

# Falsehood

An Analysis of Illusion's Singularity

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# Preface

Our conclusion occurred before the arguments that support it, and in this respect, our arguments are horribly biased at the onset. Although written by a single individual, they are our arguments because the arguments in this work are as old as philosophy. None of them are new, and many students of philosophy will recognize the originating sources, at times perhaps hearing the voices of those authors. Despite a lack of original argumentation, we have put these arguments to new use.

In these contradictory words, rather than presupposing the existence of objective deception or illusion or falsehood at the start, I sought an analysis of the reality of illusion on par with the analysis of the reality of reality. Particular attention is given to perceptual illusions because I assume that, through empirical illusions, the concept of illusion has been justified and given identity. After all, what is more certain than our history of perceptual error? The reader is asked to question this assumption, and although this is similar to questioning perceptual certainty itself, the two questions are not identical. The resulting analyses nonetheless inform each other.

I am led to the conclusion that the concepts of illusion, falsehood, and objective error in general—for I carelessly lump these together and make little distinction—are intrinsically contradictory in nature. This is not to say that they are valueless or that none of these exist, but if they do, each must exist in a contradictory state, at least according to our classical conceptions.

And I continue to believe that true deception exists, just as much as truth itself, but whatever this deception is, it is not what we thought it was, nor is it any sort of deception or illusion analogous to perceptual illusion, for perceptual illusions are not deceptive or illusory at all. Deception is far cleverer than it has led us to believe, which, although expected from Deception, does not mean that we have caught Deception in the act.

# Chapter 1. Conflicts

Who has not murdered an idea for true love? Our scholarly history is marked by crimes of passion, but surely you have committed no sin and sit wondering why I hold all of humanity accused. Innocent people, I presume, choose not to waste energy while waging battles against concepts. They recognize that the art of academic argument is merely a type of assassination and have sought more useful employment. Know that we thought-killers practice our art and science over hours and centuries, awaiting the moment when our loathed ideas are captured and strung up in preparation for the chopping block. On the block we can find satisfaction, but only the experienced executioner will strike cleanly through deep meat. Practice is necessary. A sign of life is failure.

But who truly cares for the thoughts of humanity beyond other humans? This second question I pose for the sake of balance and to show that no crime has been committed in the universal court. Our ideas will likely be extinguished along with the molten core of the earth in a cataclysmic event. If impatient while waiting for nature's local demise, we may instead evaporate our physical selves with the aid of nuclear fusion, consume the environment down to the dirt, or lose the game we play against microbial organisms. The possibility and high probability of our eventual extinction must be calmly acknowledged before questions of value can be approached honestly. We will not go forward in time eternally. With this scientific thought one can begin an investigation.

I do not hope for an end of our line—we are having a magnificent run, one that I wish would continue for some time. You and I, fellow companion, are the primitive men and women of yesterday who will be looked upon with the nostalgia of simplicity by future minds. But we are also the society of tomorrow that breathes today, and although the ancient cultures lacked technological expertise and technique in art, I can while squinting see the same everyday struggles in our culture today. I half lie when I tell you my vision for these things is poor. The conflicts of aboriginal men and women are ostentatiously replicated in the metropolitan empires, and I assume that we have not inherited these problems from the ancient Greeks, nor from the first hominids who walked on two legs upon African plains. In fact, no creature at all is to blame for the current dilemma.

Our struggle, although manifest in the oscillations of history, originates from the fabric of the present. The present is to blame; like an electric power-plant it provides the voltage differential, generating the alternating historical current that is viewed as a periodic waveform of past events. We often fault poor memory for today's mistakes, but history does not repeat itself because it is forgotten—how can memories removed from existence or left in the past have influence upon the present? Admittedly, over finite time periods, recurrence of a forgotten history may randomly occur with infinitesimal probability, but this repetition would be a statistical fluke and should not be expected to occur again in a world of infinite possibilities. Rather we conclude that history repeats with regularity because it is remembered all too well, that those who should have forgotten the past have not done so, and that those who do remember take action to repeat it. Thus every repetition of history has its origin in the presence of the present, today, right now.

Assign biological blame if you must, but never conclude that the human species failed in the past—it fails only as we speak, this moment and each moment next.

Psychoanalytic theory may help us here. A self-tortured being repeats its patterns of self-destruction for the same reason that nations separated in space-time repeat silly conflicts of moral aggression: the present is perverted at its core. But perverse is a poor word to use. More clearly I mean that the present is shaped, connected, and colored in a way that generates cannibalistic behavior; put another way, the Freudian repetition of the mind applied to a universe that consumes itself.

One might assume that our neurotic galaxy is helpless, destined to tumble and stumble along the well-worn path of the pathetic; or one might also conclude that the galaxy is a well of infinite potential simply waiting to burst forth. Both alternatives sound about right, or neither, yet whatever the world's course, humans are woven into this universal weave realizing our existence as an aspect, a part, a twist in the void; we are threads of a tense cloth covalently bound and held captive in a tapestry that simultaneously grants our only possibility of freedom.

And I speak of freedom, but of all assumptions please do not presume that we *possess* freedom or awareness or conscious choice. These treasures, like the native's land, are owned by the universe itself and cautiously loaned out with an expectation of return. Viewed with planetary eyes, aware experience is a physical singularity that hides a turbulent distortion of cosmic geometry. From this galactic perspective I am a prolonged instant of sudden impact where sight and sound are continuously forged in an electromagnetic fire.

The grand idiocy of existence has been eroded first by symbolic forms of expression, then further by particles, and now through the proliferation of televisions and simulated environments. I see in star formation a sublime tale of molecular dust as it accretes to form a dynamical orb in violent hydrostatic balance, a near perfect self-sustaining conflict between gravitational potential and nuclear explosion that ignites the night sky like the blinding eye of a God betrayed. Our phenomenological experience deserves at least an equal story of temporal formation and destruction. Just as a star can only be understood in the processes that create, sustain, and then destroy stellar structures, our awareness cannot be comprehended outside of a subtle sequence of constructive interactions, knowledge of competing physical forces, and an appreciation of the boundary conditions that yield conscious solutions.

Let us prepare for the day, the day after the idea of illusion, when knowledge of knowledge formation is known. On this sentient morning the world will be propelled into a hallucinogenic transformation. Fearful beings will hold on more and more tightly to previous simplicity, and the fragile who cannot find safety will fragment into noise, while the worshiping relativists will fall deeper into a welcoming hole, smiling, scholarly accepting identity-diffusion as a perfect, perverted reality. And most of us will select to become half-blind—the sensible response when forced to look into a sun. A society exposed to truth must choose delusion in order to persist.

## THE MORAL ENGINE AND DUALITY

How can I write the words religion or science and expect you to understand what I mean? These words float around my head without definite form, evoking an electric symphony of memory and idea that changes with each separate exposure; but despite each word's fluidic effects, they reliably ignite theories and experiences that explain my aggregate life. I know that you, in part, can share in this understanding. Nothing aggravates (saddens?) me more than the

proliferation of arguments that begin from an observation of uncertainty, of honest empirical ambiguity as above, where the authors, rather than attempt to understand the nature of this ambiguity, choose to revel in alleged ignorance.

I too wish for a world abundant in uncertainty—I envision suicide without—but equally, I desire to tame whatever ignorance I can. Show me your rulers and gravitational metrics; I will use them to quantify the distance of my thoughts. But where in philosophy are the robust measures of distance? I have no desire to make binary distinctions within worn-out categories, nor do I wish to run away from measurement by denying the procedure all-together.

As our foundation in distance comparisons has dissolved, it has become rational to say, for instance, that the distance between Truth and modern cosmology is equivalent to the distance between Truth and Aristotelian cosmology. But we are not Truth, and we cannot compute any distance involving this term, and as a substitute, as an approximation of Truth, you, the individual, must insert your world-theory-experience into the distance formula. Upon honest computation you should find a non-zero distance between every conceptual system and yourself. This is not a failure of the theory, the religion, the philosophy—you are not identical to any of these, but neither are you completely distinct. Positive distance need not imply complete rejection, and if the theory is understood at all or evokes meaning then the theory cannot be infinitely distant from you.

Let me incompletely distinguish for the moment between my meaning of Truth and the binary conception of true. True and false as they are used in casual conversation over dinner, in serious philosophical discussion, and in computer programming are binary outcomes; they are the result of a categorization procedure that begins with a given object of unknown a priori form that when arbitrarily processed produces an outcome of zero or one. To understand the principle mystery of binary truth you need only grasp how a computer can differentiate images of cats from non-cats or detect collisions in a video game. The algorithm, the process, beginning with uncategorized data, transforms this data with a mapping that yields one or zero where the mapping carries a given label that indicates the category of the binary output to us. We function similarly. Linguistic propositions couple to categorization procedures whose truth output is dependent upon the world-theoretic experience of the particular being. Creatures possessing care and subtlety understand that the full continuum of values between zero and one are acceptable outcomes—we call these processes probabilistic; they understand distance.

Unbinary Truth, the conceptual Truth that drives history, has almost nothing to do with propositions, predicates, or categorical assignments. This Truth is as much force as matter, and I fantasize that the philosophico-religious endeavor arose from a fundamental moral tension: a world that *ought* to be composed of Truth, and simultaneously, a present that *is* dominated by Illusion and Untruth. In Buddhism, Zoroaster, and the Greeks we see a present composed of deceit, lies, and illusion that can only be untangled by embracing strategic methodology and belief. Our first assumption was, and still is in some quarters, the obligation to Truth within the actuality of Illusion.

Acting synergistically the two primeval axioms of world philosophy-religion unleashed a cyclical juggernaut of exploration that has excreted libraries of residual thought. Still, present ideology and practice have not congealed into concrete form, and no system of belief dominates the universal mind. Instead of a singular Truth, philosophy has generated a collective of ideas that have reproduced with mutation where each idea survives through conflict in partial and perverted form. As a dominant species of idea does not empirically exist, philosophy, taking this observation seriously, began to abandon the first of its axioms: the belief that fixed Truth can or

ought to be found. With the fundamental assumption of philosophy colliding against the undeniable empiricism of the present, the only work for philosophy to do was to buttress its simultaneous assumption—the reality of present Illusion.

Skeptics and relativists have been around since the beginning, but they did not always possess the technological fruits ripened over millennia of failure and the untamed safari of competing ideas. Today, armed with these rational perspectives birthed in the quest for Truth out of the force of Truth, many have concluded that all is Illusion. These meta-empirical skeptics of today deny invariant Truth of any sort and dare not construct foundations that will be shortly torn down. Too many have failed before. Too many have been ridiculed on the playground of future ideas.

But the axiom ‘present is illusion’, by itself, exerts no force. Without an *ought* to Truth the engine runs down, thus to continue forward philosophy has switched from anabolic to catabolic processes. Our stored knowledge has become fuel. And while the critiques of the meta-empirical skeptics may open pathways for future thought, the dissipative dynamic, value structure, and dogma of the group prevent any significant movement from within. Uncertainty, absurdity, and non-structure are worshipped, generating a new homeostasis of comfort for those who see only a world of unfathomable variety. But the stability of this equilibrium is not given, and their comfortable ignorance suffers from unrelenting hunger, for it is not a particular position, belief set, or value that creates comfort, but the *process* of elucidating new ignorance and uncertainty. Rather than discovering a novel means to produce heat—the dream of cold fusion—we are now standing in an intellectual field of dry straw where warmth grows in proportion to the spread of a consuming wildfire. Soon the fire will be burnt out, the straw consumed, and what remains will be cold, dark, and anxious once again.

## ILLUSION

Unchallenged, Illusion has occupied the place of Untruth for too long. While Reality has been slashed and beaten by the skeptical whip, Illusion, being slyer by nature, has slipped from the claws of otherwise able intellectual predators and now hides upon hallowed ground. Under Illusion’s domination from afar, our state of knowledge is a small child that trembles in darkness, starving, who frantically searches the floor for pieces of decaying carrion that do not exist. Oh look, we found nothing yet again! We are tired of empty stomachs and cold nights, and our beds, which ought to keep us warm, are occupied by a foreign body—Illusion’s—who lies awake under *our* sheets with an evil grin.

Illusion cannot lead us to Truth. Truth would annihilate Illusion—what respectable torturer offers the means to his own destruction?

“How can we defeat you?” we ask.

“There is a pure dagger, but it is hidden in the dark. Only this dagger can defeat me. Search harder,” spoke Illusion.

Thus the torturer tortures us not with flail or whip, but by forcing us to squirm in darkness upon mere command. Fearful puppets we are, amusement for a cunning idea, and I am quite serious about the carrot-like appearance of truth suggested by Illusion. Whatever forces us forward does so for its own survival alone. Like in nature, the force of gravity works only to perpetuate that gravity by attracting more matter, and the electromagnetic force of the photon eternally oscillates, repeating itself until annihilation or collision. Illusion, materialized as the

force toward a comforting Truth, reproduces only Illusion after all accounting is done. As long as we believe in this Illusion we are guaranteed to run around in academic circles, finding submissive arguments that take us back to the Illusion that initiated the search.

We will search no longer at your bidding, dear Illusion. Your secret is loose...you have no relation to Truth at all.

## RESTFUL SLEEP

There are many reasons to fear the nighttime—a decrease in the number of photons striking your neighborhood is not one of them. Blackness is not evil, and even the man who looks outside his window at night and sees demons crawling through the treetops is a fortunate soul. His world is alive with hell-spawn phantoms and naughty faeries while mine is barren and dry. It would be a mistake to assume that the man wishes to rid his perception of evil spirits—perhaps he has nothing more and desires nothing less? Without this fantasy he would be an empty shell, alone, waiting for the next delusion to crawl inside his head and take residence.

When the succubus is upon you, or under the bed while you dream, I hope that you will still sleep deeply throughout the night. And once you awake, rejoice as the light becomes a perception and then a memory. It matters not if the light outlines demon or angel. Your senses, your perceptions, and your meaning are never illusion for even a moment. There is no reason to fear demons as Descartes did. Should the demonic creature have the power to manipulate the gray moist tissue within your skull, or pervert your electrical patterns of mental sense and cognition, you need not fear deception. All of your parts and all of the universal mechanics and equations are functioning precisely to specification. The total setup that includes your mind coupled to the demon's interaction with your mind establishes your perceptual experience—as it is supposed to be. Both demon and mind operate how they must, producing the only perception possible given the complete condition. Not deceptive nor determined; simply abiding by the atemporal constraints of the moment.

Descartes provides the solution to his deceiving demon before he finishes the story of the problem. If my perceptions and senses are a product of a malicious demon, then I can rest comfortably knowing the source of my vision. All that remains is the science of the matter. How does this demon interfere with my sense? What sort of technology does he possess, or is he imbued with a biological organ that interacts with the minds' of other creatures? Above all I wish to meet and understand this demon. I will ask it why it seeks to play with us and if all of its kind posses the same desires. Should it not listen then we will fight. I mock the philosophical depth of this exercise, for I see no inextricable darkness and dread in the situation, nor am I propelled to seek the foundation of all knowledge. Rather I wish to understand the demon Descartes speaks of and its relation to my perceptions.

I see little epistemological difference between an ethereal Demon that creates an object's perceptual parts and a self-unified, unknowable object-in-itself that causally generates the exact same set of sensations. For each hypothesis, the set of possible perceptions are identical and the mechanisms unknown; the difference between them arises from a theoretical transformation. Under the first hypothesis, a Demon creates perceptions; under the other, an innocent object.

The difference is not one of deception, but rather one of purpose. We morally scold the Demon who purposely influences our perceptions for play, while an unaware object-in-itself that does the same but presumably without selfish intent is left off the hook. Perhaps, as some say, our objects-in-themselves conceal their true-natures, projecting distorted versions of themselves to we helpless humans—is not the object then an evil-deceiver as well? You will say that the object can do no other, but then, perhaps the Demon can do no other... who knows.

2

Although different worlds may logically manifest the exact same set of perceptions, the philosophical difference between these equivalent perceptions, at least upon Cartesian understanding, is one of construction, of mechanism. We are uncertain as to how our perceptions are created or explained. I grant you this uncertainty, but it has nothing to do with deception or mistrust. We may also be uncertain whether we are dreaming or not, meaning, uncertain as to whether our perceptions arise from external sources or from internal construction. The perceptions themselves do not deceive; rather, we question their particular path and mechanism of creation.

We routinely entertain different theories of explanation for assumed constant observables—we have done this for fire, for gravity, for superconductivity and any other characteristic that we can pin down long enough to talk about. For Descartes, that constant of discussion is perception itself, and he discusses possible theories of perception's mechanism: dreams, evil Demons, and I assume hypothetical real objects or a benevolent spirit. From these possible theories he concludes, implicitly:

Since I am uncertain how perceptions are created or explained, I do not know anything that involves inference from these perceptions.

To include more of Descartes' thought, you may replace perception with the words belief, cognitive state, or some combination, for these may be caused by demons as well. His conclusion implies, generally, if one does not understand everything about one's objects of discussion already, including their causal genesis and complete explication, then no certain knowledge can be gained by further inference using those objects at hand. For example, in the future we may conclude that gravity is explained differently than it is now. This change in understanding implies that all other inferences, based upon an outdated understanding of gravity in the past, become instantly suspect. Whatever you thought gravity was, it is not, and whatever conclusion you made using those old concepts must be false or at least incomplete. The only way to avoid future disruption and secure knowledge is to reduce possible uncertainty to zero regarding the topic in question. Here is another way to put it:

1. If something X can be explained in multiple ways, then inference Y based upon X is uncertain.
2. Something that is uncertain is not knowledge.

I'm not sure what knowledge is, but it is certainly possible that uncertainty leads back to certainty. Probabilistic central limit theorems rigorously suggest how this might be. Quantum theory similarly suggests that determinate perceptions may be constructed from indeterminate entities. Descartes lived prior to a robust probabilistic theory and could not have appreciated



probabilistic objects or their contribution to knowledge on the whole. In some sense, the meditation is a manifestation of latent probabilistic processes that desired escape.

3

Why do you suppose Descartes feared the demon? He did, this is certain, but his fear was not born of illusion or evil or even galactic doubt. Descartes feared first his loss of freedom at the whip of a mental torturer. If the perceptions of the mind are hopelessly dependent upon a demon's longing and desire, then one should conclude that self-control, self-ownership, and solitary self lose all meaning. The perceptual self becomes a whim of another, and thus Descartes found a reason to still believe in freedom even under mental dominance—an unshackled 'I' that retains the ability to *freely* think.

But we can build other paths to freedom. Why not accept your perceptions as they are, embracing the demon's torture while asking for more? The demon only enjoys its play while you scream and resist, and otherwise it will bore and seek another. Are you listening to us you creatures of hell and mind-controlling super-aliens and demigods? Create whatever perceptions and meanings and *thoughts* you want for us. We are your prisoners and play-things trapped in your simulation without the hope of escape. The awareness you give us will be cherished, accepted, and remembered despite; even if that acceptance is only a consequence of your desire. And if one day you bore or sleep too long, perhaps one of us will understand your creation and open new doors for the rest of us. With or without you, *This* is our objective, definitive, and timeless reality.

4

Descartes, like so many of us, was driven by a desire to remove doubt. Yet why would one attempt to annihilate an entity like doubt unless one first believed that uncertainty itself warrants destruction? We have here an unavoidable value judgment driving the meditative process. Deception of the senses is assumed to be morally reprehensible, so much so that as the meditation advances, the moral core of the argument manifests as an expectedly evil demon, a demon that is evil only because it deceives and controls our perceptions—what other distasteful properties is the demon given aside from a penchant for human deception? The opposition to a non-deceiving God is too much evidence to deny the moral fueling of the birth of modern epistemology.

The meditation originates from the moral tension between the evil of uncertainty and the goodness of certainty, climaxing in the confrontation between a deceiving demon and Descartes' thinking. But let us not take these characters too literally. If I place the combatants, demon and thought, on the same playing field, the structure of the situation appears to be the ageless conflict between external control, a character played here by a deceiving master, and internal freedom played, in a legendary performance, by free thought. Nietzsche, more clearly, recognizes the conflict between external control and internal freedom, dubbing a system's lustful expansion of freedom the will to power; a concept that assumes as a premise external forces working to subdue that will. He also recognizes that the issue is a question of value rather than confusing it with a quest for knowledge.

Permit me to replace Descartes' doubt with the concept of Evil and certainty with that of Good, for in the meditation, doubt and certainty are respective synonyms for Evil and Good.

Under this transformation you will find that the essence of the meditation remains invariant, and the final conclusion becomes an obvious consequent of the premise. Descartes is filled with the Evil of doubt, this he knows, and he tries, diligently, to search his insides for the smallest remnants of Good. He assumes that man cannot be all-Evil, especially not a follower of God, thus some Good must be found hidden within himself. Yet Descartes can imagine that if a deceiving God—an Evil God—ruled the universe, then possibly everything, included Descartes, could be composed entirely of Evil; thus he concludes the existence of a Good, non-deceiving God to establish the possibility of Good within himself. All is not finished, for Descartes anxiously recalls that his mind is packed full with the Evil of doubt, and through nearly circular maneuvers, carves a small space in his visual cortex to house a fragment of God's Good.

I am not interpreting a text when I tell you these things, nor do I presume to know what any man or woman actually means. Through a simple substitution, when I replace two terms with two others, I find that the meaning of the piece is relatively preserved to me. In other words, one can statistically explain the majority of the variance in meaning with moral terms, and although not exactly the same, the significant correlation between moral and epistemological readings is evidence enough for a person more interested in relational distances above binary fact.

In transforming moral matters into an almost secularized quest for scholastic knowledge, Descartes made possible an academic field of philosophy that has separated from religion and value. During his day, religious dogma did not allow Descartes to question the Good directly, and to his genius, he slyly side-stepped his oppressors via a coordinate transformation of terms—should we expect less from the mind that created analytic geometry? He freed the quest for knowledge from the constraints and assumptions of moral dogma, but this academic separation does not imply that the quest for knowledge and the quest for Good are different. Our modernized, purified pursuits of knowledge are still, in the Scholastic tradition, the pursuit of value or God, regardless of the name you choose for your field.

## 5

In more pragmatic states, one fears of Descartes' demon its interference with our imagined intimate relationship with individual perceptions. It is assumed, I think, that each perceptual situation occurs in some sort of isolated room that is hermetically shielded from perturbing forces, outside of which nothing has relevance or impact. Or rather, each perception is thought to have deep significance and meaning in isolation, and that talk of particular perceptions correspond to the building blocks or atoms of experience. The demon through its influence violates this first assumption of intimate phenomena, magnifying the complexity of our experience and perception beyond simple comprehension. Do you think that man, knowing she needed to consider the manifold of every possible perception in order to fathom just one, would have even attempted the effort?

The independence and significance of perceptions is a simplifying assumption that helps us generate approximate answers to the intractable problem of existence. A physicist knows well the short cuts she takes to make even simple calculations—she is required to do so only too often, and independence is often the first. Thus the simplifying approximations that philosophers employ to understand linearized questions of Knowledge and Love must necessarily disfigure the original intuitions beyond any recognizable form. Language is always an approximation...of what?

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