meaning wasn't a meaning of that kind (i.e. such that what is meant does not exist), then it wouldn't be what objection 2.3a is making its particular objection to, and it is only a meaning of that kind because of the particular meaning that it has. If it wasn't that meaning, then it wouldn't be what objection 2.3a is making this particular objection to. The objection therefore requires what it denies is possible (the meaning of 'a Y') and so is contradictory.

For the reasons given in my four counter-arguments, the objection to the possibility of the meaning of 'a Y' (and therefore, to the statement 'the truth is not such that there is a Y') cannot be correct without contradiction (even though, for the reason explained in objection 2.3a, it is also contradictory for such a meaning to be possible).

(Remember that, at this point, I am merely trying to show that it would be contradictory for 'statement 2' in 2.1 to fail to be true. If it would also be contradictory for statement 2 to *be* true, that is not an obstacle to my argument.)

Since objection 2.3a to the validity of 2.1 is contradictory, it would be contradictory for that objection to be correct. So, taking account of this and of the argument in 2.1, it would be contradictory for 2.1 to fail to be true.

2.4 Some more arguments as to why statement 2 cannot be correct, on the grounds that it involves a meaningless contradiction, (and also why 'a Z' is a contradiction), and how these arguments are also contradictory themselves.

This deals with another kind of argument in support of 'Objection 2', which is similar to (though not exactly the same as) the one dealt with in 2.3. The argument may seem obscure or difficult to follow, at least at first glance. It does get complicated, and may need to be read more than once to be understood. It shows an argument against what is being said in 2.1, and how that same argument is flawed.

As explained below, this kind of argument could be used to claim that 'statement 2' (in 2.1) and 'a Z' (an incidence of the world being not round) are not meaningful because they involve a contradiction. According to this kind of argument, the idea of any particular unreal thing (such as 'a Z' or 'a Y') is actually a contradictory idea, and the same applies to the idea of any untrue thing. This kind of argument supports 'objection 2' by claiming that, since 'a Z' is just a meaningless contradiction, 'a Z' is not a thing, and therefore the logical problem (which is described in my 'central argument') that arises when such a thing is unreal, can be avoided.

One such argument is as follows. 'A Y' means 'a reality which is not such that the world is round'. Since 'the world' refers to a particular thing which is round, the meaning of 'a Y' would contain a contradiction, on the same principle that the phrase 'a reality which is not such that a round thing is round' does. The phrase 'a reality which is not such that a round thing is round' describes a contradiction

and so it would be contradictory for what it describes to be anything (and therefore arguably the phrase cannot correctly mean anything). It could be argued that the same applies to the phrase 'a reality which is not such that the world is round', because 'the world' refers to a thing which is round, and that therefore 'a Y' also describes a contradiction, and so what it describes is not anything, and so what it means cannot be anything either. Therefore, 'a Y' cannot form a meaningful part of statement 2, and so statement 2 cannot correctly mean anything beyond 'the truth is not such that there is.. '. So 'a Y' is not an unreal thing, but a meaningless contradiction. (I will call the argument in this paragraph 2.4a.)

Furthermore, it could be argued that, on the same principle as argued in 2.4a, 'a Z', which means an incidence of the world (which is round) being not round, would also be a contradiction and therefore meaningless and not a thing. (I will call this argument 2.4b.)

I have two counter-arguments to deal with the kind of argument in 2.4a and 2.4b.

My first counter-argument is quite complicated. According to 2.4a, the description of the unreal thing, 'a Y', is a contradiction. The principle of my first counter-argument, below, shows that it would also be contradictory for such an 'unreal' thing to fail to be genuinely an unreal thing.

This first counter-argument is as follows. 2.4a claims that the phrase 'a reality which is not such that the world is round' is a contradiction, because 'the world' refers to a thing which is round. Now, this contradiction arises because it says something about a particular thing, when, in fact, that is not true about that particular thing and when the correct answer, to the question of whether it is true, is 'No'. In this case, the contradiction in 'a reality which is not such that the world is round' cannot arise unless the world is round and unless it is not true that the world is not round and, therefore, unless 'a Y' ('a reality which is not such that the

world is round') is not real. If 'a Y' is unreal, then there is *something* which is unreal, because where *nothing* is unreal, there is no incidence of being unreal. Therefore there is a contradiction in trying to use 2.4a to argue that 'a Y' is a contradiction rather than something unreal.

This argument, as to why 'a Y' is an unreal thing, also applies to 'a Z', because if 'a Y' is an unreal thing, then so is 'a Z'.

My second counter-argument to 2.4a and 2.4b is quite similar to my fourth counter-argument to 2.3a. This second counter-argument would apply to the argument in 2.4a, for example, as follows. It is only because of what *means* 'a reality which is not such that the world is round' (or 'a reality which is not such that a round thing is round') that we have the particular contradiction that 2.4a describes. The contradiction in the meaning is only possible because it *does* mean 'a reality which is not such that the world is round'. So the reason there is the problem (described in 2.4a) with it being able to have a meaning, depends on it having that meaning (i.e. the meaning of 'a reality which is not such that the world is round'). If it didn't have that meaning, how could there be that particular problem with it being able to have that particular meaning? So in order for there to be that problem with it being able to mean 'a reality which is not such that the world is round', it has to mean 'a reality which is not such that the world is round'.

This second counter-argument shows that the argument in 2.4a, as to why there is a problem with the existence of the meaning, is based on contradiction.

Therefore, as with 2.3, the objection, in 2.4a, to the possibility of meaning 'a Y' cannot be correct without contradiction (even though 2.4a shows that it is also contradictory for such a meaning to be possible).

The principle of this second counter-argument can also be used against the argument of 2.4b; i.e. the argument that 'a Z' has no meaning relies on the particular meaning that 'a Z' has.

The two counter-arguments, above, seem to show that the arguments made in 2.4a and 2.4b are contradictory and so it would be contradictory for them to be correct. So, taking account of this and of the argument in 2.1, it would be contradictory for statement 2, and the rest of 2.1, to fail to be true.

In the same way as with 2.3, what I say in the previous paragraph is true, despite the fact that it is also contradictory for the arguments in 2.4a and 2.4b to be other than correct. My overall argument works, so long as it would be contradictory for statement 2 to be not true, regardless of whether it is also contradictory for statement 2 to be true.

In conclusion, the whole response to objection 2, including sections, 2.1 to 2.4, shows that, if the world is round, then there is a contradiction unless 'a Z' is something rather than nothing. The objection to my Central Argument is therefore refuted.

(This paragraph is an aside. Ironically, the very fact that, as explained in 2.4a, 'a Y' is a contradiction, means that it would be contradictory for a Y to not be something unreal. This is because, for the reasons explained in my first counter-argument, a Y is only a contradiction if it is also something unreal. This means that, as well as using the arguments that I have, we could, as an alternative, actually use the argument in 2.4a itself as a basis for arguing that there is a contradiction unless objection 2 is wrong.)

Objection 3. Not everyone would accept my meanings of the words 'truth', 'reality', 'something' or 'nothing'.

Response

If other people appear to use different words to mean what I mean by 'truth' and 'something', etc., then my argument could be translated into the words that they would use, so they can 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 4. There must be something wrong with the argument. Some things exist, such as the world we can see and hear, or such as our own 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, I, personally, consider that it would be contradictory to think that one's own consciousness does not exist.

However, none of this alters the fact that, in the light of my 'central argument' (above) and my arguments in response to the objections, it appears that any idea about anything is contradictory. This applies both to the idea of a physical world and to the idea of consciousness. 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 is round' 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 philosophically justify really believing in such ideas, given that my argument seems to show that they are actually contradictions?* 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 so one cannot think that any particular idea is correct without making a mistake in the process of one's philosophical thinking.

Unless there were an argument, such as mine, which seemed to show that there is no possibility of anything being true without contradiction, it would seem justified to think that something must be true. However, my argument changes that.

In deciding whether to accept my argument, it may also be helpful to remember that what I'm arguing for is my argument's 'end-point'. Therefore, although I'm supporting the non-acceptance of (for instance) the idea that there is a physical world, this doesn't mean that I'm supporting (for instance) the idea that there is

no physical world. To repeat one of the 'guiding questions' from the 'end-point', 'Can one think correctly on what the meaning of the end-point is?'. I will discuss the end-point more under objection 8 and later on. For the moment, I am making the point that acceptance of an idea such as 'there is a physical world' appears to be a philosophical mistake.

I will ask the reader these questions. After careful consideration of how my argument seems to show that there is no possibility of anything being true without that thing being a 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 philosophically justified in believing such a thing and that you could believe in it without making a philosophical error? I will leave the reader to consider these questions.

Taking account of all of the above, I would not consider that any idea about a physical world, or about consciousness, is correct.

(As regards consciousness, on the one hand, I think the idea that consciousness does not exist is contradictory. On the other hand, in the light of the 'central argument', I don't see how any idea, including the idea that consciousness does exist, can avoid being a contradictory idea.)

Objection 5. 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' could have any meaning. For example 'X might be Y' could mean 'the world might be round'.)

Response

My 'central argument' shows how it is contradictory for anything to be true. Therefore, the 'central argument' can show that it is contradictory for it to be *true* that the idea 'the world might be round' is, or means, anything. Therefore, one cannot be philosophically justified in making a judgement that the world might be round, if, in doing so, one is making a decision in favour of any idea (i.e. an idea that the world might be round).

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

Alternatively, I would argue that the idea that a particular thing might be true (as distinct from the idea that it is true or is not true) really just means that it is not known whether it is true. In the light of my argument, it would be a mistake to think that *it is true* that a particular thing is not known. Therefore, it seems one can't take the view that a particular thing might be true, without supporting a contradiction.

The idea that anything exists except what does exist (as opposed to what might exist) is contradictory. My argument shows that it is also contradictory for anything to exist or be true. So, in the light of that argument, it would be a mistake to think that anything might be true.

As I said, under '*An explanation ofwhat 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 6. Can't there be more than one reality?

When I say (in my 'central argument') it's not possible to be something that does

not exist, this suggests that I am only considering the possibility that there is a single reality. In such a single reality, what existed would be what existed in that single reality, while what (if anything) did not exist in that single reality, would not exist in any way at all.

However, not everyone would accept that idea of a single reality. Isn't it possible that there might be one way in which a particular thing does exist, while there is another way in which it does not exist? For example, it may be thought that in addition to a) existing physically, there is the possibility of b) existing subjectively, or c) existing in a parallel universe. If something could exist in one of these ways, while not existing in one of those alternative ways, this would suggest that there are other possibilities to the simple alternatives of existing, and not existing, that I consider in the 'central argument'.

Alternatively, what about the idea that there are some things that neither absolutely exist nor absolutely don't exist? Regarding the past and the future, I would not go so far as to say that they actually exist, because that would seem to require them to exist now. But what about things that neither absolutely exist now, nor absolutely do not 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

One cannot correctly say that, because there is more than one reality, my 'central argument' is wrong. The reasoning is as follows.

Firstly, I will explain that, if there is one reality which is the only thing that exists, I call that an 'exclusive reality', which would be described by an 'exclusive truth'.

Now, it may be thought that, instead of an exclusive reality, there are a number of truths and realities. Suppose V and W are two of the realities that exist. If V exists and W exists, it is true that they both exist. So there is an overall truth that both V and W 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 V and W exist and, therefore, in which they co-exist.

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

Either way, this means that there is a single overall truth and a single overall reality, although it may include many different things. (This is regardless of the issue of to what extent the single reality consists of the physical realm and / or subjective consciousness.)

What about the idea that some things neither absolutely do exist now, nor absolutely don't exist now, which may form part of Einstein's theory of space-time? (For the reader's sake, I will shorten 'neither absolutely do exist now, nor absolutely don't exist now,' to 'don't absolutely exist'.) I will give two arguments against the use of this idea as an objection to my 'central argument'. (I will refer to such an objection as 'objection 6a'.)

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 'central argument'.

But perhaps Einstein's view is that we can't correctly say 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.

My 'central argument' is about what does and does not exist, using my definition of 'exist'. So, if objection 6a means that, in terms of my definition of 'exist', some things do not absolutely exist, then 6a can be an objection to my 'central argument', as this might then affect my 'central argument'. However, unless it was in terms of my definition of 'exist' that some things did not absolutely exist, this wouldn't be relevant to whether my 'central argument' was right.

The following argument seems to show that if objection 6a meant that some things do not absolutely exist, (using my definition of 'exist'), then objection 6a would be contradictory.

If some things do not absolutely exist, then, in terms of my definitions, 'some things do not absolutely exist' is a true statement. 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 if it is not easy to read, or if it appears unnecessarily long-winded. The

wording is to overcome particular possible counter-arguments and I have not yet managed to think of a way to do that more concisely.)

If 'some things do not absolutely exist' is a true statement, then there is an incidence (or occurrence) that is described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist'. The alternative would be that, 1) there is no incidence that is described by the words 'some things do not absolutely exist', while, at the same time, 2) some things do not absolutely exist. That alternative would seem to be contradictory because 1) appears to be inconsistent with 2).

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'.

The next point is that, 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 for there to be 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 of some things not absolutely existing. So, if there is incidence A, there is the existence of an incidence which consists of some things not absolutely existing. So what it consists of is not absolutely existing. This would mean that there is something which exists and what it consists of is not absolutely existing.

There is a contradiction if incidence A exists but what A consists of is not absolutely existing. You can't correctly say that something exists if it does not absolutely exist. Therefore there cannot be an incidence A.

The preceding paragraphs seem to show that objection 6a (which claims that, in terms of my definition of 'exist', some things do not either absolutely exist or absolutely not exist) 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 'central 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 4 deals with objections based on empiricism.)

The above seems to deal with objection 6a.

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

To repeat a previous point, the logic of the argument (above), as to why there must be a single reality, applies irrespective of the issue of to what extent

reality consists of subjective things or other things.

Of course, in my central argument I eventually arrive at the point where there is nothing that is true. The point I'm making here is this; the idea that there might be more than one reality can't be used to correctly argue that my 'central argument' is wrong.

Objection 7 Could my 'central argument' be overcome by Bertrand Russell's theory of descriptions? Or, alternatively, could it be overcome by Frege's method of distinguishing meaning from denotations?

(This objection, and the response to it, have been changed from the previous versions.)

It appears to be commonly thought, by contemporary philosophers, that the central issue with which my argument deals (i.e. the paradox concerning whether anything is unreal), was resolved in principle by Bertrand Russell in his article 'On Denoting'. That article explained what became known as Russell's theory of descriptions. (The principles of this, and its relevance to the issue of unreal things, were further discussed in the article 'On what there is' by Quine.)

The main points of Russell's article can be explained as follows.

His article concerned 'denoting phrases'. (Roughly speaking, to 'denote' something means to refer to it.) What he meant by 'denoting phrases' were names and also phrases such as 'a horse', 'some horses', 'the horse', 'every horse'. It might be thought that a denoting phrase would denote something, such as a horse. However, Russell defined 'denoting phrases' as phrases with a

certain form, which do not necessarily actually denote anything. For example, 'the present King of France' is a denoting phrase which does not denote anything.

Russell and his supporters have claimed that the use of denoting phrases leads to problems, including the problems that occur when there is not anything to denote. One problem which arises in that situation, is that it would be contradictory to say, concerning anything, that that thing does not exist. For example, if there is no such thing as object J, then there is not an object J, concerning which, we can say that it does not exist. (In other words, logically, there cannot be an object J which does not exist.) So there are no things, concerning which, we can say, without contradiction, that they are unreal. On the other hand, it would also be contradictory to say that object J does exist.

Russell found an alternative to using denoting phrases. Russell's supporters claim that this alternative avoids the need for contradictorily saying that something doesn't exist (and that it also solved some other problems). He suggested rephrasing statements, to convey the same information, without using the denoting phrases. For instance, instead of saying 'the present King of France exists' he might say 'for one example of x , x is now a King of France', and, instead of saying 'the present King of France does not exist', he might say 'for no examples of x , x is now a King of France'. Instead of using a denoting phrase, he has used ' x ', which Russell called 'a variable', and he has talked about the properties of that variable. So his statement avoids the problem of using a denoting phrase, which has nothing to denote.

This way of phrasing statements, which was proposed in this context by Russell, is the way that statements are phrased in what is known as 'first-order logic'.

We saw the problem, which is involved in talking about something (such as 'object J') which doesn't exist. The problem is that there doesn't seem to be any possibility that isn't false. Obviously, it's wrong to say object J exists, but it also seems logically wrong to say it doesn't exist. (As earlier explained, this is because, if there is no such thing as object J, then, logically, there cannot even be an object J which does not exist.) Russell's supporters claim that his method overcomes such problems, so that, by using his way of speaking, we can have one statement which is true (i.e. 'for no examples of x , x is now a King of France') and one which is false ('for one example of x , x is now a King of France'). it is claimed that, in this way, the problem can be solved.

So how might this undermine my 'central argument'? My 'central argument' claims to show an unavoidable contradiction between two paragraphs within it (paragraphs A and B), on the subject of whether anything is unreal. Paragraph A argues that if anything is real then something else is unreal, and paragraph B argues that not anything is unreal. In effect, Russell would agree with paragraph B and would say the conclusion of paragraph A is due to making one kind of statement rather than another (i.e. it's due to the use of denoting phrases). He would therefore claim to have found a way to avoid the paradox, which I am claiming exists.

He would say that, if we use his system (i.e. phrase statements in accordance with 'first-order logic'), we can avoid thinking that there is a king of France, for example, without ever making the kind of statement (such as ' the present king of France does not exist') which implies that something is unreal.

Therefore, he might argue that we can make correct statements about what is real, without thinking that this needs to involve believing that something else is unreal. For example, so long as it was was rephrased to fit his suggested way of speaking, we could say (in effect) that it is reality that the world is round, without also having to believe that something else is unreal.

In his article, Russell also considered another theory, which could be used to try to oppose my argument. This theory is based on a distinction between the 'denotation' and the 'meaning' of a word or phrase. (A 'denotation' means what is denoted, or referred to, by the phrase.)

This theory came, originally from another philosopher, Frege, (although Frege used the terms 'sense' and 'reference', in place of 'meaning' and 'denotation') and, in an earlier paper, Russell had supported it. According to this theory, a phrase, which speaks of an unreal thing, such as 'the present King of France', has a meaning but not a denotation. If meaning can really be distinguished from denotation, then it might be thought that this could form the basis of an argument against my claim (in paragraph A of my 'central argument') that there must actually be unreal things.

A supporter of Frege's theory would argue that that theory provides a way for us to still say that particular things are real, without having to accept the contradictory idea that there are actually unreal things. This is because, instead of having the old distinction between real things and unreal ones, the theory enables us, instead, to distinguish between phrases which have a denotation as well as a meaning, and other phrases which only have a meaning.

On this topic of meaning and denotation, Russell also considered the phrase 'the centre of mass of the solar system at the beginning of the twentieth century'. At one point in his article, he argued that the meaning of the phrase is complex, involving the meanings of all the words, but the denotation is different and simple, because it's simply a certain point. So, at that point, Russell seemed to be giving this as an example of how meaning can be distinguished from denotation.

However, in the course of his article, Russell appears to reject Frege's theory and he says that 'it seems the whole distinction of meaning and denotation has been wrongly conceived'. Instead, he proposed his own solution to the problem of unreal things, which was to rephrase sentences and to avoid the use of denoting phrases, in the way I previously described. Nevertheless, some may feel that Frege's theory could be used against mine and, in my 'response', below, I will also respond to that idea.

(In an earlier version of this (my) document, I overlooked Russell's rejection of Frege's theory.)

Having now described the theories of Russell and Frege, I will respond to them below.

Response

To help comprehension, this response has been broken down into numbered sections, 7.1 to 7.10, each with a sub-heading.

7.1 Introduction, including information on changes which have been made to this response.

In the following response, I will explain why neither Russell nor Frege have actually provided a way to overcome my argument.

This response has been changed from my previous response on this subject. For example, it has changed on whether my argument can be fully 'translated' into first-order logic and also on whether Russell agreed with Frege.

As previously explained, my 'central argument' claims to show an unavoidable contradiction between two paragraphs within it (paragraphs A and B), on the subject of whether anything is unreal. Paragraph A argues that if anything is real then something else is unreal, and paragraph B argues that there is not anything that is unreal. Russell would agree with Paragraph B and would think that Paragraph A results from erroneous use of language. However, for reasons which I will explain below, there is a contradiction unless paragraph A is correct.

Some of the following text may not be particularly easy to read, but it seems to be a sound argument. I have broken much of it down into small paragraphs, to make it easier to follow. Also, some of it may seem rather long-winded, but that text is there to clearly establish the point it is making. I think it is worth making this a very careful and detailed argument, because I believe it shows that a theory (Russell's theory of descriptions), which has been widely accepted in philosophy, is flawed.

Earlier in this document, in my response to objection 2, I gave an argument as to why there is a contradiction unless paragraph A is correct. According to that argument, it can be shown, through a series of logical steps, that, if the world is round, then it follows that something is unreal (or, at least, that there is a contradiction unless something is unreal). In that case, the unreal thing would be 'a reality, which is not such that the world is round'.

However, Russell would object to some of the language I have used in that argument. (For example he would object to the denoting phrase 'a reality'.)

In my response to objection 2, as already mentioned, my argument goes through a series of statements. Regarding the earlier statements in that argument, which are from before the point at which it has been shown that something is unreal, if those statements were rephrased so that they are in the form of first-

order logic, and if they avoided the use of denoting phrases, I do not see that Russell would have any logical reason for objecting to them.

In the following text, what I will do, is to take one of those earlier statements (from my response to objection 2), and I will try to rephrase that into first-order logic, as Russell would recommend. I will then show that, even though that statement has been rephrased in accordance with first-order logic, it still follows logically, from it, that there is a contradiction unless something is unreal and unless some statements, which use the kind of language which Russell opposed, are correct.

This will show that, regardless of whether statements are initially rephrased to fit first-order logic, there is still a contradiction unless my argument is logically correct.

7.2 A rephrasing of a statement, from my argument, to fit first-order logic.

So now I will take one of the appropriate statements, from my response to objection 2, and rephrase it (as well as I can) in accordance with first-order logic.

In my response to objection 2, one of the statements in that response is 'The truth is not such, that the truth is not such that the world is round'.

For simplicity, let's consider the logically equivalent, but simpler, statement 'the truth is not such that the world is not round'.

So how can I rephrase that statement to fit first-order logic and Russell's method? I have to avoid denoting phrases such as 'the truth' and 'the world'.

Instead of 'the truth is..', I think Russell might say 'For one example of x , x is true and nothing else is true and x is ..'. When it comes to 'the world', I have to avoid using any denoting phrases, such as 'the third planet from the Sun'. To try to follow Russell's principles, what I've done is to include enough information so that I can only be referring to the world, even though it makes the statement seem long and rather strange. So instead of 'the world', I say 'for one example of w , w is such that it is roughly 8,000 miles across and it includes 5.972×10^{24} kg of matter and it rotates every 24 hours and billions of humans live on it'. This can only mean what we normally call 'the world'. Finally, in the rephrased statement, I have to say whether, or not, the world is round.

So what I end up with, looks like this. 'For one example of x , x is true and nothing else is true and x is not such that, for one example of w , w is such that it is roughly 8,000 miles across and it includes 5.972×10^{24} kg of matter and it rotates every 24 hours and billions of humans live on it and it is not round.' I will call that statement S .

In the following argument, I want to show that certain things follow from a statement like statement S . However, statement S is long-winded, which will make it cumbersome to use in my argument. So, in my argument, instead of the full length version of S , I will use a shorter statement, which will make my argument easier to follow, but which should be understood to be just a shorthand representation of S . The shorter statement will be ' x is not such that w is not round', and I will call that statement $S1$.

The argument in 7.4 (below), will show that, from the statement ' x is not such that w is not round', it follows that something is unreal. After I've used $S1$ in my

argument, I will then show how that argument and its conclusion would also apply to the original statement S.

7.3 On the use of indefinite descriptions in my argument.

Before I make the following argument (in 7.4), I will explain that it will involve the use of some denoting phrases, such as 'a reality' and 'something'. Russell called such phrases 'indefinite descriptions'. He criticised them for not having a clear reference or denotation. He said that by discarding them, and other denoting phrases, it was possible to avoid the the paradox, which I describe in my 'central argument'.

However, for reasons which I will explain, my argument must logically be true, including where it uses indefinite descriptions. That much must be true, however limited is the information conveyed by the indefinite descriptions.

I will cover this point more, later on, in 7.5.

7.4. Why something is unreal, based on my definitions.

In section 7.2, I gave the name 'S1' to the statement 'x is not such that w is not round'.

In this section, I will show how it follows, from statement S1, that there is something that is unreal (or, to be precise, that there is a contradiction, *unless* there is something that is unreal).

I will begin by talking about how true statements relate to real things. The following argument is correct about truth and reality, as I have defined them (see the section and appendix on definitions). In other words, given what I

mean by 'true' and 'real', what I say, in the following argument, is true, according to my definition of 'true'.

Let's consider a statement 'z is t' (which could mean, for example, 'the zebra is tall'). My definitions are such that, if z is t, then there is a reality, which is such that z is t. (Otherwise, 'real' and 'reality' wouldn't mean what I sincerely mean by them, or else there is a contradiction .) Also, according to my definitions, I would say that, if z is t, then there is an occurrence (which could otherwise be called 'an incidence'), which is such that z is t. Therefore, I could say that, if z is t, there is something which is such that z is t (given that both the reality and the occurrence, previously referred to, are something).

On the same principle, if the statement 'x (the truth) is such that w is round' is true, this means that the statement 'x is such that there is something, which is such that w is round' is also true.

Just to clarify the meaning of that last statement, I'll insert some square brackets, so it becomes 'x is such that there is [something which is such that w is round] '. The point of the square brackets, is to clarify that what is inside the brackets should be read as one item, within the meaning of the sentence. I will also use brackets in other, following, statements, where I think it will clarify meaning.

So we saw that if 'x is such that w is round' is true, this means that the statement 'x is such that there is [something which is such that w is round] ' is true.

It follows that, if 'x is not such that w is round' is true, this means that 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is round] ' is true.

This is implicit in the meaning of the statements. My definitions are such that, if w is round, then this means that it is true that there is [something which is such that w is round].

It follows that, when one denies that w is round, there is a thing which is implicit in the meaning of what is being denied (i.e. it forms part of the meaning of what is being denied), and that implicit thing is that there is [something which is such that w is round].

The point in the previous paragraph is important to the argument. If it isn't true, then 'w is round' doesn't mean what I mean by it.

So one cannot consistently deny that w is round, without being willing to deny that there is something (such as an occurrence), which is such that w is round. One cannot consistently deny the one, without being willing to deny the other.

On the same principle, if 'x is not such that w is not round' (which is statement S1 from section 7.2, above) is true, this means that 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] ' is also true. Let's give the name 'S2' to that statement 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] '.

So, how does this show that something is unreal?

Statement S2 is 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] '. Because 'x' means, essentially, 'that which is true', and because S2 starts with the phrase 'x is not such that there is..', and because that is followed by the phrase [something which is such that w is not round], it

follows, from the meaning of the statement, that what is meant by [something which is such that w is not round] cannot be real.

For simplicity, let's give the name P to the phrase ' something which is such that w is not round '.

Here are some crucial points.

S2 must be true (assuming that S1 is true).

Because statement S2 is true, and because it starts with the phrase 'x is not such that there is..' ', it follows (as explained above) that whatever is meant, within the statement, by the subsequent phrase P, must be unreal.

(Some might argue that P doesn't have a meaning. That idea can be countered as follows. For any statement, which has the same form as S2, to be true, P must have some meaning within it. P must either mean just the words or symbols, which constitute the phrase P, or it must mean something else. Either way, it means something and, as I've argued, that something must be unreal. In this case, P means [something which is such that w is not round].)

This point is also crucial. If [being unreal] didn't occur (i.e. if there was no occurrence of [being unreal]), then P's position, in the true statement S2, wouldn't be occupied. In other words, occupation of that position wouldn't occur.

However, P does occupy that position. Therefore, [being unreal] must occur.

Now, according to my definition of 'nothing', if there was nothing that was unreal, then [being unreal] would not occur.

However, because of the position occupied by P, within the true statement S2, there is an occurrence of [being unreal]. That can only be possible if something is unreal. (It is what is meant by P that must be unreal.)

Therefore, something is unreal.

The preceding argument shows that, even if we start off by using a statement which Russell should accept, and which has been phrased in accordance with first-order logic, it logically follows, from that statement, and from taking account of my definitions of 'true' and 'real', that something is unreal (or else there is a contradiction).

7.5. The justification for the use of indefinite descriptions in 7.4.

As I explained, above, Russell would have objected to some of the language I have just used in the statements within the preceding argument. He objected to phrases such as 'a reality' and 'something', which he called 'indefinite descriptions' and criticised them for not having a clear reference or denotation. So, in particular, he would have objected to statement S2; i.e. the statement 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] '.

However, as I have argued above, if the statement 'x is not such that w is not round' is true, then there is a contradiction unless the statement 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] ' is also true. There is a contradiction unless that much is true, however imprecise and limited the information in the second statement is. Therefore, there is a contradiction unless my argument, including its use of 'indefinite descriptions', is correct.

7.6 How the argument of 7.4 applies to statement S, as well as to S1.

Unavoidably, this section uses some long winded sentences.

In 7.2, I said that, in the argument of 7.4, I would use the shorter statement S1, in place of the full statement S, and that S1 should be seen as shorthand for S. I also said that I would subsequently show how the things I say, in 7.4 about S1, also apply to S.

In 7.4, I have shown that, if 'x is not such that w is not round ' (statement S1) is true, it follows that 'x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] ' (statement S2) is also true.

On the same principle, from statement S, there follows another statement, which I will call S3.

As earlier described, statement S is as follows. 'For one example of x, x is true and nothing else is true and x is not such that, for one example of w, w is such that it is roughly 8,000 miles across and it includes 5.972×10^{24} kg of matter and it rotates every 24 hours and billions of humans live on it and it is not round.'

S3, which follows from S, on the same principle that S2 follows from S1, is as follows.

'For one example of x , x is true and nothing else is true and x is not such that there is [something which is such that, for one example of w , w is such that it is roughly 8,000 miles across and it includes 5.972×10^{24} kg of matter and it rotates every 24 hours and billions of humans live on it and it is not round]'.

S3 differs from S, in that it includes the underlined phrase and square brackets.

In 7.4, I showed that, if S2 (' x is not such that there is [something which is such that w is not round] ') is true, then it followed that something is unreal, because the phrase 'something which is such that w is not round' must mean something which is unreal. It must mean something which is unreal, because, in S2, it was preceded by the words ' x is not such that there is..'

On the same principle, it follows from S3, that something is unreal, because there is part of S3 which is preceded by the words ' x is not such that there is..' , and so that part of S3 must also mean something which is unreal. That part is the words 'something which is such that, for one example of w , w is such that it is roughly 8,000 miles across and it includes 5.972×10^{24} kg of matter and it rotates every 24 hours and billions of humans live on it and it is not round'.

In other words, my argument still works, when it is applied to statement S, which is the longhand version of the statement in first-order logic, which I described in 7.2.

7.7 My change of mind, on whether my argument can be rephrased in accordance with first-order logic and on what is obscured by first-order logic.

In a previous version of my response to objection 7, I said that, my argument, which shows that there is a contradiction unless something is unreal, could be translated into the kind of language which Russell advocates.

I have now decided that that is not actually the case. The use of first-order logic seems to obscure a fact. It seems to obscure the fact that there is a contradiction unless some things are unreal. In order to show that something is unreal, I have had to use language that Russell wouldn't. But what I have shown, in the preceding sections, is that statements, which are in language that Russell wouldn't use, and which show something to be unreal, do follow logically from statements that Russell should accept.

7.8 Conclusion regarding Russell's failure to overcome my argument.

So, from all that I have argued in this response so far, we can conclude that, despite Russell's argument to the contrary, it can still be shown that there is a contradiction unless something is unreal. So there is a contradiction unless paragraph A, of my 'central argument', and my response to objection 2 are both correct (although Russell would claim that both of them are mistakes caused by the use of denoting phrases).

However, there is, of course, still also a contradiction unless paragraph B of my 'central argument' is correct. In other words, it's also contradictory for there to be

a true statement about something unreal (otherwise known as 'a non-existent'). On this point, Russell and I are agreed. I think one reason why it is contradictory for a true statement to be about a non-existent, is that it is contradictory for anything to be a non-existent (for the reason explained in Paragraph B). Also, as pointed out in the objection, above, it is contradictory to say, of anything, that it does not exist, because, if there is no such thing, then there is not something which does not exist.

Therefore, there is still an unavoidable contradiction between paragraphs A and B of my 'central argument'. It's contradictory for a true statement to be about a non-existent (as Russell would accept), but, on the other hand, if anything is real, then there is also a contradiction unless it can be correctly stated that some things are non-existents. Russell claims to have found a way of avoiding making statements about non-existents, but there are statements which are about non-existents and it would be contradictory for some of those statements to fail to be true.

So Russell's idea does not seem able to overcome my 'central argument' and the necessary contradiction, between Paragraph A and Paragraph B, that the 'central argument' describes. His theory may be believed in, because the alternative to it (which involves statements about the king of France, etc.) is contradictory, and because his method seems to have obscured the fact that contradiction cannot be correctly avoided.

7.9 Why Frege's theory on meaning and denotation does not overcome my argument.

I will now move on to discuss the theory about the distinction between meaning and denotation, which was mentioned in the objection, above. (A 'denotation' means what is denoted, or referred to, by a particular word or phrase.)

According to this theory, a phrase, which speaks of an unreal thing, such as 'the present King of France', has a meaning but not a denotation. (As previously explained, this theory was argued for by Frege, although he used the words 'sense' and 'reference', rather than 'meaning' and 'denotation', to make the same basic distinction. As I mentioned, above, Russell appears to have eventually rejected this theory, although, in a previous version of this document, I overlooked that.)

A supporter of this theory would argue that the theory provides a way for us to still say that particular things are real, without having to accept the contradictory idea that there are actually unreal things. This is because, instead of having the old distinction between real things and unreal ones, the theory enables us, instead, to distinguish between phrases which have a denotation as well as a meaning, and other phrases which only have a meaning.

My argument, on the other hand, is that, if one thing is real, then there is a contradiction unless something else is unreal, even though there is also a contradiction if something is unreal. The question is, does Frege's theory provide a way to defeat my argument?

I believe Frege was mistaken about the distinction between meaning and denotation (or sense and reference). In my view, where there is a denotation, it is the same as the meaning. In a true statement, the two are the same. I will explain this as follows.

It is only where the meaning is also a denotation that a denotation is possible. For if the meaning is not the same as a denotation, then what is being denoted and how?

Also, in a true statement, the meanings are denotations, otherwise what the

statement describes isn't real and, therefore, the statement can't be true.
(Based on my definitions of 'true' and 'real', there is a contradiction unless that is the case. This is despite the fact that this contradicts what I am saying, elsewhere, which is that there are true statements which say that some things are unreal. My overall argument is to show that there is an unavoidable contradiction on the subject of whether anything is unreal, and this example is another illustration of that contradiction.)

For example, regarding any statement of the form 'X is Y', in order for the statement to be true, what 'X' means must really be X. So 'X' must have a denotation.

Also, take Russell's example of the phrase 'the centre of mass of the solar system at the beginning of the twentieth century'. At one point, in his article, Russell claimed that the meaning of that phrase was complex, unlike the denotation, which was a simple point. However, the point in question **is** the centre of mass of the solar system at the beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore, the meaning and the denotation of the phrase are the same. The one is not more complex than the other. So this example provides no justification for distinguishing the meaning and the denotation.

Therefore, when dealing with true statements, there seems no justification for distinguishing meaning and denotation. It follows that it must be wrong to claim that, within true statements, there can be words or phrases which have meanings but which don't have denotations. So, Frege's idea does not provide a justified reason for opposing the part of my argument (based on paragraph A), which says that that there is a contradiction unless there is something unreal.

7.10. Overall conclusions.

In summary, Russell's theory of descriptions does not provide any justified basis for objection to my argument.

He seems to have found a way to avoid having to speak of unreal things and, thus, to avoid a contradiction on the subject of whether anything is unreal. (This contradiction being, essentially, the contradiction between paragraphs A and B of my 'central argument'.)

However, my argument shows that, if anything is real, then there is genuinely a contradiction unless some things actually are unreal and unless some true statements can describe them as being unreal. Therefore, the paradox described by my 'central argument' cannot be correctly denied.

It appears to me that Russell's use of language obscures this paradox, but does not get rid of it. If, like Russell, one avoids the use of denoting phrases, then one can avoid the logic of my argument. However, my argument, complete with its use of denoting phrases, is logical, or (to be more precise, given that contradiction is ultimately shown to be unavoidable) it is contradictory to oppose my argument.

Also, Frege's idea of the distinction between meaning and denotation (or 'sense' and 'reference'), does not overcome my argument, either.

Objection 8. It surely can't be right that *everything* is contradictory, or that there is *nothing* which 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 there is nothing which is true or that everything is contradictory. But, in the light of my 'central argument', how can any idea (including the ideas 'there is nothing which is true' or 'everything is contradictory') be correct, or constitute my conclusion? I do not see how it can.

Secondly, in support of the objection, I could ask 'Isn't there a contradiction unless something is true?'. However, in the light of the 'central 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 there is nothing which is true, or that the end-point does not allow anything to be true or that it means that everything is contradictory. But, in the light of the 'central 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 9 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 contradicting oneself and therefore not successfully asserting any idea. Therefore, one can't correctly assert that, because logic itself is flawed, my 'central argument' is flawed. The idea that logic is flawed is contradictory.

If logic is possible, then truth must be logical.

On the other hand, 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 10 Isn't part of the argument similar to one that has been made before, by Parmenides?

Response.

Having worked out the argument which I have expressed, in this paper, as the 'central argument', I read about Parmenides and noticed that the part of the 'central argument' which is covered by Paragraph B, in which I argue that there is nothing that does not exist, is similar to some of Parmenides' argument.

His view, as I understand it, was that there is only what exists, and one cannot speak of what is not. However, I am not clear on whether his reasons for thinking that were similar to mine.

Unlike me, he thought that if there was empty space, it would constitute non-existence of anything. Since there is no non-existence, he thought there cannot be any empty space. According to my definition, 'nothing' is such that if nothing has the attribute x, then the attribute x is not had. However, if empty space has the attribute x, then the attribute x **is** had. So, in my terms, where there is empty space there is something. It is in terms of my definition of 'nothing' (rather than any other definition), that there is nothing that is unreal.

Parmenides did not make the step from 'you cannot speak of that which is not' to 'it is impossible for anything to be untrue'.

Since he also thought that it followed that there can be no change, Parmenides ended up concluding that all that existed was one, unchanging, completely solid object. That is very different to my conclusion.

So far as I am aware, the rest of my argument was not covered by him.

Objection 11 The 'central argument' looks like it might just be a play on words.

Response

There would be a play on words if I said something that wasn't actually true, because it involved one word having two separate meanings. For example, if I said that a dog and a tree have something in common; a bark. That doesn't apply to anything that is said in my argument. I'm not using the same word to mean two different things, and I do not see how my argument can be wrong.

Objection 12 Doesn't current philosophy provide other reasons for objecting to my argument?

Response

So far as I'm aware, current philosophy does not provide any sound reasons for objecting to my argument. I will, here, briefly refer to current thinking on the central issue of my argument, namely the issue of how to deal with the problem of whether there is anything that does not exist. (A description of that current thinking can be found in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article 'Existence' at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existence/> .) I will describe how

that thinking relates to my argument, without explaining my argument in the same depth as I have elsewhere.

It appears that the dominant approach in existing philosophy is the one provided by Russell. Under objection 7, I have already described Russell's approach and I have responded to it. Russell's approach involved avoiding any reference to unreal things. For example, rather than saying that there is something, such as a king of France, which is unreal, he might have said 'There is no example of a thing which has the property of being king of France'. Another version of this kind of approach is to say that the property of being a king of France is not 'instantiated'. (The meaning of 'instantiated' is such that, if there is an instance of some properties, they are said to be 'instantiated'.) To each version, my response would be (as explained under objection 7) that my argument shows that, if there are real things, then there is a contradiction unless there are unreal things (including a king of France) which can be referred to in true statements.

In my view (as explained in my argument), it would be contradictory either for 1) something to be unreal, or for 2) something to be real unless something else was unreal. There would be a contradiction if any part of my argument was not correct.

Some have argued that there are examples which can neither be real or unreal things, because they are contradictory, such as a thing which is taller than everything or such as a thing which is not itself. This might be thought to show a hole in my argument, as follows.

According to my argument, if one thing is real, then there is a contradiction unless some other thing is unreal (see 'paragraph A'), but it might be argued that I am mistaken, because, if it's true that there is nothing which is taller than itself, the opposite of that (i.e. an instance of a thing being taller than itself) is a contradiction rather than a thing.

In response, I would make the following points. Firstly, regardless of whether what the previous paragraph says is correct, there would be a contradiction unless my argument is also correct, for the reasons explained in it.

Secondly, as explained (under 2.4 under objection 2), my view is that any unreal thing is a contradiction. It is no less a contradiction than the examples just given. If something is unreal, this makes it contradictory. For example, if the world is round, then 'an occurrence of the world not being round' is contradictory. Similarly, an occurrence of something not being itself is contradictory, if it is itself (which it is).

On the other hand (on the same principles explained in my argument under objection 2), things are only contradictions because they are also unreal things, and this applies to these examples of contradictions (for example, the thing which is not itself). For that example, this can be explained as follows. The reason why it is contradictory for a thing to not be itself is that it is not true that anything is not itself. So why does that make the contradiction an unreal thing? It's because, by my definitions, if it is not true that anything is not itself, this means that an occurrence, of anything not being itself, is an unreal thing (i.e. such an occurrence is an unreal thing). So the occurrence is an unreal thing, rather than nothing. This is on the same principles as I explain in my response to objection 2 and, in particular, in 2.4.

The idea that there are things that don't exist is referred to as 'Meinongianism'. According to my definitions of 'are' and 'exist', that is a contradiction. The most radical kind of Meinongianism follows what has been referred to as the 'naïve comprehension principle', according to which, there is whatever can be thought. My argument is also consistent with the idea that, (if something is real) there is a contradiction unless there is a thing (which may be real or unreal) which corresponds to whatever can be thought.

Various ways have been proposed to deal with the problem of unreal things by avoiding describing them as unreal. For example, Zalta has proposed the idea that instead of saying a particular thing doesn't exist, we should say it 'encodes' certain properties but doesn't 'exemplify' them. Others have suggested that everything exists, but that some of those things are fictional, which appears to be a contradiction. Some say that everything exists, but that only some of those things (the ones which would normally be called 'real') are 'concrete'.

As explained, what I think my argument shows, is that, if some things do exist, then it would be contradictory unless some other things genuinely do not exist, and unless those unreal things are things (and, also, unless there are no things that do not exist).

According to some, we can say that, as well as things that exist, mere 'possibles' exist (i.e. things that are possible can be said to exist). I would say that nothing exists except what exists. When we say a particular thing is 'possible' rather than 'real', the truth is just that we don't know whether that particular thing does, or will, exist.

One issue on which philosophers have disagreed is whether existence is a property, or predicate, of entities, or, alternatively, whether an entity's existence is not anything that is additional to the entity itself. Presumably, those who think that some things do not exist, would make a distinction between a thing and its existence, so that unreal things can be said to lack existence. I believe I have correctly defined what I mean by 'exist'. If 'existence', or 'being real', is as I have defined it, and if it is regarded as a predicate, then, on one small point (regarding the statement 'x is real', see the detailed appendix on definitions) it is a unique predicate. However, in relation to what I mean by 'exist', my argument appears to be correct, regardless of whether existence is classified as a predicate.

In summary, so far as I'm aware, other philosophy does not provide any justification for rejecting my argument.

Other, More Obscure, Objections

This document follows an earlier document on the same subject, which also dealt with several more obscure objections to the 'central argument'.

A Summary of the Main Points Covered by my Argument

Here, I will summarise the main points made in my overall argument, so the rough outline of the whole argument can be seen relatively easily. This will only give a rough idea of the arguments. To properly understand the arguments, (especially of the longer, more involved sections, such as those under 'objection 2' and 'objection 7', but also elsewhere) the full text should be read. I have not included a reference to every small point or objection.

A very short summary of my '**Central Argument**' is this. In order for one thing to be real, something else must be unreal. For example, if the world is really round, then it is not real that the world is not round. However, it is not logically possible for anything to be unreal and, therefore, it is also contradictory for anything to be real, or true. This leads to unavoidable contradiction, and, from that, to the 'end point', which is discussed elsewhere.

I then consider 12 possible objections to my 'central argument' and explain why, in my view, none of them are justified.

'**Objection 2**' is an important one. It argues against the 'central argument', on

the grounds that it might be possible for something to be real without it being necessary for something else to be unreal. My response to 'objection 2' shows, in more than one way, that there would be a contradiction if anything was real without something else being unreal. This is fundamental to my whole argument.

Objection 2, and my response to, it gets quite long and complicated, including 4 numbered sections, 2.1 to 2.4. Even this brief summary of it may seem a bit complicated.

In my response to 'Objection 2', the central points I defend are these. If the world is round, and we assume that 'a Y' means 'a reality in which the world is not round', then the statement 'the truth is not such that there is a Y' is true. If there was nothing that was not real, then there would be nothing that could occupy the place that 'a Y' does in that true statement (the statement 'the truth is not such that there is a Y'). Since 'a Y' does occupy that place in a true statement, a Y must be something unreal (as opposed to a Y being nothing).

I then consider some arguments in favour of Objection 2, such as the idea that if a Y is unreal then 'a Y' doesn't really mean anything and, so, the statement which includes 'a Y' cannot be correct. I also consider the idea that 'a Y' is just a contradiction. I first put forward arguments in favour of those two ideas. Then, in response to each of those arguments, I make several counter-arguments, each of which shows that there is a contradiction unless a Y is a genuinely unreal thing. For example, in response to the idea that 'a Y' doesn't mean anything, I argue that the meaning of the statement 'the truth is not such that there is a Y' is such that there would be a contradiction if it was not true and meaningful. In another example, in response to the idea that 'a Y' is a contradiction, I show that, logically, it is only a contradiction because it is also an

unreal thing.

'Objection 3' says that not everyone would accept my definitions of 'true' and 'real', etc. I respond that, whatever words are used, so long as they mean what I mean, by the words in my argument, and so long as what I mean is logical, then the argument will be logical.

'Objection 4' protests that surely something exists, such as the physical world and/ or consciousness. I respond that, the ideas, that the physical world and/ or consciousness exist, are ideas and that my 'central argument' shows the contradiction in such ideas and, therefore, actually believing in such ideas cannot be philosophically justified.

According to **'objection 6'**, my 'central argument' relies on the assumption that there is a single reality, because my argument assumes that the only options are for something to be absolutely real or for it to be absolutely unreal. In my response, I show that there is a contradiction unless there is such a single reality. Part of my argument is that if there are 2 'realities', V and W, this really means that there is one overall reality in which V and W co-exist.

Under 'objection 6', I also consider whether Einstein's theories of relativity might disagree with the idea that there is a single reality. If his theories include the idea that some things do not absolutely exist now, then that seems inconsistent with the idea of a single reality. Essentially, I argue that what exists cannot logically include things that do not absolutely exist now. Therefore, if Einstein believed that some things do not absolutely exist now, this seems to be a logical flaw in his theory.

'Objection 7' asks whether my argument could be overcome by either Russell's

Theory of Descriptions or Frege's method of distinguishing meaning from denotations.

My response to 'Objection 7' is the longest of all the responses and is quite complicated. (The objection and response, together, take up 18 pages.) To explain it more clearly, I have subdivided it into 10 sections, 7.1 to 7.10.

I describe Russell's theory and show a flaw in it. Although Russell claimed to have found a way to talk about real things without speaking of unreal things, I show that, even taking account of his argument, it still follows that, if some things are real, then there is a contradiction unless some things are unreal. I show that it even follows, from a statement which I believe Russell would accept (and which is phrased as I believe he would phrase it), that there is a contradiction unless some things are unreal.

My argument relies on the fact that, according to my definitions, a true statement describes something real. It follows that a statement which denies that a particular thing is true, implicitly means that a particular thing is unreal. In my response, I give a detailed explanation of this and of its relevance.

It appears to me that Russell's use of language is a way of avoiding the paradox, which is described by my 'Central Argument', but it does not get rid of that paradox.

Also, I show a flaw in Frege's idea that the distinction between meaning and denotation (or 'sense' and 'reference') can be used to overcome my argument. I argue that, in a true statement, there is no distinction between meaning and denotation.

'Objection 8' protests that it can't be true that there is nothing which is true. I respond mainly by talking about how ideas such as 'there is nothing which is

true' are not the meaning of my argument's 'end point'.

'Objection 9' suggests that perhaps my argument is flawed because logic itself is flawed. I respond that, although it would be contradictory for logic to be flawed, in effect, my argument is an examination of whether anything can be logical, and that such an examination is necessary for acceptance of the 'end point' to be philosophically justified.

'Objection 11' asks whether my argument is based on a play on words. I show that it isn't, because a play on words involves an untrue statement.

'Objection 12' asks whether contemporary philosophy provides any reasons for not accepting my argument. I summarise established thinking, on the subject of whether any things are unreal, and why that thinking does not provide any grounds for objecting to my argument. By and large, in one way or another, established thinking seems to avoid acceptance of the idea that anything can be genuinely unreal. I have shown, particularly in my responses to 'objection 2' and 'objection 7', that, if something is real, then there is a contradiction unless something is genuinely unreal. This shows that, for the reasons described in my 'central argument', if something is real, then there is a genuine paradox on the subject of whether anything is unreal.

In summary, I believe that I show that all the 12 objections to my 'central argument' are unjustified.

Experiencing the Meaning of the End-Point

It seems that, in searching for the truth and in the light of the preceding argument, you cannot fail to end up at the 'central 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’ at the end of the ‘central argument’ 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 the end-point, assuming that it is possible to do that and that one was able to do it.

One approach to trying to see the meaning is to contemplate the question: 'Can one think anything that is correct?'. 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 that 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 of 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 that 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?

I am not very good at perceiving the meaning of the end-point, but the general idea of it, that I have formed, 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 making no judgements, as seeing without preconceptions, as having 'beginner's mind', as not being attached to beliefs, 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 Reps, 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 should mean that Zen is consistent with it. Given that the argument of 'Logical Mysticism' seems to show that reality cannot be anything that is different to the end-point, if it 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 (roughly) 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 what this document says, 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 what this document says, 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 on the issues of

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 the 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 issues be correct? How can I, without making a philosophical mistake, have any idea of what is the case on any of these 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.

Finally

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

Contacting Me

Responses to this document would be appreciated. I can be contacted at peter.spurrier@aim.com

Appendix. Detailed Version of My Definitions

Under 'Some Definitions' I gave a short version of the meanings of 'true', 'real', 'exist', 'something' and 'nothing' that I have used in this document. Here is a more detailed version of that text.

The meaning of 'true' is such that, for any 'x' and 'y' (i.e. whatever 'x' and 'y' mean), if x is y, then the statement 'x is y' is true, and if x has attribute y, then 'x has attribute y' is true. For example, 'x is y' could mean 'the world is round'. If the world is round, then the statement 'the world is round' is true. (Another example of a possible meaning of 'x is y' would be 'the world is real'.)

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'. It can do this in two ways. Firstly, in any case 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. Secondly, where, for example, the statement 'x is real' is true, it not only reports a real occurrence of x being real, but also reports that x is real. '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.

I would make my definition of 'true' such that, if x does not exist, then 'x does not exist' is true. As for the question of whether reality can include the non-existence of something (and whether it would actually be possible for anything to not exist) that is the subject of the 'central argument'.

My definitions are also as follows. 'A thing' means 'not nothing'. The meaning of 'nothing' is such that if nothing does x, then x is not done, and if nothing has the attribute x, then that attribute is not had. 'Anything' is any thing, and 'something' is some thing.

(I am not saying that these words have to have the meanings that I have described above, but that, in the following argument, this is what I mean by these words.)

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. This document shows, under 'Objection 6', 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. (Objection 6 does not deal with the separate issue of whether what exists is necessarily physical.)

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 3'.

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