

Review

Georges Dicker, *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination*.
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Georges Dicker has done us all the great service of producing a delightfully clear and analytically precise evaluation of Berkeley's metaphysics and epistemology. The sub-title of the book seems quite apt, for Dicker's evaluation of Berkeley's views is indeed "critical." Actually, maybe "apt" is not really the right word, for once one has read the whole book, one realizes that the sub-title is something of an understatement. Let me suggest a sub-title that sacrifices conciseness in the name of somewhat greater accuracy: *A Critical Examination that Reveals the Theory and the Arguments for it to be Complete Failures, both by Virtue of the Fact that the Theory is Inconsistent with Analytic Truths (such as the Causal Theory of Perception), Unable to Accommodate Obvious Distinctions (such as that Between Subjective and Objective Temporal Order), and Inconsistent with Common Sense (such as the View that Sensible Objects are Intersubjectively Perceivable), and by Virtue of the Fact that the Arguments for the Theory are Either Invalid (Mostly Because they Commit the Fallacy of Equivocation) or Based on False Premises*. Indeed, if Dicker's criticisms of Berkeley are on target, then the Good Bishop is best studied in early modern courses as an example of how *not* to do philosophy (e.g., how to fall into confusion and fallacy), rather than as a major intellect from whom there is much to learn.

Some philosophers will wonder whether there is any *point* to writing a book that is so relentlessly critical of its main subject. Why spend so much time and effort using Berkeley as a punching bag, when the history of philosophy is otherwise full of insights? But this seems to me unfair to Dicker. For of course it matters greatly whether Berkeley is right or wrong, and if it turns out that an analytically precise reconstruction of Berkeley's philosophy reveals it to be profoundly mistaken, then that is an important result in its own right.

But how good (i.e., how textually faithful and how analytically insightful) is Dicker's reconstruction? This is much too large of a question for me to attempt a complete answer to it here. But I *can* attempt a *partial* answer, and this is what I will do.

Dicker's book divides naturally into four parts. In Part One, Dicker sets the stage for his critical examination by outlining some central elements of Locke's metaphysics and epistemology: the positing of material substrata, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, the representational theory of perception, and the account of sensitive knowledge (i.e., knowledge of a world of material objects outside our minds). In Part Two, Dicker reconstructs Berkeley's case for idealism in the first seven sections of the *Principles* and in the first of the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. In Part Three, Dicker explains how Berkeley tries to bolster his case for idealism by attacking the Lockean views discussed in Part One. And in Part Four, Dicker discusses various aspects of Berkeley's positive world-view, with special attention to its

vulnerability to objections. My review focuses on Part Two of the book, with special attention to the First Dialogue argument for idealism.

By (Berkeleyan) idealism, Dicker means the thesis that “what exists is only ideas and minds” (p. 4). It follows from this thesis that matter (or material substance), which is supposed to be neither idea nor mind, does not exist. It also follows that tables and chairs and other sensible objects, which are clearly not minds because they are not conscious and are incapable of perceiving anything, are ideas or collections thereof. And because the very existence of an idea, for Berkeley, consists in its being perceived (its *esse* is *percipi*), it follows that no sensible object can exist unperceived.

Dicker thinks Berkeley tries to establish something like the latter proposition by means of an “*opening syllogism*” extracted from the first three sections of the *Principles*. The syllogism (simplifying a little) is this (p. 71):

- (1) All the objects of human knowledge are ideas or collections of ideas. (PHK 1)
- (2) No idea or collection of ideas can exist unperceived. (PHK 3)

So, (3) No objects of human knowledge can exist unperceived.

Now surely this is an overstatement of Berkeley’s position. Berkeley himself would deny (1), because he thinks that minds are objects of human knowledge. For example, he writes that “[w]e may be said to have some knowledge or notion of our own minds” (PHK 89, p. 211) and that he himself has “some knowledge or notion of [his] mind, and its acts about ideas” (PHK 142, p. 211). Given that Berkeley does not hold that minds are ideas, it follows that he rejects (1). But PHK 1 makes it quite clear that Berkeley wants to secure, not (1), but rather (1*):

- (1*) All sensible objects are ideas or collections of ideas.

I say this because, in Berkeley’s universe, there are two kinds of sensible objects, both mentioned in PHK 1: sensible qualities (including colors, odors, tastes, sounds, tangible qualities, such as hot and cold, as well as motion, solidity, shape, size, and number) and physical objects (such as apples, stones, trees, and books).

What of premise (2)? Well, there is no doubt that Berkeley endorses (2) in PHK 3. But Dicker thinks that Berkeley provides an *argument* in support of (2). Dicker calls this argument “*the argument from the meaning of ‘exist’*,” and he finds it in a famous passage in PHK 3 where Berkeley says that “the table I write on, I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it” (p. 70). But this is a mistake, I think. Berkeley clearly takes premise (2) to be self-evident: it is *obvious* to him that no idea or collection of ideas can exist unperceived. What is *not* obvious (at least initially) is that no *sensible object* can exist unperceived. It is *this* proposition—call it (3*)—that Berkeley uses the table passage to establish.

So PHK 1-3 actually provide us with two separate trains of reasoning for the conclusion that sensible objects cannot exist unperceived. The first is this:

- (1*) All sensible objects are ideas or collections of ideas. (PHK 1)
 - (2) No idea or collection of ideas can exist unperceived. (PHK 3)
- So, (3*) No sensible object can exist unperceived. (PHK 3)

The second is contained in the “table” passage. As Dicker sees it, the argument is a “non-starter” (p. 74), but I think that this is a bit uncharitable. Let me explain.

Dicker claims that the main premise of the table passage is that the proposition expressed by (S) is identical to the proposition expressed by (D) (where X is a sensible thing):

- (S) X exists.
- (D) I perceive X *or* under appropriate circumstances I would perceive X *or* some other mind perceives X.

From this propositional identity, Dicker claims, Berkeley derives conclusion (E):

- (E) X exists only if I perceive X or some other mind perceives X.

From (E) it then follows (validly) that X exists only if X is perceived, and hence that no sensible object can exist unperceived.

Dicker then claims (rightly, of course) that the inference from the proposition-equivalence of (S) and (D) to conclusion (E) is a whopper of a fallacy, which is why he thinks the argument is a non-starter. But there are two problems with Dicker’s reconstruction here. First, no human being in her right mind would think that the proposition expressed by (S) is identical to the proposition expressed by (D). Second, Berkeley, who is surely aware of this, never tells us that what (S) says is the same as what (D) says. Berkeley’s thesis is that *on some occasions*, namely when I am perceiving X, (S) is used to mean that I perceive X, and that *on other occasions*, namely when I am *not* perceiving X, (S) is used either to mean that under appropriate circumstances I *might* (not “would”) perceive X or to mean that some other mind perceives X. In other words, Berkeley’s thesis is not that the proposition expressed by (S) is disjunctive, but rather that, when (S) is used, it is used to express one of three propositions, depending on its circumstances of use.

Now this doesn’t exactly get Berkeley out of trouble. For, after all, Berkeley *does* think that, at least sometimes, when I am not perceiving X and I say “X exists,” all I mean is that under appropriate circumstances, I might perceive X; that is, all I mean is that X is *perceivable*. And, Dicker might say, from the claim that under appropriate circumstances I might perceive X (that is, from the claim that X is *perceivable*) it doesn’t follow that X can’t exist unperceived.

But here's the thing. As Dicker himself recognizes (albeit around 200 pages later), Berkeley actually *argues* that the perceivability of sensible things entails that they can't exist unperceived! Dicker points to the following passage:

HYLAS: Yes, I grant the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, but not in being perceived.

PHILONOUS: And what is perceivable but an idea? And can an idea exist without being actually perceived? These are points long since agreed between us. (W 2: 234; p. 271)

Dicker's reconstruction of the argument in this passage (simplifying slightly) is this:

- (1) For something to be perceivable, it must exist.
- So, (2) For any idea to be perceivable, it must exist. (from [1])
- (3) For any idea to exist, it must be actually perceived.
- So, (4) For any idea to be perceivable, it must be actually perceived. (from [2] and [3])
- (5) Sensible things are identical with ideas.
- So, (6) For a sensible thing to be perceivable, it must be actually perceived. (from [4] and [5], by Leibniz's Law)

I think this reconstruction is erroneous. Philonous does not state either (1) or (2). What he says instead is this:

(1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.

And the argument Philonous runs is a *reductio* of Hylas's claim that the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, not in being perceived. The reasoning runs as follows:

- (AR) The existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, not in being perceived.
- (1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.
- So, (2#) If the existence of Y consists in being perceivable, then Y is an idea. (from [1#])
- So, (3#) Sensible things are ideas. (from [AR] and [2#])
- (4#) The existence of an idea consists in being perceived.
- So, (5#) The existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceived. (from [3#] and [4#])
- So, (6#) It is not the case that the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceived. (from [AR])

Given that (5#) and (6#) constitute a contradiction, Berkeley infers from the truth of (1#) and (4#) that the assumption for *reductio* is false.

Notice now that (1#) and (4#) together entail:

(7#) The existence of anything perceivable consists in being perceived.

And suppose that sometimes, when I say that table T exists, I mean that T is perceivable. It follows from (7#), then, that if what I say is true, the existence of T consists in being perceived, and thus T cannot exist unperceived.

Berkeley's argument in the "table" passage for the claim that the existence of sensible objects consists in being perceived, when appropriately supplemented, is therefore far from a non-starter. But it does rely on two claims: (i) that perceivable things (and so, sensible things) are ideas, and (ii) that ideas cannot exist unperceived.

But now, leaving out mention of idea-collections (which is otiose anyway, given that such collections are just complex ideas), (i) and (ii) are the two premises of the argument for idealism we reconstructed from PHK 1-3! The upshot is that *the argument from the meaning of "exist,"* properly understood, depends on (and so ultimately reduces to) the *opening syllogism,* properly understood. Indeed, this is not the only place in the early PHK sections where the syllogism appears. As Dicker's accurate reconstruction of the relevant passage reveals, the main argument of PHK 4 is a slight elaboration of the syllogism.

Here's the text:

What are [sensible objects] but the things we perceive by sense? And what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations? And is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of them should exist unperceived? (PHK 4)

Dicker's accurate reconstruction, modified slightly, is this:

- (1) Sensible objects are what we perceive by sense.
- (2) What we perceive by sense are ideas.
- (3) Ideas cannot exist unperceived.

So, (4) Sensible objects cannot exist unperceived.

The slight elaboration here is a sub-argument for the first premise of the opening syllogism, properly understood:

- (1) Sensible objects are what we perceive by sense.
- (2) What we perceive by sense are ideas.

So, (1*) Sensible objects are ideas.

If we put all this together, what we see is that ultimately the first four sections of the *Principles* build up to the argument of PHK 4 without reliance on any "non-starters." Instead of there being three separate arguments (one in PHK 1/3, another in PHK 3, and yet another in PHK 4), there is at bottom only one, which is far from invalid.

Now how should we evaluate the argument of PHK 4? In particular, would the argument persuade Berkeley's materialist, anti-idealist predecessors and contemporaries, such as Descartes and Locke? Dicker rightly notes that it would not, for Cartesians and Lockeans would surely insist that many of the things that we perceive by sense (including tables and chairs) are not ideas, but rather material substances whose existence does not depend on being perceived (p. 72). So Berkeley needs some sort of argument to establish (2), an argument based on premises that do not beg the question against his opponents. As Dicker also rightly notes, Berkeley provides such an argument in the First Dialogue (DHP 1).

How does Dicker analyze this argument? He claims that Berkeley begins by setting out some definitions or concepts (of "sensible thing," "immediate perception," and "sensible quality") and one important principle, which Dicker calls "the Principle of Perceptual Immediacy," or "(PPI)," definitions and principles that are then employed in the rest of DHP 1 to establish that sensible qualities are merely ideas (p. 90). I myself think that there is both more, and less, going on in the introductory section than Dicker thinks. So let's turn to this section.

Dicker thinks (rightly) that both Hylas and Philonous initially agree to D1:

D1: Sensible things = *df* things that are perceived by the senses. (p. 85)

He then claims that Berkeley offers us two definitions of the phrase "immediate perception," definitions that, so Dicker claims, Berkeley takes to be extensionally equivalent. Here are the two definitions:

D3: X is immediately perceived_o = *df* X is perceived, and it is false that X would be perceived only if some item that is not identical with X and that is not a part of X were perceived.

D4: X is immediately perceived_p = *df* X is perceived without (the perceiver's) performing any (conscious) inference. (p. 87)

There is also (PPI):

(PPI) Whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived. (p. 87)

Dicker claims that Berkeley then combines (D1) and (PPI) to get a more precise definition of "sensible things," namely (D5):

D5: Sensible things = *df* things that are immediately perceived by the senses.

According to Dicker, Berkeley then "says what these sensible things are composed of: they are composed of sensible qualities," and finally "declares that sensible things are *therefore* nothing but sensible qualities and combinations of sensible qualities" (p. 89, italics added).

I agree with much of what Dicker says here, but there are four problems with his story. First, (D1) and (PPI) do not together entail (D5). But Berkeley is not guilty of invalid reasoning, for he accepts a slightly different version of (PPI), which, when conjoined with (D1), does entail (D5). Second, Berkeley is not just setting the stage for his later arguments that sensible qualities are only ideas: what he is doing is *arguing* for the conclusion that sensible objects are either sensible qualities or collections of sensible qualities. (Dicker notices Berkeley's use of "therefore," but neither highlights it nor extracts an argument from the relevant passage.) Third, it is a mistake to read the relevant passages as containing two definitions of immediate perception. Fourth, it is a mistake to foist on Berkeley either of the definitions of immediate perception that Dicker proposes: as I see it, Berkeley accepts neither (D3) nor (D4).

Let's start with the argument. Dicker is right that Berkeley accepts (D1):

PHILONOUS: What mean you by sensible things?

HYLAS: Those things which are perceived by the senses. Can you imagine that I mean anything else? (W 2: 174)

He is also right that Berkeley accepts something very like (PPI). But (D1) and (PPI) do not entail (D5). For (D1) says that sensible things are things that are perceived by the senses, and (PPI) says that whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived. From the conjunction of (D1) and (PPI) it follows that sensible things are things that are immediately perceived, but it does not follow that sensible things are things that are immediately perceived *by the senses* [= (D5)]. And yet Berkeley does use (D1) and something like (PPI) to argue for (D5):

HYLAS: To prevent any more questions of this kind, I tell you once for all, that . . . in truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately. . . .

PHILONOUS: This point then is agreed between us, that *sensible things are those only which are immediately perceived by sense*. (W 2: 174)

Clearly, then, Berkeley is not merely assuming (PPI), but rather something from which (PPI) follows, namely (PPI*):

(PPI*) Whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived by the senses.

So Dicker is right that Berkeley uses *a* principle of perceptual immediacy to argue from (D1) to (D5). It's just that the principle of perceptual immediacy that Berkeley uses is not exactly the principle that Dicker identifies as the one that Berkeley uses.

But there is more reasoning here than appears in Dicker's reconstruction of it. For Berkeley also introduces another statement that functions as a premise—call it "(P1)":

(P1) Everything that is immediately perceived by the senses is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities.

Here is the passage:

PHILONOUS: You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by sight any thing beside light, and colours, and figures: or by hearing, any thing but sounds: by the palate, any thing beside tastes: by the smell, beside odours: or by the touch, more than tangible qualities.

HYLAS: We do not. (W 2: 175)

Berkeley then puts (D1), (PPI*), and (P1) together to get an argument for a claim that is stated in PHK 1 without argument, namely that every sensible thing is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities. As Philonous puts it:

PHILONOUS: Sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities, or combinations of sensible qualities. (W 2: 175)

The argument is valid:

(D1) Sensible things = *df* things that are perceived by the senses.

(PPI*) Whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived by the senses.

(P1) Everything that is immediately perceived by the senses is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities.

So, (C) Every sensible thing is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities.

It is important that we see this argument for what it is: not just as a way of setting the stage for the important discussion of sensible qualities to follow, but as a critical piece of reasoning designed to get us part way to the conclusion that sensible things are ideas. For, indeed, all we need to add to the argument we have so far in order to get idealism is the thesis for which Berkeley argues in the rest of DHP 1, namely that every sensible quality is an idea. I think that Dicker probably doesn't disagree with this, but the fact that there is an argument here really flies under the radar in the book.

If this reconstruction of Berkeley's strategy for proving idealism in DHP 1 is correct, then it is critical that he avoid equivocation on the phrase "immediately perceived." But, according to Dicker, there is equivocation here, and it dooms Berkeley's argument for idealism.

Recall the two readings of "immediately perceived" Dicker offers us:

D3: X is immediately perceived_o = *df* X is perceived, and it is false that X would be perceived only if some item that is not identical with X and that is not a part of X were perceived.

D4: X is immediately perceived_p = *df* X is perceived without (the perceiver's) performing any (conscious) inference.

As Dicker sees it, there is a problem with the argument if (D3) is accepted. For although (P1) may be true if read through the lens of (D3), representationalists (including Locke) “will say that it is false that whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived_o, because material objects are perceived by the senses, but not immediately perceived_o” (p. 131). In other words, if (D3) is accepted, then representationalists will reasonably reject (PPI) (and hence (PPI*) as well). On the other hand, there is also a problem with the argument if (D4) is accepted. For although (PPI*), read through the lens of (D4), is true, representationalists would now be well within their rights to deny (P1), for they hold that no conscious inference is required to perceive material objects by means of the senses, and yet material objects are not identical with sensible qualities or collections of sensible qualities. And if the phrase “immediately perceived” is given a (D3) reading in (P1) and a (D4) reading in (PPI*), then Berkeley’s argument is straightforwardly invalid.

What is Dicker’s evidence that Berkeley adopts (D3)? The only passage Dicker cites is this one:

PHILONOUS: Or, may those things properly be said to be sensible, which are perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others? (W 2: 174)

I see it as quite a leap to go from this passage to (D3), which involves a false complex counterfactual conditional that refers, not just to the objects mediately perceived, but also to their *parts*. Why not suppose that Berkeley has something far simpler in mind, something that derives directly from the etymology of the term “mediate”?

And what is Dicker’s evidence that Berkeley adopts (D4)? The only passage Dicker cites is this one:

HYLAS: In truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive *immediately*: for they make no inferences. (W 2: 174-5)

But here Hylas is recapitulating in an extremely truncated manner a piece of reasoning that Philonous has just dragged him through. That the reasoning is truncated is evident from the fact that, literally speaking, it makes no sense to say that *the senses* perceive, immediately or otherwise; nor does it make sense to say that *the senses* make inferences. The reasoning that Philonous has just pushed Hylas to accept is this. By (D1) and (PPI*), every sensible thing is immediately perceived by sense. Philonous says that it then “follow[s] from this,” and from the fact that it is by means of reason that one perceives the causes of sensible qualities, that the causes of sensible qualities are not themselves sensible things. In order to make sense of this argument, we must suppose that Berkeley is assuming that it is impossible for something to be immediately perceived by sense if it is perceived by means of reason. This is probably what Berkeley is trying to capture by having Hylas say that the senses “make no inferences.” But (D4) does not drop out of this: all that drops out is that reason can’t be involved in the immediate perception of an object by sense. This is compatible with (D4), but it is also compatible with many other accounts of the meaning of “immediately perceives,” including those that make no

reference to *conscious* inference. Indeed, the psychological aspect of consciousness that Dicker ties so closely to this particular conception of immediate perception is nowhere to be found in Berkeley's text.

Where, then, should we look for clarification of Berkeley's concept of immediate perception? I suggest *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (NTV), the main thesis of which is that distance, magnitude, and situation are all perceived by sight, but only *mediately*! In NTV 9, which he titles "Some ideas perceived by mediation of others," Berkeley writes:

It is evident that, when the mind perceives any idea not immediately and of itself, it must be by the means of some other idea. Thus, for instance, the passions which are in the mind of another are of themselves to me invisible. I may nevertheless perceive them by sight; though not immediately, yet by means of the colours they produce in the countenance. We often see shame or fear in the looks of a man, by perceiving the changes of his countenance to red or pale.

The phrase that Berkeley uses to clarify the meaning of his technical term "mediately perceive" has since come to be known as the "by-locution." A spirit *S* mediately perceives an object *O* when and only when *S* perceives *O* *by* perceiving something other than *O* (a mediating entity *M* lying in some sense between *S* and *O*) that is in some way related to *O*. (D3) is an attempt to put a counterfactual spin on the by-locution, but as should be fairly obvious upon quick perusal of the literature on by-locution analysis, such a spin doesn't work. So why foist it on Berkeley when he himself doesn't use it?

Let's do a little more to clarify the way in which *M* must be related to *O* in order to perform its perceptual mediating function. Berkeley's fundamental term for this is "suggestion": that is, his view is that *S* mediately perceives *O* when *S* perceives a mediating entity *M* that suggests *O*. Suggestion itself is a relation of mental association that can be grounded in three different ways: (a) by stipulation (as when meanings are assigned to words), (b) by experience (as when the perception of lightning is invariably followed by a perception of thunder), or (c) by reason (as when the perception of a triangle leads one to think of a fact that one has proved about triangles, such as that their interior angles add up to 180 degrees). This is all a far cry from (D3).

As I see matters, then, Berkeley adopts (DIP) instead of (D3):

(DIP) *X* is immediately perceived = *df* *X* is perceived, but not by perceiving something numerically distinct from *X* that suggests *X*.

From (DIP), it then follows that *X* is immediately perceived by sense if and only if *X* is perceived by sense, but not by perceiving something numerically distinct from *X* that suggests *X*.

Now we can ask: How do (PPI*) and (P1) fare when read through the lens of (DIP)? (PPI*), so read, now says that whatever is perceived by the senses is not perceived by

perceiving something numerically distinct from X that suggests X. (P1), so read, now says that everything that is perceived by the senses, but not by perceiving something numerically distinct from it that suggests it, is a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities. It is really impossible to say whether these two principles would be accepted or rejected by representationalists, until the phrase “perceived by the senses” is further clarified. For there is potential ambiguity here too: in saying that O is perceived by sense one might mean that O is perceived *partly* by sense or one might mean that O is perceived *wholly* by sense. I don’t have the space to discuss what I think are Berkeley’s changing views about whether to accept the “partly” or “wholly” conception here, but this is where I think the action is. In any event, I don’t think that Berkeley is guilty of a kind of simple-minded equivocation that depends on confusing two conceptions of immediate perception.

Suppose, now, that Berkeley’s argument that every sensible object is a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities is sound. What remains to be discussed is Berkeley’s argument or arguments for the claim that every sensible quality is an idea. Now here Dicker adopts the standard story, which goes something like this. Berkeley uses a pain-pleasure argument to show that intense heat, intense cold, bitterness, and the smell of rotting flesh are pains, while moderate heat, moderate cold, sweetness, and the scent of my mother’s lasagna are pleasures. Perhaps because he sees that the pain-pleasure argument doesn’t work, or shows no more than that a limited set of secondary qualities are ideas, Berkeley switches quickly to the argument (or arguments) from perceptual relativity, an argument (or arguments) designed to establish the same conclusion as the pain-pleasure argument.

I think that the standard view is mistaken, and that Robert Muehlmann’s non-standard interpretation of these arguments in *Berkeley’s Ontology* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) is closer to the truth (though I also differ from Muehlmann with respect to important details that need not concern us here). To see why, let’s begin by considering the pain-pleasure argument, or, more particularly, what Dicker calls Berkeley’s sub-argument for the first premise of the pain-pleasure argument (p. 93). On Dicker’s reconstruction, the argument, applied to the case of intense heat, is this:

- (1S) On putting one’s hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation or idea of intense heat and pain.
- (2S) If on putting one’s hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation of intense heat and pain, then the intense heat one immediately perceives is not distinct from the pain.

So, (3S) The intense heat one immediately perceives is not distinct from the pain. (p. 93)

Dicker then argues that the argument is “faulty” (p. 94), because Berkeley is caught on the horns of a dilemma, depending on two ways of understanding the phrase “intense heat,” either as “*quality* of intense heat” or as “*sensation* of intense heat.” If the phrase “intense heat” means the former, Dicker argues, then (2S) is false: for “the fact that one immediately perceives one uniform *sensation* of intense heat and pain does not imply that the *quality* of intense heat one immediately perceives is not distinct from the pain” (p.

94). And if the phrase “intense heat” means the latter, Dicker argues, then (2S) is true, but the conclusion, which identifies the *sensation* of intense heat with a pain, “comes nowhere close to establishing [what] Berkeley wants; namely, that the quality of intense heat is the same thing as the pain” (p. 94).

Now this strikes me as an uncharitable reading of the relevant passage, which is this:

- PHILONOUS: Upon putting your hand near the fire, do you perceive one simple uniform sensation, or two distinct sensations?
 HYLAS: But one simple sensation.
 PHILONOUS: Is not the heat immediately perceived?
 HYLAS: It is.
 PHILONOUS: And the pain?
 HYLAS: True.
 PHILONOUS: Seeing therefore they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the fire affects you with one simple, or uncompounded idea, it follows that this same simple idea is both the intense heat immediately perceived, and the pain; and consequently, that the intense heat immediately perceived, is nothing distinct from a particular sort of pain.
 HYLAS: It seems so. (W 2: 176)

Dicker kindly reproduces my favored reconstruction of this argument in his book, and then compares his reconstruction to mine. Here is my reconstruction:

- (1A) On putting one’s hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation.
 (2A) On putting one’s hand near a fire, one immediately perceives intense heat and pain.
 (3A) If one immediately perceives X and Y at the same time t and one immediately perceives one uniform sensation at t , then X is not distinct from Y.
 So, (4A) The intense heat one immediately perceives on putting one’s hand near a fire is not distinct from the pain one immediately perceives at that time.

Leaving the minor difference between (1S) and (1A) aside, Dicker acknowledges that his interpretation is “less literal” than mine, and that my (2A) “limns” the text more closely than his (2S). What keeps him from accepting my reconstruction, he says, is that “(3A) is unintuitive and false as it stands” and he sees “no way to amend it so as to obtain a true statement” (p. 96).

But now I think that Dicker has morphed from the Grinch into Mother Teresa. I’m all for charity, but if charity requires that every one of a philosopher’s premises be read as true (by our lights), then the existence of real philosophical disagreement (e.g., between Berkeley and Locke) will turn out to be mere illusion! I agree with Dicker that (3A) is false. But this does not matter. The important question is whether it is reasonable to suppose that Berkeley takes it to be true, and here, I think, the text speaks clearly in favor of this supposition.

If one then asks whether a suitably revised version of (3S) is true, I think Dicker's claim that there is no way to amend it so as to obtain a true statement is surely an overstatement. For Dicker has actually provided such an amendment. Here is his best suggestion:

(3Ar**) If one immediately perceives only X and Y by sense-modality S at *t* and one immediately perceives one uniform sensation by sense-modality S at *t*, then X is identical to Y.

What is wrong with (3Ar**)? Dicker thinks it's vulnerable to the following counterexample: "Imagine that my visual field is completely filled by two black slabs, A and B, whose adjoining edges are so tightly conjoined that I cannot see any division between A and B. Then A and B give me one uniform black visual sensation, but it does not follow that A is identical with B" (p. 97).

But this counterexample fails. Dicker's mistake here lies in misconceiving Berkeley's idea of *uniformity as phenomenological*. But, as the relevant passage makes clear, Berkeley's conception of *uniformity* is one of *simplicity* or *lack of composition*: as he puts it, "the fire affects you with one simple, uncompounded idea." So it is false to say that A and B give Dicker one uniform black visual sensation. For the visible blackness is divisible into a left half and a right half, and thus can be thought of as a composite of two black expanses (which is certainly how we should think of the expanses if the slabs were pulled apart). The black visual sensation may be uniform in one sense, but it is not uniform in *Berkeley's* sense. I conclude that Dicker has given us no good reason to reject (3Ar**), which is certainly all to the good from Berkeley's point of view.

Recall now that Dicker's criticism of the pain-pleasure sub-argument is that it equivocates on the term "intense heat," which could mean either "quality of intense heat" or "sensation of intense heat." Dicker finds evidence that Berkeley "equivocates between qualities and sensations" in the passage that immediately follows the proof that intense heat is a kind of pain. Here's the passage:

PHILONOUS: Again, try in your thoughts, Hylas, if you can conceive a vehement sensation to be without pain or pleasure.

HYLAS: I cannot.

PHILONOUS: Or can you frame to yourself an idea of sensible pain or pleasure, in general, abstracted from every particular idea of heat, cold, tastes, smells, &c.

HYLAS: I do not find that I can.

PHILONOUS: Doth it not therefore follow, that sensible pain is nothing distinct from those sensations or ideas,—in an intense degree? (W 2: 176-7)

Dicker's take on this argument is that its conclusion, which is no more than that pain is not distinct from the *sensations* of intense heat, cold, and so on, is "simply irrelevant to what Berkeley is trying to prove," namely that pain is not distinct from the *qualities* of intense heat, cold, and so on. If we are to read the conclusion as relevant, then we must

suppose that Berkeley fails to distinguish between sensations and qualities in setting up an argument that is supposed to show that qualities are no more than sensations!

I see why Dicker reads the passage in the way he does. But I think his reading is, yet again, excessively uncharitable. Of course, Berkeley is interested in proving that pain is not distinct from the *qualities* of intense heat, cold, and so on. He proposes to do so by relying on a principle about abstraction, namely, that what cannot be separated by the mind cannot be separated in reality. This principle entails, in particular, that if the idea of X cannot be abstracted (or mentally separated) from the idea of Y, then X and Y cannot be separated in reality (i.e., X is not distinct from Y). In the middle of the passage, Berkeley states a clear instance of this principle, namely that if the idea of pain cannot be abstracted from the ideas of intense heat/cold/tastes/smells and so on, then pain itself is not distinct from intense heat/cold/tastes/smells and so on themselves. In other words, Berkeley is giving us a principle whereby an identity of qualities follows from the impossibility of mentally separating ideas that represent those qualities. There is no equivocation here, and the principle delivers the right result by means of a valid argument that looks like this:

(B1) If the idea of X cannot be abstracted from the idea of Y, then X is not distinct from Y.

(B2) The idea of intense heat cannot be abstracted from the idea of pain.

So, (B3) Intense heat is not distinct from pain.

Berkeley, as it happens, just botches his presentation of this argument by referring in a seemingly question-begging way to intense heat as a “vehement sensation,” and by stating the conclusion as the non-distinctness of pain with certain “sensations or ideas—in an intense degree.” It is no surprise that Berkeley should have made this mistake: he does, after all, *believe* that intense heat and so on *are* vehement sensations! The moral is not that Berkeley equivocates between qualities and sensations, but that he should have chosen his language more carefully in his presentation of the argument I have charitably attributed to him.

Let us move on to the argument (or arguments) from perceptual relativity (APR). I say “arguments” because Dicker thinks that there are actually two versions of APR. Let me begin with what Dicker thinks of as the “first version” of APR.

Dicker claims that the “first and fullest statement of the first-version APR concerns the qualities of heat and cold” (p. 100). Here is the relevant passage:

PHILONOUS: Those bodies, therefore, upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be thought to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

HYLAS: They must.

PHILONOUS: Can any doctrine be true that necessarily leads a man into an absurdity?

HYLAS: Without doubt it cannot.

PHILONOUS: Is it not an absurdity to think that the same thing should be at the same time both cold and warm?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Suppose now one of your hands hot, and the other cold, and that they are both at once placed into the same vessel of water, in an intermediate state; will not the water seem cold to one hand, and warm to the other?

HYLAS: It will.

PHILONOUS: Ought we not therefore, by your principles, to conclude that it is really both cold and warm at the same time, that is, according to your concession, to believe an absurdity?

HYLAS: I confess it seems so.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, the principles themselves are false, since you have granted that no true principle leads to an absurdity. (W 2: 178-9)

Dicker rightly points out that this argument is a *reductio*. But he thinks that Philonous's opening statement does not clearly identify the assumption for *reductio*. The part before the semi-colon, says Dicker, suggests that the *reductio* assumption is (a):

- (a) Material things really have whatever moderate degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

But the part after the last comma ("must be thought to have cold in them") suggests that the *reductio* assumption is (b):

- (b) Material things in which one perceives a moderate degree of cold (or heat) really have the quality of cold (or heat) in them.

The difference between these statements is subtle. (a) says that if one perceives a material object O to have quality Q in degree D, then O really has quality Q in degree D. (b) says that if one perceives a material object O to have quality Q in degree D, then O really has quality Q. What (b) does not say, but (a) does say, is that O must have quality Q *in the degree it is perceived to have it*. From (a), I can conclude from the fact that I perceive a fire to be intensely hot that the fire really is *intensely* hot; but from (b), all I can conclude from the same fact is that the fire has *some degree of heat*.

Dicker claims that if (a) is the *reductio* assumption, then the *reductio* "cannot be used to support Berkeley's thesis that . . . heat and cold are merely . . . ideas." By contrast, he says, "only if (b) is the assumption to be disproved can the argument support [that thesis]" (p. 101). Assuming, then, that the argument is designed to show that heat and cold are merely ideas, Dicker interprets the argument as directed against both (a) and (b), and reconstructs it as follows:

- (1) Heat and cold are qualities of material things. (Assumption for *reduction*.)
 - (2) The same material thing . . . can seem hot to one hand and cold to the other.
- So, (3) The same material thing can be both hot and cold. (p. 101)

Dicker then claims that the argument commits a “basic fallacy,” namely that of confusing “seeming with being”: for the argument moves “from a single premise about how things are together with a single premise about how things seem, to a completely new statement about how things are” (p. 105).

My sense of all this is that Dicker misunderstands APR, that the argument he rightly criticizes as invalid is not the argument that Berkeley puts forward in the relevant passage. The main problem, I believe, is that Dicker unthinkingly assumes, along with the standard view, that the purpose of APR is to establish that heat and cold are ideas. This assumption distorts his interpretation of the passage, and leads him to criticize Berkeley unfairly.

Let me explain. The first thing to notice is that Dicker misidentifies the assumption for *reductio*. Here, again, is what Philonous says:

PHILONOUS: Those bodies, therefore, upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be thought to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

Notice the use of “therefore” in the first sentence. Philonous must think that the assumption for *reductio* here follows from something else to which Hylas has already committed himself. But if we look at the speech of Hylas’s that immediately precedes this passage, we find nothing that could serve as a reason for holding anything Philonous says in the passage. So what, and where, is the assumption that commits Hylas to the assumption for *reductio*? The answer is that the assumption is stated quite explicitly by Hylas himself just a few pages earlier. Hylas says this:

HYLAS: Whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it. (W 2: 175)

We can put this claim in the following terms:

(Ga) Material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

This claim is a clear generalization of (a), which concerns *moderate* degrees of heat:

(a) Material things really have whatever moderate degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

What this strongly suggests, then, is that (Ga) is the assumption for *reductio*. Philonous’s plan is to attack (a), and thereby show that (Ga) is false.

I have argued that (Ga) is the target of APR. Now Dicker thinks that Berkeley also targets (b), because, so Dicker claims, the falsity of (b), but not the falsity of (a), might

reasonably be thought to establish that heat and cold are nothing but ideas. But it is an interesting fact that this claim of Dicker's is false. Recall (b):

- (b) Material things in which one perceives a moderate degree of cold (or heat) really have the quality of cold (or heat) in them.

We can restate (b) a bit more perspicuously as follows:

- (b*) For every material thing X and for every subject S , if S perceives a moderate degree of cold/heat in X , then X really has cold/heat in X .

Suppose, now, that (b) is false. What does this mean? It means this:

- (not-b) For some material thing X and for some subject S , S perceives a moderate degree of cold/heat in X , but X does not have cold/heat in X .

From (not-b), we may infer (not-b-cons):

- (not-b-cons) For some material thing X , X does not have cold/heat in X .

But from this result it does not follow that heat and cold are nothing but ideas. In order to show that heat and cold are nothing but ideas, one would need to establish the following universal generalization:

- (u) For every material thing X , X does not have cold/heat in X .

But (u) does not follow from (not-b) or (not-b-cons). So it is not reasonable for anyone, let alone Berkeley, to believe that establishing the falsity of (b) really goes any way towards establishing that heat and cold are nothing but ideas.

What this means is that, whether the assumption for *reductio* is taken to be (Ga), (a), or (b), APR is not being used to show that heat and cold are not qualities of material things (but rather ideas). It follows directly that Dicker's reconstruction of APR is mistaken.

What, then, is the proper reconstruction of APR? Well, it begins with the assumption for *reductio*, namely (Ga):

- (Ga) Material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

As I have already argued, (Ga) entails (a):

- (a) Material things really have whatever moderate degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

Philonous then gets Hylas to accept the following assumption:

(HC-imp) It is impossible for the same thing to have a moderate degree of heat and a moderate degree of cold at the same time.

And then Philonous imagines a hypothetical situation in which the following fact obtains:

(P) Subject *S*, who dips a cold hand in water *W* and a warm hand in *W* at the same time, perceives *W* to have a moderate degree of heat in *W* and a moderate degree of cold in *W* at the same time.

The reasoning to a contradiction is now straightforward. From (P) and (a), it follows that *W* has a moderate degree of heat and a moderate degree of cold at the same time. But, from (HC-imp), we know that *W* does not have a moderate degree of heat and a moderate degree of cold at the same time. Contradiction. Assuming that (P) and (HC-imp) are true, it follows that (a) is false, and hence that (Ga) is false as well. The upshot is that it is a mistake for Hylas to think that material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

The obvious question, then, is why Berkeley *cares* about establishing the falsity of (Ga). How is this supposed to move him any closer to establishing that all sensible qualities are ideas? Answer: it doesn't, *but it's not meant to!* The point of APR is to beat up on relatively unsophisticated materialists, such as Aristotle, who think that perception works by means of the transmission of accidental forms through various media to our sense organs, forms that are then stored by the imagination as phantasms, and then intellectualized as notions. If Aristotle's theory of perception is true, then material objects really do have all the sensible qualities we perceive them to have. What APR shows is that material objects *don't* necessarily have all the sensible qualities we perceive them to have, and hence that Aristotle's theory of perception is false. This is an important and perfectly respectable result.

Let me now move on to what Dicker thinks of as the "second version" of APR. Dicker finds the "first and fullest statement of this argument" in the following passage, which I have simplified slightly:

PHILONOUS: Is it your opinion the very figure and extension which you perceive by sense exist in the outward object or material substance?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Have all other animals as good grounds to think the same of the figure and extension which they see and feel?

HYLAS: Without doubt, if they have any thought at all. . . .

PHILONOUS: A mite therefore must be supposed to see his own foot, and things equal or even less than it, as bodies of some considerable dimension; though at the same time they appear to you scarce discernible, or at best as so many visible points?

HYLAS: I cannot deny it. . . .

PHILONOUS: Can one and the same thing be at the same time in itself of different dimensions?

HYLAS: That were absurd to imagine.

PHILONOUS: But, from what you have laid down it follows that the extension by you perceived, and that perceived by the mite itself . . . are each of them the true extension of the mite's foot; that is to say, by your own principles you are led into an absurdity. (W 2: 188-9)

Dicker thinks of this APR as “subtly different” from what he takes to be the first version of APR (p. 108). Recall Dicker's reconstruction of the first version (the “F” stands for “first”):

- (F1) Heat and cold are qualities of material things. (Assumption for *reductio*)
- (F2) The same material thing . . . can seem hot to one hand and cold to the other.
- So, (F3) The same material thing can be both hot and cold. (p. 101)

Here, now, is his reconstruction of the argument from the “mite” passage (the “S” stands for “second”):

- (S1) The very shape and size perceived by sense in an object is always that of the object itself. (Assumption for *reductio*)
- (S2) An object's shape and size looks (seems, appears) different to different perceivers, different species of perceivers, and to the same perceiver under different conditions of observation.
- So, (S3) An object can actually have many incompatible shapes and sizes.

Notice that the arguments are similar inasmuch as (F2) resembles (S2), and (F3) resembles (S3). Focus now on (F2) and (S2). Dicker sees in the “mite” passage commitment to the assumption that “an object's shape and size seems different . . . to the same perceiver under different conditions of observation.” But this is not accurate. The “mite” passage does not consider what Hylas's principles commit him to in a hypothetical situation in which a single perceiver perceives a material object to have two different sizes or two different shapes at the same time. There is good reason for this: it is very difficult, if not impossible, to place a single perceiver in a situation similar to the “water” example with respect to the perception of different shapes or sizes by sight. So Dicker is right that the argument contained in the “water” passage and the argument contained in the “mite” passage are different, but the difference in the arguments is not the difference he sees in the arguments. According to Dicker, the main difference between the two arguments concerns (F1) and (S1). According to (F1), heat and cold are in material things. According to (S1), a particular shape (size) is in a (presumably material) thing whenever it is perceived by sense to be in that thing. However, as I've argued, (F1) is not the *reductio* assumption of the argument from the “water” passage: (Ga) is. And, interestingly, (Ga) corresponds exactly to (S1): what (Ga) says about heat and cold, (S1) says about size and shape.

This suggests that the argument of the “mite” passage corresponds almost perfectly (*modulo* the fact that it concerns the perception of different sensible qualities by different perceivers rather than the perception of different sensible qualities by the same perceiver)

to the argument of the “water” passage. And, indeed, the arguments are very similar. Begin with the assumption for *reductio*, a slightly amended version of (S1):

- (S1) Material things really have whatever shape and size any perceiver perceives in them.

Philonous then gets Hylas to accept the following assumption, which says about shape and size what (HC-imp) says about temperature:

- (HC-imp*) It is impossible for the same thing to have different shapes (sizes) at the same time.

And then Philonous imagines a hypothetical situation in which a fact very similar to (P) obtains:

- (P*) One perceiver perceives a material object to be of a certain shape (size), while another perceiver perceives the same object to be of a different shape (size), at the same time.

The reasoning to a contradiction is now straightforward. From (P*) and (S1), it follows that the same object O has different shapes (sizes) at the same time. But, from (HC-imp*), we know that O cannot have different shapes (sizes) at the same time. Hence, the contradiction. Assuming that (P*) and (HC-imp*) are true, it follows that (S1) is false. The upshot is that it is a mistake for Hylas to think that material things really have whatever shape (size) one perceives in them. If my reconstruction of these arguments is correct, then Dicker makes a mistake in thinking that the two “versions” of APR he identifies have significantly different assumptions for *reductio*.

Given that Dicker has misidentified the argument and the reasoning of the “mite” passage, it won’t be surprising to learn that he also misevaluates the argument. Dicker thinks that the argument from (S1) and (S2) to (S3) is “simply not valid” (p. 109). He is right about this, of course, but his correct evaluation of the (S1)-(S3) argument doesn’t matter, because, as I’ve just argued, *this is not the argument of the “mite” passage!* Still, Dicker thinks that the “mite” passage “may be felt as quite persuasive,” and his diagnosis is that the (S1)-(S3) argument “can easily be converted into a valid [argument], by reformulating [(S2) as (S2’)]” (p. 110):

- (S2’) Many incompatible shapes and sizes are perceived by sense in an object.

After conversion, Dicker’s reconstruction of the “mite” passage argument looks like this:

- (S1) The very shape and size perceived by sense in an object is always that of the object itself. (Assumption for *reductio*)
 (S2’) Many incompatible shapes and sizes are perceived by sense in an object.
 So, (S3) An object can actually have many incompatible shapes and sizes.

With the addition of (HC-imp*), the claim that the same thing cannot actually have many incompatible shapes and sizes at the same time, this *appears to be* almost exactly the APR that I have extracted from the “mite” passage: for (S2') is, *modulo* lack of reference to the same time and modulo lack of reference to material objects, logically equivalent to (P*). However, the lack of reference to material objects in (S2') turns out to be of the utmost importance with respect to the evaluation of the argument.

Dicker's worry is that premise (S2') of the amended argument leads to unintuitive ontological profligacy. Dicker writes:

According to [(S2')], [each perceiver in the “mite” case] sees an object that actually has a different shape and size. So [(S2')] forces us to conclude that each [perceiver] sees a different object, since a single object cannot have different shapes and sizes at the same time. (p. 115)

By contrast, says Dicker,

[(S2)] seems to be just an obvious and completely commonplace fact, based on the laws of perspective, that when people look at an object from different vantage points, that very object may look, appear, or seem different to them. There is nothing even faintly suspect about saying that in such a case, they all see one and the same object, though they see it differently. (p. 116)

So, as Dicker sees it, Berkeley is caught in another dilemma. If Berkeley relies on (S2'), then he ends up with a bloated ontology; but if he replaces (S2) with the “commonplace” (S2), then his argument is invalid.

There are two things to be said about Dicker's criticism here. The first is that Dicker has lost sight of the fact that the relevant argument is a *reductio*. Berkeley's point is that materialist principles [here, (S1), (S2'), and (HC-imp*)] lead to absurdity. Philonous does not himself endorse (S2'): *Hylas* the materialist does. This is why it is important to read (S2') as applying to *material* objects: what *Hylas* accepts is that the object perceived by the mite is the same object as the object perceived by me. His reason for thinking this is that the mite and I are both looking at the same *material* object. If physical objects such as mite's feet were merely collections of ideas in minds, then it would not be obvious that the mite and I are perceiving the same object. Dicker is therefore mistaken in thinking that the argument from the “mite” passage commits Berkeley to a bloated ontology.

Now, as it happens, Berkeley *does* have a bloated ontology. For, although he eschews material objects, he accepts that physical objects really do have the sensible qualities they appear to us to possess. He is even happy to accept that an oar dipped in water that looks crooked *is* crooked! His diagnosis of the “crooked oar illusion” is not that the oar is straight but merely *appears* crooked. Rather, what a person who sees the oar as crooked “immediately perceives by sight is certainly crooked; and so far he is in the right.” The person's mistake does not lie in “the ideas he actually perceives; but in the inferences he makes from his present perceptions,” for example that “upon taking the oar out of the

water he shall perceive the same crookedness; or that it would affect his touch, as crooked things are wont to do” (W 2: 238). So if Berkeley did not think that the mite and I were perceiving different feet, then he would be committed to the absurd view that the same foot has different dimensions at the same time.

But none of this is a real problem for Berkeley, because, as it happens, he has an *argument* for his bloated ontology. Consider his discussion of the “moon” example in NTV:

Suppose, for example, that looking at the moon I should say it were fifty or sixty semidiameters of the earth distant from me. Let us see what moon this is spoken of: It is plain it cannot be the visible moon, or anything like the visible moon, or that which I see, which is only a round, luminous plain of about thirty visible points in diameter. For in case I am carried from the place where I stand directly toward the moon, it is manifest the object varies, still as I go on; and by the time that I am advanced fifty or sixty semidiameters of the earth, I shall be so far from being near a small, round, luminous flat that I shall perceive nothing like it; this object having long since disappeared. (NTV 44; W 1: 187)

Berkeley’s point is that the moon that he sees from the Earth is only “a small, round, luminous flat.” Were he to be carried “toward the moon,” he would, after a while, cease to see a “small, round, luminous flat,” but rather a “vast opaque globe, with several unequal risings and valleys” mentioned in *Alciphron* 4.9 (W 3: 153). By Leibniz’s Law, Berkeley concludes that the small, round, luminous flat seen at t_1 (Moon1) is numerically distinct from the vast opaque globe seen at t_2 (Moon2).

Of course, the materialist will scoff at Berkeley’s description of what is seen in this thought-experiment. The materialist will say instead that there is only one moon, a moon that appears when seen from Earth to be a small, round, luminous flat, when it is actually in itself a vast opaque globe. But notice that the materialist must deny the very commonsensical statement that what one sees from Earth is small, luminous, round, and flat. Berkeley therefore not only has an *argument* for his bloated ontology; he can also point out that the materialist can only defend his ontological minimalism by running afoul of common sense.

Ultimately, then, the argument of the “mite” passage, which is almost perfectly parallel to the argument of the “water” passage (the only difference being the reference to different perceivers in the former and to the same perceiver in the latter), turns out to be valid and therefore represents a serious objection to materialism. If it is then pointed out to Berkeley that premises similar to the very same argument force him to accept a bloated ontology, his response is to embrace ontological profligacy for solid philosophical reasons that, unlike materialism, are consistent with common sense.

I have argued, *contra* Dicker, that the sole function of APR, properly understood, is *ad hominem*: Berkeley means APR as a *reductio* of materialism and nothing more. In particular, Berkeley does not use APR to establish that all sensible qualities, including

primary qualities, are ideas. But then, I hear you ask on Dicker's behalf, doesn't Philonous move to APR after having recognized that the pain-pleasure argument cannot be used to establish that all sensible qualities are ideas? Doesn't Philonous appeal to APR because he needs it to establish what the pain-pleasure argument fails to show? These questions presuppose what I have been calling the standard view. So it is important to see that the standard view is false.

Dicker rightly points out, as many others have, that Philonous applies the pain-pleasure argument to no more than the following sensible qualities: heat, cold, taste, and smell. In particular, Philonous does not apply the pain-pleasure argument to color or sound. Moreover, at a critical juncture in the conversation, Philonous appears to recognize that he has no way of countering Hylas's suggestion that moderate heat (or warmth) is neither pain nor pleasure, but rather a privation (or lack) of pain and pleasure (i.e., an indolence). And it is immediately after this seeming recognition that Philonous proposes APR. Finally, as Dicker rightly points out, Philonous goes on to apply APR to a host of sensible qualities other than heat and cold, including tastes, smells, colors, size, and shape. All of this suggests that Berkeley means for APR to pick up where the pain-pleasure argument leaves off.

But the suggestion needs to be resisted. In the first place, although it is true that Berkeley fails to apply the pain-pleasure argument to colors and sounds, it is fairly obvious that this is something he *could* easily do. Recall that Berkeley infers, from the fact that pain and intense heat are perceived at the same time without being distinguished, that intense heat *is* a kind of pain. Similarly, Berkeley could easily infer, from the fact that pain and intense sounds (or colors) are perceived at the same time without being distinguished, that intense sounds (and intense colors) are pains. Just picture yourself at a rock concert, and you will see what I mean. Or imagine Voldemort shining an intense red light in your eyes. So if Berkeley does not apply the pain-pleasure argument to sounds and colors, this is purely for stylistic reasons. There is nothing wrong with repeating an argument, but surely after one has run it three times, there is no need to run it a fourth or a fifth time. Even the thickest materialist will have gotten the point after the second iteration.

In the second place, what appears to be a critical juncture is far from it. Contrary to popular belief, Philonous does *not* acknowledge that the pain-pleasure argument can't be used to dislodge Hylas from the thesis that heat and cold are privations of pain and pleasure. Here is the sum total of Philonous's reaction to the privation suggestion:

PHILONOUS: If you are resolved to maintain that warmth, or a gentle degree of heat, is no pleasure, I know not how to convince you otherwise, than by appealing to your own sense. (W 2: 178)

I think many readers, even very thoughtful interpreters, stop reading at the word "otherwise." What they see in this passage is Philonous's acknowledgement that he is unable to convince Hylas of the falsity of the suggestion that moderate heat (or cold) is an indolence. *But this is not what Philonous says!* We need to read *all the way to the end of the relevant sentence*. What Philonous says, properly understood, is that he sees no way

of convincing Hylas of the falsity of the indolence suggestion *except by appeal to Hylas's own sense*. He is telling Hylas to pay close attention to what he is sensing when he senses moderate heat or cold, and implies that if he does this carefully, he will convince himself that these qualities are sensations, *indifferent* sensations perhaps, but sensations nonetheless. So Philonous is not giving up on the pain-pleasure argument: far from it.

In the third place, the fact that Philonous applies APR to primary qualities—qualities to which he does not apply the pain-pleasure argument and to which the pain-pleasure argument clearly does not apply even if he wanted it to—does not show that he relies on APR to show that primary qualities are ideas. The reason for this is that Philonous uses a separate argument to establish the ideational nature of primary qualities on the basis of the ideational nature of secondary qualities. The argument appears in the following passage:

PHILONOUS: But for your farther satisfaction, try if you can frame the ideas of any figure, abstracted from all particularities of size, or even from other sensible qualities.

HYLAS: Let me think a little—I do not find that I can.

PHILONOUS: And can you think it possible, that should really exist in Nature, which implies a repugnancy in its conception?

HYLAS: By no means.

PHILONOUS: Since therefore it is impossible even for the mind to disunite the ideas of extension and motion from all other sensible qualities, doth it not follow, that where the one exist, there necessarily the other exist likewise?

HYLAS: It should seem so.

PHILONOUS: Consequently the very same arguments which you admitted, as conclusive against the secondary qualities, are without any farther application of force against the primary too. (W 2: 194)

The argument here is simple. Primary qualities and secondary qualities cannot be separated by the mind; but any two things that cannot be separated by the mind cannot be separated in reality; so primary qualities and secondary qualities cannot be separated in reality; moreover, as the pain-pleasure argument shows, secondary qualities are ideas; but whatever can't exist apart from an idea in reality must itself be an idea; therefore, primary qualities too are ideas. QED. So this argument, together with the pain-pleasure argument (appropriately extended to all secondary qualities, including colors and sounds), establishes to Berkeley's satisfaction that *all* qualities, without exception, are ideas. APR is not needed for this purpose. And indeed, as I have argued, that is not the reason why Berkeley appeals to it. The function of APR is *negative*, and Berkeley's case for idealism does not rely on it.

Let us now stop and take stock. Although Dicker correctly identifies some of the premises of Berkeley's argument for idealism, the reconstructions he offers of the various sub-arguments are all seriously flawed. And although Dicker is right that the flawed reconstructions he identifies are all invalid, question-begging, or unintuitive, this is no skin off Berkeley's nose: for, properly understood, none of the sub-arguments for which

Dicker offers flawed reconstructions is obviously or clearly problematic. Dicker is, I am guessing, a materialist, and so am I (at least, most of the time). The difference between us is that whereas *Dicker* thinks that Berkeley's argument for idealism is multiply flawed in sophomoric ways that can serve as object-lessons in how not to philosophize well, *I* think that the argument represents a very serious, analytically rigorous, and philosophically respectable challenge to materialism. If Dicker were right, then Berkeley's challenge would be not much more than a philosophical curiosity, a kind of argument that, in Hume's words, produces no more than "momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion" (*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 12, Part 1, fn. 32). The *Principles* and the *Dialogues* could be expunged from the history of western philosophy canon, and those of us already schooled in how to avoid fallacies would be none the worse for it. But, happily for all serious admirers of Berkeley's work, Dicker is wrong. Despite Dicker's best efforts to stop it in its tracks, Berkeley's argument for idealism lives on.¹

Samuel C. Rickless
University of California, San Diego
srickless@ucsd.edu

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