

Introduction to Philosophy Essay Questions Units 10 – 12
Paul Martinus, MS.
Pathways to Philosophy

Dr. Geoffrey Klempner
Introduction to Philosophy
November 9, 2014

Abstract

This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements needed for completing *Introduction to Philosophy*, “A Possible World Machine” through the International Society for Philosopher’s (ISPP) Pathways to Philosophy program. This paper attempts to address the third question in the set of essay questions particular to the tenth through twelfth unit’s pertaining to the explanation of idealism. It should be noted that this paper is written according to American Psychological Association (APA) sixth edition standards.

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Introduction to Idealism

Question

The question presented by Pathways to Philosophy (n.d.) is whether “to exist is either to perceive or to be perceived; How would you explain Bishop Berkeley's idealism to someone who knew nothing about philosophy?” (p.1)

Response

In response to this question, we first adopt an Aristotelian approach to classification by segmenting the question into two parts. The first essentially takes into account Berkeley's phrase in Latin, which reads, *esse est percipi* (i.e., to be is to be perceived) (Robinson, 2014). According to Robinson (2014), Berkeley denied the existence of material substances for perceptions were believed by [Berkeley] to products of mind, and not physical objects per se. The second, tries to convert the essence of this phrase into something practical or meaningful. In order to achieve the second aim, we will attempt to highlight an example.

Idealism is one of many philosophical theories such as constructivism (i.e., understanding society via social constructs) or materialism (i.e., that physical matter is the most fundamental substance) for example that essentially attempts to provide a means of explaining our reality of existence so that we may arrive at a meaningful understanding of what it means, to *be*. According to Pathways to Philosophy (n.d.) idealism states that insofar as reality is concerned, existence is void of everything we think we believe exists but our perceptual experience thereof. What makes the idea that is ‘idealism’ unique is that everything we experience are ultimately figments of our imagination.

While returning to the idea that we are, or anything else is for that matter, is predicated in being perceived, we must acknowledge both the *perceiver*, *perceivers*, *perception*, and the *perceived*. As a perceiver, we perceive existence in the form of reality. Yet, we are but one of seemingly many perceivers. The question we are found leading ourselves to then would inquire about those perceivers we perceive possessing mind (i.e., other people and even lower order beings such as cats and dogs). Surely, other people are not mere figments of our imagination. Right? Well, from a purely philosophical perspective, it seems that we must at least entertain the possibility that our perceivers do not actually perceive any more than we think they do. Yet again, we seem to be heading down a perceptual road to madness for to arrive at the conclusion that not even other minds exist is inherently maddening.

So, for sanity sake, let us assume other people are indeed people as we perceive them possessing minds of their own as separate and distinct perceiving beings. With that said, we are able to say that both we as an individual and individuals possess minds in our own right. How then we might add does our perception of existence differ from other perceivers? After all, despite technology's best effort to bridge the perceptual gap, we cannot share in one another's reality any more than we can agree on whether Led Zeppelin's music is better than Pink Floyd's. What we can seem to agree on however, is that we seem to be perceiving existence similarly to one another as perceivers. Although we cannot communicate with cats and dogs in a mindal manner, our perceptions as human beings appear to be solely resident in our minds as communicably evidenced on account of the sharing of ideas.

This shared network as it were, seems eerily similar to internetnetworked cognitive mainframe or collective unconscious. It is interesting to note according to Anonymous (2014) that Jung's collective unconscious must have been a byproduct of his work with schizophrenic patients while working at a psychiatric hospital. On a more credible note, we are informed the Jung's collective unconscious relying on archetypal imagination is directly sourced from imaginistic creativity as well as what amounts to developmental spirituality (Hunt, 2012). Thus, where on one hand, and speaking from acquired knowledge, the consciousness we experience as

individuals may not only be linked via our shared deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) for our species, *homo sapiens*, shares a common ancestral thread, which on the other hand, may be threaded together to explain the variance with an established perceptual parameter serving to help us understand our reality from both singular and plural perspectives. In attempt to more fully understand this concept, additional explanation is required.

Let call into our discussion, the topic of quantum psychology in effort help us substantiate the essence of the examination at hand. For example, from a biological perspective, we are told by Adamski and Borowik (2014) that “a human being is an open system and cannot be considered in isolation from their surroundings, as together with their surroundings they constitute the one whole” (p. 86). Moreover, existing between oneself and one’s environment is “a continuous exchange of information, energy and matter” (Adamski & Borowik, 2014, p. 86). Forgetting the materialistic references, we might preserve quantum psychology’s underlying idealism by maintaining a point-of-view that the continuity in question, is not actually exchanged between environmental physicality external to oneself on an atomic elemental level, but possibly engages in a sort of internal idealistic exchange if you will on level composed of innate patterns and archetypal representations, where one’s isolation as it were, is wholly imaginary as well. Hence, a perceptual loop is itself, brought into being as being perceived.

One of the problems raised by Anonymous (2014) pertains to perceptions that are perhaps, not really real at all. If *to be is to be perceived*, what are we to say about someone we perceive being, who is unable to be perceived by another perceiver of whom, we are able to acknowledge as possessing the ability to share in similar perceptions not related to one’s perception of another who fails to be vetted by another’s perception? If we have a paranormal experience by perceiving an angel *per se*, while standing next to another who did not perceive what we perceived, we would find ourselves wondering whether what we saw was real. One only need to read the New Testament to testify to Paul’s visions and so forth, as what would be commonly referred to as schizophrenic testimonies. Did people in the bible see what they saw as many schizophrenics report seeing what they see? Are these paranormal experiences real? If so, how can they be explained?

One way of explaining them is through the use of idealism. If an angel appears before two people, yet only one can see it, then for all intents-and-purposes not only is the angel real for one, and not, for another, but we may explain the event in mindal terms. If events exists solely within the confines of one’s mind, then the events themselves are mindally determined to exist or not exist, depending on whether they were experienced or not. The angel was not external to the mind of the perceiver, but within the mind itself. In a way it almost seems that each mind as it were, were a bubble encapsulated within a universal mind.

If we were to conjure into being a circle of truth, that is us, and place it within a larger circle, we are soon left with a perceptual contradiction of us as a finite mind bubble within another mind bubble for the boundary of the bubble itself undermines the infinite nature of the universal mind within which we imagine ourselves existing. Even if we remove ourselves from the bubble by doing away with the bubble altogether, we soon find ourselves bound by the borders of the page and known reality itself for we would soon describing experiences familiar to us such as the room, building, plant, universe, and so on; all the while, essentially reducing ourselves by virtue of never-ending expansion into *ad infinitum*, which is absurd. In the end, we are left with no other alternative but burst our own bubble and think of ourselves as our own ultimate reality upon there is neither a beginning nor end. Everything just is.

Asides from this, or that, what we are left with is our own mind. That is all that really matters according to idealism. If one’s does not think so, then all one needs to do is contemplate the color pink. Is it really a color at all? Qualia being described by Stanford University (2014) as properties of sense data, leaves us with an almost indescribable description for pink may just as well appear red to another. Or what about “pink” according to one person’s perception thereof simply being “pinkish” whereas another, described as a spring-rose? How we describe such experiences of existence colors our reality differently. One’s experience of reality is experienced differently for the difference, or variance, is differentiate according to the perspective lens of the individual. The perception being focused according to one’s experience despite being able to imagine things that do not seem to exist; such as unidentified flying object (UFO’s) for all we know, they may be no more than an overactive collective unconscious.

Final Thoughts

To recap what we have said, idealism exists in the realm of mind. Everything is a byproduct of mindal perceptions. We human beings are perceivers, perceiving forms of things that exist in our mind. To say to be is to be perceived essentially means that in a practical sense, something only really exists so long as it is perceived. For example, not only does the thought of a tree falling in a forest somewhere not make a sound, but the tree as well as the forest exists only insofar as our imagination allows. When something is perceived, we might think of ourselves as exercising our imagination upon which the laws of physics are broken down in our dreams.

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